# The Hungarian Quarterly

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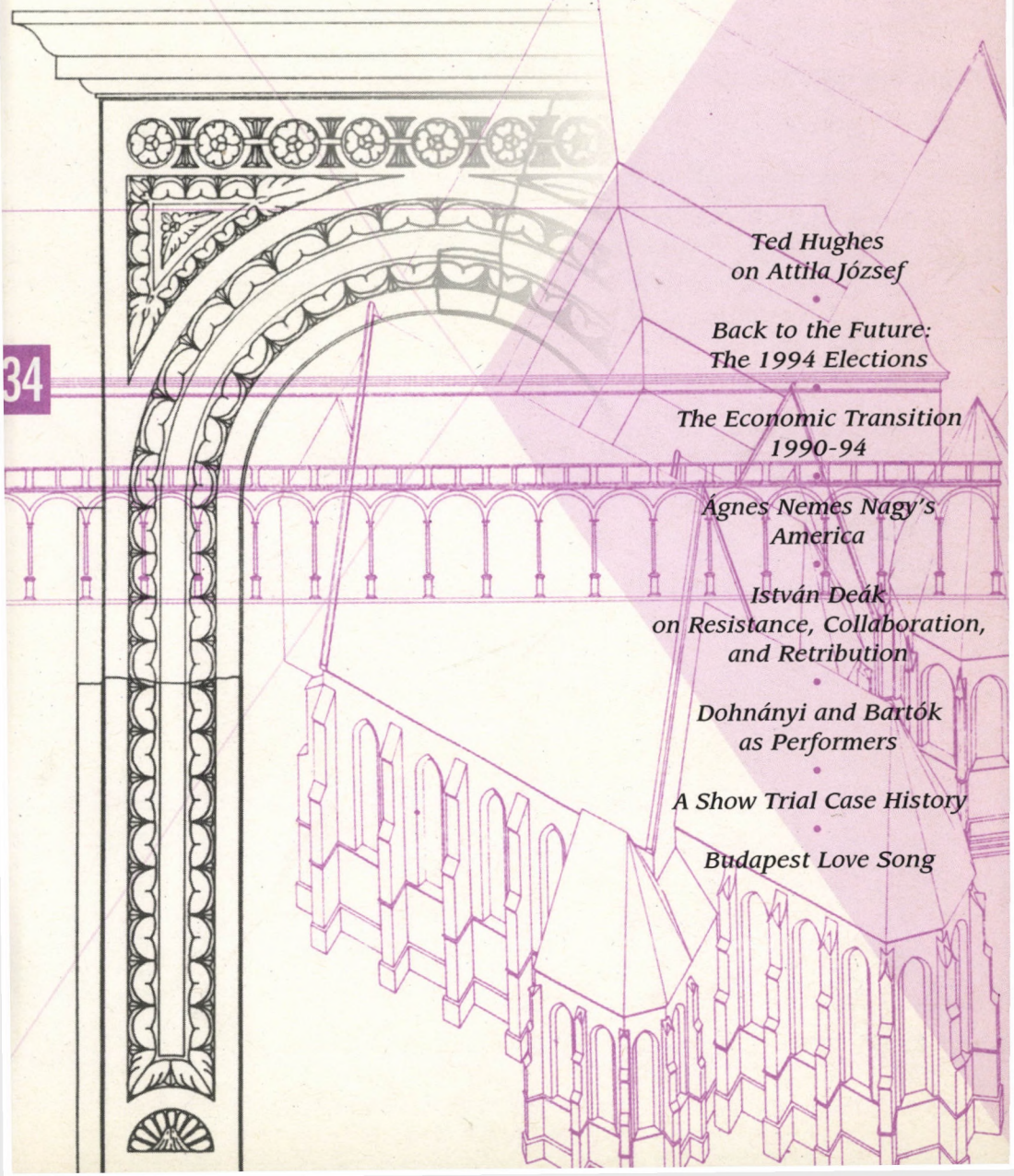

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# The Hungarian Quarterly



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Ted Hughes

# On Attila József

In any near-literal translation of Attila József's poetry one can feel the truth of the claim, which Hungarian poets make, that he is one of the most solidly and thoroughly original great poets of modern times.

Every part of his nature seems to cooperate in each poem. But the truly arresting thing is the last-ditch sort of urgency under which this cooperation happens. It is both genuinely desperate and irresistibly appealing. The final posture of his suicide—his right arm severed by the wheels of a train—was the ultimate image of a personality violently divided against itself. Reminiscent of a remark in Coleridge's Notebook: "Were I Achilles, I would have cut my leg off to get rid of my vulnerable heel". It is not too fanciful to see these two antagonists, in the poetry, as a child locked in its sufferings and an adult (an Attila, in fact) struggling to make intellectual sense of that predicament, struggling to unlock the sufferings and force the child to grow up.

The child is a primitive image-maker of extraordinary inventiveness, ingenuity, spontaneity, precision, freshness. His precocity, in this respect, is phenomenal: a Mozartean abundance of ideas, melodies, combinations. That image-substance of his thinking is like a continuum. It is so fundamental to his poetic speech that one can well imagine what his paintings would have looked like—had he painted. They would have been "primitive" paintings, maybe, with that otherworld autonomy and peculiar light, and teeming with daemonic, protean, highly defined figures, full of strange miseries, terrible eyes, collisions. A vision of folk-experience, in a landscape of labourers where the tools bleed and the mountains are folded, worn-out hands, and of folk-innocence, where the twilit village is a heaped plate of steaming potatoes. But a vision undergoing a cataclysm. At the same time the detail is intimately real, as if everything had to be re-examined in the anguished security of his worked-to-death mother's kitchen. As in primitive pottery, every thumbprint is warmly human yet surreal, every utensil is a juju where serious psychological disturbance, and even plain agony, can be indistinguishable from wild comedy. The real world is the setting and substance of everything: the actual materials of this image-maker are supplied by the real life of the heroic, fatally-stricken child.

These materials come under the shaping energies of the struggling adult. There was some fatherless, defender-of-a-near-helpless-family precocity, too, about this adult. A feverishly restless intellectual, politically fixated, argumentative, marvellously lucid, recklessly direct to hit the nail on the head. If this was a separate self, it was also an intellectual version of the other self. Tormentedly self-aware and yet unself-conscious, idealist full of naivety. Naive, that is, in refusing to trim or adapt or grow a defensive, knowing sophistication over his child-heartedness—in other words refusing to protect the vulnerability of his essential qualities: having the courage of his innocence. With a perfect knowledge of what this cost.

The unique timbre and accent of Attila József's poetry inhere in the quality of grappling unity, the tightly-woven interplay, that these two selves or modes of operation managed to achieve. They achieved it not just here and there, at high moments, but consistently: it forms his characteristic language. He sustained it, throughout his work, in what amounted almost to the speech of a unified personality—albeit a personality unified by that very crisis, the existential crisis of a mind about to explode into fragments, a crisis that went on day after day, year after year, growing steadily worse.

This impression of unified wholeness, in what is always an orchestration of antagonisms, is at least partly due to the dramatic completeness of the persona projected in the poems. And this dramatic completeness is again due to the urgency, the voice of the crisis. That ferocious, lucid urgency. A remote ancestor might be Villon. But there is an almost relentless, warrior-like, "as-if-death-had-already-occurred" all-outness to József. Except perhaps in the "children's" poems, one never has the feeling that he is composing a poem, or creating a work of art—though a work of art may be the result. One is aware mainly of him simply *thinking*, but with totally concentrated self-application, trying to get something clear, to lay hold of something with a perfect, full grasp.

Reading the poems can resemble watching somebody work out a mathematical problem with full intensity. The poetic "form"—sometimes structurally idiosyncratic, as in *The Seventh*—then seems like the mathematical procedure necessary to arrive at some particular solution, following the elemental consequences step by step, deeper and deeper. Till suddenly it comes out right. Except that none of the poems is ever anything like a mathematical problem. More usually, for József, it resembles a matter of life and death—may literally be a matter of life and death, in the later poems. Bleak options, eternal perspectives, cleanly confronted. But though the great thing, the infinite thing, is the insatiable, unconsolable howl of his exposure to what had happened and continued to happen, it is weirdly counterpointed by a strange elation, a savage sort of elation or even joy.

Something of this comes through, to my mind, in many of the poems, in any near-literal translation. These new translations by Agnes Vadas and Lucas Myers succeed in remaining scrupulously close to the original in literal meaning yet are nervously alive as poetry, they release that meaning with raw and immediate simplicity, electrified and electrifying. ❧

Attila József

# Two Poems

Translated by Lucas Myers with Agnes Vadas

## *Mother*

*Anyám*

*My mother sat with a quiet smile*
*for a moment one Sunday as the dusk came down,*
*with her tea mug clasped in both her hands*
*and the shadows gathering around her chair—*

*She'd brought her evening meal back home*
*in a little pan from a wealthy house.*
*I kept thinking as we went to bed*
*that the rich would empty a bigger pan—*

*My mother was small and she died young*
*since that's what washerwomen do,*
*their legs shift under loads of wash,*
*their heads throb at the ironing board—*

*For mountains they have piles of clothes,*
*for the play of clouds beyond the ridge*
*they've got the steam from the laundry vats,*
*for a change of air, the drying room—*

*I see her put the iron on its stand.*
*Capital broke her fragile form*
*which was getting thinner all the time.*
*Proletarians, reflect on that—*

*She was somewhat bent from scrubbing clothes,*
*I couldn't know she was young in her dreams*
*and the apron she wore was always fresh*
*and the postman wished her a pleasant day—*

*1931*

# *Night on the Outskirts*

*Külvárosi éj*

*Our kitchen fills with dusk*
*like an underwater pit.*
*Up through the narrow court*
*light slowly lifts its net.*

*Silence. The scrub brush torpidly*
*seems to get its legs and move.*
*Above, a section of the wall*
*ponders whether it will fall.*

*And on the sky in oily rags*
*night pauses and emits a sigh,*
*crouches at the city's edge,*
*then stirs and, wobbling through the square,*
*sets aflame a piece of moon.*

*The factories stand like ruins.*
*And yet within*
*the deeper darkness*
*the pedestal of silence*
*is being forged.*

*On the windows of the textile mill*
*moonbeams drift in bundles.*
*The moon's soft light is thread*
*across the ribs of looms.*
*Work has stopped till morning*
*but the falling dreams of factory girls*
*weave restlessly*
*on the machines.*

*Beyond,*
*like a vaulted mausoleum:*
*iron, cement works, factories for bolts,*
*echoing family crypts.*
*The workshops guard the secret*
*of somber resurrection*
*and a cat*
*scratches at the fence of boards.*

*The superstitious watchman sees*
*a glimmering light, the will-o'-the-wisp.*
*The dynamoes*
*like insect backs*
*coldly gleam.*

*The whistle of a train.*
*Dampness rummages the gloom*
*in the foliage of a fallen tree*
*and weights the dust along the road.*

*A policeman's on the road*
*and a mumbling worker.*
*Here and there a comrade,*
*clutching leaflets, scurries past,*
*sniffing ahead like a dog,*
*listening behind like a cat.*
*Every streetlamp's his detour.*

*The tavern mouth heaves fetid light,*
*the tavern windows vomit puddles.*
*Inside, a lamp swings, guttering,*
*and while the tavern keeper snores*
*a lone day labourer stands watch.*
*He bares his teeth against the wall.*
*His pain is bubbling up the stairs.*
*He cries. He cheers the revolution.*

*The crackling water hardens*
*like cooling ore.*
*Like a stray dog, the wind is walking,*
*his big tongue lolls and touches water,*
*swallows water.*
*Mattresses of straw like rafts*
*are swimming on the currents of the night.*

*The warehouse is a grounded boat,*
*the foundry is an iron barge,*
*and the iron-smelter dreams*
*of a scarlet infant in the moulds.*

*Everything is damp. Everything is heavy.*
*Mildew maps the countries*
*of misery on the walls.*
*Out in the barren fields*
*rags and bits of paper*
*lie on the ragged grass—*
*how they would like to crawl!*
*They stir but have*
*no power to move...*

*O night, the replica*
*of your damp and clinging wind*
*flitters in the dirty sheets.*
*You're hanging in the sky*
*like ripped cloth on a dress,*
*like pain on life, O night!*
*Night of the poor, be my coal,*
*smoke here on my heart,*
*melt the iron out of me,*
*the standing, unsplit anvil,*
*hammer flashing, clanging—*
*gliding blade for victory,*
*O night!*

*The night is grave, the night is heavy.*
*Brothers, I too will sleep.*
*May suffering not lie upon our souls*
*and on our bodies may no vermin feed.*

*1932*

János Dobszay

# Back to the Future

## The 1994 Elections

The second free elections after the end of communism were won by the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP). It had been formed in 1989 as the successor of *the* Party of the earlier one-party system. This makes Hungary the third of the former "socialist" countries—after Lithuania and Poland—in which, after a break, the left was asked to form the government. In Hungary, voting takes place in two rounds; this time in both the poll was heavier than four years ago (63.15 and 68.91, and 46 and 55.12 per cent, respectively), this too underscoring the weight of the popular will that found expression.

The MSzP obtained 209 mandates out of 386, forty-five more than the MDF led by Prime Minister Antall four years ago, when it formed a coalition with the Christian Democrats (KDNP) and the Smallholders (FKgP).

The MDF, the party leading the outgoing government, obtained 37 seats, and were thus the major losers. The earlier Smallholders Party had split into twelve parts, and all those who had continued in the coalition lost their seats, including two ministers and five undersecretaries. The FKgP proper, which had left the coalition in 1992, obtained 26 seats and are now the second largest opposition party. (Four years ago the united Smallholders had forty-four seats.) The number of Christian Democrats grew by one, but their vote was still below 6 per cent.

The Free Democrats (SzDSz) obtained 18.13 per cent of the vote and are once again the second largest party in the legislature. The other liberal party, the Young Democrats (FIDESZ) did not succeed in increasing their representation albeit they had, for some time—indeed, even six months before the elections—headed the polls. They even lost one of their twenty-one seats. The explanation provided by the pundits was that the electorate was determined to put an end to the conservative–national coalition, and that a FIDESZ moving to the right and promising merely a half about-turn in the campaign, disappointed them.

***János Dobszay***,
*a sociologist and journalist, is on the staff of* Heti Világgazdaság, *an economic weekly, and one of the "Investigative journalism" trustees of the Soros Foundation.*

The electorate did not seem to mind that the MSZP offered a pig in a poke. Those who felt nostalgia for the technocratic reform communist Miklós Németh government—the last of the old system—did not hesitate to vote MSZP, hoping that Németh, now Vice President of the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development in London, might return. Miklós Németh repeatedly stated that he had no such intention but voters may well have thought that the decision was not final, that as a banker supposedly above party politics he could not very well say anything else. Nor did Gyula Horn, the President of the MSzP, clarify the situation. He waited till after the polling stations closed before he publicly stressed that it would not be proper for someone to become Prime Minister of Hungary who had not fought at the hustings.

There is no doubt that nostalgia for the security and sufficiency of the last twenty or thirty years of communism played a part in the sweeping victory of the MSzP, but it is equally certain that there was more to it than that. The mistakes of the MDF-led coalition also largely contributed to the socialist victory.

Tamás Kolosi, the sociologist who heads the Social Research and Informatics Association, wrote: "The cabinet headed by József Antall after May 1990, and by Péter Boross after Antall's death in December 1993, did a good job on many occasions, but the way they went about their business irritated people, who may well have felt humiliated." The government was really stumped by the bitterness felt by people at the sight of what succeeded communism. All they could do was to blame the press and the opposition parties. *Ex post facto*, in the awareness of the election results, there is no reason to doubt that the use of papers sympathetic to the government, and the electronic media on which the government had laid its hands as vehicles for criticism of the press as such, and for anti-communist rhetoric, backfired.

The public interpreted this as a diversion of attention from present problems, hoping that confrontation with past crimes would dwarf present errors.

Public opinion polls signalling growing support for the MSzP were dismissed. The leaders of the coalition parties generally described them as manipulated or unfounded. That in turn was interpreted as the haughtiness or contumely of power. The polls showed that the standing of the MSzP improved right to the end, largely due to the injuries Gyula Horn suffered in a motoring accident.

Last, but not least, the Hungarian electoral system helps to explain the absolute majority of the MSzP. Where proportional representation ruled, they obtained 32.1 per cent. This proved sufficient to win 149 of the 176 one-member constituencies. Thus the MSzP obtained almost three times as many seats as the SzDSz who came second, although their vote was only a third larger. As a result there is even less of a serious counter-weight to the MSzP than there was to the MDF in the previous parliament. What remains to be seen is whether the MSzP will be able to remember what the MDF so often forgot, that parliamentary numbers are not necessarily backed by public support.

Neither pre-election declarations by party leaders nor party programmes justified predicting a coalition between the MSzP and the SzDSz. The approach of the two parties showed considerable differences. The MSzP primarily concentrated on economic crisis management and the SzDSz on the growth of a free market economy. Their programmes were diametrically opposed as regards the role of the head of state.

On election night, the magnitude of the MSzP victory appeared to rule out a coalition. But the MSzP, obviously as an echo of the past, was reluctant to form a one-party government. The MDF, KDNP and Smallholders (the 1990 coalition parties)—and FIDESZ as well—had categorically rejected any idea of governing jointly with the MSzP, and their position did not change. Not so that of the SzDSz who, within 48 hours of the elections, revised their earlier rejection, showing a readiness to form part of a coalition, provided that parliamentary mathematics were not taken as the basis of a distribution of government posts, that the game of government would not reduce them and their party to walk-on parts.

At the MSzP Congress on June 4th an overwhelming majority—431 out of 450—decided in favour of coalition negotiations with the SzDSz and on Gyula Horn as their man for the office of prime minister. The offer of a coalition was accepted by the SzDSz Conference of Delegates. In practice this meant accepting that Gyula Horn, member of the Political Committee of the Communist Party before the changes, would be the Prime Minister.

The SzDSz Conference was nowhere near as supportive of a coalition. Out of 562 delegates 155 favoured the party's continuing in opposition, the point of view of many being that an SzDSz which had been the toughest opposition of the communists of yore could not very well be the ally of the post-communists.

According to the Median Public Opinion and Market Research Institute, 77 per cent of those whom they polled after the elections favoured a multi-party government, the majority of them an MSzP—SzDSz coalition.

Negotiations started with great *élan* early in June but only produced results in three weeks. There were times when they looked like failing. Those in the know say that what was in dispute was not really the apparent irreconcilability of economic programmes—friction there was considerably reduced by László Békesi, the prospective minister of finance known for his liberal views, handling the negotiations on the part of the MSzP—but the allocation of portfolios.

Right from the start the MSzP protested against the smaller partner in the coalition getting a number of key posts, leaving economic matters, where unpopular decisions will have to be taken, in the hands of the socialists. It was leaked, a few days before negotiations were concluded, that MSzP ministers would head eight departments and SzDSz ministers four, the Ministry of International Economic Relations being abolished, and its duties reallocated. Finally, the SzDSz were satisfied with three departments, Interior, Infrastructure and Education, the 9:3 ratio corresponding precisely to the 3:1 ratio in parliamentary seats. In ex-

change the SzDSz was given rights that justified a claim that no substantive cabinet decisions could be taken without their agreement.

Contrary to expectations, the SzDSz was not given a veto on government decisions. There will be "consensus and agreement" instead. Government decisions and regulations will be the fruit of the consensus of the governing parties; as regards appointments, the head of government will come to an agreement with the coalition Deputy Premier (Gábor Kuncze, the SzDSz Minister of the Interior). A Coalition Reconciliation Council was established, with the Prime Minister, the Deputy Premier, the two party presidents, the two chairmen of the parliamentary parties and one other delegate from each party. The Council must be convened at the request of either party.

It was bruited about that there was little disagreement about the forms of future parliamentary collaboration in the course of the coalition negotiations. Between 1990 and 1994, more than half of all amendments to legislation were moved by backbenchers from the government parties. Should this practice continue, then the government's legislative programme could well be fragmented by its own backbenchers. The MSzP and SzDSz therefore agreed that backbenchers could only move or second motions—including amendments to legislation—with the agreement of the chairmen of the parliamentary parties, and that neither would support motions which the other did not agree with.

Agreement on the structure of the government was nowhere near as smooth. The allocation of government departments was much disputed, furthermore the SzDSz favoured minister and parliamentary (political) undersecretary belonging to the same party, the MSzP preferred mixed departments. They finally agreed that, generally, the minister and political undersecretary would belong to the same party. At the time of writing, the proportion is 8:4.

Both parties agreed on the need to reduce government expenditure—but with only modest results. One ministry—International Economic Relations—was abolished and the number of ministers without portfolio was drastically reduced.

Party programmes allowed one to presume that a coalition would be severely handicapped by a differing of opinions on economic questions. Thus the liberals thought the growth of the private sector desirable, the socialists merely reckoned with it. Coalition negotiations appeared to justify those who predicted that the reconciliation of economic ideas would go relatively smoothly. The economic sections of the coalition agreements reflected the views of efficiency-oriented economists in both parties. Blood and sweat were promised rather than the speedy creation of that social security which figured so prominently in the expectations of those who voted for the left.

Looking at things item by item it becomes clear that points which both parties proposed independently had the best chance of making the coalition agreement, and hence the government programme, followed by those suggested by the SzDSz. Except for the parts written by László Békesi, the Minister Designate of

Finance, not much MSzP policy found its way into the economic programme. Typically it contains propositions that contradict each other. Thus it states that economic policy for the next four years will have the twin characteristics of crisis management and the creation of conditions for growth; further on, however, what is urged is not the creation of conditions for growth but growth itself.

The cautious approach to, and the affirmation of, economic growth is accompanied by some empty phrases in the guise of objectives. Thus the government promises an accurate survey of the state of the economy. Nothing is said, however, about when this will be done, or to whom the report will be addressed.

The draft of the government programme was more concrete as regards crisis management. A supplementary budget will be submitted by early October this year and this would essentially act as the 1995 budget. The programme does not tell us much about the much urged budgetary reform; for instance, it does not detail the fields from which the state proposes to retreat. Very likely this is due to the fact that the two parties have not succeeded in agreeing on concrete points.

Different views on what prospects eastern markets hold were apparent in the electoral campaign. The MSzP was even ready to revive loss-making state owned firms to serve that market. The SzDSz did not judge the prospects of eastern markets anywhere near as favourably, indeed, they barely touched on the question in their policy statement. In the coalition negotiations, the SzDSz showed a readiness to accept the MSzP position, and this shows in the government programme which declares the reconquest of lost Central and Eastern European markets to be an important foreign trade objective.

To help reduce state expenditure, the two parties agreed to create a more just social services structure by redistributing resources rather than by making new resources available. The decision to combine child-rearing supports and to reduce the number of years for which they will be available, reflects a shared intention. (At present 75 per cent of the parent's income is paid out until the child reaches the age of two, then for a year after that a monthly benefit support of 800–1,000 forints [$8–10], depending on the number of children, as well as a 5,700 forint supplement, may be applied for.) The millions thus saved will be spent on helping those most in need and on financing creches and kindergardens.

It seems that there is no agreement between the parties on the school system. Earlier the SzDSz emphasised choice, favouring a six form academic secondary school (*gimnázium*), the MSzP on the other hand insists on the eight form general school of the previous decades. The programme hedges its bets on this question, and it is not clear where it proposes to place the move from primary to secondary education.

Nor does it mention the manner in which the President of the Republic is to be elected. All the two parties could agree on was the direct election of mayors. At present this only happens in communities with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants. Passages on the reform of the electoral law also reflect two-party agreement. In

future there will only be one round. The first occasion will be the local government elections which will be held in November 1994.

"I should like to make it quite clear that this is a socialist-liberal and not a soclib coalition. This is not an agreement between two parties with similar policies but a pragmatic political alliance between a socialist party and a party which stands for the values of the middle class centre," Iván Pető, the President of the SzDSz said at the June 26th Conference of Delegates which discussed the 144 page long Coalition Agreement. Once again the MSzP proved more enthusiastic. 428 out of 436 of their delegates voted in favour, but only 497 out of 593 SzDSz delegates did so. A statement with the title "A clean sheet"—designed to dispel doubts—was passed by the SzDSz delegates:

"The Horn–Kuncze government, which unites socialist and middle-class forces, closes an age and opens another. In keeping with the will of the electorate, two parties will govern together which had been most deeply opposed to each other in the past. For decades the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, the predecessor of the Hungarian Socialist Party, was the state party of the dictatorship enjoying the fullness of power. The democratic opposition, the predecessor of the Free Democrats, openly fought the dictatorship for a decade and a half. Moral and political judgments of historical events will be the subject of long discussion as Hungarians digest their past. The place for this, however, will have to be the press and other forums of publicity. Politics will have to deal with the present and future and not the past. That is the subject of the coalition agreement of the two parties, and that will be the subject of the government programme based on it."

Gyula Horn did not deny that the two parties had been in acute confrontation four years earlier. Their cooperation was a joining of forces made necessary by the interests of the country. He emphasized that the respectability of the MSzP was not due to their marriage with the SzDSz, but to voters judging the party to be fit to govern.

The new Parliament constituted itself on June 28th, two days after the agreement was signed, sealed and delivered. The government programme, largely a second edition of the coalition agreement, was tabled a fortnight later. There is little in it about the declared objective—modernization and guiding Hungary into the 21st century, and much more about measures the government would have to take to cope with the economic crisis.

On July 15th, once the programme debate was concluded, the Horn government was sworn in. The average age of ministers, at 49.7 years, makes them four years younger than the first Antall government. Nine MSzP members of the new cabinet were members of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, the predecessor of the Hungarian Socialist Party, of at least twenty years standing, as against the 1990–1994 Antall and later Boross government, which did not include a single minister who had held a party card in the single party state. Nor did any of the SzDSz ministers in the new government. ❧

Gábor Oblath

# Macroeconomic Developments between 1990 and 1994

In 1990, after the first post-communist elections, the prospects for Hungary's economy seemed to be the best in Eastern Europe. However, the economy has performed far below expectations, which is likely to have been one of the reasons for the defeat of the governing coalition, and the victory of the former opposition, at the elections in May 1994. Are the losers right in claiming that the onerous legacy of the communist era, along with the inevitable difficulties of economic transformation and the collapse of the country's eastern trade were the main factors that hindered the recovery of the economy, and, directly or indirectly, led to their downfall? Or, are the winners right in stating that the former government misused its valuable legacy, and it is mainly due to its policy mistakes that the country's macroeconomic position is in many respects worse than in 1990? Although the scope of this article is much too narrow to cover all the issues raised by these questions, it intends to touch upon some of the reasons behind the disappointing performance of the Hungarian economy.

First, let me sketch a brief overview of the macroeconomic and institutional legacy inherited by the first democratic government, and of its major initial policy dilemma: to impose a shock therapy or implement gradual changes. This is followed by a review of some macroeconomic trends since 1990 and the discussion of two controversial elements of macroeconomic policy: foreign economic and fiscal policy. Finally, some implications of growing domestic and foreign imbalances are discussed.[1]

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1 ■ Since this article is meant for a general audience, detailed references are avoided here. The sources of statistical data quoted in the article are publications of the Central Bureau of Statistics and the National Bank of Hungary.

## Economic legacy in 1990

In 1990, the new democratic government inherited a relatively stable and significantly reformed economy, at least compared to others in Eastern Europe. As a result of several reforms implemented in the 1980s, and due to the relative domestic macroeconomic equilibrium in the country, this government, it shall be argued, did not have to start with a "shock therapy". It inherited a large external debt, but also creditworthiness, since the country at all times had met its debt service obligations. The economy was integrated into the international economy to a larger extent than in other countries of the region; moreover, in 1989, Hungary was the first in Eastern Europe to launch a comprehensive trade liberalization programme. Some of the main macroeconomic and institutional components of the legacy should now be reviewed.

The year 1990 followed several years of stagnation or minimal growth in GDP. One of the economic reasons for the demise of the "pre-democratic" regime was that during the 1980s it was no longer able to "deliver" economic growth. Although in 1987, GDP grew by 4 per cent (the highest figure for the decade), this had been preceded by very low growth rates, and was followed by two years of stagnation and by a significant decline (-4.3 per cent) in 1990.

Meanwhile, consumer prices were rising rapidly—at least in terms of Hungarian standards. Until 1987, the consumer price index (CPI) was below or close to 5 per cent. By 1987, however, inflation was already around 8.5 per cent, it jumped to 17 per cent in 1989, and reached 30 per cent in 1990. Further increase in the rate of inflation was a serious danger. But clearly, the most disturbing macroeconomic tensions and dangers were related to the external imbalance of the economy, which had both a stock and a flow component. As for the stock, the huge foreign debt, $21.5 billion, entailed a serious debt service burden. At that time, it was cash flow, that is the significant deterioration of the current account, that was the reason for immediate concern. The more so, since there was a run on the country's international reserves in early 1990: several foreign banks withdrew their deposits from the National Bank of Hungary (NBH). International reserves fell to dangerously low levels and the country was close to a liquidity crisis. It was mainly the assistance of international organizations and Western governments that helped Hungary to maintain liquidity at that time.

At the beginning of the political and economic transformation, open unemployment and fiscal deficits were both negligible. In 1989, the rate of unemployment was 0.2 per cent; in 1990 it increased to 1.6 per cent. The fiscal deficit was very low in both absolute and relative terms; in 1989 its ratio to the GDP was 1.7 per cent; in 1990 the budget was balanced. In the late 1980s and in 1990 there was certainly no clear indication that the state of public finances would soon become one of the major macroeconomic concerns.

The institutional and microeconomic conditions of the Hungarian economy represented the bright side of the legacy: these were much more favourable than in other Eastern European countries in 1990. Major steps had already been taken in liberalizing prices and removing subsidies. The system of taxation had also been changed by 1990: both value-added tax and personal income tax had been introduced in 1988. Progress had been made in establishing the legal framework for private and small entrepreneurship. By separating the functions of the central bank and those of commercial banks, the grounds for a two-tier banking system had been laid in 1987. The liberalization and demonopolization of foreign trade, initiated in early 1989, was also under way.

Thus, the economic legacy of the democratically elected Hungarian government was a mixed one. It inherited an accelerating rate of inflation and substantial external imbalances, with clearly adverse implications for future public finances. On the one hand, its legacy included temporary fiscal stability and the lack of a "monetary overhang" (i. e., savings imposed on households) that characterized other Eastern European economies at the start of the transition. Moreover, in 1990, the institutional framework of, and microeconomic conditions in the Hungarian economy were rather far from the traditional model of central planning. Leaving aside the huge external debt, the legacy of the democratic government was perhaps the best in Eastern Europe.

## Shock therapy or gradual changes?

In 1990, the shock approach to economic transformation was the ruling international paradigm. Representatives of international financial organizations, western governments and banks, both practicioners and academics, all pointed to the boldness of the radical stabilization programme implemented in Poland in January 1990, and urged other East European governments to follow the example. This approach did not receive much support from the Hungarian profession; understandably so. As noted, by that time Hungary had gone further than other East European countries in implementing gradual, even if incomplete, economic reforms. The majority of economists believed that the reforms that had already been started needed to be extended and completed; there seemed to be no clear economic rationale for shock therapy in Hungary.

To be sure, the concept of shock therapy has always been ambiguous when applied to transition economies, since it involves two distinct notions: macroeconomic stabilization and systemic transformation. The main reason why these got mixed up was that in 1990, in Poland, an attempt was made at implementing the two simultaneously. They wished to stop galloping inflation (achieve macroeconomic stability) in combination with a large-scale price liberalization (involving the internal convertibility of the Polish currency) and the radical opening up of the Polish economy. This is not the place to discuss the Polish stabilization

programme of 1990; let us simply note that conditions in Hungary were rather different from those in Poland at that time. While Poland was close to hyperinflation in late 1989, the rate of inflation in Hungary was at 30 per cent in 1990.

It was evident that hyperinflation could not be stopped gradually, but it was by no means clear why and how systemic transformation could be introduced at one stroke. Still, there were some influential Hungarian proponents of the shock approach, both among independent experts of high international reputation (e.g. János Kornai) and political parties (the Alliance of Free Democrats). The supporters of a shock therapy in Hungary had two different objectives in mind. One was related to arresting inflation in one step—this was Kornai's idea. However, the majority in the profession believed that, in contrast to hyperinflation, where a well-prepared and implemented stabilization programme may reduce the rate of inflation to double digit levels, no policy package could have immediately eliminated the 30 per cent inflation in Hungary. The other idea concerned the immediate introduction of currency convertibility, i. e., the instant and general liberalization of imports for the business sector and granting households the opportunity to convert forints into foreign currency.[2] It were mainly the representatives of the liberal parties (in opposition at that time) who supported this policy option.

The Hungarian government rejected these proposals in 1990. It chose a more peaceful path toward transition; no shocks were implemented. The immediate introduction of convertibility would have required a large-scale devaluation of the Hungarian currency at that time; such a step would not have received professional support. The government elected in 1990 chose to continue the process of gradual foreign economic liberalization. In spite of the problems with Hungarian exchange rate policy that became manifest in the following years, avoiding unnecessary shocks still appears to have been the right decision.

## Macroeconomic developments

In the period 1990–93, the Hungarian economy underwent fundamental changes. Although macroeconomic developments are focused on below, it needs to be emphasized at the outset that the transformation of the economy took place at the microeconomic level and in the institutional system of the economy. Since 1990, the private economy has gained a decisive role and the major institutions and laws supporting a market economy have been put in place.

Regarding macroeconomic trends, the most important was that the Hungarian economy sank into deep recession after 1990. I see this as the main

2 ■ Several arguments were presented to support the instant introduction of currency convertibility, but these were not "pure" economic arguments. They mainly referred to the hoped for positive psychological impact of this measure on foreigners and Hungarian citizens.

reason behind other noteworthy macroeconomic changes, in particular, those in the internal and external balance of the economy. While unemployment and the deficit of the public sector increased very rapidly, the trade balance and the current account displayed impressive improvement until late 1992. But, it will be argued that these contrasting developments are two sides of the same coin.

The 4 per cent decline in GDP in 1990 was followed by further falls by 12 per cent, 5 and 2 per cent in the years 1991, 1992 and 1993, respectively. This was accompanied by an increase of the rate of unemployment from 1.6 per cent in 1990 to 7.5 per cent in 1991, and over 12 per cent in 1993. On the positive side, inflation started to decline: after a jump to 35 per cent in 1991, consumer prices increased by 23 and 22.5 per cent in 1992 and 1993, respectively.

The almost total collapse of the country's eastern trade in 1991, leading to an estimated 45 per cent fall in the volume of exports to the former socialist countries, was an unprecedented macroeconomic blow for Hungary, significantly contributing to the recession. This extreme decline in the country's exports to the east was mainly due to exogenous factors, i. e., the dissolution of COMECON, the switch-over to hard currency payments and world market prices among the former socialist countries, as well as the balance-of-payments and liquidity problems of the former dominant trading partner, the Soviet Union (and its successor states). However, several domestic factors contributed to the recession as well. The sharp cuts in consumer and producer subsidies, coupled with the decline in household incomes and the fall in investment expenditures in the business sector, all contributed to the fall in domestic expenditures and output.

## Trade and payments

The recession in the domestic economy was accompanied by a surprisingly favourable external trade and payments performance, as well as a remarkable improvement in the country's foreign debt position. Trade performance was considered to have been surprisingly favourable for two reasons. On the one hand, in spite of the large drop in exports to the East, the significant (roughly 28 per cent) deterioration in the terms of trade with former Eastern partners and despite the fact that energy imports from the former Soviet Union had to be paid for in convertible currencies, the deficit in the trade balance ($1.1 billion) was much smaller than expected in 1991. On the other hand, an impressive geographical reorientation of former Eastern exports towards the West could be observed. The sharp fall in exports to the East was accompanied by a 20 per cent increase in the volume of exports to the developed and developing countries.

These changes in trade flows coincided with even more favourable developments in the external payments position of the country. The current account improved by $1.5 billion in 1990 and showed a surplus in both 1991 and 1992 ($270 and $325 million, respectively). Meanwhile, the inflow of foreign capital

also reached sizable proportions: the stock of foreign investments increased from $570 million in 1990 to $3.4 billion in 1992. As a result of the positive changes in the payments position, the country's net foreign indebtedness fell by roughly $2.7 billion between 1990 and 1992 (from $16 billion to $13.3 billion), while gross debts remained at their former level.

Thus, somewhat surprisingly, it was the external sector of the economy which turned out to be the most successful in the early 1990s. Although several factors contributed to this success, including the improvement in the country's overall image and trade policy environment, as well as the strict monetary policy pursued in this period, I consider the sharp decline in domestic output (itself partly a result of restrictive policies) the most important explanation for the favourable trade and payments performance. Most companies, having lost their domestic (and eastern) markets, had simply no choice but to increase their exports to the West, even if these exports were not profitable. Imports, almost completely liberalized in 1990 and 1991, would also have increased much more than they actually did, had the recession not deepened in these years.

Although it was clear to many observers that the improvement in the external accounts was mainly due to these short-term factors, and without policies aimed at the maintenance of the trade performance exports would start to fall, economic policy makers did not pay much attention to the warning signals. Indeed, the contrary was true. Instead of revising the exchange-rate policy that had already led to a marked real appreciation of the forint in the early 1990s (which resulted in the erosion of competitiveness of Hungarian producers both in the foreign and domestic markets), this policy, motivated by the priority given to controlling inflation, was pursued until 1993.

Trade and payments performance started to deteriorate in the second half of 1992, and has continued to this date. However, before addressing the gloomy developments of 1993, an overview of fiscal developments, in other words, the reverse side of the favourable trade performance is in order.

## Fiscal developments

While in 1990 the fiscal deficit was negligible, it increased to 5 per cent of the GDP in 1991, continued to rise in 1992 (to 7 per cent of the GDP) and remained in this range in 1993. While the relationship between improving external performance and domestic recession is likely to remain a controversial issue, there can be no doubt that economic contraction had a decisive role in the deterioration of the fiscal balance. The public deficit grew in spite of substantial cuts in government expenditures (mainly direct and indirect subsidies). The reasons for growing deficits have to do with the fall in income (i. e., the contraction of the tax base), and the expansion in expenditures related to increasing unemployment. But there was another important factor at work as well: the large size

of foreign debt, and the rapid growth in domestic and public debt, involving huge and increasing government expenditures on servicing these debts.

The effects of public deficits depend on the way they are financed. If financed by central-bank credits, that is by printing money, fiscal deficits normally lead to high and/or increasing inflation. If covered by bonds sold to the public, they result in the build-up of domestic public debt. Depending on the circumstances, they may also cause high real interest rates—the latter is termed the crowding out of private investments by public deficits.

Since 1990, in Hungary, public deficits were mainly financed by the issue of government bonds. The latter were purchased by commercial banks and the general public, leading to a rapid growth in domestic public debt (the ratio of the latter to the GDP increased from 3.5 in 1990 to 25 per cent in 1993). True, a part of this striking growth was due to an increase in government debt beyond current deficits (e.g. the stock of government bonds outstanding grew also as a result of bank consolidation, involving a swap of bad loans of commercial banks for government debt). However, most of the growth in public debt resulted from government deficits after 1990. Between 1990 and 1992, the increase in domestic public debt coincided with a fall in the country's net foreign debt.

What happened in this period may actually be interpreted as a conversion of foreign for domestic public debt. In a nutshell, this means that the huge fiscal burden of servicing the inherited foreign debt was covered in the years 1990-1992 by domestic savings, rather than by additions to foreign debt. The reduction of net foreign debts involved a burden as well; this was also backed by domestic savings. This, however, does not hold for the year 1993, when both domestic and foreign public debt started to expand simultaneously.

Be they domestic or foreign, large (increasing) public debts involve significant (growing) expenditure on interest payments. Indeed, by applying the distinction between the primary (or, non-interest) balance, on the one hand and the interest component of the budget deficit on the other, it turns out that in Hungary the primary deficit was insignificant in the last few years (1 to 1.5 per cent relative to the GDP); interest payments were (and still are) chiefly responsible for the magnitude of the fiscal imbalance.

This observation has direct policy implications. Since there is not much room for improving the balance by cutting primary expenditure, and there is no way to achieve a primary surplus large enough to cover interest payments, the only possibility for getting out of the debt trap is sustained economic growth, whereby taxable income and government revenue could increase, while the relative burden of public debt service (i. e., relative to GDP) could stabilize and eventually even decline.

But how to achieve economic growth? To answer this question, the reasons for, and the consequences of, the deterioration in the external balance have to be addressed.

## Deteriorating external performance

In 1993, after two years of impressive performance, the results in the external sector of the Hungarian economy turned out to be very disappointing. Exports fell by 16 per cent in volume terms, and the current account deteriorated by more than $3.7 billion, to a deficit of $3.4 billion (almost 10 per cent of the GDP), while net foreign debts increased by almost $2 billion, to $14.9 billion. The reason why net indebtedness increased by less than the current account deficit was that the country recorded an unusually large inflow of foreign capital: $2.3 billion. However, $0.8 billion of these flows was related to a single transaction, the privatization of the state-owned telecommunications company.

The deterioration of external trade and payments performance led to controversy over the reasons for the sharp turn in earlier trends. According to one view, shared by the NBH, the extremely poor external performance since late 1992 has its roots in the fiscal deficit: as domestic savings have been insufficient to finance overspending in the government sector, there was an increasing need to use foreign savings, implying growing current account deficits. In this interpretation, the deterioration in the current account should be arrested by a more stringent fiscal policy: cutting government expenditures and increasing taxes.

I do not subscribe to this recommendation. In my view, the association between deficits in the budget and the current account is quite different from the one described above. Since late 1992, the major cause for the deterioration in the trade and payments performance has been the sharp fall in exports; the rise in imports was far less significant. But the deterioration of the trade balance implies a decline in net exports, with negative repercussions on the level of economic activity and income. As the latter is the tax revenue base, it is no wonder that, in a small and open economy, a large increase in the trade deficit, especially if caused by a fall in exports, has a negative effect on the fiscal balance.

This latter interpretation indicates that the major task for economic policy is to provide the conditions and incentives for export growth, which, in turn, is essential for sustainable growth of the overall economy. With export-led growth, the balance-of-payments constraint would become looser, while the fiscal balance could improve in both absolute and relative terms. Some real depreciation of the forint is certainly necessary to improve the competitive position of Hungarian firms in external and domestic markets, but this is insufficient in itself. More is required: that economic policy as a whole, in particular by promoting export-oriented investments, serve this purpose.

It is clear that Hungary's most pressing economic problem, the growing current account deficit, cannot be blamed on the pre-democratic era. Although the first democratic government took sound decisions in avoiding a shock therapy, it was unable to implement a strategy for avoiding the accumulation of domestic and external imbalances. This remains a task for the new government. ❧

Sándor Tar

# Special Treat

(Short story)

The child waited in the dark, narrow frisking room beside the porter's cubicle with Miss Anna, her supervisor. Unbutton your coat, said Miss Anna, it's warm in here; did you hear what I said, she said later in a whisper, people came and went through the doorway, the barrier rose slowly before a blue lorry. Forty-two twenty-seven, shouted the porter standing outside. State Fuel and Building Material Company! Excuse me please, called Miss Anna through the partly open door of the frisking room. There was a man sitting in the porter's cubicle writing something, you couldn't see the table. Hello, cried Miss Anna with her hands pressed against her breast, hello? The porter looked up, looking first in another direction before he spoke, Yes? Couldn't you call them again, asked Miss Anna, they may have forgotten we were coming today. Which workshop did you say, asked the porter and put on his glasses. The whetters, said Miss Anna, her voice faltering with excitement, then cleared her throat, the whetters, she repeated. I told you to unbutton your coat, didn't I? The little girl stared out through the crack in the door, counting the beads of perspiration trickling down her back and tickling her skin with her mouth open. Cosmos Worker's Brigade, cried Miss Anna in the direction of the porter's cubicle, that was the name, Cosmos Brigade! There's no such thing as brigades here now, Miss, said the porter, who were you wanting to speak to, from the whetters? Miss Anna took out a handkerchief and wiped her face with it. I don't rightly know, she said, the people who were the child's patrons until now. Or is there no such thing as patrons either, any more? We used to come once a month, they give the child a special lunch and show her the factory. The porter hummed and hawed, shaking his head, then began to dial. Miss Anna pushed up the sleeve of her fur coat, looked at her watch, you stay here, she said, and stepped out into the foyer. Unbutton your coat, dear, she

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***Sándor Tar***
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called back loudly, it's very hot in there! Through the crack in the door that cut a long strip out of her, she appeared to have only one leg, twenty, sighed Supa, the little girl happily, darkness enclosed her, thick as mud, and she knew she couldn't move, ever again. She closed her eyes. They said you're to wait, said the porter, someone will be along soon, it's just that they're rather busy at the moment. Fine, said Miss Anna, thank you. The gate barrier rose again, something came in. Did you see that, dear? The nice man in there pushes a button, and the barrier rises. She pointed at the porter sitting in his cubicle. Supa stared at him with loathing. I told you to unbutton that damned coat, hissed Miss Anna, but I'm just wasting my breath, aren't I? With quick, strong fingers she began tugging at the buttons of the little girl's coat, have you got a handkerchief, she asked later, wipe your nose! Out in the street a car sounded its horn, Miss Anna looked at her watch again, then went to the porter's cubicle and knocked on the door. Hello? Look, she said, I'm in a rush, I've got to go, I'm very sorry I can't wait to meet the factory representative but I've really got to go! What? said the porter. Would you please just keep an eye on the child until these whetters or whatever you call them get here? The porter looked up in surprise, yawned, waited a moment, what, he asked finally, what do you want me to do? I'd like to leave the child here if I may, I've got to go. Alright, said the porter, it's alright with me, and went on writing in a notebook. Miss Anna looked around. Don't you dare come out of there, you hear me? she told Supa, just do everything like I said. I've got to run. The little girl did not reply, goodbye, said Miss Anna, they'll bring you home when you're done. Then she knocked on the glass front of the porter's cubicle, goodbye, she said, goodbye, she said again to the other porter outside who, glancing after her, saw the large red-haired woman squeezing herself in beside a man into the waiting car.

Would you all please stop fucking around now, said Gémes, the foreman, the porter's called me up for the third time, saying there's some kid down there and to do something about it. Do what? Who's the kid, anyway? Whose kid is it? It isn't mine, said Bread, and put a handful of workpieces into his lap, I'm divorced and the wife got custody. He pulled the mask back over his mouth and pressed the first piece against the whetstone. The machines were aligned along the walls of the narrow, corridor-like workshop, slim, snaking pipes sucked and carried the dust away, rattling bronchitically, the walls, the floor, the windows were black, there was a smell of burning tallow in the air and bits of fluff floating, crates and boxes stood on the floor and whetstones stacked up in piles. Rozika, the foreman persisted, do you know anything about this? The thin dark woman stopped what she was doing, shrugged her shoulders and said, no more than the rest. They're just putting it on. She must be the brigade child, Andrea something, the kid the brigade used to be patrons of, it's all written up in the brigade diary. Mrs Nyári organized it all. Organized what? asked the foreman. The child, of course. What was there to organize about the child? Well, we helped her with

her lessons, and every month one of the brigade members took her out to lunch as a special treat. Lunch? Yes, lunch, asserted Rozika, the foreman stared at her blankly. Me too? he asked. That's right, you too, said Kelemen, the burly, bald whetter, joining in the discussion, and what's more, me too! And me a bachelor! You can imagine the trouble it took me to make her a cup of tea! There was a burst of laughter. But I never even saw the child, said the foreman indignantly, once they were quiet again. Neither did we, said Német, glancing at him from above the rim of his glasses, but we got really fond of her. Didn't we, Bagos. Loved her like she was our own. There, in the diary. You mean it was written up in the brigade diary, helping her with her lessons and the lunches and all, and the child never... Exactly, said Rozika, Mrs Nyári put in something about her every week, you should know, you were the one who authorized it. We took them presents from Santa, which the children recirpocated with a lovely programme. The children did what? Recirpocated our kindness, that's how it was written in the diary. Anyone seen that diary about somewhere, asked the foreman, no, said several all at once, Mrs Nyári took it with her to her next place, she thought she could flash it around but we all know the rest, Rozika added. And how come they brought the kid here today, if they've never done it before? For a while no one answered, there was just the drone of the machine furthest away and the steady shrill whine, Bread did not take part in the discussion, he went on working. And there was the money we collected, Német said later, but I've spent it. What money? For the points. You authorized it, and patronizing meant a lot of points, we came first, sometimes second. And they gave us money for the points. You leave me out of all this, said the foreman irritably, who the hell bothered to check what one signed, when it came to brigade affairs. Well, then... is someone going to take her then, or what are we going to do? Bread, lay off a minute, I can't hear a thing! Bread looked up, I can lay off alright, he said, if I get paid for it.

There was no mad scramble, Bread said his budget did not allow for unexpected expenditures of the kind. Kelemen's a bachelor, I'm not much of a hand at housekeeping, he said, there may be a little brandy or beer at home, if not I'll lay in a supply, depends on how many miles the kid does per gallon. Német asked whether the child was a boy or a girl, he hadn't quite caught the name. A girl? Nothing doing, then. And if it were a boy? Nothing doing then either, the wife's been feeling out of sorts ever since she fell against the philodendron, she won't even cook for him, let alone for a strange kid. Bagos said it was the last thing he needed, he was already paying maintenance for one kid, why should he take on another? And Rozika commutes. The foreman's eyes flicked nervously from one to the other, I can't take her home, he said constrainedly in the end, and everyone knew why, he was divorced and living with a young woman. Let's just carry on as if we didn't know about her, said Bread, just walk right past her when we go past the porter's cubicle, she doesn't know us. How can you say

such a thing, Rozika snapped indignantly, you should be ashamed of yourself! And besides, the porter knows us, said Német, and he'd hand over the little orphan to one of us for certain. Someone suddenly came up with a bright idea, let them take her back then, that would be the best thing, let them take her home! That's right, cried the others, relieved, we've got to tell them brigades and patronizing have been scrapped. Rozika shook her head in disapproval, well I hope you don't mind my saying so but I for one feel ashamed of myself. To do this to a kid! But the foreman had already rushed off to telephone, the others had set the machines going, put on their masks, the drone and the whine grew louder, the specks flying off the whetstones sparkled like fireworks.

The foreman put down the telephone, feeling like he'd been beaten up. The woman who brought the child had left, telling the porter that they would be taking the child home, once they had taken her out to lunch. On top of it all, we don't even know where the child comes from, because she doesn't know herself, he told Rozika discouragedly. A fine state of things, said the woman, poor child. Well, there's only one thing we can do, said the foreman later, I'll just have to call up and find out the addresses of all the institutions and which of them's missing a little girl called Andrea something. What does she look like, asked Rozika, I didn't see her over the phone, snapped the foreman irritably, all I know is what the porter told me, she's about ten years old and won't take off her coat, she's pouring with sweat and when you ask her what her name is all she'll say is Supa. Otherwise she's a sweet little thing, he added wryly. I'll take her home, said Rozika, but I can only bring her back in the morning, and I'll bring her here. After all, we can't just... out of all these people, there's not one who'll... Alright, said the foreman gruffly, I'll take her home! But where shall I take her afterwards? Would you tell me that? We'll leave a message with the porter, said Rozika, if anyone should come looking for her... Gémes sighed and said, go and take a look at the child, I'll be along in a minute.

Elvira! Virácska! Gémes was calling her name before he had shut the door behind him, pushing the little girl ahead of him. A thick-lipped woman with too much make-up on appeared from somewhere within the depths of the flat, wearing a lacy night-gown of sorts, coming up with lazy steps, then stopped, who's that, she asked. Gémes began to explain, took off his coat, kissed the woman, laughed confusedly, we'll bear it somehow, just this once, he said, someone will be coming to fetch her soon, darling, don't pull that nice sulky face at me, come on, what shall we do. The woman did not say anything, she stared at the child as though she were a plant or something, stared at this pale, skinny, sweating, unkempt little figure whose eyes were burning with hatred. What's your name, dear, she asked later, but the child did not reply. Her name is Andrea, Gémes finally said instead of her, and the little girl glanced at him contemptuously. Supa, she cried in a harsh, bitter voice. Alright, alright, said Elvira, there's no need to jump down my throat. If it's Supa you prefer, Supa it will be.

Were you planning on having her eat with us, she asked, turning to the man, or what? There's room enough, said Gémes, or would you rather not? It's all the same to me, said the woman, just get her unwrapped somehow, or she'll be roasted alive before our eyes, I don't know, I don't want to touch her. We're having soy bean stew for lunch, and a mixed salad. Marvellous, enthused Gémes, marvellous!

Nuisance, thought Supa, then something else came into her head, nonsense. Nonsense nuisance. They told her to take off her coat and wash her hands. She stood in a room. It was a pity she had lost count, another drop of perspiration was running down her back, melting away a little lower down this time, somewhere around her waist, if she moves there won't be another. She pushed her right foot slowly forward, it's nice and warm in here, she felt the tiny beads forming on her forehead and under her lip, it's nice here. She did not hear what they were saying, she felt several drops trickling down her back all at once, Gémes wanted to take off her coat from behind, he spoiled everything! And the woman, with finger and thumb, from the front, AND HER FACE WITH A RAG! She bit her hand.

Alright, get the little beast out of here, said Elvira, pressing a paper handkerchief to her hand. I can't stand the sight of her! She's not a child, she's an animal! Darling, did she bite you very hard? Show me! Gémes put his arm around the woman's shoulder but she shrugged it off, and repeated, syllable by syllable, get-her-out-of-here! Go on, get going! Then she went into one of the rooms, the man followed her, look, there's nowhere to take her, what do you want me to do with her? Where do you want me to put her? Out in the street or down the drain, came from somewhere within the room, it's all the same to me, I just don't want to lay my eyes on her again. Colonial style furniture in the spacious living-room, a fireplace with green tiles around it, armchairs, fur rugs, an enormous mirror, soft carpets, a bunch of flowers, peace and quiet, and now in the middle of it all there stands this little monster with her dark stare and grubby face in her filthy soiled coat, not saying anything, not moving. For a moment Gémes could not believe his own eyes, he hoped he was only dreaming. See what you've done, he asked the child, but she just stared at him with wild anger in her eyes. Alright, said Gémes, we're going to get in the car and we're going to drive until we find this institution of yours. Come on, get going, out! The child did not move, just stared at him, Gémes made to touch her, and at last she spoke, you creep. And smiled faintly, as though she were glad she had thought of something. Then she moved towards the door of her own accord.

Gémes stopped the car when, on a sudden impulse, Supa leaned forward and snapped off the sun-shield. Until then she had squirmed restlessly, struck the window once or twice with her fist, stood up. Damn and blast you, he said, turning round to face her, what the hell have you done now? What the bloody hell's the matter with you? Hey? The child's face was still perspiring, though the win-

dow was down in front. Have you gone out of your tiny mind? Just you wait, I'll chuck you out of here by the scruff of your neck, like a cat, or else hand you over to a policeman! Silly little nit. The child banged the sunshield down on the floor of the car, I'm peeing, she retorted at last. You doing what...? It took a while to register but Gémes finally realized that he had to jump out of the car, drag the kid out, make for the nearest pub and shove her in the loo. Dear God, he grumbled to himself, wiped his brow, took a look around. It was an ordinary pub, a couple of tables, noisy, smoke-filled, ill-smelling. At one of the back tables sat Kelemen and Német, yes, no mistake! He waved at them but they did not notice him, he moved aside so they'd have a better view of him, at last! Kelemen raised his bottle of beer in greeting, Gémes grinned and waved to him. We're not having anything, he said when they came over, we're well away, aren't we, pal? You said it, said Német, you said it. Listen, said Gémes, you've got to help me out somehow. You know I took that little girl home... That was real kind of you, said Német, and we were saying, among ourselves you know, that the foreman, well, it just goes to show you... That's not the problem, complained Gémes, the problem is that the child bit my wife, I'd take her back but I just can't cope with her alone. She bit her, did she, asked Kelemen, showing interest and leaning against Német, and which part of your dearest did she... Silly bugger, said Német, and where are you going to go now? He hiccupped. I'm trying to find out where she belongs, I'd have taken her back already but I can't because... And where are they now, I mean the kid, asked Kelemen, I expect they're taking a walk while you take a nip... She's in the toilet, replied Gémes nervously, and taking her time, he thought. Which one? Oh, I don't know... this one, I think. That's the men's, said Német, and someone's got to go in and fetch them? Yes, agreed Gémes, and I need someone to keep an eye on her while I go find that orphanage or home or whatever... You know, you're a good man, said Kelemen, just don't spread it around, I live nearby, if I remember right, which way was it, Német? Out this way and then how was it, anyway, they can stop over at my place while you go... wherever... They argued for a little while longer until Kelemen finally understood that Elvirácska hadn't come, only the little orphan was here, and she had gone for a pee, had been gone for a good half hour, her kidneys must be something special, shouldn't have given her so much beer to drink, at that age they don't need assistance to drop off to sleep, well, fetch the girl then, Német, she'll be alright with me, we'll rub along somehow, she'll hand me the beer and do the wash and the whitewash and the washing up. I've got a shopping bag on me, you know, he said later, when Német had dragged Supa out of the toilet, and Gémes got the message and ordered five bottles of beer to put in it. The child might fancy a drop, said Kelemen, while her daddy's away. He isn't her daddy? Well then, who is this girl? Oh! Yes, of course! Come along then girl, or d'you want a snifter before we go to make up for all the fluid you just lost, where did all that pee come from, how d'you do it? Just when and if you

fancy, and... Német joined them up, you take hold of your daddy here, here's his hand, just don't let go of it or else he'll fall and all the bottles will be broken, there now... The child looked up at Kelemen with stern eyes and gripped his hand firmly. Gémes watched them from the car, he knew where Kelemen lived, he was the one who had been with him when he'd been taken home in an ambulance. He watched them stagger along and saw that the child kept such a tight hold on the old man's hand that his shoulder was bowed. I don't envy him, thought Gémes, and started the car.

Kelemen lived in the building that housed the pub but in the back of it, in a lean-to, one room, a kitchen and a tiny entrance-hall and that was it, there was a shed of sorts rotting to pieces a little way off, a couple of trees, it was dark, the light of the street lamps did not reach this far. Kelemen fumbled with the door for a long time before they were finally able to get in and did not stop speaking all the while. He sometimes called Supa Miss, and sometimes Madam, here we are, then, he said, when he succeeded in opening the door, I'll have the light on in a minute, this way. An unmade bed with a rumpled quilt, a pillow, no sheets, two tables, a single chair. A piece of coloured material hung from the top of the window, in front of it stood an old-fashioned bench and under it an array of empty bottles. It was warm in the flat, so warm that even Kelemen noticed it, it's warm in here, he said, suddenly breaking off the story he was telling, but there's nothing we can do about it, he patted the radiator, the heat comes from the pub, he explained, and it can only be turned off from there, what does it matter. Well, it would be better if it was beer coming through this thick pipe, but it's no use telling them that. Sit down, your daddy will be coming to fetch you soon, he's a good man, I remember... Kelemen suddenly stopped, no, he said after a while, I don't remember anymore. He opened a bottle of beer with the cap of another and drank.

Supa stood where she had let go of the burly man's hand, it was nice and warm in here, just like in the other place, clothes strewn about everywhere, Miss Anna will give her a beating, the smell, the old man took off his shirt and, and, he was sweating all over! She too could feel the warm wetness on her back, waited for the moment when the first one would start trickling down, but HE had oceans of them! On his back, on his chest, on his brow, and he drank, and told stories, and now, now, it had started! Supa breathed a sigh of relief, then unbuttoned her coat without taking her eyes off the old man for a minute, watched this beautiful, great body bathed in beads of perspiration, all pearls, then slowly lowered the coat to the floor, come on, she heard, have a drop of beer! Back in the old days, in the foreign legion, this was the way your uncle Német and I tore the snakes into ribbons, like an expander, and the Arabs went out of their minds 'cos it was a sacred snake or something... Supa went up close to him, put her hand on Kelemen and laughed, the old man went on talking, gesticulating, later he showed her some kind of dance, at times the child was

gasping for breath she was laughing so hard, then suddenly found herself telling stories in turn, about her father, who was a giant and came and went among them with a whip, and her mother, who tried on her father's tie and hung like that and laughed until they took her down, and she was still laughing when they were trying to find her shoe because it had fallen off her foot, and someone found it on the window-sill, and about Miss Anna too, who always takes someone out for lunch to some factory and leaves them there, and they all know she's on the job meanwhile, but it's better if she isn't there, all the same. Supa talked and talked, the words rushing out, sometimes swallowing hard, the old man, blinking stupidly, laughed at everything she said, and the girl too laughed at it all, sipped beer, lit matches, then suddenly fell silent. What's up, asked the old man. I peed in my pants, said the child happily, upon which Kelemen burst out laughing again, why, that's nothing, never you mind, he said in a while, gasping for breath, so did I! So did I! There... stop laughing now, it's a serious matter, this... He tried to get up from the puddle but never quite made it, he kept falling back, waved his hand sadly, and went on laughing, Supa too, they couldn't stop.

When Gémes opened the door on them around midnight, Kelemen was snoring on the bed, and the little girl was sitting on the bench in a long green dressing-gown and smoking; beside her on the floor lay an empty beer-bottle and a comb. She stood up slowly. She knew by then she would never leave here. ❧

*Translated by Eszter Molnár*

György Jovánovics

# An Ágnes Nemes Nagy Poem in Stone and Bronze

After a meeting of the Széchenyi Academy, Balázs Lengyel approached me and asked me to help the family find a simple headstone for the grave of Ágnes Nemes Nagy, who passed away two years ago. He took me to the Farkasrét cemetery and showed me her grave and the grave of the painter Erzsébet Vaszkó nearby which he had picked as a model. This truly is the most beautiful grave in the cemetery, a huge, rounded, unhewn stone with an inscription in the centre in tiny, gilt letters:

†
VASZKÓ ERZSÉBET
FESTŐMŰVÉSZ
1902–1986

I warned Balázs Lengyel that anything this fine would be almost impossible to match.

The unusual commission—not to carve a headstone for Ágnes Nemes Nagy, but to find a beautiful stone—was not withdrawn. Balázs Lengyel accepted that he had no choice but to rely on me, the task is not as simple as it seems. It is not easy to find the right stone.

We agreed that there would be nothing on the stone but the name, without the date of birth and death, and if possible, some lines from a poem. I asked him to pick out a number of texts that he thought suitable, and one or two of Ágnes Nemes Nagy's autograph signatures, and to send me photocopies of the originals.

I began to study Ágnes Nemes Nagy's handwriting. Fascinated by calligraphy, I am passionately interested in man-made marks of any kind. That the poet's handwriting was not clearly legible did not bother me

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***György Jovánovics**'s sculptures have been shown in many international exhibitions. One now stands in a square in Seoul, South Korea. The 1956 Memorial in Lot 301 of the Budapest Municipal Cemetery is his work.*

at all. In fact this was the trait of hers I found the most appealing. Let her writing be read, let it be deciphered in the cemetery by no more than the few who had chosen to do so in her own lifetime. But I had trouble with the signature. I thought that at least that should be clearly legible. The NEMES and the NAGY were all right, but the A of the Ágnes was a very odd, unusual mark. The opening stroke—in effect not forming part of the letter and inconsistent with its graphical character—swoops down from high and is much larger than the left-hand stem of the letter; the resulting A looks more like an H or a K, and the name concludes with a not easily identifiable flourish. (Elsewhere this A was written regularly and symmetrically).

I knew it would be very difficult to find a suitable "stone" because of the text. The text is two-dimensional, the stone rounded. How to resolve this contradiction? Some of the lines appeared right. I sketched the outlines of an imagined stone, wrote Ágnes Nemes Nagy's name in the centre, and below it, a little to the right, the poem "Above the Object". (The original title of the poem was "Resurrection", this she crossed out and wrote the new title above it.)

*For there is light above every object.*
*Like polar circles, the shining trees are decked.*
*Comes one by one a glowing skybound regiment,*
*in caps of light, the ninety-two elements,*
*bearing on each brow the image of each mode—*
*I believe in the resurrection of the body.*

(*Translated by Hugh Maxton*)

It would be difficult to find a more beautiful epitaph. But could a stone be found to fit it? (And it would be wonderful if I could engrave a number.) Most important of all, this wasn't a passage taken from a poem, but a complete poem. This made it immensely preferable—there are a great many lines from poems engraved upon headstones, but I have never yet come upon a complete poem. I thought that the relatively long text, the complete poem, would draw passers-by to notice that this is a poet's grave, the text of her own poem. (I don't know why, but I feel that the title of a poem should not be marked on a headstone.)

I did not have the time, that summer, to travel round the country, and visit all the quarries. A young restorer-sculptor student colleague of mine promised to go anywhere and everywhere I sent him. He knew what I was looking for; if he came upon anything that seemed suitable, he'd take a photograph, notify me of the location; there would be nothing for me to do until then. Apparently he did find a stone, but then he disappeared, left the country that summer, and I was pressed for time, bound by my promise to Balázs Lengyel. I travelled up to Budapest and called someone I know who had turned contractor, bought up several quarries

and a great deal of material, and knew the country's stones inside out. He had a huge store-house in Pécs near the best quarries, for example. I would surely find what I was looking for—if not there, then elsewhere. So we'd be on the road again, like not so long ago. I had a long journey ahead of me after all.

Wavelengths can sometimes harmonize with nature in the most impossible situations. As when I was rashly planning a complicated sculpture for which I needed a huge rustic block of stone of forty tons or so, a stone, in other words, beyond reach, unattainable, which we found on our first trip, in the first quarry, the moment we arrived. It had been blasted out of the rock wall minutes before our arrival, together with the enormous bones of a prehistoric animal, an unknown species of a hundred thousand years ago that had for some mysterious reason died in a herd. The smell of the explosive still lingered in the air. This chunk of stone later became famous, it even came up for discussion in the Italian Parliament. A year later, it was standing in a cemetery in Budapest.[1] President Cossiga of Italy was on the way to the cemetery, when a sniffer dog scented explosive in one of the deep bore-holes of the stone. An attempt on the President's life was suspected. The police car that came to fetch me kept its siren going full blast.

I have been looking for another stone—for the grave of a painter friend—for fourteen years now, so far in vain. What is going to happen now? Before we left, my contractor friend suddenly remembered that he had a small stock of stone here in the stoneworks at Solymár, not far from my studio. Stones not needed by sculptors and landscape gardeners are broken up and turned into crushed gravel, gritstone, sandstone powder.

Ten minutes later I had the stone. It was there, ready, the exact shape and size, as if made to order. It lay silently beneath several hundred tons of irregular blocks piled one on top of the other, practically inaccessible. The battle of stone and text could begin.

I bid my friend a hasty farewell, went to the Marxim café and spread out the photocopies of the autograph poems and my drafts on the table. I had sketched the shape and marked in the proportions of my stone in the quarry. On this drawing I now wrote the complete text of the poem "I Carried Statues" (without the title, of course) in such a way as to make perceptible the slope of the handwriting and the perspective decrease of the lines. I put Ágnes Nemes Nagy's name at the bottom.

Somehow or other I had not thought of this poem before. I would not have believed, would not have dared to imagine, that a stone of an ideal shape for this very text could exist somewhere.

1 ■ As part of a memorial to the victims of the reprisals which followed the 1956 Revolution.

I examined the designed meaning and the undesigned shape—the poem and the stone. I had seen very little of the latter. I had had to climb down to it, down and among huge chunks of rock. It was at once rough and yet shaped: the bottom and the sides were untouched, in their natural condition (in situ), its upper surface cut, flattened, even. In effect it was a cast-off remnant, a "border-stone". The result of the last useful cut made on a huge travertine piece, to ensure a healthy block. Its shape was perfect, the length and width matching those of a standard gravestone. If it had been ten centimetres longer or shorter in any direction, it would be unusable. Only its vertical size can be diminished, depending on how deep it is to be sunk into the ground. But its prow shall float freely above the surface. That is how it must be positioned. It is like a stone ship, pitched and tossed by the waves. But it also brings to mind ancient faces carved of stone or primitive female idols. All in all, I am quite sure that Ágnes Nemes Nagy had a liking for every kind of ancient, unmarked sculpture, and that the island in her poem is Easter Island. The poem is a monument to him who raises monuments. It is numinous, particularly in the Mediterrenean way. After reading it, I found I had retained four planes or interpretations of meaning.

I Carried Statues
*Szobrokat vittem*

*On board ship carried statues,*
*huge faces unrecognized.*
*On board ship carried statues*
*to stand on the island.*
*Between nose and ears*
*perfect right angles,*
*otherwise blank.*
*On board ship carried statues*
*and so I sank.*
(*Translated by Hugh Maxton*)

1. I carried statues on board (Lines 1 and 8)
but I sank (Line 9)
(Meaningful life and accidental or tragic death)

2. I carried statues on board (Line 3)
to the island where they should stand (Line 4)
but I sank (Line 9)
(The intention is rather curious. The island is obviously uninhabited.)

3. I carried statues on board (Line 3)
to the island where they should stand (Line 4)
vast faces unnamed (these are statues) (Line 2)
Between nose and ear (Line 5)
there were ninety degrees, (Line 6)
with no other sign on them (detail) (Line 7)
but I sank (Line 9)

(Information about the statues—for example, that they are without features,—is given; then, for the initiated, a cultural specific is provided, a single abstract element: the Camper angle, used by doctors and sculptor-anatomists only. Incidentally, the description here is inexact, only one side of the angle is given, the second is missing. What were the ninety degrees measured against? And, strange coincidence—the number ninety reappears in the second chosen poem.)

4. Lastly, the rhythmically definitive communicative form, the poem itself, unalterable. Repeating, transposing, discarding, undulating. Surging up and down, up and down. One line rising, the next falling, the one exception coming after the fifth line, where the sixth line remains on the crest before the seventh once more descends, in accordance with the pattern determined by the uneven number of lines.

To me it sounded as though the surging began on the high seas, the first "I carried statues" being the highest in pitch and the third (Line 8) the lowest, the waves moving shorewards. The ship sank near the shore.

Early in the morning I drove out to the stoneworks, the watchman recognized me, it was Saturday. In my mind's eye I projected the lines onto the stone and found they fitted perfectly. The contours of the stone and the character of its surface were both adapted to the image of the text. The next morning I took Balázs with me. I was afraid that he had had a different sort of stone in mind, and that he might ascribe my choice of poem to the self-centredness of a sculptor. I made no secret of the fact that the work would give me greater pleasure if the inscription the stone would bear were to personify meaningful life as a man handling, carrying statues before it presented the metaphor of death (the sinking into the sea).

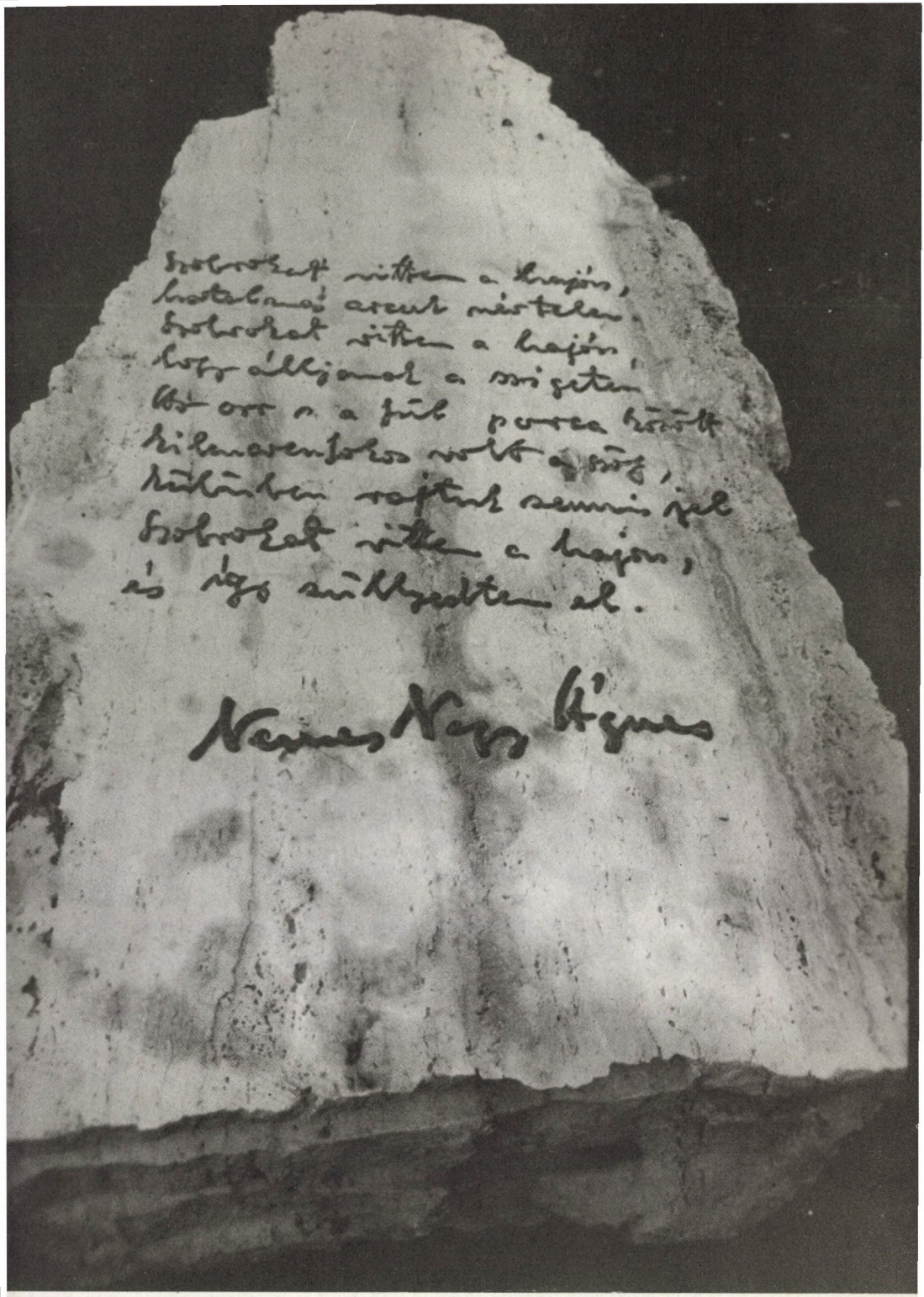
Balázs understood and accepted my plan, and added that he was glad the line "I believe in the resurrection of the body" would not appear on the headstone after all. " We had an argument with Ágnes about it," he told me. "Why do you say you believe in the resurrection of the body when the doubt exists within all of us ?" Not long after, we received a very curious, surprising answer to this question from Ágnes herself, through a poem that had lain in hiding for years. But more of this later.

Then I learned that my supposition concerning Easter Island was correct and that the model for the poem (this is not obvious from the text) was the English poet Sidney Keyes, who was born the same year as Ágnes and was killed at Tobruk in 1944 in the African campaign. (There is another poem, entitled "The Streetcar", also commemorating his death.)

The problem of the signature was likewise solved. Balázs brought me a copy where the original flow of the handwriting was retained, yet every letter was legible. The periodical *Jelenkor* published a facsimile of the poem entitled "Winter in Rome", complete with the poet's signature, in June 1983, on Sándor Weöres's 70th birthday. I made an exact enlargement of this signature. This is important.

I liberated my stone and had it put in a place where I could work on it. A very dependable colleague and I could have finished the work together in three or four days. But it turned out to be impossible to carve this writing into the surface of the stone. Because of the texture of the material, many of the letters would simply disappear. There was nothing else to do but to mould the text in some positive material, then cast it in bronze. I realized that engraving had been a conventional idea from the outset. A clear, positive representation is better suited to the natural surface of the stone, the image of the inscription. Ink and black-lead, though thin and fine, are still a layer, positive, not negative, compared to the plane of the paper. Slow work requiring the patience of Sisyphus awaited us. (There were four of us by then.) The poem was made up of 84 separate units. Every full stop, every dot and dash, every otherwise identical letter was different, as in Ágnes Nemes Nagy's handwriting. In the final version, two hundred tiny pegs fitted into the same number of bore-holes held the bronze text in position. My fingerprints are visible on every letter.

For the modelling of the poem I had to be familiar with the physical features of the handwriting, magnified ten times. It was necessary to interpret the texture, the thread of the poet's lines thus enlarged and brought out in relief, especially in the case of the letters "a", "e" and "i" shrunk into a single, identical dot in the original. Balázs Lengyel brought me the original, treasured, manuscript. This piece of paper, 155 by 116 millimetres, ruled with small squares and torn out of a poor quality spiral notebook, had turned brown at the edges. As brittle as an autumn leaf, and about the same size. It was laid on an empty A4 sheet of paper, slipped inside a transparent plastic folder. The plastic protected the brittle scrap of notepaper from handling. While Balázs talked to my young colleague, I—driven by a curiosity that was barbaric, but very carefully nevertheless—drew the piece of paper out of the folder, held it in the hollow of my hand, then instinctively turned it over. I did not at first understand what had happened, for I seemed to see the same as overleaf, I did not understand why there should be a Roman numeral two after the title "Szobrok", why the flow had changed, why the line that had descended should now rise. Then I began to



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*An Ágnes Nemes Nagy Poem in Stone and Bronze*

read, and it was only then that I realized that this was a different poem. There was dead silence in the studio, Balázs had noticed my astonishment, followed my gaze, was completely taken aback. He too was seeing the poem for the first time! He had never turned the piece of paper over. He copied the ten lines down for himself excitedly. Together we deciphered the parts not clearly legible. Here was resurrection after all! Ágnes Nemes Nagy could not bear the thought that the ship had sunk, was lost together with the statues. So she resurrected, or at least raised them from the depths. And the mariner—almost drowned, gasping still —pulls the battered bodies ashore and heals them on the Island. It appeared that I was justified in thinking that the shipwreck occured inshore, near the island! What I like best about it is that the mariner does not pause to gather his strength but hastens immediately to the rescue of the statues, as though they were living beings.

As the poem is not included in her volume of collected poems, selected by the poet herself, and Balázs Lengyel does not recall it appearing in print elsewhere, the obvious question is whether Ágnes Nemes Nagy herself forgot to turn the paper over after a time?

Here is the second poem:

Statues II
*Szobrok*

*You I save from under water,*
*Life without you gives no quarter.*
*And from tideline's clutch I haul*
*Bodies broken in their full.*
*In the sand I dig a bed*
*For every saved and lolling head,*
*Sprinkle oil with each day gone*
*On lovely faces of smashed stone.*
*Rain moistens, soaks you silently*
*Of whom not one will any see.*
*(Translated by Hugh Maxton)*

Balázs Lengyel

# Ágnes Nemes Nagy's America

The poet Ágnes Nemes Nagy travelled to America in the autumn of 1979 on the invitation of the International Writing Program of the University of Iowa. She kept there a diary for four months. Her notes start with the description of her panic at flying to America. Where does this "terrible fear" come from in 1979, one may ask. Even then, let alone now, hopping over to America, to the States took less time than travelling from Budapest to Paris by train. True, but in our life together, as a married couple, there was fear and anxiety enough. For example, our experience by the river Drava in 1944 with the partisans, then—with the situation reversed—when we were hiding people who were persecuted, later air-raids, and rocket barrages when I was a soldier in Budapest, or again later, together, when I was a deserter there, in the besieged, devastated city, and then a political prisoner, after 1956. Living together as husband and wife in the darkest of dictatorships, then, after the divorce, remaining as intellectual companions to the end. It could well be that in the course of these eventful times our nervous systems changed bit by bit. We lived in the Soviet block from 1945 until 1989, and when the Iron Curtain closed on us in 1948, we were not allowed to travel abroad for thirteen years, because we weren't members of the party. Later, in the "soft dictatorship", travel was possible after submitting applications and lobbying in high places. In order to be able to fly to the States in 1979 as writers—and what's more, together—it was not enough to get an invitation from the University of Iowa's Writing Program, we had to get the approval of the Hungarian authorities. For some years approval had been given for writers on the Program, following negotiations. Several friends of ours had received it, lately even married couples.

It was not that hard to get the necessary permits in 1979. The real problem for us was the strangeness of American life. The huge dis-

***Balázs Lengyel,***
*an essayist and critic, was the editor of* Újhold, *a literary biannual. He was this journal's regular poetry reviewer between 1981–1990.*

tances, the absence of European ways. The struggle with the language. We knew good old Europe, but you have to be young to travel to a new continent.

Yet after Paul Engle and his wife, Hualing Nieh, the Director of the Writing Program, had visited us on several occasions in Hungary, they managed to convince us by their generous kindness to undertake the journey. We continued to feel this kindness—like a little sun—during our stay in Iowa. However, Ágnes's unstable health—as it appears in the diary—and her struggle with the language were permanent problems. Ágnes was familiar mainly with things French and German, including the literature, although she had her links with classical and especially modern English poetry as well. We knew of T. S. Eliot and the generation following immediately after the war—even though we had been shut off from Western literature during the war. Ágnes even wrote two poems (*Tram* and *To a Poet*) about Sidney Keyes, for instance. (The beginning of the latter poem is typical: "My contemporary. He died, I did not. / He was killed at Tobruk, poor fellow.") Strangely enough, it was no problem talking about literature in English, but everyday conversation, the weather and the like, was a torment.

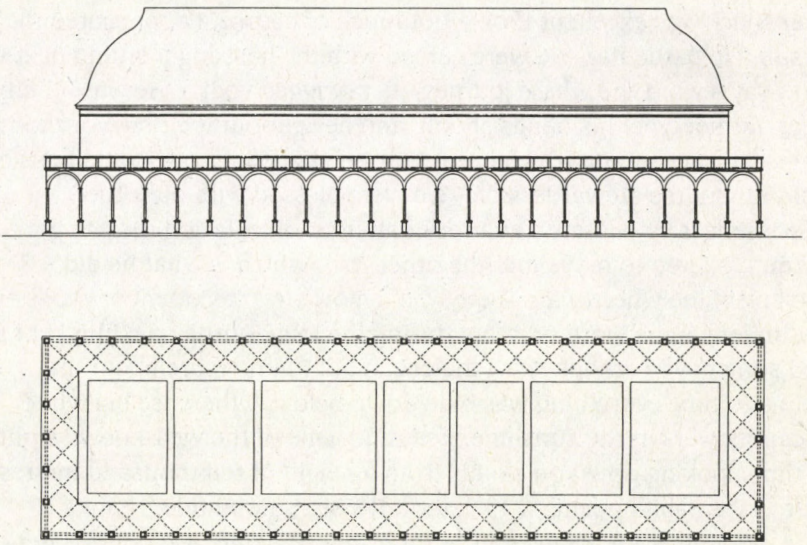
Thus, we had good reason to feel anxiety over the unknown. But Paul Engle and Hualing Nieh not only invited us, they held out promises that the International Writing Program would publish a volume of Ágnes's poetry in English, in a translation by the American poet Bruce Berlind. We had to accept the invitation, although we were quite unwilling, as we had numerous other literary obligations, and for the reasons I have mentioned before. As the diary describes at length, just before our return to Hungary, at the last moment, when the participants of the Program had already scattered in all directions, the first collection of Ágnes's poems in translation, *Selected Poems,* appeared, soon followed by other publications abroad.

In addition to this volume, Iowa also gave us the Diary, which covered life and the experiences of the American journey. Ágnes not only jotted down notes for her own use—that was her habit back home too, in a small notebook that contained phone numbers—she wrote a continuous account day after day, a record of events, observations, ideas, and trains of thought, while impressions were still fresh, in order to work them up later. She also wrote two poems during the trip, *Sequoia Forest* and *American Station,* the latter written in the Grand Canyon.

Ágnes always had an extremely strong sense of reality, capable of recognitions that were like discoveries. Not in vain did she write in one of her poems: "I like matter", she liked massive forms, the sensuousness of things, but she also had a vision of the hidden correspondences of the intellect inherent in things. Their systems of ideas, their philosophy. The image in what the eye sees. If anybody wants to know what a randomly chosen slice of America is like at a brief glance, Ágnes' sensitivity will give them a lively image. They can get more than just a chance moment of America. The participants of the Writing Program were

writers of various countries or nations, with two or three from each. Many South Americans, Asians, Africans, Arabs, Black-Americans, and quite a few Europeans, mainly from what was the Soviet bloc. Ágnes wrote about all the oddities and the fiery debates that prove that what is taken for granted by some can be a painful, basic problem for others. For example, in what language should writers write, in their new national language, or their old traditional or tribal language, perhaps in a dialect spoken by several million, but which one? How does a Chinese intellectual live, if he lives in communist China, in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, or the U.S.? What is the world of a Filipino writer like, who lived under an oppressive regime, imprisoned for a long time, just like many Hungarian writers in the Soviet bloc? How is it that when a Pole, a Bulgarian, a Hungarian, a Czech, a Croat, a Greek, or a German walks in an American street, the locals know for sure that they are European? What does it mean that over there we are not Hungarians or whatever, but first and foremost Europeans? What is the origin of this mysterious attitude, these reflexes? Why is it that we feel solidarity for each other over there? Why did Ágnes carry a Hungarian matchbox in her handbag for four months, and bring it back to Hungary at the end?

She intended these notes for herself and not for publication. She wanted to work on them, but other things she did and then her illness made her forget. I found her diary notes together with a huge amount of manuscripts, in three different boxes, in three copy-books of various colours and sizes. Lucky that I managed to find each of them. All I had to do then was have them typed. ❧



*Nyék, Royal Hunting Lodge, the 2nd Palace or Reception Court. Built by Wladislaw II very likely for his wedding in 1502. Destroyed down to its foundations. Very likely the model for the Prague Belvedere, construction of which started in the late 1530s.*

Ágnes Nemes Nagy

# American Diary

(Excerpts)

*September 10, 1979*

I have felt attacks of anxiety quite a few times in my life—there was always good cause—but I rarely felt quite so panic-stricken as I did before our trip to America. Nevertheless, after weeks and months of sweating terror, we went to the airport, got on the Malév plane (before that I called Panka from the departure lounge as she had asked me to), and flew to Frankfurt. There we switched to a PanAm jumbo. A huge plane, so big you feel you're on a pleasure steamer. There is one set of three seats, then four seats, then another three seats in each row, though it's not as comfortable as it's made out to be. Still, you can walk between the rows and go to the bar where they serve soft drinks free. They keep on stuffing you with delicious food (actually the Malév morning snack was excellent too), a hot lunch of course. I appreciated the prawn salad in particular. We were cursed with the passenger sitting next to us: he didn't say a word the whole journey, just swigged vodka. He was a hefty American farmer type, his hands shook, and he spat out the odd word to the air hostess in such an amazing accent that I reckoned no one could possibly understand. But the stewardess did. We were blessed with our other fellow-passenger who, after a quarter of an hour of irritation (Balázs got a seat behind me), offered to move into the other row. Which is what he did, and then slept the whole way. There was a movie too, a Colombo whodunit; I didn't understand a word of it, but during the long journey the film kept me amused somehow. Perhaps I saw the ocean but I'm not sure about that. From time to time everything was blue down below. Otherwise big white cloud-cauliflowers in the sunshine. Beautiful. One of the well-known sights of our time: looking down on clouds from a height of ten thousand metres. I muttered the Babits poem: ..."I knelt on the sea's flood tide." Babits, it seems, wrote this for aviators. (The time shift was only five hours; later on we suffered for this, on the way to Chicago we slipped another hour.)—New York. Our welcoming man was waiting for us, a tall, grey-haired, stylized Uncle Sam. He even wore checked trousers. He was pleasant and friendly.

His attentiveness to the Polish boy. The Poles, or Central Europeans in general. The old woman. We went with her to get the luggage. We stood around beside the revolving luggage conveyor for about an hour. The area gradually became deserted like after a football match—our luggage didn't appear. Another elderly Hungarian couple were left there like us without luggage. We had lost everything. Four suitcases, autumn and winter clothes, manuscripts, irreplaceable drafts. If it wasn't for Uncle Sam we would have perished beside the conveyor belt. He rushed about here and there, however, and saw to it that there was a written record of what had happened. We had to select from a picture what our luggage looked like (it was like a Szondi luggage test), and so on. In the end it was getting very late, and the airport bus (due to an accident) had been held up, so our guardian packed us into a taxi and sent us round to United Airlines, just like that. Aboard the third plane. We became giggly. "All our luggage is lost," said Balázs, and we both shook with laughter, because the situation was completely absurd. My legs had swollen to the size of an elephant's, there were creases running across them like you get on a plump baby's legs. Not quite so healthy, though.—I walked half a kilometre on those legs in Chicago, but there wasn't a women's toilet. It was more like a nightmare at that stage: it must have been about 3 or 4 am by our time. Then the fourth plane to Cedar Rapids. Luckily there was someone to meet us, and we only had a drive of three-quarters of an hour. A glimpse of Hualing and Paul outside the Mayflower. Kind Mary Nazareth[1] explained to us the main things we had to do, but I scarcely heard anything by then.

We threw ourselves onto the bed.

*September 15*

A Chinese weekend. Hualing and Paul[2] were preparing like mad for this special attraction. Conference at 2 pm; there were only Chinese at the speakers' table. The old man, the first to speak, was brief. I spoke to him about Tu Fu, the letter sent on the foot of the wild goose which is a classical Chinese motif. Wild geese in fact were flying over the Iowa river. Then everyone starts speaking, in Chinese (there's an interpreter), and in English—that, too, should have been interpreted, for us at least. It's incredibly tiring. Yet we could probably get something out of it if we could understand.

1 ■ The social director of the programme and her husband, Peter Nazareth, an Indian writer.

2 ■ Hualing Nieh, Chinese prose writer, the director of the Writing Program; Paul Engle, American poet, Hualing's husband. The Mayflower is the hotel-like home of the writers.

Afterwards there is a reception in the National City Bank. As to why a bank should receive us, why they should give us drinks and sandwiches and chat—that's an American speciality. I speak to the tall Pole in English. We understand each other. The Dutch couple speak French. What a relief! The Argentinian comes over. He too is a polyglot; we have a decent conversation about Fernando Pessoa. He says fine things about him, he adores him. Paul says that the galley proof of my book should be ready this month. He wants a photograph, and I've brought one. How I hate this photograph business. I'm not an advertisement for soap.

*September 16*

I hastily cook a meal of pork chops with rice. There's also melon (more like a marrow, I'm afraid) and coffee. I wash my hair. Dreadful, hard water. We are about to have lunch, when Hussein the Palestinian drops in. Long discussion on Arabic literature. In the meantime I give him some food which he praises; he says it's like *Brassói aprópecsenye*. He even tells a Budapest joke. He's a pleasant boy, though I've never heard of anyone paying a visit at one thirty in the afternoon. He goes on at length about pre-Mohamed "pagan" literature. He's keen on that. He quotes beautiful Arabic poems. How did they go? "If I die, neither my mother nor my tribe will mourn me, but I have a noble family: a hyena, a wolf, a lion, a tiger (?)—the world is wide for those who walk the earth fearing and hoping like a stranger." Or: "The desert night in silent waves, the stars are motionless, as if they were bound with a rope to the... mountain; the mountain crouches like an old man in a cloak." What he says is very interesting, but it's tiring and his voice is shrill. We'll carry on some other time. At 4.30 we meet down in the hall. There's to be a big do at the Lieberlings, a few kilometres from Iowa City. A luxurious house standing completely on its own on the shore of a lake, surrounded by splendid woods. Cinematic environment. In the two-storey hall there are 17th century Italian paintings and a life-sized Baroque statue. Fantastic lamps, horn-shaped, but one fixed upside down. The effect is stunning; a calculated, refined coincidence. The house is half glass. Buffet on the lawn, then a performance by a Chinese dancer and a Chinese flautist. The standard of ballet in every dictatorship is high, as we know. After that all thirty-five Chinese stand up (they are not all from Iowa, some are guests), and sing as a choir, conducted by Hualing of course. This is a nice, obviously amateur performance, done on the spur of the moment. They just sing, sometimes well, sometimes badly—in a fairly European way and with enjoyment. It's only now, facing them, that I see how much they differ from each other. My stupid European or white feeling that all yellow people look alike, is finally exploded "in its atoms". They are of widely different types. My favourite is the grey bearded Li T'ai-Po. He is very elegant, very classical. The majority are American Chinese, you can sense that very strongly. Their movements are

American, even their manners.—Then we have dinner (not too good) outside on the lawn, on this beautiful evening. Magnificent trees above the lake, flowers, laid tables, a swarm of waiters. Now I'm beginning to feel tired. With my knowledge of the language, conversation takes a lot of energy. A museum director. With her I can at least talk about Matisse and Bonnard. Though in fact she is a pre-Columbian specialist. Here Balázs excels, because during the Chinese lectures he slipped away to have a cigarette and was happy to look around the museum. The conference was held in the beautifully appointed hall of the museum. Architecturally wildly modern, wonderful. The huge pictures on the walls—they would be something to chat about. That agressive admixture of surrealism and expressionism is not my cup of tea. They keep telling me stories, and if they don't, then they are non-representational and unpleasant. And the evening isn't over yet. I'm feeling more and more cold and lonely. It's only lack of vitality. My daily energy is much reduced nowadays. We still have to go inside the wonder-house for a concert. The Iowian string quartet. Two Haydn pieces and a Samuel Barber. I am just about in a state to enjoy the two Haydns. Home at last. Tomorrow a trip to the Mississippi.

Postscript to the Lieberlings' evening. Our host was a former museum director, a small, white-haired, white-bearded man, that's where the flood of art treasures came from.—But what I want to write about is a picture. We are sitting in front of the house on the lawn in the sun in a circle with room for the dancer in the middle; to the side behind us is the lake, the trees, the clearings. The Chinese flautist is just leaving the circle. He is an elegant, self-assured American boy; he explains what kind of ancient Chinese woodwind instrument he is playing. He is standing there by the big darkly reflected wall of glass which extends the whole length of the house. An aeroplane comes into sight; they always fly about here like dragonflies. And reflected at the same time on the black glass wall is the extremely refined silhouette of the Chinese flautist and the silver aeroplane which draws away shining above him; a modern halo.

*September 20*

Another typical case of our unnecessary, but absolutely exhausting adversities. We want to go into town under our own steam for the 3.30 pm seminar. But the town bus (which runs hourly) has changed its schedule. What's the new schedule? We rush around asking people, in the end we get there too early, at about half past one. Balázs proudly claims that he knows which part of the university we have to go to. In fact his knowledge isn't up to much. That doesn't surprise me: the university is all over the place, it weaves across the town with all its departments, main and sub-buildings. In any case, the map we were given of the town is amazingly poor. Eventually, with a lot of difficulty we manage to get where we should be.

It's the lecture by Nadia Zaki Bishai, the ugly Egyptian girl (woman).
It's quite possible that in her own environment she isn't ugly, poor thing,
but I look with compassion at her shapeless body and her big face with big
glasses. That's why I want to be at her lecture giving my support,
which could be quite unnecessary. An hour of reading her poetry in English.
It turns out that she writes in English. She mumbles so softly that even those
whose English is good don't understand. But her last piece, some kind of prose,
is accompanied by music. It's dreadful. (As a matter of fact I'm afraid my taste
differs strongly from the taste here. At the Chinese conference, a young Chinese
boy in a red shirt gave a recitation. He flapped his shirt and giggled, maybe he
was telling good jokes, because the audience was laughing with him.
Then with his arms wide apart he shouted, jumped about, did everything but
stand on his head. "What a sweet boy," Paul remarked, "I like that type."
I'm afraid I don't like that type. That much fun and games leaves me cold.)
Well, our Nadia wasn't fun, she was just unbearably boring,
whipped up with music. Afterwards, a bit of discussion on the question
of language. This is new for me, I mean at this proximity. Who should write
in what language is a frequent subject of debate here. For a Hungarian
writer the answer is obvious: of course, naturally everyone should write in his
native language. How can one conceive of poetry in a "second" language?
We know there are exceptions, a Joseph Conrad, a Beckett—but they are
exceptions. It's different, however, in the world. What language their literature
should be is a crucial and vital issue for some very large nations.
And it isn't only for those who are just entering literacy—for instance,
the peoples of Black Africa—that this is a matter of life or death,
but also for some of those who have great written cultures, great traditions.
For instance, the Arabs, Indians, modern Greeks, etc. Dialects, the academic
or no longer living character of a great ancient language, nationality rivalries,
Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Berber, Coptic, Ancient Greek, etc. This is all bound up
with the problem of the colonizing country's language, the ancient traditions of
new states (e.g. Israel), the linguistic side, identification, or non-identification
of national awareness. It's enough to make your hair stand on end just
to touch on this complicated issue. I am not one to sing God's praises from
dawn to dusk because he created me Hungarian, but now I thank
my lucky stars that I've got a native language. That at least isn't something
Hungarian literature has to grapple with. Or perhaps—not quite so loftily—I
should simply give thanks to Berzsenyi and Kazinczy? Maybe we too were wa-
vering on the borderland of not having a language, but we forgot about it?
And they, entering history with sound timing at the end of the 18th century,
recreated something that was almost on the point of dying out?
In any case I kiss your hands, my great-great grandfathers. Here in corn-grow-
ing Iowa, among the Chinese, Blacks, Arabs, and Hindus, I think a lot about you.

The Egyptian girl was immediately attacked by Hussein the Palestinian—that was to be expected—and, apart from that, several people reproached her for writing in English, including some for whom the matter was completely irrelevant. Who disseminated in the hall their naive linguistic convictions which I too was lulled by for so long. Maybe they're not so naive? Maybe there are reasons if not literary ones? Who knows? All that concerns me is that I saw into a volcano, on whose green foothills I had been walking up till now, far outside the danger zone.

After that we had dinner. Or at least we hung around outside the university for an hour till people got themselves organized, then we hung around for another hour and a half waiting for pizza in a big bistro. We ate pizza the size of ten-gallon hats between us, then, after eight o'clock, we were taken shopping. Balázs bullied me into hurrying, why am I lingering so long in the butcher's—and then we waited almost an hour again for the others. This feverishly urgent time-wasting is exasperating. My legs are beginning to pack up.

*September 23*

Sunday. Hair-washing. Address list, photo. Supper at the Engles at seven pm. We start out too early, because although their house is nearby, we have to climb the hill (my legs). A few villas set in a grove of old oak trees with a private road leading to them. Squirrels. As they take the nuts they stop from time to time, watching motionlessly, with their shaggy question-mark tails. They are not our squirrels, they're grey squirrels, but every bit as charming. The oaks are different, the water too, everything tastes different. It's quite hard to get used to. The Engles's lovely home is full of Chinese furniture, ornaments and lamps, but there is an Indonesian wall as well, with masks and idols. They're terrifying. One of the Indonesians says about a pig's head that it's a benign goddess. This Indonesian boy told quite a few stories; he's young, but he's spent a good deal of time in prison already. He started to tell us in detail how eleven of their generals were tortured, we could hardly restrain him. Of course I understand. But my own nightmares are quite enough.—Hualing is tireless, as always. Snodgrass, an Iowa-born poet, appears. It turns out that he knows my name, from Bruce Berlind[3]. They both taught at Colgate University. A pleasant surprise. For my part I here read his poem *The Hitler-Bunker*. I only understood the gist of it, but it excited me very much. That's understandable; but what makes an American poet deal with this subject now? Could it be a new fashion, like the Holocaust, which they say happens to be a rotten television

3 ■ Bruce Berlind, poet, translator of Á. N. N.'s poetry.

film, but it shocked the Americans. Now? I ask. For the first time or once again? I ask.—I really do ask Snodgrass with his huge grey beard how he came to this theme. After all, he could barely have taken part in the war (he was born in 1926). But he did take part, he says, he was a volunteer in the Pacific. That was quite something. He got there at the end of the war like Bruce did to Germany, but he saw a good deal.

He simply felt the Nazi experience was expressible now.—But we can't have a long intellectual discussion (particularly with my knowledge of English). Paul and Hualing's style is friendly and jokey. Balázs reckons they're the hail-fellow-well-met type, "real Hungarian lads". We have a bit to drink, and that relaxes us a little, though I can hardly drink nowadays. I don't enjoy it. Of course in the old days... (in the Half-Candle, those good, friendly drinking sessions). Chinese dinner. Unbearably bad, unimaginable horrors. I've eaten all sorts of things in my life in various countries, I'm neither fussy nor a food nationalist. Quite the opposite! My device has ever been: you have to try it! How many Chinese restaurants we went to in Paris! But this... Paul recommends something as "Northern China's best soup". Balázs, who is terribly hungry, tries it. Dreadful. The rest too. All those bits of this and that in little dishes. It is served to us like a buffet. We know this Chinese idea of lots of little bowls! Best of all is the apple pie and the ice cream. But we're in for a surprise here too: we take a good-sized portion of green ice cream thinking it's pistachio. Well, it was peppermint. On the other hand, the Engles' terrace! Built right in among the oak trees, with a view onto the Iowa river which at dusk looks like a lake. Sunset over the Iowa. (Incidentally, the river is full of fish and wild duck, as we saw the next day.) It's a gentle river, like the little rivers of the Ile-de-France: it flows through green, lawn-like pastures, with no dams or embankments—in other words, it never floods. We even saw a sailing boat on the Mississippi.

I talk to Thea, the Dutch woman and her poet husband, thanks to you, French language. We've read a poem of his in Hungarian in *Magyar Műhely*. Apart from that, in the September 1979 *Nagyvilág* that we brought with us, not only is there a short story by Hualing, and my translations of Berlind, but also some short prose pieces by Kohlhaase (the East German here). Rather good.—We drink, we laugh, it's quite a pleasant evening. I almost unwind. Paul's anecdote about us: he happened to be in Hungary at the time of the football world cup. The Soviet Union and Germany were on television at a Hungarian friend's home. He asks his host who he is rooting for. The Hungarian replied, I don't want the Russians to win, but I hate the Germans too. Roars of laughter. We laugh too, of course, though I could have taken a bet on the punchline. As a matter of fact, they are very tactful politically; to organize something like this international group of writers you'd have to be. Every shade is represented here, not just in colour of skin. All in all—apart from the food—it's a good evening.

*September 24*

We get a telephone call in the morning telling us to go to a Snodgrass lecture in the evening. We skip it; all these English readings are awful. But I get an attack of remorse again, that I haven't accomplished something I should have done. I'm always full of anxiety. I don't understand why. It looks as if I really am becoming neurotic. Could it have been me who sat alone in that little house beside the Drava, with partisans and trains exploding all around me every night? Wasn't I afraid—or was it bearable fear—during the siege of Budapest? And at such and such a time? Or with the machine-gun fire coming from the Red Cross ambulance in 1956? And tank rounds as they entered our room? The nightly telegrams ("We're expecting your Ode to Stalin immediately," "Writers' Union"), the deportations, the trials, the humiliations, etc. etc. Cowardice comes with old age.—I toss and turn the whole night because of Snodgrass. Gasping, brief nightmares, sleeping pills.

*October 17*

Oh dear! The proofs have come. The lay-out looks fine, but there are some worrying things about it. The order, for instance. I left that to Bruce, I didn't want to interfere with how he put the book together. After all, he could see it from the viewpoint of the translation, while I saw it from here, in Hungarian.

On the other hand, as it is the whole thing's been thrown together haphazardly. The poems have no progression, no organic link. The most obvious example is that he starts with *The Tram*. All right. Maybe because of the English dedication (to Sidney Keyes). But why isn't *To a Poet* next to it, as it is in the original volume, of course because it's about Sidney Keyes. The two poems explain each other. *To a Poet* is somewhere at the end for no rhyme or reason. There is neither chronological order (which I never insisted on, but it would be better than nothing) nor any other order. Connected groups of poems are split up. Quite early poems mixed up with the most recent voices. It's very upsetting.

*October 18*

Into town with Paul. He isn't aware of any other manuscripts. Bruce sent the manuscript direct to the printers. Unpleasant matters. We try to telephone Bruce. In the evening we learn that he is in New York.—This whole thing is utterly hopeless, I've known that for a long time. With the effort of goodwill they publish the odd Hungarian volume of poetry here and there. It makes no difference who wrote it, how or when—it all depends on the translation. If by a stroke of luck there happens to be a good poet among the translators, then the volume will be good or at least passable, otherwise it'll be bad. It makes not a scrap of difference what the Hungarian poet is like. In the west they haven't the

foggiest idea about the practice of translation which any normal poet has at his fingertips in Hungary. But it isn't as simple as that. I could write reams on the bitter experiences of translation from Hungarian, tackling the question from all sides. But what would be the point? Final outcome, everything is in vain. The best of good intentions, or luck (that they are publishing this book, for instance, which is a miracle). One, only one thing becomes malleable and volatile: quality. The only thing that I've striven for in my life, the only thing which gives meaning to literature.—Oh, well, not to worry. We should be happy with what we've got.

*October 26*

Balázs is off for the flowers and the chocolate to give Gigi, I do the shopping. The usual thing. Bob gives us forty-five minutes for our shopping, by the time I come out he has driven off with some of our group. A number of us wait for the minibus. Thirty minutes in the cold wind. It's this sort of thing that won't let me shake off my flu. Then one of them wants to buy flowers, another something to drink, a third one a saucepan or a cigarette lighter: all separate trips and waiting around. We're home by half past six. Dreadful. I know it can't be done any other way; there's no other way to harmonize so many wishes; without the minibus we can't carry home a week's provisions. But it's tiring and disrupting. By the time I get home, panting and coughing, I should be getting dressed for dinner. We're going to the Engles's. (Interact: the Columbians offer to give us a lift—at Paul's request, as it turns out later. Because Paul is kind and thoughtful, he has noticed that I'm not in the best of health.) But Olga[4] is still getting dressed. We ought to be there at seven; at a quarter to eight we set out under our own steam. It's amazing how some people have such deliberate disregard for others. (What does Paul and Hualing's invitation mean to them?)

The dinner. Chinese again. It's their obsession. Two big pans of all sorts of vegetables are cooking on the table on a separate little electric hotplate. The table (always without a cloth, this is the custom, it seems) is laden with excellent food: thin slices of fillet steak, fish, oysters, salads, sauces, a thousand types of this and that. Everything raw. You have to suspend the various things in the cooking pans in little wire nets, let them cook, then eat them. Together with the boiled vegetables. Some things taste good, and some people like the whole thing. But how delicious it would be properly prepared.—Conversation. The usual pretend-conversation, no one says anything; jokes, pranks. There's just no way we could talk about literature, for instance. As a matter of fact I'd listen to anyone talking about anything if they would only say something: Macedonian folk art, Swahili newspapers,

4 ■ Olga Elena Mattei, Columbian, writes poetry, our neighbour in the Mayflower.

wild geese, Chinese football—I don't care, anything. But this is the greatest rarity. What I'd give for a good snatch of central European conversation! These sham conversations (in Western Europe too nowadays) which float in the air like gossamer. Oh, how nice! Thank you very much. Alors, vous avez passé deux ans à Omaha? Fresh oysters, please. Sie sprechen aber sehr gut englisch. The best is the rest, hahaha. Pure Ionesco. "Comme c'est bizarre, comme c'est curieux."

I'm sure there must be some writers in this whole troupe, not just dilettantes. But it's hard to select them (linguistic difficulties).

Outside it's a lovely autumn evening. Cold, autumn days.

*November 9*

Another seminar at half past three, this time Lacaba's. We'll listen to José without fail. At eight Meto and Wolfgang (the Yugoslav and the German) are giving a reading in Jim's library, but in the meantime we are invited to the Engles's at seven. We'll get there later. Just let it not be a Chinese dinner! My God!

The first snow this morning. It doesn't stick, it just falls, it falls onto the completely denuded forest. November forest. Big grey-brown galleries of branches on the hills. Now we can see that our big house is set among hills, and behind the forest and within it there are houses here and there. I haven't seen a forest's slow, almost smooth transformation like this from a summer forest to a winter one for ages. Now only the oaks have some reddish bunches of leaves on their branches—they'll last till next spring.

I understood Lacaba clearly at the seminar. It's almost farcical how similar the history of an oppressed people on the other side of the globe is to our own. With great deviations, of course. "We lived three hundred years in a monastery, fifty years in Hollywood," he said, quoting the Filipino remark which we'd already heard from him. Imprisonments, demonstrations, actors who wear national colours on stage and are locked up for it. Struggle for the language. Political literature. They wrote Spanish under the Spanish, today they write English—or Tagalog. This local language must be strengthened. It's very mixed: "Taglish". They happen to be independent at the moment, but even so writers and intellectuals are locked up because of totalitarianism. "Their own" dictatorship, the autocracy of sweet home.—I'm afraid Lacaba isn't a good speaker! His English is excellent of course, but his talk is a bit long, not shaped enough. My God, if I could speak English as well as he does... Lacaba's wife Marra is a poetess. She's that sweet, graceful Asian type. In any event the whole thing was very interesting. (The poem she read out was bad. A vehement leading article about a poor girl who was raped. Well, that's it. Infection of literature by politics.)

At seven, Paul comes to pick us up because it's freezing. The road to the hill is slippery. It's a Chinese dinner again, but now I enjoy it. I'm not quite sure why. Have I got used to it? There's a new boy, Edwin Thumboo, from Singapore. He seems intelligent. But it could be that it's just that his English is fluent.

Paul relates his experience in Germany in 1934; Bavarian peasants fly only the Bavarian flag (the royal one, blue and white) at ceremonies. "They hate the swastika." Night in Berlin, the sound of boots. A policeman asks him for his papers: "What are you doing here?" "Studying," he replies. "Why?" asks the policeman.

After Europe comes Asia. Can you have democracy with a completely undeveloped mass of people? Democracy is for your race, for whites. Should there be dictatorship then? A restricted dictatorship perhaps, they say. Then the Asians discuss Indira Gandhi, China and lots of unfamiliar facts among themselves. Ani (the Hindu woman with the terrible accent), the two from Singapore (one Chinese, one half Hindu) and the Indonesian have their say in turn. Hualing drops out of the conversation, she looks tired. I'm not surprised. The amount they do is monstrous.

All in all it's an enjoyable evening. We talk about something and I understand more. But why is it never literature? Paul's anecdote about Eliot at most. Eliot and his wife are eating on a platform somewhere in America. Paul sees them from below. The great poet eats with one hand, and with the other he fondles his wife under the table. All this is very clearly visible from where Paul is sitting. Hahaha.

*November 12*

Today the Nino seminar is an English lesson. But have Nino and his wife got back yet? They hadn't arrived yesterday. I must read Weissbort's poems. (And Paul's and Gigi's and...) It's dreadful. I hardly understand them and I've got to give an opinion on them. Like the translations of my own poetry. Because that is what people want, understandably. Except that the whole thing is absurd. After all, even if I would understand them completely, I still wouldn't be able to judge the quality. This is a big subject too. You can appreciate poetic quality only in your native language. In a foreign language classical poetry at most, where the value of reputation, and time and the linguistic clarity (Racine!) form the basis of judgement, of appreciation. In a foreign language I can only appreciate a poem with support from the old poets, just like the average reader. The geographical distance creates a distance in time, which the public senses in relation to the existing "modern" poetry. This distance is a few decades. (Ady today is universally accepted, etc.) In a foreign language I can appreciate poems written a few decades ago with no difficulty, but not contemporary poetry written today. And I don't reckon anyone is capable of doing that. Hungarians

who come home from abroad full of praise for new poets can, at most, get an insight into the poetry through the publicity or the reputation. But can they really know what it's like? Whether it's good or not? When they hand over to us a heap of manuscripts. Naturally, at the time even the *Nyugat* poets could only appreciate poetry written a few decades earlier.— Because knowledge of a language isn't enough in this case. You have to live in the literature for that. As I live in the Hungarian.—That doesn't mean of course that reputation, hearing something second hand, or information isn't important. Quite the contrary, it's very important, from that will stem—in time perhaps—the real experience. Once the information has settled, once it has extended and penetrated.—All this primarily applies to poetry. Prose is simpler. There the individual value of words is considerably less. Prose is much more international. The story, the characters, the actuality, this and that. So many things to help with evaluation. But poetry is different. A synonym can decide a poem's value. An inkling of rhythm. To write "ecstasy" instead of "frenzy" makes a world of difference. To write "floral" instead of "flower". A poem's structure, the incompleteness of a sentence, etc. etc. Real poetic competence goes right to the limits of the native language.

(Alfréd Rényi: I would have to be familiar with every poem in that language, or even in the world, if I really want to understand those four lines.)

The rest of the day. And, what a day it was! Nino and his wife arrived; they had driven across half of America. New York, Washington, Niagara Falls, etc. They gave their lecture, which involved Edwin reading Nino's poems, then Nino spoke in Bulgarian, with his wife (who speaks better English than him) translating. Well... it wasn't exactly brilliant. Rather low level, unnecessarily political chat. Nothing but platitudes. After that Paul took us home, then at half past eight he drove us to his place again. Now the party was in honour of a Taiwanese writer whose book—while he has been here—has been banned in his home country. Poor thing. A thin, bespectacled Chinese boy, with the look of a student. The situation in Taiwan seems to be rotten too. All situations are rotten. Who is banning what, why and where—these are the main literary questions. The party: I am happy to report that I enjoyed myself. Could my English be improving? I talk, go up to someone, understand. (Ani is the only one who sits alone—a strange female.) We brought some whisky because it was a holiday and Paul had announced that they weren't able to buy any spirits. But in fact there was some: I drank delicious Spanish sherry (Xeres!).

Edwin Thumboo, the poet who recently arrived from Singapore. He teaches English literature there, and his special interest is Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. I say, Heywood. We talk about the Elizabethan age and the influences of other periods; Kyd, Marlowe, Turner, Webster. We mention Donne too. Then we turn to the moderns. He likes Yeats, Eliot less so, and he has a lot of respect for Pound. We discuss that. Also Auden, Dylan Thomas—he speaks

disparagingly of Ted Hughes, he has objections to his craftsmanship, considers him inflated. Then, there are some poets who are less well-known, yet very good. I don't suppose you've ever heard of Sidney Keyes. I stare at him in surprise. He praises Keyes, explaining that he was killed in the war, what a talented poet. I then tell him my own special and strange story in connection with Keyes. My poem *The Tram*, his death, the facts about his death which came much later.—That someone from Singapore should talk to me about Keyes in Iowa! This is the sensation of the evening.

*November 15*

I do the washing. Tidy up. We leave on Sunday. What about our book parcels? It's shopping today too. I have to buy a knitted coat for Auntie Bors. What for Laci Terek? Piroska Szabó? I want to go into town early and make notes on what I have to buy. But! Paul calls saying that the photo I brought from Budapest hasn't been accepted by the printers for my volume of poetry. I have to get some photos taken today. I'm annoyed. Why wasn't it accepted? In Budapest the printers can use this type of photo. And why was this discovered now? They've had two months to find out. The shopping is off, a car is coming at three to take us to the photographer. They take three shots like they did for my passport in Királyhágó tér. What will they be like? They'll put some junk in my book again. The photo I brought was a portrait at least. They'll show them to me tomorrow—as a favour—since we're leaving on Sunday. What'll happen to this book anyway? Afterwards there's a bit of shopping in the dark, it's tiring. Once again a lot of things I couldn't get done. Home by bus. I write a long letter to Bruce. I apologize for the misunderstanding about *Akhenaton*. I'm worried about the book, I hate this photo business. Why do they need a photo at all? Soap ad. But that's how we do things too.—I've had bad pictures taken of me all my life. When I was young it was just about bearable; today it's miserable. It's like a thorough look in the mirror; depressing old age. My face is not photogenic, it seems; it gets its character from movement, changing expression. My youthful appearance: blond, with a Hungarian peasant girl face, lacking any intellectuality. In old age: a loose featured face like an uncooked scone, and still with no "spirituality". I've got an amazingly stupid face. It doesn't matter when you're young; I was the coalmen's favourite, they always whistled after me on the streets of Buda. I can't complain about my appearance when I was young; it was adequate for my life. But today? At least I should have some "intellectuality"—All in all: I loath my photographs.

*November 16*

Today I'll try again to do my shopping. What will crop up in the meantime I wonder? We have to pick up the photo. Seminar at 3.30 pm, Metodi Jovanovski,

the Yugoslav. Preparations for the journey. Cards to write. Oh dear, this journey. We're tired, we're afraid. I know, I know I'm a spoilt brute not wanting to fly to California. But we're living all the time at the limit of our strength. The language. The lifestyle. The continual arrangements, things to get done. Phoning the airport to confirm our seats, financial matters, hotel in San Francisco. That's what I hate most, arrangements. And in the middle of all this, to be receptive. To understand something of this crazily alien new planet which is totally lacking in associations with the past. I am longing for Europe as for a little nook.—Of course, on the other hand, I'm thinking of the Pacific Ocean. I'll look across it as far as the Easter Islands. As I wrote in *Statues*. I think of Hawaii too. It was my mother who told me about the Kilauea crater (what a wealth of things she told me about!) and about Queen Kamehameha — that's how she pronounced it. And the female Homer. And the happiness of the South Seas, Gaugin. They say the Frisco cable-cars aren't running at the moment. I'm sorry about that. I'd like to see the redwoods.—But now it's packing, getting ready, being pulled around.

Panka has sent us a pile of Hungarian newspapers. God bless her. Dear Panka, my article on Jókai is among them. How I could do with Panka here! She would get things done all right. She'd organize, act and make decisions.

Of course I didn't buy anything important. There isn't time, or at least if there is I get tired. So far from the town, and with such a restricted bus service.—Paul shows me the photos at the seminar. They're ghastly. They're like police pictures of criminals or passport photos taken by a park photographer. Six rotten little photos, each one worse than the other. We beg them to use the original picture for the book, the one from Budapest. If that doesn't work, they shouldn't put anything in. Actually Paul was at the printers today and he says it'll be an attractive-looking book. The title: *Összegyűjtött versek—Collected Poems*. Bruce has asked for a second set of proofs, that'll take time. Paul himself corrected my preface in ten places, with Bruce's agreement (printing errors). I feel bad that I can't do anything to help. Two set of proofs is a normal request, of course, it's just that we're so short of time. Why were they so late? They had at least two and a half months, or even more. Paul didn't say for sure, he just "hoped" the book would come out while I'm here, in other words by December 15th at the latest. It looks as though we'll be leaving out Washington. We won't be able to fit it in. We fly home on the 20th, and I'd like to see New York at least.

*December 18*

We brought this bad weather. From Chicago. The first blast of winter, in Christmassy New York. It isn't quite so cold today, the snow's falling. We are going to the Metropolitan Museum. A lot of walking again; surprisingly

enough, I'm managing all right. But I can feel that this is my very last effort. The Met is supposed to be near. By American standards it is. In Budapest, I'd never think of going such a distance on foot. But how should we go? Always by taxi? The buses run on the parallel Avenues —one to the south, the next to the north, one way. The Met is, for us, "on the cross" between them. We'll have to walk.

It's worth it. We are expected at the Met. We're given a special greeting: there is a huge sign on the facade. "History of Costume in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The fashion of the Hapsburgs." Hapsburgs, with a p. Not to worry. That's how they write it in English. We look at the special exhibition for us. It's in the basement, beautifully arranged. The Empress Elizabeth's ball gown, the gowns of her ladies-in-waiting, court mourning, the court dress of a knight of the Golden Fleece—all on life-sized dummies, very cleverly lit. Francis Joseph's hunting outfit, his various ceremonial cloaks. And the main attraction: an unprecedented collection of Hungarian hussar uniforms. This regiment and that regiment, dress of Hungarian nobility for the coronation of Charles I in 1916, Countess X's first court ball gown. Whole series of Hungarian gala dresses, swords galore; the jewellery, turquoise clips, silver sword-belt chains required for the Hungarian gala dress displayed separately. Inscriptions: "mente", "shako", "dolmany". It turns out that part of the collection has been lent by the Hungarian National Museum. Gloves, fans, headdresses, trains. And all the time the Blue Danube waltz is playing.

Good God, how strange this is seen from America. In the same way we could be seeing an exhibition entitled "The temples of the Khmer people" or ceramics from Baluchistan. But people are interested. Quite a big crowd, with the occasional Hungarian word, but the great majority are attentive American faces. The tape is now "You are my heart's delight." I start to hum the tune stupidly. What I feel is indescribably mixed up, some sort of tragic operetta feeling. Later I shrug my shoulders and concentrate on the "home" feeling. Around us Central Park, Manhattan, the Atlantic Ocean, the end of the 20th century or, rather, the beginning of the 21st. New York winter, beneath dark grey snowclouds. Inside a Viennese waltz.

We look at the rest of the Met too. Stunning riches. Italian, Flemish, Renaissance, Spanish, French. Many Gainsboroughs, a beautiful Hobbema. "Forest Path". The metaphysics of forest and garden paths. The way they bend. Real and painted landscapes. These tracks have always intrigued me. I've written parts of several poems about them. In a picture this bend in the path is the third dimension and, if you imagine it on the flat, it is the dynamics of a bend, ancient aesthetics quality. In nature, on the other hand... man is present, but only in quotes, as it were. It is rather some sort of transition between nature and man, its infinitely simple, beautiful curve is the questionmark after "where". The forest track always bends. If it doesn't bend it isn't a real forest track.

Why does this bend have such an effect on me, almost like a sacred experience? If I could unravel this I would be taking a large step towards the concept of aesthetic quality.

That was the Hobbema. We sat for a long time in front of it. And many Rembrandts. And millions of others. For instance, Cretan statues. By this time, I could hardly cope with the series of rooms on "Cretan culture" even though I adore it. Ephebes with their archaic smile and their archaic "first step". Mediterranean marble of which, I learned in Rome, there are many kinds. Denser or looser, crystalline, some which give differing surfaces, yellowish or lime white. This quality of the material strongly influences the effect the statue has on the viewer; unconsciously, of course. To gently stroke the surfaces, confront the carved out or inlaid eye sockets. The statues from Asia Minor, Egypt and Greece, as they break down in the Cretan. But let's go now, for God's sake, because I'll break down too.

On the ground floor we look back at the notice by the ticket office: Entrance free. If you want to help our work we are glad to receive voluntary contributions. We offer a five dollar contribution.—How American. Typical of their cultural institutions. Gracious, generous and extremely practical. The museum-goer isn't left wondering what to do. Don't waver, hand over that five bucks, don't think we expect ten, but don't insult us with one either. And if you really haven't got a bean, go and feast on culture free.

(Incidentally, they are brilliant at organizing! They hand out a notice today that in two and a half months this or that plane is leaving from such and such a place, hotels are booked for you, lecture begins, it takes off at such a time, waits, starts. If you can't make it, you miss it, or you want to alter the date, they see to it in two minutes, and change your ticket dates. And they don't even put on airs, they smile and thank you. "Have a good day!" says the waitress when you leave. The airport officials wear the colours of their airline on their ties. The United Airlines staff, for instance, have pink, yellow and blue stripes. The California colour is lemon yellow. There is nothing military about their efficiency, nothing servile about their patience. Their job is to be of assistance to the passengers. But they do have to work, and work hard.)

We stagger out of the museum. It's snowing. We trudge home. Ilus's wonderful lunches. Balázs literally gobbles them up, he is so keen on the flavours of home. There's a Hungarian restaurant nearby and I plead with him that we should at least go out for meals, but he looks at me so downcast that I haven't the heart to drag him away. Anyway, it's difficult to resist Ilus's incredible kindness.

In the afternoon, Agnes Vadas, violinist, and her husband, Lucas Myers, poet. Agnes Vadas says she came round to our place in 1947. We don't remember, but we keep quiet about that, so many people came to us in those days. They both translate Attila József for pleasure. A good conversation. He is the slightly

effeminate, refined Anglo-Saxon type. He's just like his heavy-chinned, hefty compatriots, but on a smaller scale somehow. He was at Oxford with Daniel and Ted Hughes.—She is unhappy. She has exile pains and special ones: she hasn't been able to play the violin for three years because of neuritis. How many sad exiles there are. She visits us for the sake of a thirty-year-old memory. With Attila József as an excuse, at last we can speak about literature in both French and English.

In the evening Jóska Bakucz[5] comes round and takes us to Greenwich Village. We look at the bar where Dylan Thomas read his poems, heavily under the influence. Maybe the White Horse. We end up in an Italian bistro. It's dark, with the occasional red light. Food. Talk. Poor Bakucz. He is currently keen on automatic writing, dreams, Zen Buddhism. He has discovered that André Breton (plus Soupault and Péret) is a great poet. What should I say to that? I want to avoid a quarrel. Not only is what he says sadly fashionable, it's actually old hat now. To rediscover the avant-garde in 1979! And Breton, of all people, as a great poet. What should I say when he quotes the Bar-do Thes? We certainly missed out on quite a few of the fashionable trends, but the Bar-do Thes Sgrol had a secret following in Hungary in the fifties. I wasn't that impressed even in those days, though our situation could have brought out more resonance then. Mysticism attracts me much less than faith, for instance. The great conversions started with Gide and Eliot, then round about Isherwood they strengthened again. I've no objection to someone being converted or turning to transcendentalism. But dished up with those names and concepts...

In Bakucz we have another variation of the exile. Unfortunately, he's talented. He gives the impression he's gone a bit mad. If only he had set off in the direction of his talent, or would set off!

He's got a house, a wife, a job, a car. And what is all this worth, worth to him. You get the same picture everywhere among exiles, in Western Europe too. How many times have we witnessed this in Paris and in London. A poet—if he can help it —shouldn't leave his country. Being bogged down in the language is what holds you back most. If someone is being persecuted to death, he should go. If his art or skill is international, he should go too. And anyone who wants to make money, dollars, and be prosperous, can go too. Good luck to them, if they can't find anything better for themselves. But someone whose métier is language... Oh God, what a problem this is.

What'll become of you, Jóska Bakucz, our former lodger? Who brought to us his Persian cat called Édi, later Cicero. The trouble we had with Cicero's peeing-dish and his bad nature. That cat was gorgeous, but stupid in an aristocratic way.

I don't think I've come upon such a stupid cat in my life. What became of you without Cicero and the Vérmező, Bakucz? And how will you go on from here?

5 ■ The late József Bakucz, poet; he left Hungary in 1956.

Greenwich Village—to say something new—is a bit like Paris. But those fire escapes are dreadful. As they are everywhere. That evening we walk about in a freezing mock-Europe.

*December 19*

The snow is falling. Nevertheless Pista Püski is taking us sightseeing today. He's got a station waggon for delivering books. He works for his father; he's an amiable, quiet and clever boy. He tells us that in America everyone finds what he wants to find. Because there's everything here. He takes us north into Harlem. It's staggering. Like Budapest after the siege. The buildings haven't actually fallen down of course, but every third one is burnt out (battles between the landlords and the tenants), the windows are patched up with paper, roofs damaged. We're not allowed to get out of the car, aren't tolerated. The only whites in Harlem are the police, and they are mainly Irish. That's why the blacks have a special dislike for the Irish. And for all the black police too. Pista has a story about a friend of his who was helping a director to shoot a film here. The distributor promised the black extras money if he managed to sell the film. He couldn't sell it. The blacks suspected the director of some fiddle, they waited six months, then shot him. Pista's friend got away with a bullet in the leg. The story was more complicated than that, I've forgotten the details. It doesn't matter really. That was the essence. There's hardly anyone on the street now, it's no weather for blacks. This black problem is terrifying. The more we know about it, the less I feel like handing out wise advice to the United States. The welfare business. There is a new law which says that in the case of two people applying for the same job, the black has to be taken on. Black music, black priests. And the worst thing is the prospects. This problem is going nowhere, if anything it is getting worse. Ten years ago you could still go to Harlem. Now you can't.

Our Gypsy problem, which has some similar aspects, seems insignificant in comparison. (Rate of reproduction, difference in levels of civilization, which is by no means a simple social difference, but a divergence of periods in the lives of two peoples, moral values, educatability, etc.) After all, there are some prospects in this: the Gypsies are going to improve their lot however difficult and gradual the change will be, and they'll assimilate. Those who don't want to can be a national minority if that's what they chose. Racial difference is negligible here. But with regard to the blacks... It seems to me that the difference between white and black is the greatest among human races. America swallows up the yellow-skinned peoples with no trouble, the brown-skinned as well. Marriages, a million variations in the children. Although the Chinese, for instance, live in huge colonies and are fairly segregated. But they want this segregation; the moment they don't want it, the American melting-pot comes into action.

The number of indefinable facial types I saw! Unimaginable variations, among them very beautiful ones. But marriage with blacks is a sensitive business. And black children in schools, they practically destroy the institution itself (teachers flee the schools because they are beaten up, no, it's not just the blacks who do the beating...) The growing black and general violence. The murder statistics. Ilus, who one evening had her money stolen by a band of black youths. ("I wasn't afraid, far from it, I went for them.") A thousand stories of this kind, on the buses, in the subways. How will this all end up as far as the blacks are concerned? After all, there are university teachers, not just criminals; black artists and nuns. Peaceful coexistence in Iowa, for instance. If it is as peaceful as it looks. I'll punish the sins of the fathers in their sons—that's the problem of the American blacks. But can it remain like that?

Let's get out of Harlem as quickly as possible. What is my naive—though obviously to some extent just—conviction about the equality of races worth here? I can't even have a say, because I'm not familiar with the situation. The Central European racial problem is quite enough for me. I've always had a say in that, with the experience of a lifetime. And I hate it too, with the experience of a lifetime. I've no time for the "racists" back home in Budapest. I know the name of the game there.

We drive right through Greenwich Village once more. The snow is getting thicker. Down to the tip of Manhattan Island. Battery Park was the first public park in New York. The site of the first landing. Dutch houses. The traces of New Amsterdam. We get out on the shore. We should be able to see the Statue of Liberty from here. But it isn't visible. A little patch of ocean with a little ferryboat on it and a few seagulls flying and squawking. In front of us fog, torrential walls of snow. Looking back we can see the silhouettes of a few skyscrapers, in some kind of vast fog. New York in snowfall like this is like a vision.

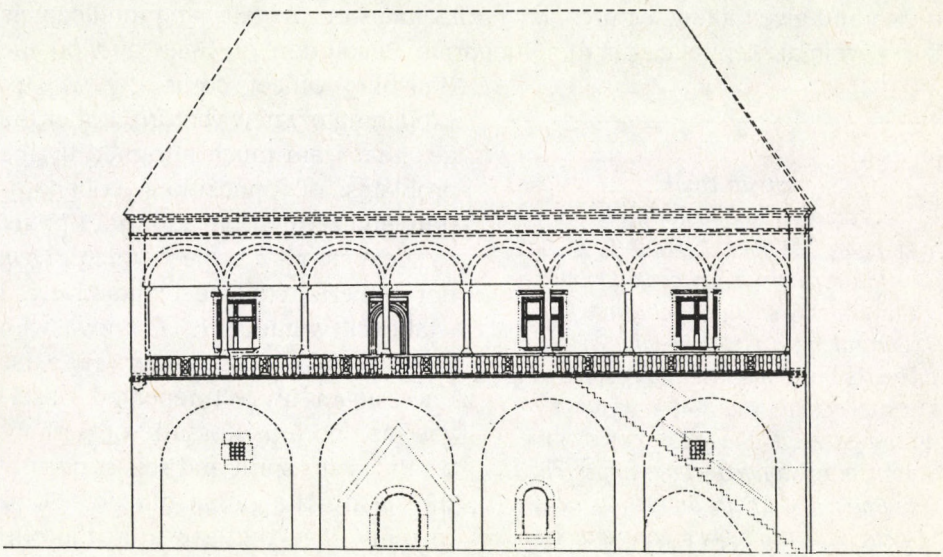
## Postscript

In America I learnt that I was a European. Just as I really learnt that I am a Hungarian when I was outside Hungary.

Europeans are all alike. What is a European like? A European eats with a knife and fork. He doesn't cut the food up first, then puts down the knife and carries on with a fork. If you glance round a restaurant you can tell from a distance who the Europeans are. Europeans are capable of saying good morning without smiling, and even of not answering the question "How are you?" with "Fine", but possibly with "I've got a headache". Europeans smoke. Europeans wear lined winter coats. After five hours of walking they show signs of tiredness. The mountain climbers are the only exceptions to this. Europeans are conceited. They don't like beautiful fifty-year-old houses, they look right through them as if they were air. Europeans rarely laugh, and at different things

from other people. Europeans are manneristic. They lack genuine unaffectedness, warm-heartedness, natural confidence and an open, cheerful way of facing the world. Europeans are insincere. If a siren sounds somewhere—ambulance, police, smog warning—a European winces. He doesn't like the humming of aeroplanes. Europeans are neurotic. Europeans are scared.

Motifs: smog warning. Siren, dread.—Matchbox. I carried a Hungarian matchbox around with me all over America for four months. It was terribly important: in places where there was no ashtray, it was my ashtray. On buses, for instance, and in many places where they are fighting against cigarettes. What's more, I didn't get another, new matchbox in the USA. It may have just been chance, but I could only buy books of matches or lighters in department stores or drugstores. I guarded my matchbox as if it were a pyx. Others were glad of it on excursions or other times, especially the Europeans. "A matchbox. Excellent!", they shouted, "We can smoke—with caution." After finishing a smoke, I asked for it back, cleaned it and put it away in my handbag. I brought my irreplaceable treasure safely home to Buda from the biggest country in the world. ❧



*Nyírbátor, Báthori Castle. Interior facade of the Reception Court. 1510s. The ground floor has been transformed into a granary, the cellar is in its original state.*

István Deák

# Resistance, Collaboration, and Retribution during World War II and Its Aftermath

Let me begin with expressions of joy that I have been given the honour of membership in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Here is a fitting occasion, I think, for me to thank my fellow historians in Hungary for having so generously supported me and my work over the years, often when such support was not without danger.

My fellow historians are aware that the choice of World War II as a topic for this inaugural address heralds my departure into new scholarly waters. I have done no extensive work in this field, having only occasionally published some articles and given a few lectures. My books focus on the left-wing intellectuals of the Weimar Republic, on the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, and on the Habsburg officer corps. By way of explaining my new venture, I offer the fact that I am much intrigued by the problems of opposition, collaboration, and retribution, and that I prefer to speak about a subject which I have not hitherto covered exhaustively. I shall tell what little I know with enthusiasm, rather than rehearse once again my oft repeated observations on Lajos Kossuth, or perhaps on the caste-spirit and self-conceit of the Austro-Hungarian officers. Come to think of it, the leap from the officers of halcyon days before World

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■ This is the translated address given by István Deák on April 14, 1994, on the occasion of his inauguration into the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. It anticipates a major work on the same topic, attended by extensive documentation.

War I to the fascists, war criminals, and anti-fascist resisters of World War II is not all that gigantic. It suffices to remember that Maréchal Pétain, the head of the collaborationist Vichy state, served with distinction between 1914 and 1918, and that the German generals of World War II, be they fanatic Nazis, or martyrs of the July 20 anti-Hitler conspiracy, were, almost without exception, commissioned before the First World War. General Slavko Kvaternik, the military commander-in-chief of the Croatian fascist state, as well as four Hungarian prime ministers, including Béla Dálnoki Miklós, who headed the first Hungarian anti-fascist government, all started their careers as professional officers in the Austro-Hungarian forces. Indeed, Generals Tadeusz Bor-Komorowski, the commander of the 1944 Warsaw rising, and Stanisław Maczek, who commanded the Polish Armoured Division in the Normandy landing in 1944, had both been Austrian career soldiers in their youth.

Much has been published on the subjects I propose to discuss, yet there are also serious gaps. Whole libraries have appeared on resistance movements in the various countries occupied by the Germans, but scarcely anything that discusses the resistance in Europe as a whole. Even less comprehensive work has been done on collaboration, and on a theoretical definition of the phenomenon. Lately, however, a growing number of historians, sociologists, and other scholars has studied post-war retribution and the punishment meeted out to war criminals and traitors, being perhaps motivated by the timeliness of the question. After all, disputes concerning the possible prosecution of East German, Czech or Hungarian communist criminals are on the political agenda, and so is the rehabilitation of war criminals condemned by people's courts almost fifty years ago. Then there are the recent attempts by the United Nations to revive an international court, for the first time since the Nuremberg trials, in order to deal with war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the former Yugoslavia.

I ought to mention at this stage that we are incomparably more familiar with collaboration, resistance, and retribution in Western Europe than in Eastern Europe. Thus, in Bergen, Norway, there is an institute entirely devoted to the study of the Nasjonal Samling (National Rally), the Norwegian Nazi party, the social composition of its membership, and the retribution it suffered after the war. At the other extreme, in Romania, most scholars and politicians still have to admit that fascist parties with a large membership existed and that there was such a thing as a specifically Romanian version of the Holocaust. I am happy to acknowledge at the same time that serious research in this field is under way in Hungary.

Allow me to sum up in a few sentences what I have learned from recent publications on resistance, collaboration, and retribution, and also my own opinion on these three questions.

My first proposition is that, right up to the present, accounts of both resistance and collaboration have been much embellished everywhere, the purpose being to enhance the presumed national interest. In this respect both the official view and received wisdom in Western and Eastern Europe resemble each other remarkably.

According to my second proposition, there is a great deal of similarity between the motivations and policies of various groups and individuals who collaborated with the Germans during World War II. The same can be said about the resistance. Furthermore, both active collaborators and active resisters made up only a small part of the population.

My third proposition is that the fight against the German occupiers was everywhere accompanied by a civil war of some sort, and that the resistance was exploited by every party and group which achieved power to further its own post-war aims.

Finally, my fourth proposition is that post-war retribution and liquidation were fairly similar everywhere. Nowhere were the methods used absolutely legal but, with the exception of one or two countries, e.g., the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, illegal methods did not play a dominant role. Retribution was sufficiently successful everywhere to ensure that a significant proportion of collaborators, traitors, and war criminals receive their just deserts. Finally, retribution everywhere legitimized the new political system, be that communist, non-communist, or, perhaps, even anti-communist.

My frequent reference to the similarity of developments may appear all the more surprising if we bear in mind that this implies placing in one category Western Europe—where the Nazis engaged in a war of conquest in the classical sense of the term—and Eastern Europe where ideological conviction and the desire to expand the *Lebensraum* lent the German campaigns an extraordinary repulsiveness. It may also seem odd that I mention in the same breath countries defeated by the Germans and countries allied to Germany. This will appear less astonishing, however, if we consider that, with the exception of Poland and the Soviet Union, every defeated and occupied country enjoyed some degree of self-government during the war, while not a single allied or satellite state remained an unconditionally trusted Nazi ally right to the end. Thus Denmark, defeated and occupied in April 1940, was allowed to keep king, government, parliament, army, police, and democratic political system. Having signed the Anti-Comintern Pact in November 1941, Denmark became legally an ally of the Axis. And yet, there was no other country in which resistance, often directed by the local authorities, was more successful in aborting German persecution of the Jews. Or take defeated France, part of which was not even occupied by the Germans until November 1942. At least up to that time, the Vichy government disposed of an independent army, a large colonial empire, and a sizeable navy. It was not the

Vichy French government which was responsible for Hitler's rejection of Prime Minister Laval's offer of close French collaboration in creating a new order in Europe.

On the other hand, surveying the states allied to the Germans, it becomes apparent that every one, with the exception of Hungary and Croatia, that is Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Finland, and Bulgaria, turned against the Germans at a certain moment in time. One result of that was, for example, that following the surrender of Italy in 1943, the Germans dealt more brutally with the prisoners of war, politicians, and population of the erstwhile fascist ally, than with the soldiers, politicians, and population of France, the defeated enemy.

I could list many more examples in evidence of my proposition that there often was little difference between allied and defeated countries, or rather, that the gamut extended all the way from systematic resistance (Poland) to large-scale, but never a hundred per cent, collaboration. Take Hungary, which in law is rightly called Nazi Germany's last satellite and yet, there were certain political situations where Hungarian resistance to Nazi Germany was stronger than that of the French. Right up to March 19, 1944, when the German army occupied the country, the Hungarian government sabotaged the final solution of the Jewish question, which was so important from Hitler's point of view. Thereafter, the new government, appointed by Regent Horthy at the insistence of the Germans, co-operated enthusiastically in the deportation to Auschwitz of the Hungarian Jews. Nearly the same can be said of the occupied Netherlands where civil service departmental heads were in charge. Unlike the Hungarians in 1944, the Dutch officials acted with little conviction: yet they mustered enough bureaucratic zeal to round up and hand over the Jews in accordance with German wishes. True, the Hungarian goverment, at least up to March 1944, enjoyed greater independence than the Dutch, but it is certain that, had the Dutch authorities tacitly sabotaged Nazi orders, then the Germans on their own would not have succeeded in exterminating a percentage of Jews there that far exceeded what was achieved in Hungary. Furthermore, there is no indication that the Germans would in any way have punished any Dutch—or Hungarian—government official or gendarmerie commander who sabotaged the *Endlösung,* the Final Solution. As we know, Bulgaria—with an eye on events in Italy and Hungary—denied the surrender of the country's native Jewry, and even the Slovak puppet state was able to suspend deportations for two years, between 1942 and 1944.

What was said about satellite and resisting countries, that is, that differences between them were smaller than generally demonstrated by historians, is also true of individuals and particular political groupings. Of course, there were collaborators who held out to the bitter end, such as the Croatian Ustasha, or the last, fanatic members of the Vichy government who found refuge in Sigmaringen, Germany, in 1944. There were many, too, who opposed the Germans from

start to finish. More characteristic, however, were collaborators who sooner or later engaged in some sort of resistance activity, or members of the resistance whose usefulness to the latter derived directly from concurrently working for the Germans. A favourite example of mine concerns the French railway officials who impeccably served the German authorities and Maréchal Pétain, right up to 1944, when they woke up to the fact that the Germans would not win the war. These officials accepted an offer by the resistance as an atonement for past sins, and on June 6, 1944, D-day, they so misdirected German military transports that the transports arrived in Normandy with fatal delays. There is no need to look to France for ambiguous attitudes. Here was Regent Admiral Miklós Horthy, who both collaborated with and resisted the Germans, or we could name Alois Elias, Prime Minister of the Bohemian Protectorate who, as a leading member of President Hacha's collaborationist regime, also did his best to represent the London government-in-exile in Prague. The Germans hanged him for his pains.

It can be said in general that there were two kinds of effective resistance in World War II: one was a massive armed struggle, the other well considered individual action. Tito's Yugoslav army and Russian, Ukrainian, and Polish partisans are an example of the first, the French railway officials, whom I just mentioned, of the second. The effectiveness of the latter group derived from collaboration preceding resistance, that is, it was due to key positions obtained by cooperating with the German authorities.

In a great many cases it is difficult to separate collaboration from resistance. Was Drazha Mihajlović, the Serbian general, a member of the resistance or a collaborator? As the commander of the Chetniks, he boldly fought the Germans, though concurrently forming a tacit alliance with the Italian occupation forces. Indeed, from time to time, Mihajlović even cooperated with the Germans against the communists, and Tito had him hanged after the war for that very reason. Did the Ukrainian nationalists resist or collaborate? They fought the Germans, the Polish resistance, and Soviet partisans, but at the same time established peaceful relations with the Hungarian army, another force of occupation. Could the Hungarian Kállay government be said to have resisted? Up to 1943 it militarily supported the Germans, but after the defeat of the Hungarian forces at the Don River, it sabotaged further participation in the war. The Hungarian government opposed the Germans on the Jewish question, yet economically it was the servant of the Third Reich. Finally, how should we judge the French communists? In 1939 and 1940, they systematically weakened the already feeble war effort of the French, and after the German victory, they offered their services to the victors. Starting with the 22nd of June, 1941, however, the French communists were in the vanguard of the armed struggle against the Germans.

It constitutes a separate problem to define what resistance meant in unoccupied satellite countries. Communist historians speak of an anti-fascist resistance in Hungary before March 19th, 1944, in spite of the fact that Miklós Kállay's gov-

ernment was not fascist and indeed tried to resist the Germans. If, however, active opposition to the Kállay government by the left is called resistance, then why not also the much more effective and larger scale opposition by the fascist Arrow Cross Party? One could even argue that the miners' and other strikes organized by the Arrow Cross Party did far more damage to the German war machine than barely discernible sabotage by leftists. Hungary lost the last vestiges of her independence on October 15, 1944; only after that date was there a clear distinction between collaborators and resisters. Much the same can be said about Romania, where the real fight was between the fascist Iron Guard and the fascistoid Royal Government, rather than between the resistance and collaborators.

In brief, opposition to, or cooperation with, the Germans largely depended on local politics. Understandably, politically active Europeans were primarily motivated by national and party interests and only in a secondary way by ideological identification with Nazism, or its rejection.

Historians generally speak of three kinds of collaboration and three categories of collaborators. The first is made up of enthusiasts, ideologically committed to Nazism, whom we recognize in such persons as Jacques Doriot in France, Anton Mussert in the Netherlands, Léon Degrelle in Belgium, and Béla Imrédy in Hungary. The conservative nationalists make up the second category. They tended to support Hitler because of his anti-bolshevism and anti-Semitism, but they did so with reservations. The third, and by far the largest, category, were those who bowed to what appeared to be inevitable, and tried to do as well as they could for themselves under the control of the Germans. A large proportion of industrialists and businessmen, and of workers and peasants, belonged to this category. I am sure there is no need for me to point out that the enthusiasts were smallest in number. Characteristically, the Germans did not put their trust in these fanatics, exploiting them principally as agents and for propaganda purposes. In the eyes of Hitler and his associates, National Socialism was not for export; whenever they could, the Germans entrusted the leadership of defeated or allied countries to conservative anti-communists. Hitler trusted Horthy and not the Arrow Cross leader Ferenc Szálasi, the Romanian dictator General Antonescu and not the fascist Horia Sima, Pétain and Laval and not the French right-wing extremists, Marcel Déat and Jacques Doriot. The local National Socialists were only entrusted with the leadership when the conservative nationalists proved a failure from the German point of view, as Miklós Horthy did in the autumn of 1944, when he tried but failed to surrender to the Soviet Union.

Let me briefly return to the propositions I posited earlier. According to the first, the history of collaboration and resistance was everywhere falsified by official government policy, by historians, by the press, and indeed, by the received wisdom of the community. From Denmark to Greece, and from France to Russia,

the lie, spread by every government, was accepted that only a small minority cooperated with the occupiers, German dominion being rejected by the great majority. The Germans and their local hirelings were made responsible for the country's tragedy, the people, on the other hand, allegedly, liberated themselves from under the German yoke or, at the very least, played a major part in the country's liberation.

That sort of theory makes political sense. After the war, every party put in a claim for political power on the basis of its resistance record. The uncomfortable truth is, however, that with Poland the sole exception, in every country in Europe, be it defeated and occupied, or a satellite state, more people cooperated with the Germans in one form or another than resisted. As German military successes multiplied in the early years of the war, so the number of those desiring to cooperate with the Germans grew, and as the Nazi successes waned in the closing years of the war, so the number of collaborators diminished. The huge number of denunciations, received by the SS and the Gestapo from the general public in Hungary in 1944, caused what amounted to a national trauma later, but much the same was true of France, Norway, and the Netherlands. According to most recent research, the Germans received an amazingly large number of denunciations in all these countries. A young Czech historian, František Janaček, calculated that roughly the same number of informers—several tens of thousands—served the Soviet-Communist system in Bohemia as had served the German occupiers. Informers and stool pigeons have existed in many periods, and world-wide.

Even in countries that ring loud with the praise of resistance heroes and where, according to historians, German propaganda proved unsuccessful, more men volunteered for service in the Waffen SS than took an active part in the resistance. In the Netherlands, 22,000–25,000 men served the Germans as armed volunteers. Similarly, in Norway, Denmark, Belgium, the Baltic countries, and the Western Ukraine, more young men proved willing to sacrifice their lives in the war against Bolshevism, than to risk their lives fighting the Germans and their hirelings. Finally, the number of collaborators depended not only on the domestic situation but also on the Germans' willingness to recruit collaborators. They were most keen to do so in the northern and Baltic states, where the inhabitants were reckoned Nordic Aryans. On the other hand, no young Pole served in the Waffen SS, not only because Poles generally loathed the German occupiers, or because such traitors would have been killed by the Polish resistance, but also because the Waffen SS did not admit Poles into its ranks.

It is part of the truth that a significant proportion of those living under German occupation did not look on the German presence as an unbearable burden. Instead, the German presence was accepted as something that made it possible to settle accounts with various enemies at home, such as the communists or liberals, and even more so as something that made it possible for the country to rid itself of this or that national, racial, or religious minority, in the first place

the Jews. German occupation was felt to be almost unbearable right from the start in places—primarily Poland—where the Germans dealt brutally with everybody. Most recent research shows, however, that even in Poland thousands cooperated with the Germans in the annihilation of the Jews. In other words, there were many Poles who would have done everything possible to harm the Germans and the German war machine, but who nevertheless did not hesitate to report any Jew in hiding and even helped in their apprehension. True, a brave minority risked their lives, indeed frequently sacrificed their lives, to help the persecuted. Some of these heroes had been anti-Semites before the war, but now they were shocked into action by the consequences of their prejudices.

I do not think that after such preliminaries I need to say much about my third proposition, i.e. that in practice resistance was everywhere accompanied by what amounted to a civil war. The French called this *la guerre franco-française.* In it the fascist Milice was confronted by the maquis and other resistance movements, and the communist FTP (Francs Tireurs et Partisans) also frequently found itself in conflict with the Gaullist FFI (Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur). We are all too familiar with the dreadful civil war in Yugoslavia in which Croats, Serbs, Bosnians, Roman Catholics, and Serbian Orthodox, royalists and communists butchered each other. Or with the Polish tragedy, where the Home Army (Armija Krajowa, AK) fought not only the Germans but also the communist partisans (Armija Ludowa, AL), the nationalist partisans, the Ukrainian partisans, and the Soviet Russian partisans. There was a sort of civil war in Norway as well, and even in Hungary. In Hungary, it was actually not the left that fought the right, but it was the extreme right that used violence to try and overthrow the domination of the moderate right.

In a number of countries, primarily Poland, the Ukraine and Greece, the civil war outlasted the end of the World War II by a number of years. In Greece, royalists and non-communist republicans, in alliance with the British Army, and later the Greek Army, with American military support, defeated and destroyed the Communist Party (KKE), its Popular Front organisation (EAM) and military forces (ELAS).

Both the fight against the Germans and cooperation with the Germans served as an excuse for the oppression and even elimination of national, racial, and religious minorities. It was in the persecution of Jews that the Germans could best count on the ready assistance of local authorities and the masses. A few years later, the Soviet Union obtained the support of the masses and of non-communist politicians in a number of East European countries by giving the green light to, and indeed urging, the persecution and expulsion of German minorities. It is common knowledge that as early as 1943, President Edvard Beneš officially placed Czechoslovak foreign policy at the service of the Soviet Union, primarily in order to obtain permission for the expulsion of the vast German and Hunga-

rian minorities. Beneš did this at the helm of a country which, during the war, had not really distinguished itself in resistance. Only a few Czech intellectuals, amongst them Václav Havel, have so far dared to acknowledge in public that it was the expulsion of the Germans that turned Czechoslovakia into a committed satellite of the Soviet Union. The extirpation of the Jews and the expulsion of the Germans also fatally weakened the educated middle classes in Eastern and Central Europe, making it possible for the offspring of workers and peasants to take over in the name of the Communist Party. We shall have to come to terms with the fact that, in Eastern and Central Europe, the most important consequence of German and Soviet occupations has been the destruction of minorities, and of the old educated middle classes.

Some of my listeners will have no doubt noticed that I have said nothing so far about the much debated Jewish collaboration and Jewish resistance. In my opinion, ours is not the right context for such a discussion. One cannot apply the same standards to the deeds of a man in mortal danger and of another who is not on the threshold of death. In Nazi dominated Europe only the lives of Jews, of nomadic or mixed race Gypsies, and of the Polish intelligentsia were in permanent danger because of their origin or social position.

I want to stress that nothing I have said about the resistance wishes to throw doubt on its effectiveness. Polish, Soviet, Ukrainian, Yugoslav, and Greek partisans did serious damage to the German war effort. Nor can there be any doubt that partisan war was, in many cases, necessary and morally right. But numerous problems raised by resistance and collaboration were not solved by either World War II or by the retribution and political arrangements that followed it. Yet these problems cast a growing shadow on our lives.

The 1907 Hague Convention not only permits but approves outright cooperation with the military authorities of an occupying power. This is particularly true of such occupied countries that concluded an armistice with the victor. France was one of these, and the legal situation there was in no way affected by the fact that Brigadier General De Gaulle personally rejected the armistice. The situation was more involved in Norway, for there the army had surrendered, but the king and the government, who both had fled to London, urged further resistance and looked on the surrender as a military agreement of purely local validity.

It had been the aim of the Hague Convention to reduce the brutality of occupiers to a minimum. But the same Hague Convention—in another paragraph—authorized partisan warfare, demanding only that those engaging in it wear a clear distinguishing mark, and that their arms be not concealed; furthermore, that they be subjected to military discipline, and that they belong to an identifiable command structure. These limitations clearly ignore the essence of partisan warfare, which relies on concealment for its efficacy. No one in World War II obeyed the provisions of the Hague Convention related to collaboration and resistance by the civilian population. Massacres, torture and mass execution of

hostages and prisoners were everyday events. It is common knowledge that increasing partisan activity, bloody terror, and counter-terror, have been characteristic of every warlike conflict since that time.

This takes us to my fourth and last proposition, the question of retribution and the purges. As I mentioned, retribution all over Europe shows surprising similarities. There is, therefore, no justification in the complaint of some that there was no retribution in their country, nor, on the contrary, in allegations of state terror.

Purges, and the political and social transformation which accompanied them, started well before the German retreat. Governments of the right and fascist militiamen executed presumed and real enemies by the thousands, and confiscated and shared amongst themselves the property of their victims. The expropriation and redistribution of Jewish property was particularly destructive of the existing social order and implied a fatal decline in moral standards. The social revolution was not initiated by the resistance or the Anglo-American-Soviet allies, but by the Nazis and those who collaborated with them. It was Hitler, and not Stalin, who exterminated the aristocratic Prussian officer corps in 1944.

The resistance movements, too, started retribution and purges at an early date, well before the German retreat. In Poland and France, the search for collaborators and traitors, who were then judged by a secret tribunal, was always a major resistance activity. Assassination squads made sure that sentences of death were carried out. In France it was common practice to send toy coffins to prominent collaborators. Unavoidably, in the midst of a partisan war, members of the civilian population, primarily local officials such as village headmen, feared the wrath of partisans as much as the brutality of the German forces of occupation and of their own government troops. Both sides imposed taxes and requisitioned provisions.

General retribution itself started on the day of liberation when the number of anti-fascist resisters suddenly multiplied many times over. Early retribution frequently took the form of lynching, with British, American, or Soviet troops looking on, unable or unwilling to interfere. Figures relating to the number of the guilty who thus got their just deserts and to the number of innocents who perished, are only approximate. The estimates of historians are shocking in themselves, although they are nowhere near as high as those which former collaborators and sensation hungry journalists would like us to believe. A few historians maintain that in France retribution had a hundred thousand victims, and even the generally cautious Robert Aron speaks of thirty to forty thousand. It would appear, however, that the resistance in France executed a "mere" ten thousand, without proper legal proceedings, in the days immediately preceding and following liberation. Figures for Belgium and Northern Italy—liberated late—are similar. In Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Baltic states early retribu-

tion, more or less orchestrated from above, was not so much directed against collaborators as against the local German population. The former West German ministry for refugee affairs estimated at two million the number of German civilians who perished this way. In Slovakia, Transylvania, and the Vojvodina in Yugoslavia, Germans and Hungarians were the principal casualties. Figures relating to Titoist massacres in Southern Austria, Slovenia, and Croatia are just as unreliable as those concerning massacres carried out during the war in Yugoslavia by Germans, Italians, Croat Ustasha, members of the Volksbund, and the Hungarian military. What is undoubtedly true is that, during the war and immediately afterwards, several hundred thousand citizens of Yugoslavia perished as a result of a series of retributions and counter-retributions, purges and counter-purges.

Curiously, this sort of spontaneous killing tended to occur in the territory of the defeated countries rather than in that of the satellites. The people, in their righteous wrath, turned on their torturers: that is how national historians explain things. No doubt, righteous wrath had its role, but I suspect that bad conscience and the unadmitted memory of collaboration, also spurred on the avengers. The aim of many was to remove those in the know from the ranks of the living, destroying the evidence, or else to distinguish themselves in haste as anti-fascists.

In Belgium, the Netherlands, and particularly in France, popular anger, more or less directed from above, struck with extraordinary vehemence at women who had had an affair with German soldiers, and had perhaps even borne their children. Those guilty of such a *collaboration horizontale* were lucky to escape with a shaven head; a few were beaten to death. Later, facing courts, these women were charged with treason and with sullying the honour of the nation. In addition to other punishments, they were condemned to *indignité nationale.* French judges thus held that it was the nation, and not the woman herself, who had the right to dispose over her sexual life and womb. In the Netherlands, these women (*moffenmeiden*) were frequently tarred and feathered.

Newly formed anti-fascist governments gave high priority to retribution. Former satellite states and Austria were also obliged by the armistice agreements to punish fascists and collaborators. The Germans alone were not allowed to sit in judgment over their own war criminals; indeed, for a time they were not even permitted to form governments.

Prevention, retribution, and purges were in the programme of the anti-fascist governments. They wanted to make impossible a return to power of the fascists; they wished to punish the guilty, and they wanted to be rid of undesirable elements, particularly in the administration. Because the left came to power almost everywhere, and because communists at the very least were members of governments, the initial retribution and purges were on an extraordinarily large scale. In Greece, however, where the communist resistance was already defeated in

1944 by the allied British and Greek royal forces, retribution and purges were directed against anti-fascists of the left rather than against former collaborators.

In Norway, 250,000 individuals, close to 10 per cent of the population, had served the Germans in one way or another. After the war, 92,000 of them were tried, and 17,000 condemned to prison terms, thirty to death. Every single former member of the Nasjonal Samling was tried, as were all those who had served in the Waffen SS or—as nursing sisters—in German military hospitals.

As I have already mentioned, the Norwegians took the legal and moral aspects of retribution more seriously than perhaps any other nation. They conducted highly interesting debates on the legal and moral justification of sentencing people for having belonged to a legal party, the Nasjonal Samling, before the war, or on who were more guilty, those who had served the Germans for ideological reasons, or the opportunists. Were those guilty, it was asked, who collaborated with the occupiers to save what could be saved of the wealth of the nation or its independence?

In the Netherlands, 150,000 were arrested after the war; 154 of them were condemned to death. The imprisoned included individuals who were seen to have lunched with a German soldier, or to have given the Nazi salute. One wonders how many in Hungary could have been found guilty on such a basis.

In France, the courts sat in judgment over 60,000 collaborators, 7,055 of them were condemned to death, but only 794 were executed.

Austrian authorities arrested 10,000 Nazis in 1945 alone; the four occupying powers, primarily the Americans, took many more former Nazi party members into custody. Almost 70,000 of the 300,000 civil servants were dismissed. Austrian people's courts condemned 43 to death, thirty of whom were executed.

In Italy, retribution and purges were no simple matter, in part because the south of the country was liberated a whole year before the northern part, and because the first anti-fascist government, Marshal Badoglio's, was largely made up of former fascists. Between 10,000 and 15,000 were executed without legal proceedings, and 500–1,000 fascists were condemned to death by the courts, but only forty or fifty of those were executed.

I do not dare to say much about the countries occupied by the Soviet Union. Data are either lacking or full of gaps, and steps taken against fascists soon fused with violent measures taken against democrats and even communists. To the best of my knowledge, 476 persons were condemned to death by people's courts in Hungary, and 189 of them were executed. I am not sure, however, whether this number includes only genuine fascists and war criminals. One thing is certain: the ratio of fascists and collaborators condemned in Hungary in no way exceeded the number of those found guilty in western democratic countries. In the spring of 1944, a large number of Hungarian local officials and mayors carried out, without a word of protest, illegal and often merely word-of-mouth instructions relating to the Jews. Indeed, they frequently anticipated the

instructions. Most of these officials moved west with the Germans early in 1945 and so escaped justice.

It is not possible for me to give an account here of the theoretical, legal, and practical problems of retribution. Suffice it to say that almost everywhere *ad hoc* courts sat in judgment over the fascists, and that political parties newly come to power had a great influence on their work, not only in the East but also in the Western democracies. Of the victorious great powers, the Americans alone took prevention, retribution, and purges seriously. Soviet and British military authorities behaved pragmatically right from the start; in both Germany and Austria they did not hesitate to employ former Nazis if they had need of their skills or labour. It soon became obvious that the new political parties could not really do without the political and economic support of the former collaborators. It must be remembered that, in most European countries, more people collaborated than took part in the resistance. For this reason, apart from the Cold War, in most countries (but not in Norway) the release of the condemned and the reemployment of dismissed officials was soon under way, and so was competition for the votes of former collaborators. In Hungary, in 1945, what were called the little men of the Arrow Cross, considerably boosted Communist Party membership. In Austria, the Social Democratic Party benefited most from the votes of former Nazis. By the late 1950s, most collaborators and fascists had been set free; their reintegration did not cause any special problems. Meanwhile, in many places, the authorities dealt very unfairly with such former members of the resistance as did not belong to the new state party.

*Epurazione mancata*, the purge that never was, is a term much favoured by Italian historians. Similar voices in France complain of *épuration manquée,* and they have found an echo in other countries in Europe. Naturally, complaints of the opposite sort are also oft rehearsed. No doubt, many an SS mass murderer, Frenchman with blood-stained hands, brutal Hungarian gendarmerie officer, or other blackguard did not get his just deserts. It is equally true, however, that thousands of innocent people were executed or imprisoned after the war. But what is also beyond doubt is that, for the first time in history, a whole continent made an attempt to settle accounts with its own political crimes and criminals. Bearing in mind the unbelievably long series of crimes committed by the Germans and other Europeans exploiting German domination, the retribution that followed cannot be described as either illegal or exaggerated. The trouble is, rather, that so far neither the historians, nor the jurists, nor the public have given deservedly serious attention to the issues involved in collaboration, resistance, and retribution. ❧

Éva V. Deák

# A Show Trial Case History

## The Story of Györgyi Tarisznyás



The ten years of Stalinist dictatorship in Hungary were marked by a spate of political show trials, of which the most sensational was the 1949 Rajk trial. This was such not only on account of the large number of defendants and the savage sentences, but chiefly because, for the first time, the defendants were leading communists. Mátyás Rákosi, the communist leader, on the excuse of the anti-Tito purges ordered by Stalin, settled accounts with his rivals in the party. The principal defendants were either executed or imprisoned for life.

The charges were subversion and conspiracy with President Tito of Yugoslavia—the whole scenario being concocted in Moscow, or in the Budapest headquarters of the secret police. Some of the 150 to 200 witnesses later became defendants in their turn.

Györgyi Tarisznyás, a schoolmistress from Paks, was 28 when she was imprisoned, and 34 when she was released. Of these six years she spent three and a half in solitary confinement.

She was one of the numerous supporting players in the trial—and one of the few who were not members of the party. But her story is surely more of an enigma than that of any of the others. It is a succession of bizarre, practically unfathomable, episodes as if in a fantastic and confused thriller ending without a dénouement. No rational explanation for the unexpected switches in the scenario has been found to this day—and perhaps none ever will be.

The majority of the persons involved were politicians who knew that the stakes were high and that there were good reasons for that. History was much more unjust to an innocent young girl, unconnected with politics, who had never done any harm to anyone.

The educated, pretty schoolmistress had met the ambassador of Yugoslavia—this part of the evidence was

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*worked as chief editor in the foreign languages section at Corvina Books before retiring. Corvina Books, founded at the time of the first releases of political prisoners, employed a number of them. Corvina Books were also the first publishers of this journal.*

true. Following a brief acquaintance, the ambassador asked her to marry him. This triggered off the misfortune that befell her family. When the Rajk affair blew up, the ambassador, Karlo Mrazović, was no longer in Hungary; his absence made it easier for the authorities to accuse him of having arranged a meeting between Rajk and Ranković, Tito's interior minister, and to interrogate his fiancée as a witness.

Györgyi was detained in 1949, and she spent the next few months being coached for her part in the trial. When the trial was over, she was sometimes left to languish in solitary confinement, but also, on several ocassions, she would be taken out to a cakeshop, or a theatre, and even home to visit her people—but always under escort. A year after her arrest, her father and mother and her grandmother were gaoled, along with a friend, Mari Záboji. The latter was placed in the same cell, presumably because Györgyi had begun to show signs of depression. Which of the ÁVH (secret police) officers took pity on Györgyi, one wonders. Why were they interested in her state of mind? And why was it necessary to make the whole family disappear?

Two years afterwards, Györgyi's father died in prison—without a charge ever having been preferred against him, without his ever having been brought to trial and with no sentence ever pronounced on him—a man registered in the prison rolls under a false name. Her mother and grandmother, as well as her friend, were released after three years, but for some time to come they were forced to live "incognito", at a place of residence officially designated for them, under police surveillance.

What makes Györgyi's an unusual story isn't the suffering she had to endure. Other people went through a more dreadful ordeal in Rákosi's prisons. The odd thing about her story was that the secret police, as if it were directing a play, employed the whole arsenal of its stock-in-trade against her, producing quite inexplicable changes and turns in the script.

Györgyi was born on 3 September 1921, in Paks, a small town of 12,000 people on the Danube near the Yugoslav border. Her father, Gerő Tarisznyás, of Armenian stock, a native of Transylvania, was chief of the local administration.

The whole family were tremendously popular with local people. Gerő Tarisznyás, jovial, convivial, was known for his integrity and benevolence, and his patriotism. His attractive wife won everyone over with her kind manner.

The Tarisznyáses' popularity was enhanced by Györgyi, pretty, intelligent and cultured. Even at a tender age she gave striking evidence of wisdom and fair-mindedness. She was reserved and exercised great self-control—very much so. She was dark-haired, dark-eyed, with features that attracted attention, and a well-proportioned figure, with grace in her step. With a degree in art history from Budapest University she had an excellent command of German, French and English, and, following her prison years, also of Russian. She also had a little Italian and Serbian.

Before being sent to prison, she had only had her teaching job at Paks. After she had been carried off to prison, the staff were made to remove all group photographs in her school in which she was seen as a teacher, and at public meetings people were required, with a good deal of fist-shaking, to condemn her treasonable act.

She won her release from prison on 28 January 1955, and was rehabilitated from her political disgrace. In 1955, she joined Corvina, the foreign languages publishers, in Budapest. In 1972, she was appointed chief art editor. At Corvina I met her and became great friends with her. In 1960, she married István Farkas, a journalist. She died in 1979, of cancer.

Those are brief biographical notes about her.

This account is based on taped interviews given to me by Györgyi's mother, her husband, and her friend, and on what she had told me or other friends of hers, and on whatever I managed to dig up from back numbers of newspapers and documents. As I went on with my investigations I began to see more and more clearly how much she had been going out of her way to suppress her whole story and keep it to herself; all she would tell her husband was a few fragments. She wouldn't tell her mother more, despite the fact that she had lived through similar experiences. Intimidation was still at work in her mind.

On 11 January 1948, Antal Klein, a Smallholders Party MP from Tolna County, in response to a request from the Prime Minister, Lajos Dinnyés, hosted a large shooting party on his estate, for heads of diplomatic missions in Budapest. Among the invited guests were ranking members of the county administration and of nearby Paks, which meant, of course, town clerk Tarisznyás and members of his family too. Mrs Tarisznyás, Györgyi's mother, says:

> Police were out in force to protect the prominent guests, and following the shoot, a dinner party was given for 120 or 140. Györgyi, as a teacher with a degree in French, was seated next to the French ambassador. During the after-dinner ball, she made the acquaintance of the Yugoslav ambassador, Karlo Mrazović, a card-carrying member of the Communist Party since 1919, who fought on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War, and was a member of Tito's Partisan forces in their national liberation war. After Budapest, in September 1948 he was posted to Moscow for a brief tour of duty. Later he was made Speaker of the Croatian parliament, a major general of the reserve and, member of the Yugoslav Presidential Council. He died on 23 September 1987, a good-looking, tall and lean Croat who spoke perfect Hungarian (he had been educated in Hungary).
> Some three weeks afterwards, Antal Klein and Györgyi received invitations from Mrazović to attend an evening party to be given at the embassy. Györgyi's friend, Mari Záboji, who lived in Budapest, was also invited. Mari, with her two small sons, would often come and visit us at Paks. She had been staying there at the time of the shooting party. Two weeks later, we received a call from the embassy,

saying that the ambassador would like to pay his respects to us. He came, accompanied by his secretary. This call was repeated several times, and Györgyi would also go up to Budapest, staying with Mari Záboji. Mrazović would take them to the theatre and they would dine out together. Before long, Mrazović asked Györgyi to marry him, but said he needed Tito's permission to marry a foreign girl. We asked them to wait, her father was definitely against his daughter marrying someone abroad, and they hardly knew each other.

One day in June, they went for a walk in the Buda hills. Mrazović kept looking around to see if they were followed. He was being tailed, he sensed that trouble was brewing, and feared for Györgyi.

On 15 June 1949, Györgyi was on the other bank of the Danube having a swim and sunbathing, when two men came looking for her. They rowed across, and they also looked up Antal Klein. They told them they were under orders to take them up to Budapest, but that they would bring them back in a few hours. From this moment on until we heard her voice in the radio broadcast of the trial we knew nothing about her.

I went up to Budapest, accompanied by Antal Klein Jr., but we learned nothing about them. The son of a bootmaker at Paks called on me. He said his sister was the girlfriend of a Russian officer, and said perhaps she could be of help. I went to see her, and met the Russian officer, who spoke Hungarian. He said his father had been a Uniate priest in Hungary. He promised to find out within a day where Györgyi was. Next day, he brought word that Györgyi had been interned at Kistarcsa, he had seen her there, he said. But Györgyi was never at Kistarcsa. I sent her a small handkerchief as a token. On the third day, the officer came again and said he had handed it over to Györgyi, and she had been happy to have it. He offered to help our whole family escape to Austria. Just conceivably, he would have got us arrested on the border. Quite probably he was not even Russian, but an ÁVH man. After a time the contact broke off—he could no longer be found.

Györgyi spent the first few years in that summer dress she was taken away in and she had only her coat to cover herself with. Later she was issued with prison garb. She would shiver plenty in the unheated cells. During interrogation sessions, an ÁVH colonel slapped her repeatedly. Soon, she was willing to confess to anything; at their request she learnt her role off by heart. Before the trial, they took her to her old downtown beauty parlour and hairdresser's. The street was closed off and the only one allowed to stay in the shop was the person who was attending to her. They took the leading Budapest couturier to the prison to make her a tailored suit.

We know very little about those three months from June to September. She was alone, intimidated and humiliated, in the basement of the secret police headquarters. (In her cell, she spotted a rat, and that elicited such fits of desperation that they transferred her to a better cell.) True to ÁVH practice, she would be interrogated by "good guys" and "bad guys" in turn: now she would be humiliated, now they would comfort her. Now they would threaten her with being left to rot alive, now they would hold out to her the hope of immediate release. In

the days preceding the trial, coffee, cakes, and fruit were laid on, and she was swotting up her part. On entering the courtroom, she was furnished with a handbag to make her appearance as an "outside" witness all the more convincing.

The main hearing started on the 16th of September 1949 in the grand concert hall of the Liszt Academy of Music. The defendants and witnesses—close to two hundred—appeared somewhat fattened up on better food, and were smartly dressed in dark suits, white shirts, collar and tie. Györgyi wore her new tailored suit.

During the trial, Györgyi first gave an account of how she had met and become friends with Mrazović. Up to this point, her story was true; the rest of it had been rammed into her. An official *Blue Book* (*László Rajk and his Associates on Trial in a People's Court*. Szikra, 1949), which was published the day after the trial, and obviously printed in advance, reported her evidence:

**Tarisznyás**: One day in September 1948, on my way home from school (in Paks), I ran into Mrazović near our house. He complained that he was tailed, and that he had to meet his Hungarian friends in ways that made sure that they did not get into trouble on his account. He asked me to go and see Antal Klein and request him to make it possible for him and some of his friends to come to Biritópuszta to shoot[...] Dr Antal Klein and Mrazović agreed that within a few days they would indeed come to shoot. Mrazović asked me to accompany him on the shoot. As I saw no reason why I shouldn't, I agreed.

**Judge**: Now tell us how that so-called shoot was arranged. How did Mrazović get there, and who was with him?

**T.**: On one of the days that followed, we walked to the bus stop at kilometre stone 116 along the road to Szekszárd. A few hundred metres from there, a path runs across the field. A two-horse sulky was waiting there. Antal Klein sat in the sulky. He said he had been asked by Mrazović to come and pick him up, in person. After waiting for about half an hour, we caught sight of Mrazović's car. He got out, along with a man in a green loden coat, and dark glasses. When I was confronted with him at the police station, I learned that that person was László Rajk, the former minister of the interior. We got into the carriage[...] and stopped at Biritópuszta, at a good distance from any houses. Antal Klein stayed in the carriage, and explained which way we should go to reach the nearest field-guard's hut. Mrazović and the man in the green coat took the two shotguns and set off in the direction that had been pointed out.

**J.**: Will you describe for us the behaviour of Mrazović and Rajk at that so-called shoot, so far as you were able to judge.

**T.**: When we reached the field-guard's hut I saw a man dressed in hunter's wear and carrying a shotgun waiting there. He was fortyish, of medium height. Mrazović asked me to stay in the hut and prepare the snacks. I found it odd that he did not bother to introduce the man to me, just as he had failed to introduce the other man when they got out of the car. They then talked, pacing up and down outside the hut. A few times, when they were close to me, I heard that one of the men

spoke in some kind of Slav language. I'm sure it was not Russian, it was probably Serbian. The man in the green coat was speaking Hungarian, and Mrazović was acting as interpreter. Sometimes, when they came near to me, I would catch a few words of their conversation. For example, Mrazović was speaking about Yugoslavia, and said it was time to act. The other man, the one who is unknown to me, was speaking this Slav language, and so I was unable to get what he was saying[...] I heard the names of the government ministers Rákosi and Farkas mentioned several times. When they had finished their conversation, they went into the hut[...] Mrazović, seeing how I was rather huffish, turned his attention to me and started talking to me. Then we turned back and made for the sulky, and the unknown man and his two escorts set off in the direction of Csámpapuszta[...]. Mrazović made apologies, and said that the man in the green coat, who was standing outside the hut, was an old acquaintance of his, and that they'd got so involved in their conversation they'd quite forgotten about the shooting. Then we got into the sulky, and were driven back to the road to Szekszárd by Antal Klein, where Mrazović and Rajk got into the car. Before driving away, Mrazović took me aside and impressed on me that I was to say not a word about this meeting to anyone[...]

**J.**: Come here, please. (T. walks up to the judge's rostrum.) Do you recognize in this picture the person who was waiting by the field-guard's hut? Take a look at it.

**T.**: (Takes a look at the picture.) Yes, I do.

**J.**: Are you certain?

**T.**: I am.

**J.**: I establish that the picture in which the witness recognized the person in question is a photograph of Ranković, the Yugoslav Minister of the Interior, that is attached to the documents.

Györgyi was also shown a group photograph and told to point out Rajk in it. The prison-guard, as he was escorting her back to her cell, reprimanded her, saying she had made a gross mistake, as it was not Rajk that she had pointed out.

Györgyi told me that, although it was true that there was a field-guard's hut in the vineyard, it was not at the spot the "script" of the trial had it. For this reason a trip to the place by curious Western correspondents covering the trial was delayed for several days, while a field-guard's hut was hastily knocked up at the right spot. Previously, the ÁVH had photographed 20 field-guard's huts. On the very day she was supposed to be in the company of the alleged sportman in the alleged field-guard's hut, Györgyi happened to be teaching, and actually made an entry in the attendance register. Later on she learned that the register, which established her alibi, had disappeared.

A letter written on the 10th of November 1949 by Imre Klein, a son of Antal Klein, alleged organizer of the purported shoot, who is living abroad, was published, under the title "An Encounter That Never Was", in Nos. 5-6, 1987, of the review *História*. There Klein said:

In her evidence at the trial Györgyi Tarisznyás says that my father, seated in a two-horse sulky, was waiting for Mrazović and another person near kilometre stone

116. I consider it necessary to point out that we do not own any sulky to which two horses can be harnessed. My father couldn't have borrowed one, since no one around there owns one[...] Why did Mrazović need to take Road No 6 to come to us? My father says in his evidence that he had to drive a carriage to Road No 6 to pick up Mrazović because it was not possible to drive a car down the path across the fields from there to reach our place. My father had lived there for 32 years, and it's strange that he's unaware that the road to Kölesd leads to our place—that our chateau is right next to it. It is a first-class paved road—Mrazović knew that[...]. But neither Rajk's nor the witnesses' confessions make it clear how the other party— Ranković—had come to the spot, the field-guard's hut. Or was Ranković so familiar with the area, the terrain, that, after driving his car across the Yugoslav border, he headed straight for our vineyard? [...] If Rajk needed a guide, how could his Yugoslav counterpart have known paths across fields there?

This meeting was reported by all the Hungarian press. I am quoting one report—the tone and the style are characteristic of the cold war period. The paper *Magyar Nap* of the 16th of September 1949, headlining the story as "The Tito–Rajk Gang Hatched its Murderous Plots Here—Visiting the Field-Guard's Hut at Paks," said:

Creeping grapevine almost hides the tiny field-guard's hut, the scene of the meeting. This is where the sneaking traitors, the prowling murderers, ducking their heads, slipped in through the low door of the small shed. This was the serpents' nest. Here they brewed their diabolical plot to murder Mátyás Rákosi and the leaders of the Hungarian people, and hatched their plan to bring slavery to the Hungarian workers and peasants[...]

Györgyike will be made queen. Györgyi Tarisznyás, the guide of spies, used to teach boys and girls at Paks. In the town, we learned a thing or two about the daughter of the sacked reactionary notary. She was a high-flyer. At first, they would invite her to attend shoots, acting as interpreter; later, she attached herself to Mrazović. From time to time, she would disappear from town, driven away in American limousines to who knows where[...]

Then, the Paks kulaks spread the rumour that British paratroopers will come, and then Györgyike would be the queen. Splendour and power—that's what she was hankering after. The girl who smuggled spies along paths across fields, and who, hiding behind the mask of a demure young schoolmistress, had the temerity to look into the eyes of children who had been left in her care. Children for whom she meant destitution and despair, and suffering, war and death[...] A coolly calculating, wicked and ruthless creature.

To the end of her days, Györgyi felt pangs of conscience for giving evidence against Rajk. She accused herself of being responsible for a man's death. After her release, she confessed to a priest, but she was unable to free herself of the burden that was weighing on her conscience.

Colonel Vladimir Farkas, a former ÁVH officer, in a 1990 book *Nincs mentség* (There is no Excuse. Interart Stúdió), says:

I had learnt of a Rajk–Brankov confession which seemed impossible to me. It concerned the clandestine meeting at Paks between Rajk and Ranković, the Yugoslav Minister of the Interior. When it came to my knowledge that László Rajk (was alleged to have) met him on the territory of this country, I told myself this can't be true.

Later General Fedor Belkin of the Soviet secret police—he took over as the man in charge of the interrogations of prisoners—said that "another Paks must never happen again." It was a sign of their cynicism that this realization never prompted them to change their conduct.

No proceedings were taken against Györgyi at this initial stage. ÁVH officers claimed she was being kept under house arrest because it was feared that the Americans might kidnap her. Around this time she would be held alternately in gaol or in various villas in Buda. She was broken in body and spirit in prison, but they would provide for her, on and off, a touch of relaxation and entertainment. Györgyi's mother says:

Once the trial was over, in early October, at Paks, a little girl came running after us in the street, to tell us Györgyi was here! Indeed there she was, escorted by a woman, the black car behind them. It later turned out that was a certain Lieutenant Erzsi: she was Györgyi's permanent escort. We took them home, offered them things, and talked. We tried to reassure her that things were going to get sorted out. This happened twice more. Györgyi told us that they gave her translating jobs.

Around that time I went up to Budapest, I stayed at my younger sister's in Hegyalja út. A young man showed up, bringing news that I could meet Györgyi, I'll see then how well she was doing, and what a beautiful place she was staying at. I got into a curtained car, and I was driven to a villa on Rózsadomb. A man, introducing himself as Captain Reh, drew my attention as we were walking across a lovely garden, to the sound of Györgyi playing the piano. Enormous french windows painted white, a well-tended lawn. Inside, in the large entrance hall, Györgyi came in, escorted by Lieutenant Erzsi, in a new tailored suit. We were not allowed to hug each other, we were ushered into a blue drawing room: there was a gorgeous spread on a table, tropical fruits, cold buffet, champagne, caviare. A liveried footman served us, whom I recognized as a "driver" I had seen on an earlier occasion. Two or three men were present in addition to us. There was some superficial small talk, about matters without interest. Györgyi was reserved, her manner was stiff. After forty-five minutes, my escort said it was time for us to leave. Later, Györgyi told me she had never lived in that villa—she had been taken there a couple of hours before, there she had changed her clothes—they had brought her from secret police headquarters. Armed sentries were posted at the four corners of the villa—Reh said that was to prevent the enemy kidnapping Györgyi.

On New Year's eve, Györgyi, along with her mother, was taken to the Municipal Theatre, to see *Die Fledermaus*—of course in the company of plainclothes men.

Meanwhile, Györgyi's father, the notary, had been dismissed and the house in Paks that went with the job had had to be vacated. They were given another home, but only lived there for a few weeks: one day Captain Reh made them a splendid offer. If they were to move to Budapest, Györgyi would be released instantly. They ought to change their surname, as the surname that had featured in the trial might cause inconvenience to them. They took Györgyi's mother to Budapest, to look for a home. This was to be at 28 Budakeszi út, a four-room cottage and garden, with no next-door neighbours.

Everyone, Györgyi included, believed that now with the trial over and her having dutifully given her evidence, things were going to straighten out—after all, they had encouraged her with just that prospect. Her food improved, she lived in a villa for a while on Virányos út, where several of her companions in misfortune had also stayed. True, she was not permitted to put on her own clothes—they gave her a pair of pyjamas and Erzsi would not leave her for a moment. Still, conditions there were agreeable enough, at least in daytime. But at night terrible moaning and shouting could be heard coming from the basement, Györgyi told me. Mari Záboji says:

> Following the trial, Györgyi was almost a free woman—at least that's what we believed. We met on several occasions, but we were never left alone. Once when she was taken home to their place in Budakeszi út, she managed to find an opportunity to tell me how she was filled with despair by the thought that they made her bear false witness, and how she dreaded what her people might say about all her lies, what I would think of her, as we all knew that nothing whatsoever was true in her evidence. I answered there was no sense talking about that, as everybody knew what it was all about. Later, when I was interrogated, I was confronted with her, and it became obvious that they knew the whole conversation. We were that naive that it never occurred to us that when they had repaired the house and got it ready for the Tarisznyás family, they had bugged the whole place.

Györgyi's mother:

> Around the middle of September, one evening we heard loud screaming from the street. We rushed out, and there, at the door, stood Mari Záboji, held by the arms by two plainclothesmen. She was screaming and shouting that they had followed her for a long time, she had been running, and they had come after her in a car. What did they want? My husband berated them, threatening to call the police. They left. Then we rang up Reh, and told him the registration number of the car. He promised he would look into things, and call us back. He came to our place, said he was sorry, for two days they'd been chasing somebody who'd been dropped across the western border. A blonde, just like Mari, they'd mixed them up. You've got to be vigilant, etc. A few days later, Mari was arrested where she worked...
> In the evening of the 17th of September 1950, a uniformed officer I did not know and a civilian came to our place, and asked us to go in and talk things over. We

were happy, we thought that at last things would be cleared up. Two large cars were parked outside: they told Granny, she was seventy then, and me to get into one car. One civilian sat in front.

My husband was told to get into the other car, sitting between two soldiers. It was a long journey, at last we stopped in a courtyard, and then walked through a narrow corridor and entered a hospital ward. They told us to wait, and left. We waited and waited, and then someone called from outside, asking if we wanted something to eat.

No, we had eaten. Then you'd better go to bed, the prior conference will drag on for a while. The door was opened, and a man came in, bringing two suitcases of ours, and put them down. There was a change of clothes and underwear for my husband in one suitcase, and some in the other for the two of us. I've no idea what happened to all those things, we never saw them again. When I was released I was wearing the same clothes I had on when they took me into custody.

For two years, Major General Lajos Földy, former Chief of Military Counter-Intelligence, was the occupant of the cell adjoining Györgyi's. He taught her the basic rules of prison life. He kept tapping Morse code signals on the wall that divided their cells until she learnt the code. From then on, they would communicate with each other, in Hungarian or French, about literature and well nigh everything. On one occasion, he left her the stub of a pencil, hiding it behind a lavatory pan. Földy's former wife says:

My husband was arrested a month after he had been promoted to major general, on the pretence of a fabricated (through provocation) foreign currency offence. He spent five years in gaol, four of them in solitary confinement—clad in the same flannel suit he was arrested in. At the end of four years, he was "brought to trial"—they made him sign some sort of minutes so they would be able to pass sentence on him. In 1957 he was rehabilitated, there being no offence. We realized that he owed his life to the fact that he had been imprisoned for nearly a year at the time of the Rajk trial, consequently it was impossible to implicate him. All the other section heads in the Ministry of Defence were executed in the course of the Rajk trial. After his release, my husband told me he had written several poems while in prison, and by tapping on the wall, had taught them to Györgyi and Mari, so they would be able to recite them to me when they were released. I still have the poems. Györgyi once said to me that Lajos had saved her life. Obviously by keeping her spirits up.

Solitary confinement in the Vác Prison, a sense of being abandoned, and a feeling of guilt (she believed that if she had not borne false witness, her people would not have been imprisoned and Rajk would not have been sentenced to death) began to be more than she could bear, and she began to develop symptoms of melancholia. Then one day in January 1951, the door of her cell was flung open, and her best friend, Mari, was bundled into the cell. Mrs Endre Záboji (née Mária Szabó), who may have been gaoled out of regard for Györgyi

or else as a potential actor in some other trial, was 36 when she was locked up, and a mother of two sons, aged eight and six. Mari says:

> I was never brought to trial, no sentence was ever passed on me, but when I was released they made me sign a paper stating that I had been in internment at Kistarcsa for three years for failure to report an offence to the police. The truth is, to all appearances, they wanted to put an end to all the whisperings about the Rajk trial; that's why they pulled the Tarisznyás family in, and me too, and then they put me in a cell in the Vác prison with Györgyi, because they did not want her to crack up, they hoped that with my zest for life and my vivacity I would restore her spirits. It cost me three years of my life, but, though this may sound dreadful, I've no regrets, for the gaol became a wonderful medium for a relationship between two human beings, a medium which gave rise to plenty of fine things: we would recite poems, we would do exercises, we would put up our hair with threads we had pulled out of our blankets. Later, when we were given some books, we would take turns at reading out loud to each other, and we would study together. Then the day came when we could buy things out of our earnings, and we came by some cigarettes. We would tear up the boxes and make tiny playing cards. We used the stub of a pencil we'd found as well as a lilac-coloured liquid I got for a rash, to draw the cards, and with our backs to the peephole, we would play *chicaneuse*, patience for two. Whenever somebody came in, we would cover it with toilet paper. Whenever a search was likely, we shoved it all into the eternal hiding place of women. We even laughed, and sang.

In December 1951, they were all taken back to Budapest, to the Transit Prison. They stood up in a Black Maria, divided into stalls, blindfolded, hands bound behind their backs. Coughs told them that they were all there: Györgyi's parents, Györgyi and Mari. Györgyi's grandmother was not with them—she had been taken to Kistarcsa for a while. But in Budapest, they lost touch with Györgyi's father and mother—and she and Mari were put on different floors. They would be let out for their walk, each cell separately, for five to seven minutes at a time.

On the 24th of June 1952, a trial was arranged for Györgyi so she could be sentenced. Mari says:

> She was taken to Markó utca, and put into the jail of the public prosecutor's office, where she stayed for quite a few weeks. They furnished a room for her in an office, with a bed, a reading lamp, books, and good food. The so-called trial was held in an adjoining room. Once again, they went through the motions of the whole ridiculous affair.
> Acting on orders from Rákosi, the "witnesses" of the Rajk trial were then convicted on the basis of the *Blue Book*, that is to say, on the evidence that had been pressed out of them: "No further investigation is needed".

Györgyi was sentenced to six years. As she later told her husband, she fainted on hearing the sentence. She had believed she was going to be released at last.

Around that time she was first permitted to write a letter —it was fixed how many lines it could be. Her first letter, low-keyed, impersonal, is dated 14th of May 1952, and bears a control stamp. Surprisingly enough, she sent it to the Budapest address of her mother's younger sister, although by then she was well aware that her parents, too, had been in prison for two years. (Probably she was not supposed to know, in any event her parents received her letter.)

Dearest Mother and Father,

I am so happy I am now permitted to write. I am well, in perfectly good health. We're now quite close to a settlement. Perhaps we shall soon see each other. Be confident, and have patience. Look after your health. With affectionate kisses.

Your loving Györgyi.

Györgyi's mother:

I was first permitted to write to Györgyi when I was facing a gynaecological operation. I was being prepared for the operation when the door opened and a plain-clothesman came in and said to me: "Now you will write a few lines to Györgyi." "I can't do that," I said. "The surgeons in the operating theatre are waiting for me." "Never mind. Let 'em. Surgeons have lots of time. Write her a few lines, nice and reassuring, that Granny is having an operation. Not you, mind you."

Györgyi's next letter was dated the 18th of June 1952. Apparently, she had been fed the tale about the operation her grandmother was allegedly about to undergo before her mother had written, for Györgyi wrote as follows:

Thank you for your letter of the 31st May. I was told that Granny is in hospital and that you, Mum, are looking after her. Do write how she is. I heard she had an operation. Please, Mummy dear, don't withhold the truth from me. I am strong, don't worry about me. You didn't answer my question about your myoma, either! If Granny happens to have any wishes—if she would like to have some lemonade or bottled fruit, or if her pillow isn't a downfilled one, etc. just go ahead and ask, Mum. Please. For this once, please don't be modest, perhaps they'll grant it, and then you'll bring relief to her in her dreadfully difficult state. I am also writing to Dad—I've got permission for that. I am patient—don't you worry about me. I am in perfectly good health. I do physical exercises every morning, I study Russian, I read books. I stick to a time-table and use what time I have well. My nerves are all right—the fainting fits have ceased altogether. I am now in better health than I was two years ago.

Györgyi's grandmother also regained her freedom, and died in her ninetieth year. She was a mild-mannered, wise and modest woman, a true Granny. She once asked a prison-guard: "Pardon my asking, is it customary to lock up the

grandmother of every one who is convicted?" She was deeply religious, and her faith helped her through her years in prison.

Györgyi's father's nerves no longer stood up to the strain. He insisted that he be interrogated and sentenced, but no one bothered to speak to him. He did not want to go on living. He did not eat, he could not sleep. When his wife implored the doctor to put him on a better diet or he would perish, the doctor replied: "What do you want? To dine à la carte perhaps? Try to get it into your head where you are."

Györgyi's mother says:

> My husband was getting worse steadily, and several months later, on the 30th of August 1952, he died. A prison working party removed the body and buried him somewhere—we could never find the grave. We were forbidden to write and tell her her father had died. They said that in her nervous state she wouldn't be able to take it. You'll have to forge his signature on your letters to her, they said.
>
> Only on her release did Györgyi learn that her father was no longer alive—although the suspicion had crossed her mind.
>
> On the 25th of July 1953, the new Imre Nagy government amnestied all political offenders sentenced to terms not exceeding two years. This did not apply to Györgyi, but a hundred thousand political internees were discharged.
>
> Györgyi's mother and grandmother were released in September 1953, and were taken to Nyíregyháza, a town in northeastern Hungary, and placed under police surveillance.

Györgyi's mother says:

> I happened to be with my mother, in the Transit Prison. One evening they came in and said, the two of you are going to be released tomorrow.
>
> They told us to wash our things. We could not, as we had no change of clothes. I was wearing my late husband's shirt and a shabby skirt. Those men's shirts were like chrysanthemums, they were so frayed. The following morning they brought in the clothes that had been taken away from me a year and a half before (after I had worn them for a year and a half before that), along with those of my mother, all washed and ironed, and shoes with laces, as well as stockings, and we went downstairs and came into a large room where there was a huge table, and about twelve people were sitting around it, plainclothesmen as well as high-ranking soldiers wearing medals, they looked like Christmas trees. The person sitting in the middle announced we were going to be released. For the time being you'll be taken to a pleasant sanatorium. There you'll convalesce. After that, we shall see.
>
> They made us get into a car with curtained windows, an officer sat in front. When they released us, they threatened us that we mustn't tell anyone where we came from, nothing about ourselves or about our past or where we had spent the last few years. If we should betray anything about all that, we would be taken back. I looked at the paper they gave us, and it said I declare your three-year internment

to be terminated. You have been released from Kistarcsa. I showed him the paper: What is this? I've never been to Kistarcsa. I don't even know where it is. He turned to the driver and said: Make a detour, drive that way so she'll see the place. That paper is not important, he said to me. No one will ever ask you to produce it. It's a mere formality. We travelled for a very long time.

I even thought they were taking us to the Soviet Union. Eventually, we arrived at Nyíregyháza. There they took us into a house, a Jewish old people's home. Jews who had been in internal exile lived there, their relations abroad were paying a fortune to have them brought there from their place of internal exile. There were no poor people there, but there was a former member of the Upper House, and the proprietress of a café, and a charming eighty-year old lady who once owned the Budapest Amusement Park. One day, we were just eating, when two young men of around 25 came in, and sat down. Somehow the conversation turned to Stalin's death, and it just slipped out: "What, is Stalin dead?" (He had been dead for some six months.) The two boys exchanged looks. It was obvious to them that we too had come from the same place as they had.

Györgyi's letter, dated 28th of June 1954, to her mother:

I've been given permission to receive a visit!

Because of the initial of my name, and the length of my term, it will be on the morning of Sunday, 25th of July. Be here by 9 a.m. I'm longing to see Dad, too, but I understand only one person is allowed in, and I wonder if Dad's state of health would permit a long and exhausting trip like that. Make sure, Mum, you bring this postcard with you as a reference. The happiness of seeing each other again after so many years!!! I can hardly wait to hear your voice! You must not worry, dearest Mum. I've turned grey just a little, and outwardly I may have changed, but I am perfectly healthy, my stomach is back to normal, and for several months I've been free of pains in the joints. The good old sun shines through the window, and I will get a fine tan by the time of your visit. And, most importantly, I am calm and well-balanced. I am full of hope.

Györgyi's mother says:

On one of my trips to Budapest, coming from Nyíregyháza, I went to the house in Budakeszi út. A university professor lived there, he had got it several months earlier in exhange for his own place, which had been expropriated for some big boss. All trace of our belongings had gone. A next-door neighbour, a little old lady, said several lorries had taken away the furniture and things. "We did not even dare to look after all that they had done to you people".

Granny was staying with my sister, and I had come up from Nyíregyháza for a day on the 28th of January 1955, when a big black car pulled up outside the house. We happened to be eating, I had meant to take the 6 p.m. train back. My sister went downstairs to open the door, and there an officer in plain clothes said to her:

"No loud voices, please. No shouting! I've brought Györgyi." And they were coming up the stairs already. I dashed out of the room—and there she was, standing in the

entrance hall. "My little girl, you're back?" "Yes. Yes indeed. She's back, for good, he said. "Are you going to stay with us?" "Yes I am. I've been released." Then she looked round. "Oh, my God," she said. "How good it is to have you all here! Oh I'm so happy... Where's Dad?" I was unable to speak, I just bowed my head. "Oh, Mum. I knew. I could see it in your face when you came to visit me as early as a year ago. The way you looked kind of bewildered, and were confused whenever I asked you where he was." Tears began streaming down her cheeks, but she never said a word —she could control herself. The man who had come with her said goodbye. He said they would come again in a day or so anyway, and then we would be able to talk things over. Then he left.

A few days afterwards, Györgyi and I went downtown, and when we got off the bus, and she saw the crowds of people in the street, she said she couldn't bear it, she was feeling dizzy, and we were compelled to turn back and go home. After she had had her medical check-up, she was sent to a sanatorium at Lillafüred for a month-long holiday. On her return, they came to see us again and told us to search for a place to live. By then she'd had found a job— someone had told her that Corvina Publishing House was about to be established, so she saw the manager, and they took her on. We went to look at two flats. The first would have taken some time to get ready, so we went to see the other, where the janitor told us to go and fetch the key from the Yugoslav embassy. At this, Györgyi turned and rushed off. After that, they gave us a place in Ajtósi Dürer sor.

In a letter to the National Pension Fund, dated 18th of July 1958, Györgyi's mother wrote:

I am writing this to you, requesting that you kindly replace my present special pension of Ft 600 a month, with a pension which would ensure that I have enough to live on.

I was arrested by the ÁVH in September 1950, and for three years was kept in solitary confinement without ever having been interrogated, sentenced or interned. I was released in September 1953. My husband, who was arrested with me, died because of the privations of the prison, in the prison hospital in Mosonyi utca. In prison I underwent a serious operation, which has resulted in my being partially incapacitated. As we had lost our home, I and my mother were left with practically nothing but a tattered dress each. My mother, who is now 78, was also kept in prison for three years. I cannot possibly resume work as a teacher on account of my weakened physical and nervous system, yet after 17 years of service, I would be entitled to a salary twice as high as the pay I am receiving as a medical clerk.

I would appreciate it if you granted me a pension—either a widow's pension or a pension in my own right—one that would be enough for me to live on.

She wrote several more applications of that kind—all of them to no avail. On the other hand, she—as well as her mother—received a letter as early as the 10th of August 1956, which stated that "you were interned without cause, and must not suffer any disadvantage on this account."

An excerpt from an application by Györgyi to the Minister of the Interior, on the 11th of November 1959:

> ... in 1955, we made attempts to locate the grave my father is buried in. We learned that he had been registered under the name Tárkányos, perhaps in error or for some other reason that was put right[...] In 1956, I requested that my father be exhumed. I saw Major General Pőcze about this matter. He said we would have to wait until all the bodies buried in the area are exhumed. This year we were not even allowed to visit his grave, as no one is given access to that portion of the cemetery, and we were told in the office that under present orders they are barred from giving information about graves of prisoners.

An excerpt from Györgyi's letter to the Minister of Justice, dated the 4th of December 1959:

> Ever since I was released, we have wanted to give my father a burial, as the thought is painful, indeed unbearable, that he lies buried in a prisoner's grave, and I am not allowed even near the cemetery lot. The Interior Ministry's secretariat granted me permission, dated the 26th of November 1959, to bury him. Today, on the 4th of December, I was informed by the Undertaker's that he lies buried, along with nine others, in grave 33, row 4, lot 301, of the Rákoskeresztúr Cemetery. I again contacted the Interior Ministry Secretariat, where I was given the information that I must apply to the Ministry of Justice, requesting rehabilitation of my father, and when I was in possession of the necessary paper, to contact the Interior Ministry again. Then the grave would be opened, and after it has been exhumed, my father's body would be handed over to me.

To this application, the Ministry of Justice replied, on the 22th of January 1960, that "no decision on your deceased father was ever taken by Justice authorities, indeed he was never sentenced following criminal proceedings. Consequently, there is no point to any clemency rehabilitation proceedings."

After several more applications, Györgyi and her mother were finally granted permission. Several graves were opened. Dr Sándor Pongrácz, district physician from Paks, her father's friend, was present at the exhumation. He had known him well, he knew that he had had a tumescence on an elbow bone, which he had developed after a fall from a horse, knew his teeth—but even he was unable to identify him. As the doctor said the most dreadful thing was that as many as ten bodies lay under each grave-marker.

In other words, they did not find him. So the family had a marble tablet made, and had his name and dates engraved on it. That was hung on a wall inside the Tabán church. That was the burial.

They submitted several—unsuccessful—applications asking for the grandmother's pension to be raised. It was left at 220 forints a month.

Mari Záboji, too, was rehabilitated—but by then she was living in the Federal Republic of Germany.

On the 15th of August 1960, Györgyi married István Farkas, translator and journalist. They lived together for nineteen years, until her death.

Györgyi saw Mrazović again in September 1964. Her husband says:

> We were preparing to go to Dalmatia for a holiday and the Yugoslav embassy people were aware that an application for a visa for Györgyi had been submitted. One day a visitor called on her at Corvina: it was an attractive lady, the Croatian wife of a diplomat. She brought greetings from Mrazović via the Yugoslav ambassador. On our arrival in Zagreb, we called on him. He was waiting for us. He was a tall, wiry man who commanded respect. A doer. We dined out together with him and his wife. He was our host at the Gradski Podrum restaurant. At the table, I chatted in English with his wife Xenia. We arranged to meet again next morning, at the café of Gradski Podrum. Before the meeting, Györgyi asked me to leave them on their own for a while. Afterwards, she said that Mrazović had told her he was given instructions to get married, for after what had taken place, it was impossible for him to remain single.

Györgyi would never tell anyone what she had gone through, not even her mother, a companion in misfortune, but on several occasions following her release, she had unexpected fainting fits. One of them occurred at the publisher's. One day she was wanted on the phone, and when she picked it up and learned that the call was from the Interior Ministry, she fell flat on the floor, and for several minutes lay unconscious. I picked up the receiver—and it turned out that they had found a number of old photographs. On another occasion, she and her husband were going to the Museum of Fine Arts, and the sight of the Yugoslav Embassy across the square so frightened her that she had to be made to sit down on a stone of the embassy railing.

Her mother nursed her during her painful final illness. Her loving husband did all he could to cheer her up and lighten her fate. Neighbours, friends, colleagues were all supportive. ❧

*Translated by István Farkas*

PERSONAL

Michael Blumenthal

# Budapest Love Song

*For the first time I recognized the truth of beauty: that it is brokenness, it is on its knees... I could sit, merely breathing, and be part of it. I was beautiful—at last. And I didn't care—at last. I stumbled through the ancient streets, stopped in the smoke-grimed coffeehouses and added my signature of ash, anonymous, and yet entirely satisfied... I was, simply, in the most beautiful place I have ever seen, and it was grimy and sad and broken...*

Patricia Hampl: *A Romantic Education*

## IN PRAISE OF BROKEN CITIES

The city Hampl—in her beautiful, lyrical memoir—is speaking of is Prague. But, for me, it is Budapest—beautiful, battered, grimy, ever-"improving" Budapest, city of chipped paint and shell-pocked walls, Danubian jewel of such a multiplicity of browns and greys that the two colours themselves have taken on rainbow-like dimensions in my imagination, city of prostitutes and drunks, of polyester-clad entrepreneurs and self-made millionaires in imported clothes, city of recycled gravies and exhaust-spewing Ladas and Trabants, city of politicians who look like children and poets still undomesticated by universities, city of *Túró Rudi* and grime-caked stained glass windows, city of sybaritic baths where the odors of urine and sulphur and the comingled juices of lovers and curative minerals inhabit the air, city of wet kisses on bridges, in tunnels, on esplanades and park benches, city of *krémes* and *túróstáska* and *pálinka* and *somlói galuska*, city of jewelled boats and floating casinos and stationary brothels, city of peep shows and sex shops and *húsbolt*s and *dohánybolt*s, city of dilapidated merry-go-rounds and puppet theatres, where *az élet nem habostorta* ("life is not a piece of cream cake") and everyone knows it, city of pilfered treasures and drunken security guards, city of

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crumbling buildings that sometimes (alas) collapse in the first light of morning, city of odd juxtapositions, of condoms and bananas and oil filters exhibited in a single store window, city of overpriced blue jeans, city of Konráds and Petris, city of Esterházys and Árpáds and Gönczes, city of unpronounceable drugstores, which, *lassan de biztosan* (slowly but surely), I have come to love—How do I love thee? Let me count the ways:

"What do you love so much about Budapest?", they always ask. "Isn't it, well, a bit primitive?" Yes, friends, it is a bit primitive, a bit sad, a bit tragic, a bit unfinished, a bit tinted, a bit melancholic—yes, yes, the way the beautiful always is and always has been tainted, primitive, slightly sad, unfinished, tragic, eternally hopeful. What is beautiful here—what has stolen my heart the way not even a beautiful woman has ever stolen my heart (now, finally, I realize why so often, in literature, the allure of a city is equated with the allure of a woman)—is precisely this: it's grimy lifefulness, its beautiful, pock-marked facades, its tattered dresses, its slightly musty, lived-in scent of usage and pleasure, its dark underbelly, its lardy women of *jó hús* (lovely meat) and its slightly unshaven, nicotine-stained men, its deeply sad, beautiful melodies of wistfulness and longing, its resonances of Bartók and Kodály, of Liszt and Ferenczi, of the sad, youthful suicide of Attila József and the graceful, autumnal one of Arthur Koestler.

In Budapest the future beckons to us with hope precisely because it is not yet realized, not yet perfected. Like a small scar on the underbelly of an otherwise perfect creature, it perpetually cries out to us *human! human!* in its palpable griminess, its discrete lack of urgency and subculture of stolen pleasures, its ebullient inefficiency. Here—as one of the city's great celebrators, György Konrád, puts it—"entire streets are bulletin boards... all visible matter is sculpture." Held up to us like the mirrored conundrum of our complexities and desires, the city reflects both the shabby and the glorious vicissitudes life holds in store for us. Like a cat, it is passionate and tender, at times penurious, at times generous with its affections, but exactly as it chooses: it refuses, defiantly, to submit to our everdomesticating wishes.

If a city, as Lawrence Durrell once wrote, becomes a world when one loves just *one* of its inhabitants, Budapest—a city whose allures, whose charms, whose brazen sensuality flatly resists the claims of such a singular fidelity—suggests to us (in Konrád's words) that "there are as many moralities as there are relationships," that, if we can love even one human being (or, by extension, one bridge, one monument, one gorgeously delapidated building), we can surely love another.

In Budapest, above all, the dead are allowed to cohabit peacefully and vitally with the living, continuing to circulate among us in their tarnished monuments, their periodically recycled and resurrected street names, their grimy, often partially shattered, stained glass windows, their perpetually revised and

embellished personal histories. Unwilling to release us from the grip of their sad music, they free us from both false modesty and shame, from that excess of mortality and good cheer that freezes the face into a false smile and the body into a false conformity of right behaviour. So that—whenever a dark sense of sobriety or doomed fate threatens to overtake me—I readily head for the nearest Söröző and follow the advice of a certain Hungarian writer I know: "Refuse modesty, drink to every life in this jewel of a city that you made yours."

## THE ALLURES OF EXILE

The streets are dirtier than my own, the air so filthy from spewed congestion of Trabants and Ladas that a blackish veneer of soot forms nightly on the sills of our windows. The life expectancy (for men) is a good 15 years shorter than in the U.S., testified to most recently by the death, in recent weeks, of no fewer than three acquaintances who had not yet arrived at even my own 45 years. A successfully completed (local) phone call seems almost a triumph, the language is replete with to-me-unpronounceable "*cs*"s and "*zs*"s, the diet more frequently soaked in lard and goose fat than life-affirming tofu and margarine. So why shouldn't I, as the poet Elizabeth Bishop once put it, "have stayed home, and thought of here"? Why remain in exile in this goulash-laden once-communist backwater when the calm, ecologically-sounder, politically correct shores of my own country still beckon so clearly?

"It could indeed be said," writes Eva Hoffman in her beautiful memoir *Lost in Translation*, "that exile is the archetypal condition of contemporary lives," and, given the experience of most contemporary, post-modern lives, one would be hard-pressed to disagree. Cross-cultural marriages, international jobs, borders and walls erected and torn down by New World Orders and by rekindled old ones, the world seems, ironically enough, more and more a single community and less and less home to anyone. Indeed, the word "home" itself seems to have become one great abstraction—"the place," as Robert Frost once famously put it, "where, when you want to go there, they have to take you in." But as to the question of who *they* actually might *be*, the great bard, safely ensconsced on his New England farm in a world which no longer seems to exist, remained mute.

"I am most jealous," writes Eva Hoffman, echoing my own sentiments, "of those who, in America, have had a sense of place." And yet I remember, in Cambridge some years ago, the writer Thomas McGuane's reaction when I remarked that I—coming from an immigrant background, growing up without English as a first language, being married to yet another foreigner—thought of him enviously as "real" American, safely ensconced on his Montana ranch, at home in the native vernacular and landscape. "There are," he answered, "no real Americans... no one feels at home here."

Indeed, it seems we (or, at least, terribly many of us) have all become metaphorical Gypsies in a world without borders, but also without security. "A sense of belonging and of natural inheritance," writes Hoffman, "is what I long for," and who doesn't? Yet she, as if in response to the unanswerability of her own longings, has just moved to England from the States, to which she, in turn, was "exiled" as a 13-year-old girl from Cracow.

And why, I now ask myself after two years of "exile" in Hungary, not go home—back to my own bastion of freedom and opportunity, where friends speak my language, there's always a dial tone when you pick up the phone, the cars all have catalytic converters, the health food store's just down the block, and the funerals are mostly for the old? Why not, now, go home and think of here?

Warnings, after all, abound concerning the dangers of exile, especially of the voluntary kind. "Transplanting yourself into the soil of a foreign language," writes Polish poet and scholar Stanislaw Baranczak (himself now in exile in Cambridge), "makes you, as a rule, wilt rather than flourish, feel deprived rather than enriched. In our human Tower of Babel... identity may ultimately come down to what is lost in translation."

But Gertrude Stein, one of our great writers-in-exile, had, as if to answer Baranczak's warning, another point of view. "I liked being alone with English," she once said in response to a question about missing the surrounding buzz of her own language, and who could argue she didn't do pretty well with that linguistic solitude? Since all speech, as the Hungarian philosopher and essayist László Földényi has written, "is sonorous, (and) therefore must sooner or later die away" in any event, why not put myself in a place where, at least in my own native tongue, there is less of it to begin with?

And there is indeed, I have come to realize during my self-created, and still extending, exile—both *from* America and *into* this "other" Europe—something to be gained from this peculiar condition of *Unheimlichkeit*. "I don't want a city," writes my Hungarian countryman György Konrád, "where what I detest is a duty and what I love is immoral, where everyone tries to educate everyone else... where if I love one human being I cannot love another, and my body, if it desires another body, must feign shame; where I can find joy only in what I own—my son, my dog, my mendacious pictures... where the ground plan of apartments teaches us to hate one another." And I, too, don't want such a city—don't want a city where a man looking at a woman, or teaching her, or bumping into her at a xerox machine lives in perpetual dread of being accused of sexual harrassment, where all forms of honest discourse and feeling are politically incorrect. I don't want a city where my son's schoolmates are almost as likely to carry guns or knives as books, where I am more likely to die at the point of a gun than from an excess of sausages, where nothing that money can't buy seems worth having and the president's past sex life gets more media attention than his present efforts to reform health care.

Here, in "exile," my son goes to daycare for $10 a month, I can lounge over a single 20-cent cup of (good) coffee for hours without being terrorized by an (in turn) terrorized waitperson, a woman can still be (dare I say it?) sexy and attractive without feeling objectified, a man desirous without being a vulture. (Eye contact between the sexes, in other words, is not yet the exclusive domain of litigators.) Here in exile I'm still asked more frequently about what I think than about how much I make (euphemistically: "*What do you do?*"); friendship is still valued, having less to do with equivalences of power than mutualities of passion; politicians still look (and seem) more like recent graduates from ordinary life than from the Kennedy School of Government's Summer Seminar or Grecian Formula 9 commercials; lovers still smooch in the streets, Puritans be damned.

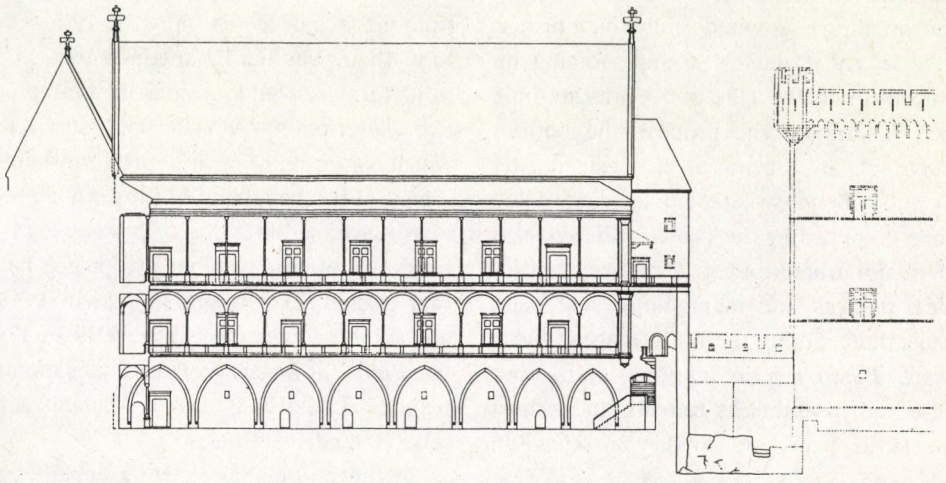
In exile, the semi-permeable membrane with which one is forced, on one's native soil, to surround oneself merely to screen out the superfluous (the spirit sags at the mere heft and weight of *The Sunday Boston Globe*) grows more permeable: one hungers, in fact, for the humble 26 weekly pages of the English-language *Budapest Sun*; the Babylonian cacophony of too many tongues is transmogrified to a few scarce whispers in one's native language greedily overheard in a café.

In addition, there are fewer of us here—we're bigger fish in a smaller, but happier, pond. Happier, I've found, an ex-Harvard professor (or mere human being) in the cafés of Budapest than a present-day one on the streets of Cambridge. Competition, while it may be good for the national economy, has never been found to be a balm for the local nerves. (Though the American poet Theodore Roethke, it is rumoured, wrote his great villanelle "The Waking," in an outburst of competitive heat with Dylan Thomas's classic "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night," his poetic competitor, we might remind ourselves, was safely ensconced on the other side of the Atlantic at the time.) And the luxury of a binational self, rather than indicating a pathological schizophrenia, may merely tear down the walls impeding a New World Order from within. "What from one perspective appears a split personality," writes Baranczak, "may turn out to be a profoundly advantageous 'multivalent consciousness'; the gap between the two languages may become 'a chink, a window, through which I can observe the diversity of the world.' The immigrant's 'Babel syndrome' may be just another name for the ultimate recognition of the human world's maddening yet magnificent plurality."

Exile, of course, can merely become a form of aggravated homelessness, a salt rubbed into the wound of our ongoing sense of alienation and displacement. Or, it may, on the other hand, prove to be a kind of balm—if not a healing, then at least a reprieve; if not a solution, then perhaps a more interesting way of addressing the question, of coming to terms with our own sense of foreignness and internal exile. "If I become aware that I am somehow

myself part of this foreignness," writes Földényi, "that this universal otherness not only touches me, but has been latent in me from the start, then I discover the common denominator of the political, existential, psychological, ethnological or religious meaning of foreignness, in which they resemble not only one another but myself. I then learn to live with this foreignness, for ultimately I wish not to filter out of my life everything which, measured against myself, is foreign by emphasizing my own identity, but to find through the acceptance of foreignness the way to the foreignness within myself, back to the long-ignored, persisting, forgotten root of my identity."

It may be, taking Földényi's argument to its logical conclusion, that one can, ironically enough, feel oneself more in exile at home, and more at home in exile. And if, as Hoffman suggests, we are all in exile anyway, why not, I ask myself, choose the real thing? ❧



*The Royal Castle in Buda. A multi-storey Renaissance loggia built by King Matthias Corvinus in the West Wing of the Ceremonial Court cca 1480. Destroyed down to its foundations.*

Gergely Buzás

# The Royal Palace at Visegrád

Visegrád stood right at the centre of medieval Hungary, close to the country's major royal centres and her most ancient towns, Esztergom, Székesfehérvár and Buda. Its importance was due, however, not only to its position but to its special surroundings, a wonderfully picturesque spot of the Danube's course, forcing its way through the Pilis and Börzsöny hills and making in the process the bottom curve of an S-bend at the exit of the Danube Bend, where huge, game-filled forests owned by the Crown were crossed by major traffic routes. A number of castles, palaces and monasteries had been built there during the Middle Ages. These were destroyed in various wars, but Visegrád nevertheless remains the richest treasure trove of medieval relics in Hungary. Of all these, the palace of the Hungarian kings, built in the 14th and 15th centuries, stands out for its artistic importance and wealth, even though, through damage caused by all too many upheavals, the palace had all but vanished from the face of the earth by the 19th century. There was hardly anything to testify to its former splendour apart from one or two descriptions which had survived, which were hard to interpret in themselves. At the beginning of the 20th century, it was called into doubt, even by highly reputed scholars, whether the palace had ever existed. Excavations, begun in 1934, and continued vigourously until the end of the 1950s, however, produced sensational results, unearthing some magnificent relics of medieval Hungary.

In the mid-eighties a new upsurge of explorations and research pursued in conjunction with them have produced surprises year after year. The most recent years have seen the complete excavation and theoretical reconstruction of a splendid, late-Gothic oriel from the age of King Matthias Corvinus, a clarification of the full dimensions and architecture of the palace, the discovery of antecedents from the Angevin age, including the carved

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stones of a richly decorated church, a systematic analysis of the utensils and furniture from the palace, with several magnificent Gothic tiled stoves among them. These discoveries have made it possible for us to develop a relatively exact idea of the stages of building, of how the palace looked at various periods, of the wealth of its furnishings and of its importance as a work of art.

## Antecedents

The earliest building on the site was a military camp, part of the Roman limes, called Ponte Navate. Its fortifications, built in the 4th century A.D., occupied a highly important strategic position, protecting the eastern end of the Danube Bend, one of the most sensitive cornerstones of the Empire's frontiers.

The location retained its importance after the collapse of the Roman Empire: the former limes as well as the waterway remained major traffic routes in the Middle Ages. At the end of the 10th century, the Hungarian ruling family, the Árpáds, made the rebuilt Roman fortress the centre of their huge forest domain in the Pilis Hills. Mention is made of the county of the castle of Visegrád as early as 1009, in the foundation charter of the Bishopric of Veszprém. The village emerged around the two churches next to the *Ispán*'s castle. Near the castle a monastery for Basilite (Byzantine rite) monks dedicated to St Andrew was built by King Andrew I in the middle of the 11th century. The parish church next to the *Ispán*'s castle was built—with new stone carvings and frescoes—by Andrew's son, King Solomon. In this period also a large stone house was erected within the walls of the castle, in all probability to serve as royal living quarters.

In the reigns of Géza I and St Ladislas, sons of Béla I, the royal court of neighbouring Dömös came to be preferred to Visegrád, which thus fell into disrepair towards the end of the 11th century. Finally, the Tartar (Mongol) invasion of 1242 completed the devastation.

After the Mongols had withdrawn, Béla IV started a momentous programme of reconstruction throughout the country. Its main purpose was to create a defence against any new attacks from that quarter. Having learnt the lesson taught by the battles of 1241 and 1242, the King decided to protect the more defensible, western half of the country by castles built along the line of the Danube. As a part of that project, also using the dowry of his Queen, Maria, he had a huge new system of fortifications built on the hill above the old Visegrád. The citadel was finished first, followed by the barbican and its living quarters, the wall across the valley, running from the citadel down to the Danube. However, the castle was not simply for defensive purposes, it was also the seat of County Pilis and, occasionally, the starting point of royal hunts.

After the death of Béla IV, the increasingly powerful aristocratic families gradually acquired huge estates for themselves, and these they practically governed as independent rulers. Exploiting the rivalry for the throne after the Árpád dynasty died out around 1300, they became even stronger. It was then that the royal citadel of Visegrád fell into the hands of one of the mightiest of the provincial lords, Máté Csák, who held sway over the northwestern region of Hungary. The Neapolitan Anjou Caroberto

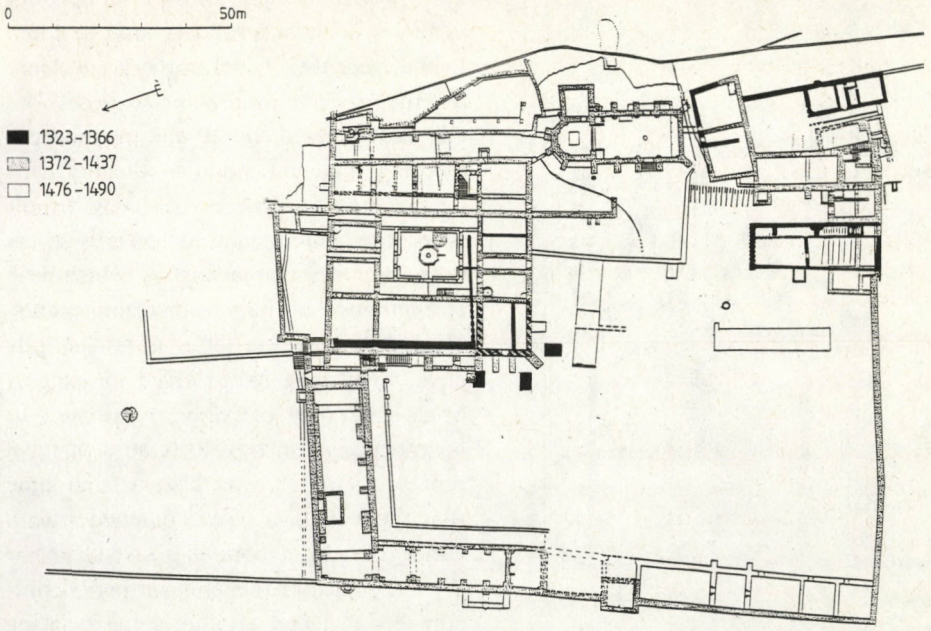
emerged as victor in the prolonged struggles for the throne, but even he was unable to subdue Máté Csák. Thus, even though Visegrád was occupied by forces loyal to the King in 1317, Caroberto did not feel secure in the central part of Hungary until the death of Máté Csák in 1321; up to then his court was in distant Temesvár, in the southeast of the country. In 1323, he thought the time was right to shift his seat to the centre, but instead of the larger and wealthier town of Buda which, however, had been hostile to him for years, he chose Visegrád which had the strongest fortifications in the centre of the country. The King, who had made many enemies during the wars of the preceding decades, felt the need to further strengthen the castle's defences. The pace of the construction involved must have been very rapid, because the Church of St John the Baptist Caroberto built inside the castle was already finished in 1325.

As a royal seat, Visegrád was the scene of such major events as the Kings' Meeting of 1335, to which Caroberto invited the kings of Poland and Bohemia, a delegation from the Teutonic Knights and most of the princes and rulers of the eastern half of Europe to settle their differences and establish political and trade alliances.

## The Angevin period: Residence of Kings Caroberto and Louis the Great

Within a few years after the royal court had moved itself to Visegrád, the small *hospes* village near the Danube ferry crossing and the port acquired the status of a free royal town. Soon all the great feudal lords of the country built houses there; several were owned by the monarch himself. These included the house in which, according to the *Illustrated Chronicle*, an attempt on the life of the King and his family was made in 1330 by Felicián Zách, one of the rebellious provincial lords.

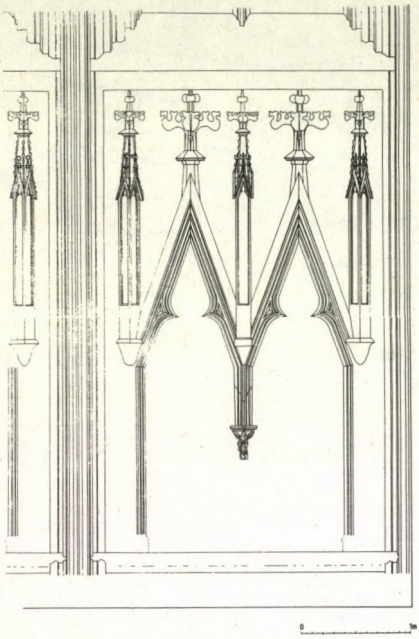
The remains of this house and its associated buildings were successfully identified during the excavations of recent years. A two-storey stone house built on the hillside, in part with floor heating, consisting of two rooms on each level and a staircase, was discovered on the southern part of the site of the later palace. Attached to it was a terrace, with another storied stone building. Lower down, on another terrace of the hillside, the remains of a wooden house with a tiled stove were found. It is still not known what other buildings may have belonged to the complex, nor is it clear whether the palace chapel dedicated to St George was already in place. This chapel, as an old and abandoned building erected by his predecessors, was later given by King Sigismund to the Franciscans, and he built a convent beside it. The Franciscan convent founded by Sigismund was south of the palace, so it is likely that this chapel, still unexplored, is related to the Angevin-age buildings found under the southern part of the palace. There must have been major buildings from the period of Caroberto, in the northern part of the site, too. Here a courtyard surrounded by more or less rectangular walls was finished first, on the terraces cut into the hillside. There must have been buildings, too, inside the courtyard, which were demolished in the course of subsequent construction. Later, at the end of the 1330s or in the early 1340s, a church was erected at its southern side. Its carved stones, along with those from other residential buildings ad-




*The ground plan of the Royal Palace with periods of construction.*

jacent to it, were clearly built secondarily into the foundation walls of the age of Louis I. These buildings could have constituted the St Ladislas Convent mentioned in 1355 and 1356, of which the 1356 document also tells that it stood somewhere in the proximity of "the royal chamber". The church itself followed the late-Classic French Gothic model of the 14th century. The methods of articulation employed are closely related to the surviving carvings from the extension of the sanctuary of the Dominican convent on Hare Island near Buda, in connection with the erection of a new tomb in the second half of the 1330s for Blessed Margaret of the House of Árpád, who later gave her name to the island. It is not mere chance that the only parallel in Hungary to the Margaret Island tomb, associated with the circle of the Southern Italian sculptor Tino da Camaino, is the fragment of a monk's head carved from white marble, found among the ruins of the Visegrád palace.

With the solid economic and political foundations laid by Caroberto, who died in the Visegrád citadel in 1342, Hungary entered the most prosperous period of its history under the reign of his eldest son, King Louis the Great. While the young king spent his time campaigning abroad, Hungary was nominally governed by his brother, Prince Stephen, in reality by his mother, Queen Elizabeth. The court moved temporarily to Buda. On its return to Visegrád in 1355, a start was made on the reconstruction and extension of the palace. An 1356 charter mentions a mint



*Designs for the reconstruction of the pews of the 14th century church.*

and a 1357 document adds that a bell foundry was operating there and that it was situated in the lower fort. This building, 13 m by 33 m, was cut into the hillside next to the buildings already mentioned and built in Caroberto's reign. Its cellar was of stone, and it was divided into two by a wall. The upper level had a wooden structural framework, probably with a plank cover. The house was protected against pressure from the side of the hill by a stone buttress. It was that buttress which preserved the imprint of the beam structure of the wall. This level was also divided into two. A metallurgical workshop operated in the southern room. Along with the construction of the mint, the earlier wooden house next to it was also rebuilt.

The royal building complex underwent further extension, probably around 1336. In that year the Chapel of the Virgin Mary in the palace was consecrated. The Caroberto-period church and the adjacent building that had stood in the northern part of the palace were very likely demolished, the church being replaced by a new wing the western facade of which was strengthened by huge supporting pillars. The function of the latter is not entirely clear. They may have served to support oriels, but they certainly contributed to giving the entrance wall its aura of royal representation. It was also at that time that the buildings were equipped with a variety of richly decorated glazed stoves.

The palace of the Angevin period presumably included another large building in front of the south palace, on the flat area below the hill. Only a few remnants of this building have been excavated; neither the full area it covered nor its function and age can be determined. Conceivably, it was connected with the Chapel of St George, another unexplored building, whose age, as already mentioned, is also indeterminable.

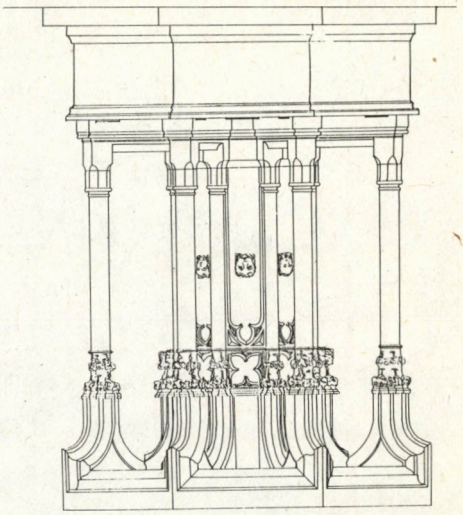
The Visegrád palace, completed in several stages in the middle third of the 14th century, was a cluster of loosely connected buildings fulfilling different functions. This type, combining living quarters, chapel, mint and service buildings, without any particular pattern to it, and lacking proper fortifications, was common amongst royal residences all over Europe in the 13th to 14th centuries. Examples include the royal palace on the Ile de la Cité in Paris, Westminster Palace near London, or—in Central Europe—the house of the kings of Bohemia in the Old City of Prague or their

mint at Kutna Hora. The other residence of the Hungarian Angevins, the Magna Curia of Buda (The Kammerhof, to give its German name), must have been a complex of similar arrangement.

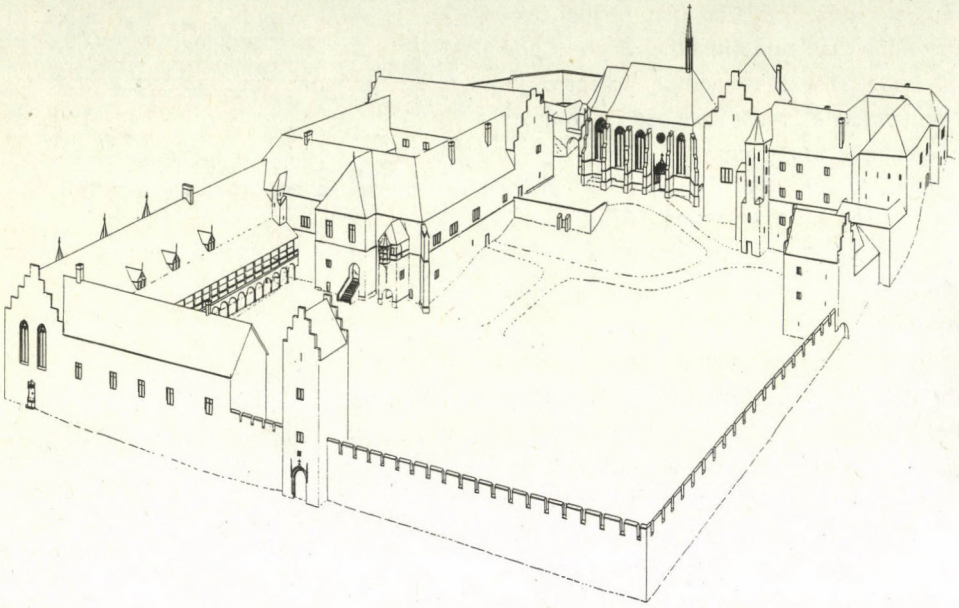
## The palace around 1400

In the last third of the 14th century, new construction, bigger in scale than anything that had gone before, was started in the Palace of Visegrád. Most of the earlier buildings were demolished. Only the floor-heated building of the Caroberto period survived, although that, too, was altered. The new palace covered a somewhat smaller area—123 m by 123 m—than the old one. There was a gate-house in the central axis of the front wall overlooking the roadway. The western half of the building complex was occupied by a huge courtyard. Its northern part was enclosed by palace wings, whose ground floor was taken up by large storehouses. The northern wing was occupied by a timber-vaulted great hall (38.5 m by 11 m) and its entrance hall 11 m by 11 m. The western wing, parallel with the road, housed a somewhat smaller council chamber and perhaps a kitchen as well. A two-level, columned gallery, the lower structure of stone and the upper of timber, ran along the front of the courtyard facade.

The lower courtyard was closed off from the east by a rectangular residential palace with a central yard. The palace's large wine cellar was under it. Its most important spaces—a hall on the ground floor and another upstairs (11 m x 22 m) were situated at the western wing looking onto the ceremonial courtyard. From here an ornamented staircase led directly to the ground level hall, while the hall on the first floor was reached over a spiral staircase. The line of the eastern half of the inner courtyard was articulated by a barrel vault supported by octagonal pillars, with benched niches inside, and probably with an open gallery. Connected to the archway was the main ornament of the building, a monumental, tower-like, octagonal ornamental fountain. The living quarters must have been on the first and the second floor of the palace's eastern wing. They were joined on the north by a latrine tower, the bathroom, provided with floor heating, a water-heating copper, and running water was entered from the second floor by means of a bridge. Another bridge on the same level led to a small, closed courtyard decorated with a



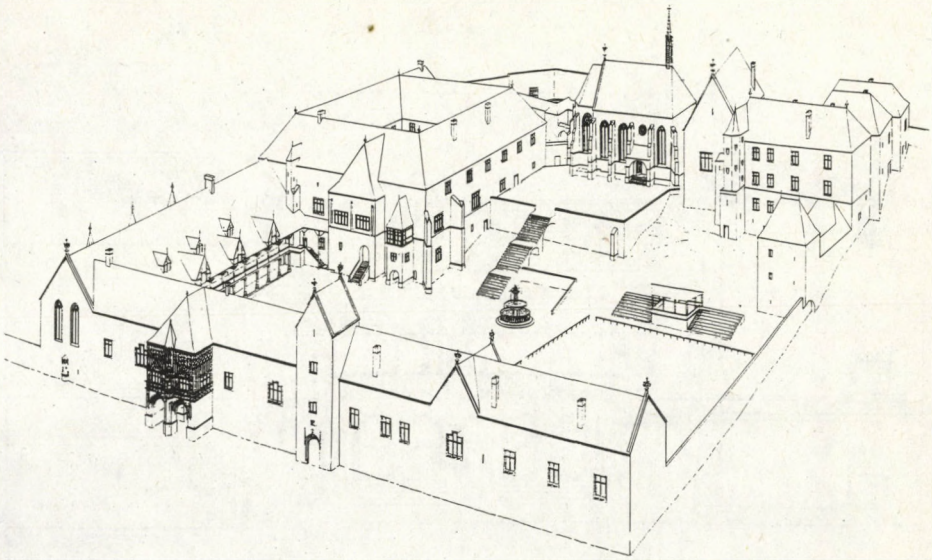
*The lower level of the late 14th century fountain in the ceremonial court.*



*Reconstruction of the Royal Palace around 1400.*

splendid wall fountain. The eastern side of the courtyard was colonnaded, its back wall was broken up by niches. Yet another bridge led from the southern end of the colonnade to the royal oratory over the sacristy of the palace chapel. This large chapel was in the central axis of the complex of buildings, directly opposite the gatehouse, on a terrace cut into the hillside. The new mint was on the hillside south of the chapel, in the southeastern corner of the complex. Its upper level consisted of living quarters, surrounding a rectangular courtyard on three sides. The mint itself was lower down, on the next hillside. A corridor from there led to a tower, which was most likely a storehouse. The inner block of the palace was joined from the north by a large garden, which had a turret-shaped fountain in its centre.

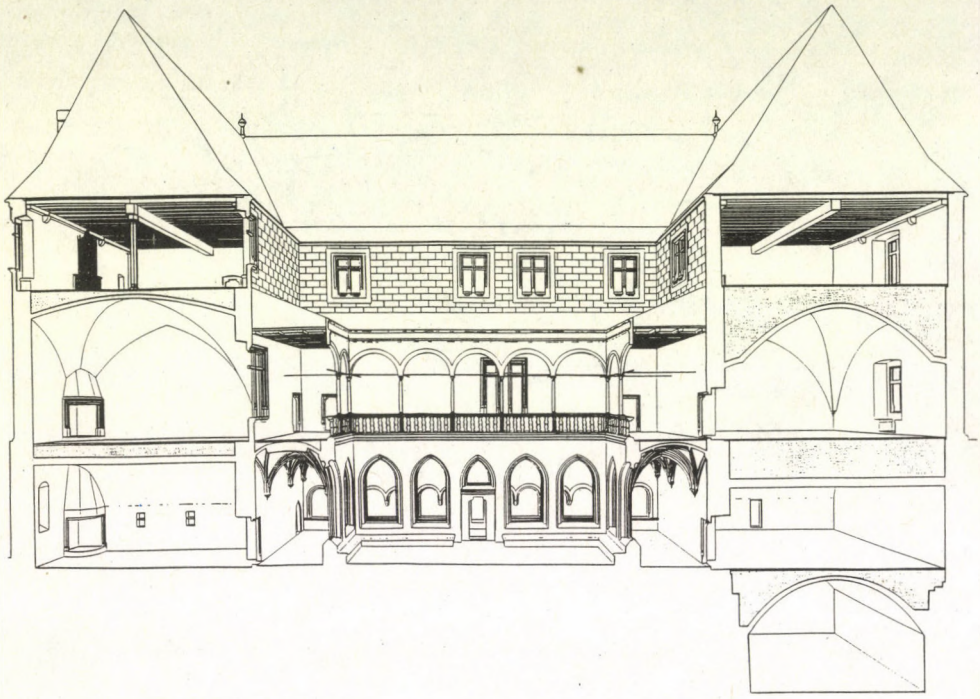
With this arrangement, aiming at regularity, and with rich and impressive stone carvings, the new building differed sharply from its predecessor. The spirit of the Gothic at the end of the 14th century, the suddenly increasing need everywhere in Europe for display and comfort, made it necessary to completely remove the Angevin palace, although that was certainly not old at the time, and to replace it with a basically new building. The exact dates for the construction are not known. Work had most likely begun in the age of Louis I, (reigned 1342–82), but was completed only in the second half of Sigismund's reign (reigned 1387–1437). Almost simultaneously with the work at Visegrád, another royal palace was built in Buda, at the southern end of the fortified town. The building of this was linked with the exten-



*Reconstruction of the Royal Palace in the age of King Matthias Corvinus.*

sion of the small mid-14th century castle—the Stephen Castle—in Buda, and the closely integrated pattern of its buildings has a close affinity with the Visegrád palace. In Buda the builders made concessions to the irregularities of the site, but those in Visegrád chose to grapple with the difficulties raised by topography and created a unit of a much stricter pattern. The archetype of all these extensive buildings with regular group plans, organized around closed courtyards, with a somewhat fortress-like exterior (but meant in reality to impress) was the palace of the popes in Avignon, completed by the middle of the 14th century. Further examples include the Louvre in Paris, transformed into a palace by King Charles IV of France, the palaces of the Viscontis in Milan and Padua, and even the seat of the Order of Teutonic Knights at Marienburg which, although even more fortress-like in external appearance, all belong to this type.

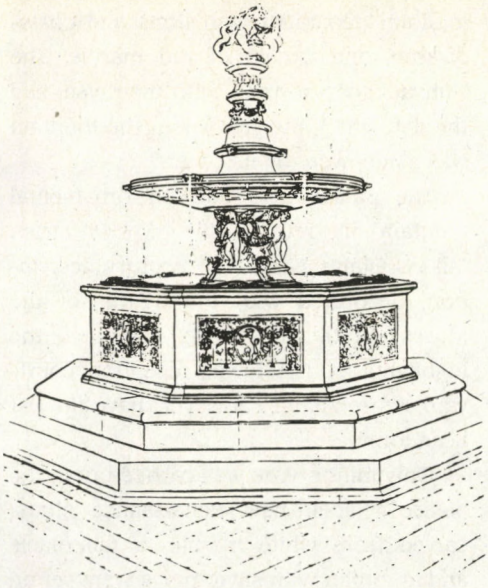
With respect to its ground plan, the northeast building of the Visegrád palace, with its closed courtyard, is also closely related to another type of castle, the earliest and most monumental of which, at Diósgyőr and Zólyom, were built for the king of Hungary at about the same time, that is the last quarter of the 14th century. These castles have regular rectangular ground plans. One side of the inner courtyard is articulated by a row of arches. External and internal walls have large, stone-framed windows in them. Although their turrets—four in Diósgyőr and two in Zólyom—gave them a fortress-like appearance, they were closer to being luxurious palaces.



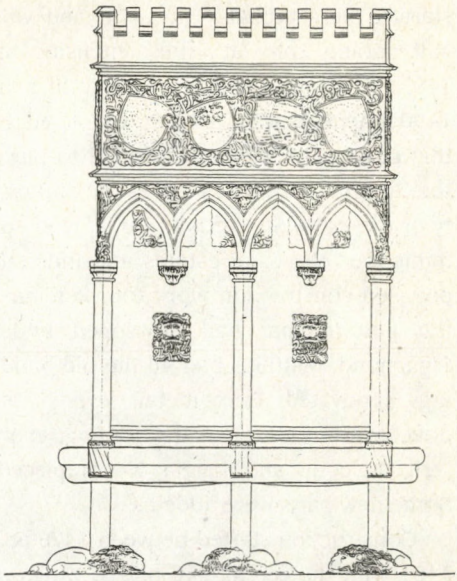
*Reconstruction of the ceremonial court in the age of King Matthias Corvinus.*

The stone carvers of the Visegrád palace were already familiar with Peter Parler's innovations as is shown by the palace's splendid ornamental wells. The octagonal fountain in the courtyard of the residential palace is remarkable. In its basic form, it must have been modelled on a French example since destroyed. This is suggested by the fact that both of its closest parallels originate in French court art. One is the fountain of life seen in a miniature portraying the Garden of Eden in *Les Trés Riches Heures,* painted by the Limburg brothers for the Duc de Berry, and the other a goldsmith's table ornament made in Paris around 1400 (in Cleveland today).

The majority of the stone carvings of the palace represent a more austere Central European style. The stone carvers producing them, after having completed their job at Visegrád, probably worked at the castle of Tata built by King Sigismund in the first decade of the 15th century, and played a part also in the construction of Buda Castle; between 1405 and 1408 Sigismund moved his court to Buda permanently. After acquiring the Holy Roman Imperial and, in name at least, the Bohemian Crown, this member of the House of Luxembourg made Buda the seat of his enormous empire, and had monumental new buildings erected there. Nevertheless, he paid frequent visits to the Visegrád palace subsequently. Indeed, some small construction was carried out there in the 1410s: the residential palace, for instance,



*The Hercules Fountain.*



*The Lion Fountain.*

was enriched by a highly ornamented oriel, and halls with tiled stoves.

On the death of the Emperor Sigismund in 1437, the Hungarian and Bohemian crowns passed to his son-in-law, Albert of Habsburg, Archduke of Austria. He also moved his seat to Hungary, and made use of the Visegrád palace as well. Only after his death in 1440 was the building abandoned, and no ruler thought of renovating it until 1476.

## King Matthias Corvinus's country residence

In the general confusion following the death of King Albert, the crown itself was stolen from the Visegrád citadel, where it had been kept most of the time from the age of Caroberto on, by a lady-in-waiting to the King's widow, Mrs Kottaner, who stole it for her mistress, or rather, for her mistress's son, the infant Ladislas V. The situation of the country became stable only after 1458, when young Matthias, the son of János Hunyadi, Regent of Hungary, who had defeated the Turks at Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade) in 1456, was elected King. Following the example of Sigismund, his great predecessor, Matthias also made efforts to establish a large Central European empire. He assumed the title of King of Bohemia, conquered Silesia and Moravia, and in the 1480s, sizeable parts of Austria as well. He also planned to acquire the Imperial Crown. After his marriage to Beatrice of Aragon, he became a noted patron of the arts. His court was attended by many famous scholars and artists, and he began some magnificent constructions. Of his works, after modernizing his seat, the Palace of Buda, second place must be accorded to the reconstruction of the residence at Visegrád. Work

started there probably in 1474, and was still going on at full intensity in 1483–1484. By the death of Matthias in 1490 it appears to have been completed. In this period the monarch decided to place the Visegrád properties under the authority of the Royal Stewards of Buda, who administered the royal estates and thus supervised construction work too. Retaining the pattern that had developed under Sigismund, Matthias had all the old buildings renovated. Every detail, every window, every doorframe, the roofing, every well, balcony and loggia was replaced. Some new parts were added.

Construction started between 1476 and 1481 with the ceremonial palace wings of the lower reception courtyard. The 123 m long main frontage overlooking the Danube was covered along its whole length and provided with a huge, closed oriel decorated with coats-of-arms. The northern part of the lower reception courtyard was surrounded by a late-Gothic two-level colonnade. The northeastern residential palace was restored around 1484. A two-tiered ambulatory—late-Gothic below and Renaissance above—was built in the inner courtyard. The octagonal Gothic well house was replaced by the Renaissance Hercules fountain in red marble. The halls around the courtyard were transformed, and the second floor must have been fully built up at about the same time. The chambers here were lower and had timber ceilings—these were the King's living quarters—and the bath was also considerably extended. In the small upper closed courtyard connected to the northeastern palace, the old colonnade and wall-fountain were replaced. The latter was replaced by the Lion Fountain, a new late-Gothic fountain decorated with lions and coats-of-arms and carved of red marble. The Hunyadi coat-of-arms, with the raven, and the date 1483, the year when the fountain was made, were on its cover.

The palace also had an ornamental fountain in red marble, known from Miklós Oláh's early 16th century description, decorated with the figures of the Muses, and this must have been one of the highlights of the lower reception courtyard. Its remnants, however, have not yet been found.

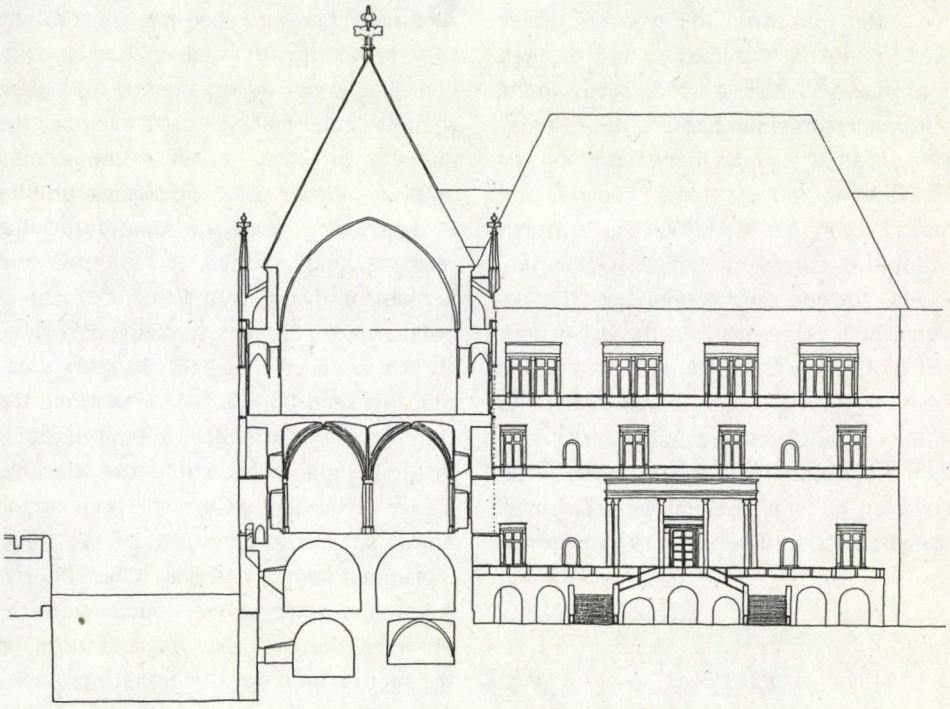
Only minor work was carried out in the palace chapel: new Renaissance altars, carved from white marble, a tabernacle and an organ with silver pipes were set up there. The organ loft was supported by Renaissance consoles decorated with coats-of-arms. A timber gallery was built at the southern end of the nave, connected to the great hall of the southern palace by a bridge. The sacristy and the royal oratory above it were vaulted. The chapel was also provided with new floor covering and coloured roof tiles.

The southern palace, too, was reconstructed. Two smaller rooms were combined into the great hall occupying the north wing of the upper courtyard; here a large but simple corner fireplace was also installed. A small light shaft was removed on the lower level, and the old mint was transformed. In Matthias's time, too, the southern palace remained second in importance as compared to the northern one.

Reconstruction was carried out by a late-Gothic workshop, whose style stood closest to that of the workshop of St Stephen's in Vienna. Traces of the work by this workshop can be seen most often in the work done by the Royal Stewards

administering the King's private estates. The few Renaissance structures surviving from the palace's reconstruction under King Matthias are of great importance to art history. They are mainly sculptural works: a fountain, a pastoforium, fragments of the chapel's marble altar and the consoles of its organ loft. There is, however, an architectural structure as well: the columned oriel decorating the floor of the upper courtyard of the living palace, provided with a balustrade. Apart from the Buda palace, these are the earliest surviving examples of Italian Renaissance architecture north of the Alps.

After the death of King Matthias, no reconstruction of any importance was carried out in the Visegrád Palace, although his successors continued to use it for a time. The last to spend summers there were King John of Szapolya and his queen, Isabella, in 1539. The buildings, already in decay, were repaired and touched up for that last occasion. In 1554 the castle fell to the Turks. The palace must have been burnt down during the siege, and its crumbling ruins were abandoned for two hundred years. Then, in the 1740s and 1750s, the remains of the walls were finally cannibalized by local residents. ❧



*The Royal Castle in Buda. The West (Court) facade of King Matthias' "Unfinished Palace" with a cross-section of Sigismund of Luxembourg's Palace. Late 1480s. Destroyed down to its foundations.*

Pál Lővei

# A Letters Patent Carved in Stone: The Visegrád Oriel

In the early 1970s, Miklós Héjj, then director of the King Matthias Museum in Visegrád, excavated the remnants of a part of the Royal Palace at Visegrád. The section he was working on resembled a tower and jutted out from the palace's facade overlooking the Danube. Among the millions of carved stone fragments, Héjj found a strikingly large number of coats-of-arms. He published a preliminary report on the excavations, and the name "Visegrád Heraldic Tower" has started to gain currency within the profession. Analysis of the fragments, further excavations, and the designs for a reconstruction the art historians by Gergely Buzás and György Szekér have made it clear that this particular part of the building was originally a monumental oriel rather than a real tower. This, however, has not changed the assessment of the key role of blazons: to our present knowledge, the building once displayed the richest heraldic ornamentation in medieval Hungary.

Between the 14th and the early 16th centuries, blazonry became increasingly widespread in art and architecture in Central Europe. Its ornamental and often semiotic role reached its climax in the Austrian provinces of the Holy Roman Emperors Frederick III and Maximilian I. In Hungary, the golden age came during the reign of King Matthias I (1458–1490), in permanent rivalry with Frederick both in politics and in the representation of royalty.

For medieval travellers along the busy road between Buda and Vienna along the Danube, one of the most important architectural sights was surely the Visegrád palace at the foot of the hill, built by the Anjou kings and extended by the Kings Sigismund and Matthias. The interior splendour, however, was hidden from the observer, the only external indication on the multi-storey front being an oriel, with an arcaded ground-floor with two vaults, resting on strong pillars. It projected from the front of the palace narrowing the road to some extent. The really ornate part was the band above the ribbed vault.

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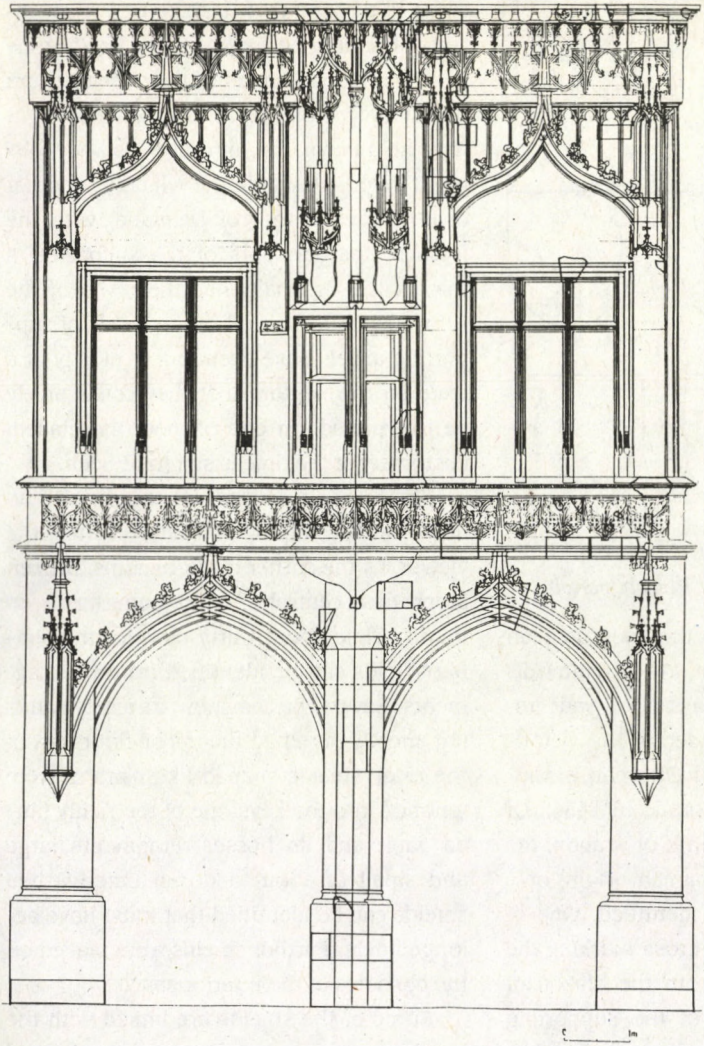
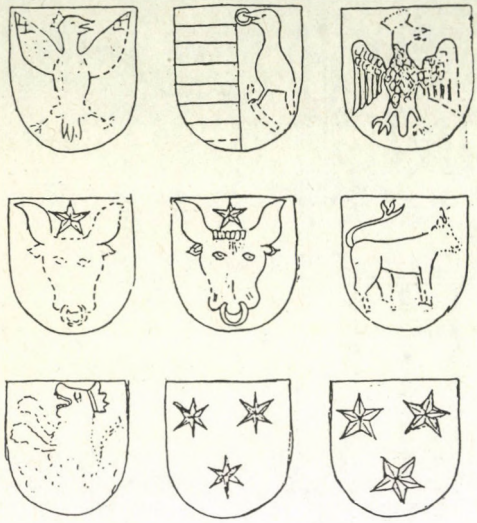


*The facade of the oriel. (Reconstruction).*

The walls of the large upper-floor were broken by richly articulated windows and covered by a net of niches, spandrels and ornate corbels. The large shields of the builders, King Matthias and his queen, Beatrix, were supported by angels in a double-canopied niche in the central axis of the main front. A large part of the monarch's shield has been found: the first field of the quartered shield shows a part of the barry of eight that reaches back to the time of the kings of the Árpád dynasty, the third, a lion rampant with a crown in its right fore-paw is the blazon of the County of Beszterce in Transylvania, and the fourth shows the three leopard heads of Dalmatia. Only the hind paws of a lion have survived of the second quarter; this might be part of the lion of Bohemia (in 1469, Matthias was elected king of Bohemia by the Bohemian



*Coats-of-arms on the corbel of the Visegrád oriel. Rough sketch.*

Catholic Estates), while the inescutcheon depicts the raven of the Hunyadis (Matthias's father was János Hunyadi, regent of Hungary and leader of the victorious army which stopped Ottoman expansion for a century at Belgrade in 1456). Of the blazon of Queen Beatrix of Aragon, the Neapolitan dynasty of Spanish origin, only small pieces have been identified. One of these is a section of the cross marking the kingdom of Jerusalem from the blazon of Aragon, with the hand of the supporting figure. The two shields were surmounted by open crowns, in imitation of jewelled ornaments. Only a single fragment of a Latin inscription from the building, in Gothic minuscule, broken into two pieces, is known. The fragment "reg" must have referred to the king or the queen, or possibly to the kingdom, and it presumably was at the bottom of the niche with the pair of blazons.

On both sides of the two great windows there were somewhat smaller shields. A Hungarian coat-of-arms with the double cross is the one that has survived most intact (it could be reassembled from nine pieces). The two hands of the supporter are presumably those of an angel, who might have held the blazon in front of its body, tilting it slightly towards the window. Another coat-of-arms is that of Dalmatia, with the folds of the garments of the supporter. A third shield originally had the raven of the Hunyadis on it. Several of the heads of supporting angels have been found, mostly in a state so fragmentary that they can scarcely be interpreted; on one of them the diadem customary at the time is still to be seen.

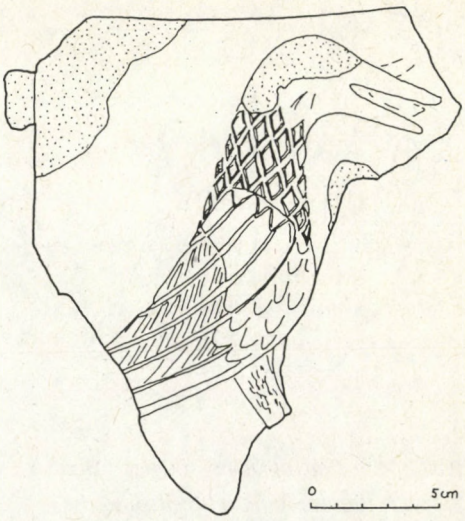
The closing corbel of the oriel had downwards slanting shields, facing the viewer. Of the corner coats-of-arms, broken along their central line, only one has been found, while about thirty more of the simple shields can be identified from the fragments. Several pieces show traces of painting, mostly in red. At the upper-floor part of the oriel, shields shaped like platters were tenoned into the keystone of the richly fluted vault and its bosses. Fragments large and small of about a dozen lime-washed shields can be identified that must have belonged here. Further shields were placed on the consoles of the interior space.

Some of the shields are linked with the royal couple and their domains. The shield parted per pale of the surviving cornerstone of the corbel showed the Hungarian coat-of-arms with the barry of eight and the raven of the Hunyadis holding a ring in its beak. A fragment of the Hungarian coat-of-arms with the double cross can also be identified. Two shields portray the Moravian eagle (Matthias conquered the Marquisate of Moravia, attached to Bohemia, in 1468-69). The heraldic beast of Lower Lausitz in Germany is the ox (the

king had also occupied Lausitz). The inner space upstairs has fragments of Queen Beatrix's coat-of-arms[1] and of one with the heraldic lion of Beszterce county[2] (which was also one of the estates of the Hunyadi family), as well as the coat-of-arms of the Bavarian Palatinate[3]. A shield with the fragment of a splayed eagle could have been the arms of Silesia, which King Matthias had also conquered. On one of the consoles, the Bohemian arms with its lion was supported by an angel.

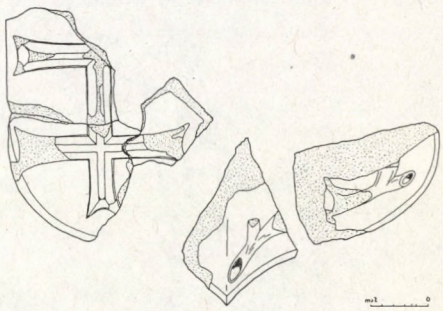
The other coats-of-arms can be linked to noble families and individuals, the most illustrious aristocratic families in the country. So far sixteen family bearings have been identified[4], further fragments remain uncertain. One of the carvings of the upstairs vault shows part of a mill-wheel, which originally filled the whole surface of the shield. This was the coat-of-arms of Benedek Pyber (Piber, Pryber), the Visegrád castellan, a person of lower estate but of great importance here, as he must have had a central role in directing the construction.

The coats-of-arms themselves help establish their own date of origin with relative accuracy. The oriel cannot be dated earlier than the marriage of Matthias and Beatrix (December 22, 1476). The other *terminus ad quem* is marked as 1481 by the shields on the interior upstairs vault[5]. On the evidence of the coats-of-arms on the frontal corbel the *terminus a quo* is as early as 1478[6]. It is scarcely probable that Beatrix's shields were carved at once during the Christmas holiday of 1476. They must have been made the following year at the earliest, and so at least the upstairs part of the oriel must have been built between 1477 and 1481, and the external front could have already been finished by 1478.

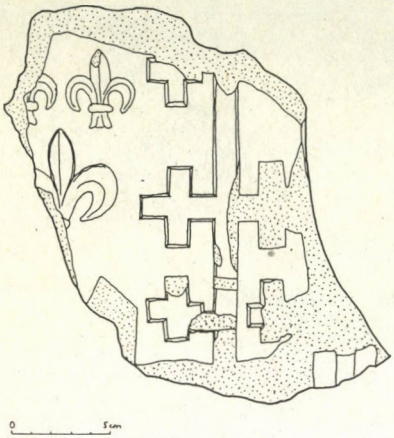



*Fragment of a coat-of-arms with the raven of the Hunyadi family.*

*Fragmentary shield of the Szobi family.*

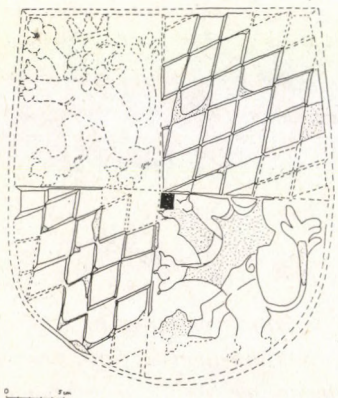


*Bottom part of a shield with the Hungarian coat-of-arms with the double cross, and a wooden branch belonging to the Hunyadi raven.*



*Part of the coat-of-arms of Queen Beatrix with the Anjou fleur-de-lis and the Jerusalem cross.*

*One of the leopards' heads of the Dalmatian coat-of-arms.*



*The coat-of-arms of the Bavarian Palatinate.*

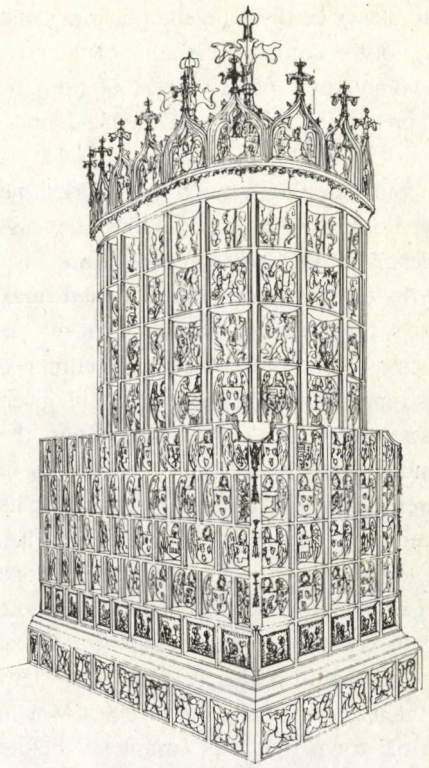
Defective as the set of coat-of-arms is, we may consider it a joint heraldic representation of the royal couple and of some (but by no means all) of their domains, as well as of the aristocratic families and barons who at the time of the construction of the edifice held leading positions. The closest parallels can be found—apart from the few heraldic monuments that will be discussed below—in the sets of several dozens of crested seals on the most important international or, more rarely, national documents. Indeed, the oriel is the veritable letters patent, carved in stone, of the reigning couple, represented by their family and provincial crests, and of the Hungarian aristocracy that did hommage at the wedding of Matthias and Beatrix. In Central Europe this is not the only part of a building which had been erected to commemorate a royal wedding. The Goldenes Dachl, a similar oriel, the best known architectural item in Innsbruck, built as an addition between 1497 and 1500 on the front of the residence of the Counts of Tyrol, is a relevant example. The edifice carved of red marble and decorated with blazons is named for its gilded roofing tiles and was built to commemorate the wedding of the Emperor Maximilian I and Princess Maria Bianca Sforza of Milan, which took place in the city in 1494, some two decades after the construction of the Visegrád oriel.

In late 15th century Hungary there were also other examples of lavish heraldic display representational and hierarchical in character. Their humble precedents are the glazed tiled stoves made in the late years of the reign of the Emperor Sigismund; these show a few aristocratic shields alongside the blazons of the monarch.[7]

A relatively well known series of blazons, consisting altogether of 17 shields, is to be found on the three doors of the tabernacle of the Church of St Elizabeth in Kassa (Košice). The door in the centre shows the Hungarian coat-of-arms, the Bohemian arms with a lion, and the Slavonian with the heraldic marten, as well as the quartered Hungarian coat-of-arms with the raven of the Hunyadis in its inescutcheon, and the shield of the city of Kassa. The two outer doors carry family bearings[8]. The series of blazons can be dated to around 1469–70. In part at least, their display may be taken as listing dignitaries of the aristocratic "government" in office, and as such, a direct parallel to the series of coats-of-arms in the Visegrád oriel.

Directly linked to King Matthias was the ornamentation of the now demolished oriel of the Hunyadis, in the Transylvanian castle of the family at Vajdahunyad (Hunedoara). The coats-of-arms carved in stone there include, alongside the quartered Hunyadi shield with the raven in two fields and the Beszterce lion in the other two, as well as the Szilágyi shield with a goat (Matthias's mother was Erzsébet Szilágyi), coats-of-arms of several aristocratic families[9]. The carvings may be dated to around 1480. The back wall of the corridor of the oriel has a painted heraldic decoration, which cannot be later than 1481[10]. Similarly to the Visegrád coats-of-arms, those at Vajdahunyad are mostly shields of leading aristocratic families.

Together with the royal bearings, fragments of aristocratic coats-of-arms, presumably once part of the Visegrád Matthias Fountain, were also used for reconstruction. They are carved of red marble and bear the date 1483.



*A tiled stove of the period of King Matthias Corvinus. (Reconstruction).*

Not all of the relics abounding in heraldry belonged to this category. The breast-walls of the Hercules Fountain, also in Visegrád, were presumably ornamented only by the bearings of the monarch and his domains. This is also true of the "Matthias stoves", in both Buda and Visegrád, which were embellished by more than a dozen different shields. The "Matthias pew", from Bártfa and bearing the date 1483, is ornamented by the arms of the royal couple and the coats-of-arms of twelve European kings. The 23

keystones of the sanctuary vault of the Church of St Martin in Pozsony (Bratislava) bear, alongside the Hungarian bearings and those of the domains, the arms of the contemporary royal office-bearers of the city, and presumably of the most notable donors.

In connection with the Visegrád oriel, the type of the building and its broader historical and ideological context are also worthy of discussion. The detached oriel, which projected considerably from the western facade of the the palace complex, was topped by a high roof and thus given a strong emphasis. Travellers along the Danube must have been reminded of a tower. This seems to justify considering its relationship with heraldic towers as well.

Several such towers in Central Europe can be mentioned. Typical for the whole region could be the building projects of the Emperors Charles IV and Wenceslaus in Prague, principally the bridge tower in the old town that was completed before 1380 by Peter Parler. On its main front are statues of the monarchs surrounded by fifteen embossed shields and Wenceslaus's badges, which are joined by further blazons and badges in the wall paintings on the vault of the carriageway. A direct descendant of this type of building, dating from a century later, is the Prague tower for storing gun powder; this was built between 1475 and 1484, and is thus contemporary with the Visegrád oriel. It also bears shields on its richly articulated front, and a whole series of coats-of-arms on the banister above the closing corbel. The front walls of the gatehouse built around 1460 on the southern side of the old court (Alter Hof) in Munich has coats-of-arms painted on the back walls of niches. The wing's upper-floor oriel dates from around 1470, and is also ornamented by dozens of painted blazons. The recorded sources tell us that Buda castle also had a heraldic tower and this can be linked with the building work commissioned by Sigismund; however, apart from the name, there are no certain data concerning its outside form and heraldic decoration.

The Emperor Frederick III, a contemporary of Matthias, undoubtedly had the greatest influence on the representation of the Hungarian king. Many series of blazons of Frederick III are known both within and without buildings, on statues, coins and in illuminated codices. The most monumental of these is the facade of the Chapel of St George facing the courtyard in the castle of Wiener Neustadt, with its "heraldic wall" bearing the date 1453. It was this presentation of regal genealogy which Frederick's son, Maximilian I, placed on an "all-European basis", for example in the series of statues for his tomb in Innsbruck, in his major commissions for graphic work ("Triumphzug", "Ehrenpforte"), or on the heraldic tower of Innsbruck castle, which was decorated in the last years of the 15th century. (The tower was pulled down in 1756.). Motives and message from the Innsbruck heraldic tower were fairly closely imitated in the central section of the arch in the series of triumphal gates (Ehrenpforte) commissioned by Maximilian.

The idea of a tower-like triumphal arch embellished with bearings did not originate with Maximilian I, as triumphal symbols are to be found already in Charles IV's commissions in Bohemia, particularly in the Prague bridge tower, as representation of that monarch by which he intended to revive the artistic endeavours of Charle-

magne. Frederick III's heraldic wall in Wiener Neustadt is also situated above the carriageway under the castle chapel, but on the internal, court facade of the building, and here the triumphal arch motif can scarcely be perceived, while Matthias's oriel in Visegrád is far from being a gatehouse, even though it stands near the palace gate. This oriel abandoned the idea of the ancient triumphal arch, which had been repeatedly renewed during the Middle Ages, and "merely" served as simple propaganda. So served, for example, the tent of Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy, which consisted of heraldic tapestry, in which he received his visitors and liegemen during his progresses.

The triumphal arch was clearly model and inspiration for heraldic towers but one can sense another idea in the background, and this is a Biblical one. According to the Song of Solomon (4.4), "Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men." In the Middle Ages this was originally a symbol for the Virgin Mary. Pictures of David's tower embellished with shields featured in manuscripts, and some miniatures carried genuine bearings, thus pointing beyond the Mariological meaning. Even though no contemporaneous sources are known to us which would prove the relationship between the tower buildings concerned and the tower of David, it is not far-fetched to see, for instance, in the coats-of-arms of the towering Visegrád oriel, ultimately the hanging shields of "mighty men", the king and his barons, as heraldic symbols of royal power. ❧

## NOTES

**1** ■ Sections of the coats of arms of Aragon and of Jerusalem.

**2** ■ The region of Beszterce (Bistritz in German, Bistrita in Romanian) inhabited by Transylvanian Saxons.

**3** ■ Quartered arms with a crowned lion in the first and fourth quarterlies, and the lozenge Bavarian arms in the second and third fields. The reason for the appearance of this badge in Hungary (apart from Visegrád it is found on a tile stove in the Royal Palace in Buda) has not yet been fully clarified.

**4** ■ The corbel included armorial bearings of the countly families of the Szentgyörgyi and the Bazini, the Ország family of Gút, the Bátori, the Alsólendva and the Bolondóc lines of the Bánfi, the Hédervári family, the Hercegs of Szekcső, the Szécsi, the Rozgonyi, the Szobi, and the Kompolti, the Geréb family of Vingárt, János Vitovec, and Archbishop of Kalocsa Gábor Matucsinai. The coats of arms on the vault include those of the Garai and the Pálóci families.

**5** ■ The blazons of the Garais and the Pybers are the crucial ones, as the aristocratic line of the family died out with Jób Garai, and Benedek Pyber was replaced in his post by Bálint Tankházi that year.

**6** ■ Archbishop Gábor Matucsinai, Lord (High) and Privy Chancellor, died in 1478.

**7** ■ Armorial bearings of the Cillei, Pálóci and Szántai Lack families.

**8** ■ Bearings of the Perényi, the Csáki, the Szentgyörgyi, the Butkai, the Druget, the Garai, the Bebek, the Újlaki, the Szapolyai, the Csupor, and the Ország of Gút, as well as one of an unknown family.

**9** ■ Blazons of the Vitovec family, the Bánfi of Alsólendva, the Kinizsi, the Kanizsai, and the Szécsi, and a few unidentified shields.

**10** ■ The quartered Hungarian coat of arms, together with the bearings of the Héder, the Garai, the Újlaki, the Csáki, the Losonci, the Rozgonyi, the Hunyadi, the Szécsi, and the Bánfi of Alsólendva can be recognized here; based on the Garai blazon, therefore the wall painting cannot be of a later date than 1481.

Katalin Sinkó

# Mihály Munkácsy's Wide-Screen Canvases

Mihály Munkácsy was born in Munkács (Mukačevo) one hundred and fifty years ago and died in Endenich, Switzerland, in 1900. He was a legend in his lifetime to artists in his native country, a result of his success as a painter and as a man of the world in Paris. Apprenticed to a cabinet maker as a lad, he became a painter-prince, a true example of an East-European self-made man. His was, indeed, a success story. Born and bred in a backward part of the world, he went on to conquer all, thanks to his talent, dedication and ingenuity. His oeuvre, for that reason, has to this day been object of a cult.

Here I would like to examine one factor of Munkácsy's success, that is the manner in which his paintings were displayed.

Instead of submitting his gigantic (450 x 650 cm) *Christ before Pilate* to the 1881 Spring Salon in Paris, as he had done with his earlier works, Munkácsy put it on display in a specially converted hall in Karl Sedelmeyer's, the art dealer's, town house. The painting showed the dignified figure of Jesus, clothed in white, facing Pilate sitting in judgement against the background of an agitated crowd and his High Priest accusers. Munkácsy abandoned the iconographical clichés of his time and presented the "historical" Jesus, as manifest in Ernest Renan's writings. The success of the painting inspired a fashion for biblical scenes in an oriental setting. Munkácsy repeated this success, showing *Golgotha* (460 x 712 cm), the second piece of the Christ trilogy, together with *Christ before Pilate*, hanging them opposite each other in Sedelmayer's pavilion. *Golgotha*, also known as *Consummatum est*, depicted Christ dying on the cross, with Mary and other holy women grieving at the foot of the cross, the crowd deserting him.

It has been customary, since the Baroque, to build galleries to show paintings and sculpture. Long, corridor-like buildings with the paintings arranged symmetrically on the walls extended an invitation to a festive walk with interruptions. In the nineteenth century, it was still customary to hang paintings very close to one another. True innovation only came with

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overhead light, which cast a kind of diffuse and homogeneous, and, to some extent, alienating natural light on each single exhibited piece. The actual arrangement of the material changed very little. In halls with natural overhead light, paintings continued to be hung side by side, their frames almost touching. Pictures were arranged within a broad strip along the walls; the bottom level was determined by the plinth, with the top level usually defined by the height of the doors. This arrangement, in general use in Europe, was designed to emphasize the central points; the larger paintings were usually hung at the centre of the walls, with sculpture often placed at the centre of the halls. No draperies or plants were used in neo-Classical or neo-Renaissance exhibition halls, the aim being concentration of attention on the canvases.

It was in Vienna in 1873 that this method of displaying pictures first started to change. At a time when the architect Hasenauer was experimenting with new ways of bringing in overhead light by adding a row of windows between the roof and the walls in one of the World Fair pavilions, Hans Makart showed a giant painting in the Künstlerhaus without any natural overhead light. Makart broke with tradition in two essential ways. First, instead of presenting a large number of works, he selected only a few. The grand hall on the first floor of the Künstlerhaus was taken up by a single painting, *Venice Pays Homage to Catharina Cornaro*. The huge, elongated canvas shows the beautiful new Queen of Cyprus on her throne, receiving lavish presents from the patricians of Venice. Makart also introduced radical changes in the lighting; he used dark draping to black out the overhead source of light. Semi-darkness ruled in the hall, and the painting alone was brightly illuminated. The spotlighting we have grown accustomed to was a novelty in 1873 to people used to the homogeneous and diffuse light of overhead windows. The painting was surrounded by drapery, carpets and flower arrangements.

In his use of drapery, Makart started a trend. By the 1880s, the hanging of drapery in the arcades and doors of exhibition halls became widespread, a practice which was readily interpreted by contemporaries as the revival of ancient traditions. The abundant use of draperies, curtains and carpets in exhibition halls and near the paintings was part of a style of presentation which strove for painterly effects and surprises and was based on the traditional interpretation of the *cortina,* or curtain motif, as expressing revelation.

In her recent dissertation, Eva Pöschl discusses the methods of presentation used earlier by the Künstlerhaus together with the changes introduced after 1873. The use of new magical effects, initiated by Makart and continued by the art dealers Mithke and Wawra, is interpreted by Eva Pöschl as a return to Baroque taste and the emergence of neo-Baroque tendencies. In my view, the new method of presentation had its origins in the lighting technique employed for panoramas and dioramas. One of the essential aspects of panoramas was that the viewer looked at the illuminated painting from underneath an umbrella or canopy. This prevented direct natural overhead light from reaching the eyes; all that you saw was the illuminated painting. In his book on the genre, Stephan Oettermann mentions a story connecting the invention of panorama

painting with Robert Baker's parasol. Like other artists, Baker usually stood under an open parasol while painting landscapes *plein air*; the idea of drawing the entire view below the full circle of the parasol's perimeter supposedly occurred to him on one such occasion. Painters in the nineteenth century also had facilities in their studios for observing their illuminated works from a darkened place, such as the inside of a tent or the shelter of a baldachin. The use of such tents or baldachins can be deduced in a number of paintings. (Tents or baldachins of this kind can be seen in photographs showing the studios of Károly Lotz and Gyula Benczúr, Gyula Tornyai, Ede Balló, and László Kézdi Kovács.) In descriptions of Munkácsy's studio, too, mention is made of such a tent, assembled of sheets of homespun cloth. It was from this tent that Munkácsy studied his works, occasionally using mirrors on the wall opposite the tent; by effectively doubling the viewing distance, Munkácsy was able to observe the colour scheme and have a distant view of the painting. In Makart's studio, a loggia was used for the same purpose.

It was perhaps these studio devices, along with the lighting technique used for panoramas, that inspired Makart to exhibit his giant painting in a semi-dark room. To enhance the magical effects, Makart covered the frame of the painting with ornamentations and plants. This helped him to blur the division between the imaginary space of the painting and the real space of the viewers. This novel method proved highly successful for Makart. After 1873, other painters, too, employed similar techniques when exhibiting their works in the Künstlerhaus: in 1878, Matejko's *The Battle of Grunewald on July 15, 1410* had a similar showing, and so did two paintings by Munkácsy: *Milton* in 1879 and *Christ before Pilate* in 1882. The latter attracted a total of 50,000 visitors. From the beginning of the 1880s, spot-lighting effects were achieved not just by the employment of recently introduced electric and gas lighting, but also by using baldachins to control natural overhead light. Up to now, I have been unable to find interior photographs of the exhibitions mentioned above, but a painting by Gyula Aggházy on the reception of Munkácsy's *Christ before Pilate* in Budapest in 1882 has survived. In it, the huge canvas is seen in the grand hall of the Fine Arts Society, surrounded by drapery, and also by the directors of the Fine Arts Society arranged in front of the painting. The President, Arnold Ipolyi, is shown handing over a silver plated laurel wreath to Munkácsy, who is in formal evening wear.

From the description given by the newspaper *Pester Lloyd* we learn that the large painting, which stood on the floor and was not hung on the wall, occupied the entire back wall of the grand hall, which was fitted with overhead windows. The lighting was inappropriate and dull, even in the morning. In preparation for the exhibition, "the annoying silk drapery trimmed with gold was taken off, full overhead light was let in, blue textiles were hoisted (probably to control the light—K.S.), and railings were installed in front of the picture. As more and more light fell on the painting, the striking and uniquely plastic features of the figures also became more apparent." When preparations were completed, the Fine Arts Society sent a deputation to Munkácsy who was in the next room; on entry, the maestro was wel-

*Gyula Aggházy: The Presidium of the Fine Arts Association ceremoniously welcomes Mihály Munkácsy at the Műcsarnok on the 19th of February 1882. (1884). Munkácsy's* Christ before Pilate, *framed by a curtain, is in the background. Oil, Christian Museum, Esztergom.*

comed with cheers and speeches, and was presented with a silver-plated laurel wreath. The article in the *Pester Lloyd* continues: "Munkácsy greeted his old friends with engaging simplicity, then immediately inspected the technical apparatus of the exhibition. He was not satisfied with the amount of 'light', and also noted the distractive effect of the gilded frame; to eliminate the latter, he issued instructions to cover the bottom of the frame, which touched the ground, using black tulle. The gas and electric lights were turned up, and the magical effects were enhanced by the installation of a mirror on the wall opposite the painting. Since full daylight came through the overhead windows at around eleven in the morning, he specified the period between eleven and twelve as the best time for viewing the painting."

The carefully contrived method of presentation, as the visual effects including the dimensions of the painting, all served the same compositional principle. In his critique, Gyula Pasteiner points out that the powerful impact of *Christ before Pilate* is due to the illusion that the crowd viewing the painting actually form part of the crowd shown in the painting, Munkácsy's intention being to merge the real space of

the viewers and the imaginary space of the picture. Some of Munkácsy's contemporaries shared the same aspiration: in the *Prussians' Homage*, painted in 1882 by Jan Matejko, or in *Luther after Addressing the Diet at Worms*, painted in 1885 by Wilhelm Beckmann, the connection between internal and external space is provided by the large half-figures—*repoussoirs*—in the foreground. Instead of using this photographic technique, Munkácsy established the connection between real and imaginary space by purely compositional means.

Since the painting could be viewed only from a particular distance, with railings placed to ensure this, the figures appeared to be of just about average height. The size of the picture was adjusted to match the life-size figures. The soldier in the foreground of the picture, who is pushing back the agitated crowd with a lance held in a horizontal position, appears to be cordoning off the viewers as well as the crowd in the picture. In *Ecce Homo*, which was the third piece of the Christ trilogy, Munkácsy used the same technique to separate the viewers from the painting with real as well as pictorial means; a chain was painted in the foreground to duplicate the real barrier at about ten metres from the painting.

Quite understandably, exhibiting these giant paintings always caused problems to Munkácsy, and required much preparation. In a letter to Miklós Szmrecsányi, he wrote: "a good display cannot lend qualities to the painting which it does not process, but many qualities it has may be lost through improper positioning or lighting." When *Árpád's Conquest of Hungary* had its first showing in Budapest (showing the Slavs' surrender to Árpád, the chief of the Magyar tribes occupying Hungary, it had been commissioned for the Hungarian Parliament's Great Chamber), Munkácsy actually considered removing the distracting elements from view. (For example, he would have liked to have had the benches in the Parliament's debating chamber covered with timber planks.) When this painting was first shown in Paris, he noticed the bad effect of the filtered natural lighting. This prompted him to have some of the opaque-frosted glass removed from the overhead windows, in the hope that brighter light would enliven the colours.

In painting his monumental works, Munkácsy always followed the same method: first he found models for the mass scenes, then he arranged and photographed them. Photographic realism was alien to Munkácsy's methods but thanks to his technique, the photographs of the models suffered a sea-change in the course of painting. The use of photographs in the creative process was common practice in the second half of the nineteenth century; the methods were specially discussed by the textbooks. It has long been known that Munkácsy photographed his models and then redrew the photographic sketches. Not much has been said, however, about the use of projectors by him, albeit this was a vitally important step in the execution of his giant paintings.

It is not chance that none of the full-scale cartoons for Munkácsy's monumental paintings—the sketches used for transferring the composition to the final canvas—have survived. The surviving large charcoal drawings all correspond in size to the so-called "reductions"; in other words, these were clearly preliminary studies for the reductions, i. e. smaller versions. In actual

*Millenary Exhibition, 1896. Part of the Metropolitan Pavilion. On the right: Gyula Benczúr:* The Reconquest of Buda Castle in 1686. *In front of it a canopy that shuts off the overhead light. Photo: György Klösz*

fact, the smaller versions themselves functioned as *sketches;* for quite a time, however, differences in the interpretation of the sources obscured this. Zoltán Farkas, whose views have gained general acceptance, believed that the smaller versions were copies of the final versions, made by Munkácsy personally: copies the maestro was obliged to produce for Sedelmeyer, as specified in the contract. This view appears to be confirmed by the book of accounts showing Munkácsy's business dealings with Sedelmeyer; in this the sums paid out for both the large paintings and the associated reductions were usually listed in the same entry. Béla Lázár, speaking on the occasion of the Municipal Gallery's purchase of the reduction of *Christ before Pilate,* did claim, relying on his own memory, that the maestro painted the reduced versions before the final works; but his opinion was not taken seriously by anyone. The smaller versions can be divided into two groups. There are those works which are reductions in the literal sense of the term. These were made by Munkácsy after the completion of a painting—occasionally decades later, as was the case with the versions of *The Condemned Cell* (1880), *The Village Hero* (1882) and *Milton*. They are distinct variants, rather than meticulously accurate copies. Some of the smaller versions associated with monumental paintings on the other hand are works which,

save for the difference in size, correspond to the full–size final works down to the minutest detail. The reduced versions are, almost invariably, of about almost half the size of the original. Munkácsy himself referred to them as "cartoons". An example of this was recorded in connection with his work on the mural for the ceiling of the Kunsthistorisches Museum's stairway; when delivering the completed oil painting, he described it to the architect as a "cartoon". In order to be able to spot the minute differences between the cartoon (400 x 400 cm) and the final mural, one needs to look very closely. (These differences basically concern the colouring, as well as an increase in the size of the picture field, which was minimal but for some reason nevertheless very important to Munkácsy.) These wholly completed canvases served as cartoons in the final execution of the monumental paintings. The method was described by Walther Ilges in a book on Munkácsy, published during the painter's lifetime: "When the composition was completed, the work of transferring the drawing onto the canvas was almost mechanical, a task which in a number of cases Munkácsy passed on to his pupils or else, like some of his colleagues, he did himself, using a projector. In the execution of monumental paintings, the use of projections eliminated the tedious work of squaring for transfer. Over a certain size, and especially in the case of panorama paintings, a projector was indispensable." However, it could be pointed out that a cartoon with a charcoal drawing of the composition would have sufficed. Nevertheless, Munkácsy used a detailed oil sketch for the enlargement, as he began the execution of the painting by drawing the outlines in colour and grounding the figures in colour as well. The sketch, fully completed in oil, could then be referred to by his assistants, when colouring.

Some of Munkácsy's contemporaries were highly critical of the paraphernalia surrounding the presentation of his monumental paintings; these voices were, however, largely drowned in the cheers of his admirers. Many people identified these effects, which resembled those found in panoramas or wax-works, as the latest in art, the consummation of Dutch realism and of Rembrandt's work in particular. Munkácsy's monumental paintings should still be looked at in accordance with the specific rules of this genre. In conditions different from those intended by the artist for their exhibition—in diffuse light or with the picture hung high on a wall—we shall never experience them as we were meant to; indeed their very qualities remain hidden. Exhibited as they are today, they look like operatic sets when carried on the road.

Methods of presentation are largely reflections of contemporary taste and visual culture. These days Munkácsy's monumental paintings are mostly displayed in interiors inspired by Art Nouveau or the Bauhaus, in the alienating surroundings of white walls and diffuse light. Taking them out of the museum cabinet and looking at them as precursors of cinematography would do them more justice. They ought to be considered works with the help of which the painters of the eighties, Makart, Munkácsy *è tutti quanti* experimented with the basic elements of the cinematic approach, such as distance from the screen, the effects of a dark auditorium and a shining three dimensional picture, which no frame separates from the public. ❧

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Miklós Györffy

# Careers—Last Steps—First Steps

Ferenc Karinthy: *Napló* (Diary) I-III, Littoria, 1993. ISBN 963-7854-16-9. 502, 475, 462 pp. • Győző (Victor) Határ: *Életút* (A Course of Life), Életünk Könyvek, 1993, 254 pp. • László Darvasi: *A veinhageni rózsabokrok* (The Veinhagen Rosebushes), Jelenkor, 1993. ISBN 963-7770-55-0, 156 pp.

In 1992, the novelist and playwright Ferenc Karinthy died at the age of seventy-one. Despite all his literary and social success, Karinthy was never really able to move out of the shadow of his father, Frigyes Karinthy, a genius whose works expressed the grotesque and absurd in East-Central Europe in the interwar period. Yet, the younger Karinthy had an exceptional life and career, despite the calamities these seventy-one years visited on the region. During his younger years, between the two wars, he met, through his father, all the great names in Hungarian literature at close quarters; in his adult years, when he had established himself as a writer, he manoeuvred through the decades of communism together with the surviving great names and his own contemporaries, retaining close contact with practically all of them. Many were his friends. In the 1950s, perhaps made tipsy by the promises of the political confidence men, he had subscribed to the system; from 1956 up to his death, he cleverly walked the thin line between those writers who were supported and those just tolerated. He avoided open confrontation, both in his books and his life, through wit, a gift of the gab, humour, and a skepticism that sometimes bordered on the cynical. He was known to one and all as "Cini".

Karinthy kept a diary with an amazing consistency, practically daily, during the last twenty-five years of his life. Now, barely two years after his death, this *Diary* has been published in three bulky volumes, amounting to nearly 1,500 pages. There was no obvious reason for Karinthy's decision on January 1, 1967, to start a diary. He was 46 years old, in his full intellectual and physical vigour. His fiction and plays had already ensured him a place in the Hungarian writing of the period.

The journal discloses a singular duality. It shows Karinthy's cheerfulness, his *joie de vivre*, his openness. He gives a daily account of current events, where he had been to, whom he met, what he did, what he read, and what he wrote. He practically wrote a daily newspaper about himself, for himself. His was an eventful, multifaceted life. Besides long-range, personal and demanding literary work, he also undertook occasional commissions. He was to be seen

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*is our regular reviewer of new fiction.*

everywhere in the city, a welcome guest and genial host, a theatregoer, a frequenter of swimming pools, and of the company of old sports cronies. He had a country home near Budapest, and he travelled much, to America or Italy, or Japan. Partly because of his father's and his own publications and royalties, partly because of his own contacts, he was able to travel much more than the average Hungarian citizen of the period. Travel was his ruling passion and he made the most of this privilege. The *Diary* relates all this with gusto and wit and entirely without pomposity. Karinthy the hedonist, who found a sensual delight in reading, music and good theatre is also here: the journal is an inexhaustible source of descriptions and impressions.

On the other hand, the *Diary* also reflects Karinthy's vexations, the pent-up bitterness, the gloom that became more frequent with the passage of time. The urge to keep a diary was certainly spurred by a desire to grasp the beauty and wealth of the passing parade; even greater was the compulsion to set down what could not be said in his published works. He was limited by censorship and self-censorship alike. The *Diary* gives rein to his suppressed political and historical thoughts; indeed, there is much incidental information and personal experience which makes the journal a genuine historical document.

Karinthy was thoroughly at home in the Kádár regime; but desiring to be his own man, he suffered more and more in it. It is this ultimately all-destructive duality which emerges from these monstrous confessions. He writes for himself all that which in published works could only be expressed in a subdued, diluted form, or which had to be avoided. It is presumably due to this keeping of two books that Karinthy has left behind no work of real importance, albeit he may well have had the talent for it.

By the late 1980s, he found himself in a void. Depressed, he was drinking heavily; the journal becomes increasingly ragged and fragmentary, the writer lost faith even in his diary. He had finally had enough of the empty lies of the system and looked on the compromises made by his generation—and by himself—with some self-criticism. But he was no longer able to summon strength for a new spurt. Even the change in the political system could not produce any fever of activity. He was less interested in the future than in the things that would pass with him. What worried him most was that the privileges of literature and a literary life would disappear. Literature would become a craft and not a way of life. He had no desire to take part any more. One single note has remained from 1991, the description of a dream, with the last words being: "to be continued". But there was no sequel in this life.

The Budapest literary scene was Karinthy's natural element. Victor Határ, seven years his senior, eighty this year, has always been an outsider in it. He was never part of any trends or movements, and until recently, his work was only known to a few. The principal reason, of course, was that Határ left Hungary during the 1956 Revolution and has been living in London ever since. The greater part of his oeuvre was brought out by Hungarian publishers in the West, or in his own edition, in Hungarian. His works were banned in Hungary and only started to appear in the 1980s.

Határ started writing in Budapest, in the 1940s, when he was studying architecture and music. After the communist takeover, he was immediately muzzled as a bourgeois formalist, and in 1950 he was given two and a half years in prison for attempting to leave the country illegally. On his release, he earned his living as a translator. One of his brilliant works of that period was a translation of *Tristram Shandy*. Work that had suffered a break when it was just beginning in Hungary, unfolded after 1956 in his years in exile in Britain. He is a prolific writer indeed. In the late 1980s, a Budapest critic, Lóránt Kabdebó, visited him in his Wimbledon home (the "Hongriuscule") and taped a long interview on his life and work. Kabdebó had already taped a similar series of interviews with another great eccentric Hungarian writer, the late Miklós Szentkuthy, and the raw interviews were reworked and shaped by Szentkuthy into an autobiographic novel, which he called *Frivolitások és hitvallások* (Frivolities and Confessions).

Victor Határ made a similar use of material recorded daily over three weeks. He based what amounts to a new book on the transcript. The first volume of this monumental self-avowal (with two more volumes planned) is now in the bookshops. It covers the years up to Határ's first arrest and subsequent imprisonment in 1943.

Határ saw the inside of a Horthy prison as well as a communist one. The Horthy regime imprisoned him for sedition, for illegal subversive activity, including the production and dissemination of pamphlets agitating against the regime and the Germans. This was a turning point: up till then he had led the life of a young man about town, studying for a learned profession and ignoring politics entirely. Yet, from his earliest years, his has been an adventurous, defiant life, marked by intellectual passion. His recollections recount all this, in his incomparably original, playful and circumlocutory style. Readers know Határ for his unparallelled gift for language, ironic paraphrase, arbitrary derivations, whimsical imagery, and an uninhibited mixture of slang, archaic usage, vernacular, foreign words, and scholarly references. All this would seem to mark him as post-modern (indeed, this is what has now brought Határ into fashion), but his style and turn of mind were just that even half a century ago. Somewhere he says the "physiological entirety" of his self is "programmed" for the Hungarian language, and that "those familiar with the computer and with languages, will know of what importance it is which courses are reserved for which concepts, what the typical work concepts of the language are. So thoroughly does a language determine not only your reflections but also their outcome. The built-in idiotisms of the language, its construction and structure, not only guide thought, but also ceaselessly mislead, or can mislead; there are some who do not shrink back from basing their philosophy on the built-in idiotisms of their own native language; the native language is after all a 'manifestation'..."

Határ, in the detours and digressions in the conversation, always gives free rein to his reflections on the Hungarian language, whose command the long years abroad have not in any way diminished. The reader often feels that what he is reading is not so much Határ's authentic life story (a story which according to Határ perhaps does not even exist), but the "text" that takes shape

in him while recalling his memories. The text is certainly being shaped by the events which did take place, but in formulation they undergo a transformation: ultimately the text triumphs over life's course. The literary reveries, exaggerations, embellishments, stylizations, and self-mythicizing sometimes break up and reshape the facts; a virtuoso gift of expression replaces them to the point that the concentrated text can sometimes weary, but often fascinates.

Strange as it may seem, Határ did not intend to become a writer at first, not even a man of letters. Instead, as he now recounts, he first studied music, and then architecture, gaining his architect's diploma with distinction. By the late thirties, he was earning a fair enough living as a tyro architect, not without involvement in some minor frauds and swindles. His friends did not come from literary circles. In the gaps between drawing and womanizing, this rebellious son of the middle-class read Nietzsche, Greek philosophers and the Church Fathers, and turned out satirical, absurd, anarchist writings—all impounded once he was detained. The story of Határ's youth, as far as can be deducted from his stylistic stunts and shamming, is typical *Sturm und Drang*, with a titanesque protagonist recalling the heroic age of the avant-garde, when the goal was to conquer rather than to redeem society. Thus the sudden bracketing with the illegal communists is an almost grotesque and eerie turn (at the same time part of the very essence of the times); he had in fact nothing to do with the communists. Later they were to bracket him with those bourgeois who not long before had been ostracizing him. The rebel was at long last to find his home in conservative Britain.

The past five years have seen a new generation emerging, writers all born after 1956. The 1989 changes have made literature autonomous and the young regrouped themselves around periodicals and publishers they themselves have established. Already critics and theoreticians of their own generation have appeared.

"An Introduction to Fiction" was the subtitle to a collection of essays and meditations by Péter Esterházy, one of the key figures of a previous generation. Just like him, many of his important contemporaries, including Péter Nádas, Dezső Tandori, György Petri, György Spiró, Ádám Bodor, Péter Hajnóczy, and László Krasznahorkai, considered literature as the art of the language, in a personal manner of speaking, as a collection of "texts" which cannot be referred directly to reality, even less to politics. According to a major critic of this generation, the turn of the 1970s and 80s brought a change of paradigms to Hungarian literature. How, then, does the new generation relate to the great accomplishment of their direct predecessors? Do they intend to carry it further or reject it?

For the time being there can hardly be an answer to this question. Indeed, the new generation has to face up to the further marginalization of literature: it too, like modern music or painting, is scarcely more than the private business of a resolute minority, even though the opportunities to organize and publish have become better. The preceding generation had to contend with censorship and ideological pressure. Péter Balassa, who as a critic did much to achieve recognition for the preceding generation, says of the new prose that it contains less and less that would interest him: "What actually has

happened to you, old man, and how did it happen, what was and what was not the real thing in it, what then is genuine in it, which is the language that is really yours or which you have been in up to your neck (whatever it might be, at last free of all prudishness)." He feels that "something has gone utterly wrong in Hungarian literature, particularly in prose, after 1987," but he is not yet able to unravel what it is.

Anyway, László Darvasi is a fully-fledged talent. Born in 1962, he was a poet first, switching to fiction fairly recently. Compared to the deconstructionist prose of many of his generation, his most recent book, *The Veinhagen Rosebushes*, is surprisingly, even suspiciously, traditional. While they may not pertain to some identifiable reality, the settings, mainly small towns, are literary abstractions of familiar Hungarian models. Sometimes they bring to mind the abstracted settings used by Ádám Bodor or László Krasznahorkai. They are mysterious and bleak, alien and closed locales; they seem to have some kind of internal order, though only disconnected fragments of this do appear. Mysteries, crimes lurk behind the characters and events; what is revealed about them cannot be taken as a rational explanation.

The short stories are principally about their narrators, who have recurring attributes: they include a bald, chaste and orphaned young man, the victim of some curse, catastrophe, illness, or indeed death. With these attributes, the narrator is part of the medium in which he lives, but also lonely, and a stranger in it, not part of the community which, usually, is fragmentarily intimated. Sometimes the story of the boy's loss of innocence, leading to distortion, alienation and destruction, begins with the death of the father; sometimes it is the absence of a father, perhaps some obscure minor bequest of that father, which plunge him into disaster.

In several stories, mythological motifs are inorganically mixed with empty, meaningless, anecdotic elements of reality, and the criminal embroilment seems to be factitious. In the better ones, such as the title story, the mythological allusions arrange themselves into an interesting composition. The boy here is the slightly mad, bald son of a basket-weaver, possessed of an incipient prophetic faculty. An uncontrollable fit of inconsolate sobbing, lasting three weeks, is cured by his mother, who herself initiates him sexually. By defiling the town's revered roses, the initiated boy provokes the community into a near fateful reaction and then, through a ritual murder, fulfils his "task". Finally he realizes that from the outset he has been watched by detectives, who have practically paved the way for him to bring about the conditions which have made him both criminal and victim.

Darvasi's stories, the product of undoubted talent and craftsmanship, leave the reader with a sense of dissatisfaction. It would be preferable if what is undoubtedly genuine and real did not have to be puzzled out, if there were less esotericism at the umpteenth remove. ❧

George Szirtes

# Perfect Hunglish

Tibor Fischer: *Under the Frog*. Penguin, London, 1993. 250 pp.

I bought this book after hearing the poet and critic Tom Paulin compare the experience of reading it to being stuck in a sweaty jock-strap. I knew straight away the book was for me. I had never actually worn a jock-strap but remembered the bigger rugby players in the changing rooms at school swaggering about in these industrial looking contraptions for keeping the more vulnerable parts of the body safely tucked up. The smell of sweat would blend with the smell of liniment. I had quite forgotten this experience and wanted to be reminded.

The enthusiastic reviews of the original edition described the book as "painfully moving... uproariously funny... plausible, insolent, sophisticated... hungry... slangy, tragic... romp... sharp...". Salman Rushdie proclaimed it a "delicate serio-comic treasure". There is much in all of this. Dedicated to "...all who fought (Not just in '56, Not just in Hungary)", it describes the lives of Gyuri (Fischer), Pataki, Róka, Gyurkovics, and others who make up the Locomotive basketball team. The book is episodic, a series of incidents moving first back then forward in time between December 1944 and October 23rd 1956, each chapter set in a particular month but fleshing out the central events with flashbacks in the form of digressions. It may perhaps be misleading to talk about central events: the episodes do not constitute a continuous narrative and causation or motivation play little part in them, they are simply incidents from the life of the central character, Gyuri. The various incidents combined reveal aspects of school, domestic and working life, with a few excursions into bucolic amusements such as eating contests, pub brawls, responses to the death of Stalin, a month in the army, a briefly described love affair, some events from the 1956 revolution, and Gyuri's escape from the country following the revolution's defeat. In its own anecdotal fashion it is a kind of *Bildungsroman* : our heroes boast, lie, fight and quip their way through a life which is composed less of episodes than of a series of energetic,

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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.*

yearning and eventually tragic tableaux—less a film than a series of slides.

As a description of a milieu the book is highly convincing. A Hungarian reader would certainly recognize the tone and terms of reference. The historical and social research is solid for the most part (the Hungarian football team beat England 7-1 in 1954, not 5-1 as stated), the geography reliable and the ear for conversational levels, particularly the use of hyperbole and irony is colourful and intense. That irony is employed as a romantic device betrays a nostalgia for defiance. The hyperbole may be read as sheer boyish exaggeration.

It is in fact very much a boys' book, in which women or female sensibilities have scant importance apart from their function as "the two-legged amusement park". By the time the book starts, Gyuri's mother has been dead for some while: by the time it ends, the only woman of any depth, Gyuri's first serious lover, the Polish Jadwiga is dead. This exclusion of femininity is part of the underlying tragedy of the book. The state too is a wholly masculine institution; to employ Paulin's terms of reference, we may compare it to a smelly locker room. We first meet the boys travelling naked on a train, "mooning" at people on provincial platforms; we learn of their backgrounds as class aliens, athletes and sex-maniacs (I suspect this is as far as Paulin got with the novel and gave up in disgust) and are introduced to the author's extraordinary prose which is worth an essay in itself, a hobbling hypercharged confection of English and transliterated Hungarian idiomatic speech, boisterous, bullying, awkward, constantly quipping and disorientating the reader. Because Fischer's style is so conspicuously an active part of his meaning, a short appetiser is unavoidable.

On the very first page the basketball team's habitual practice of travelling naked is described as "the irrefrangible rule". Let us be academic for a moment. While strict rules may normally be described as 'unbreakable', the concept of rules themselves is aphysical. The word "frangible" is associated entirely with physical objects, particularly glass. Bearing this in mind, the conjunction of "irrefrangible" and "rule" is slightly distressing for an English reader. As we read on, the table the boys are playing cards on is described as "mutilated out of value by years of liquid rings, inadvertent and advertent lacerations, the burrowing of burning tobacco", Róka's sexual appetite as his "devotion to gamic convolutions", and a conversation as a "narration... guillotined by Róka's fury at losing a heavy-wagered hand to Pataki". Some of these are inventions, some later, like "night butterflies" for prostitutes, direct transliterations from the Hungarian. Most, however, have something in common with the seventeenth century metaphysical conceits referred to by Dr. Johnson as "monstrous and disgusting hyperboles". Some are more monstrous than others. Delightfully, on page 6, "Gyuri's aspirations, though he had never opened them up, dripped out over time and had been fully divined by the others." If one untangles this, one arrives at a comparison of aspirations with livers fresh from the butcher's. The divination presumably refers to haruspication.

Language in Fischer is constantly straining towards grotesque physicality; the hyperbole of the characters and incidents is matched by hyperbole in expres-

sion. His prose draws attention to itself in much the same way as do the naked basketball team who "promoted their posteriors up against the carriage window", a sentence which, from one point of view, is perfectly illiterate (to "promote" does not mean "to physically raise": its range of meaning is wholly unsuited to the purpose for which it is being used here). But while this constant anxious promotion or pushiness (very Hungarian in some respects) is irritating at first, it eventually lodges itself firmly in the reader's mind as an expectation: one looks forward to the next piece of grotesquerie and is not disappointed. The book starts linguistically as it means to continue, moving from disaster to triumph and back again, treating those two impostors, as Kipling has it, just the same. Fischer promotes prose as a sequence of train carriages with naked posteriors promoting themselves.

But this is not without purpose. The metaphor of the smelly locker room may not be attractive to those who don't like smelly locker rooms, but it is consistent and appropriate. The life presented in *Under the Frog*—the phrase itself a bowdlerised transliteration—may not be that lived by the majority of Hungarians, but it has already provided an attractive model for films such as *Megáll az idő*, *Szerencsés Dániel*, *Álombrigád*, *Eldorádó,* and others. It is the younger generation's reflection on the lives of their fathers, uncles and elder brothers, a kind of ironical adolescent bragging. It is not an untrue picture of life, the locker room is not an unconvincing metaphor. Fisher's own father was in fact György (or Gyuri) Fischer of the BBC, and it is feasible that the book is based around anecdotes passed from father to son.

The author had tried several publishing houses before he found the relatively small publisher Polygon who were prepared to take it on. Its subsequent success with Penguin will have been quite unexpected, but it will now become the source on which British readers, as far as it interests them, base their knowledge and understanding of the Fifties in Hungary. As such it is a curiosity: a book describing a world which had already been lost before 1989 and which since then has disappeared almost without trace, a world which nevertheless continues to inform Hungarian, Eastern European and even Western European sensibilities in the form of myth. The delicacy of Fischer's enterprise consists in conveying this myth through a human model based on the affections. The book may reek of testosterone, but the process of learning and humanizing gently steers the anarchic energy towards pathos.

Translating the novel into Hungarian will be an interesting enterprise. But for the fact that it employs English words, it is already Hungarian. Fowler, the great arbiter of English usage, refers somewhere to polysyllabic humour as "much less amusing at the hundredth than at the first time of reading". But what isn't? Here among slogans "replete with sesquipedalian imprecations", neologisms such as the wonderful "stultiloquence" or "ozymandiased" (cf. Shelley's sonnet), transliterations such as "bell shock" (*csengőfrász*), and coinages and monstrous hyperboles of all kinds, there lurks a stable, sad perceptiveness predicated on negatives: not this exam, not this army, not this factory, not this economy, not this life, not this particular awful ball-squeezing tool-trap or jock strap. ❧

George Gömöri

# Talking through Eastern Europe

Eva Hoffman, *Exit into History. A Journey Through the New Eastern Europe.* Viking Penguin, New York–London, etc. 1993, 410 pp.

Back in 1990 Eva Hoffman, author of the moving and excellent autobiographical *Lost in Translation*, embarked on an ambitious journey to collect material for her next book. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, these countries appeared to be full of exciting political and social possibilities. Hoffman entered this domain of the unknown better equipped than most—her own childhood in Poland certainly helped in understanding the fears and complexes, and also (the largely unfulfilled) hopes and ambitions of her lost, and now miraculously recovered, fellow-Europeans. She also decided not be too impulsive and hasty, so she revisited the scene of her investigations—Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria—a year later. Did she really manage "to catch history" in the making? Or was it only the flotsam and jetsam of the historical process that she observed in these previously compressed and "homogenized" and now perceptibly changing countries?

One has the impression that the depth of her investigative penetration varied from country to country. Undoubtedly, she knows Poland best (knowing the language of a country is obviously a huge asset) and her memories of an earlier Poland often get extrapolated with later experiences. Previous knowledge of Warsaw or Cracow are essential in 1990 when Eva Hoffman can see better than most outsiders how far and how fast Poland had travelled from its point of departure, the centralized apathy of the early 1980s. She arrives in Poland at the time when the Balcerowicz programme begins to bite and is amazed at the calm, the rather un-Polish "stoical sobriety" of society, in view of this enormous economic dislocation. A year later she concludes: "Poland is becoming a normal country after all..." (p. 116). Yes, but the people she meets there—Adam Michnik, the film-

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maker Kieslowski, and the hard-working aristocratic lady Anna Branick-Wolska—are not exactly average Poles. The cream of the Polish intelligentsia reacts to events (not surprisingly) rather differently than the man in the street. And the epithet "normal" can hardly be applied to a country where a politician with the empty promises and posturing of a Tyminski can get 20 per cent of the vote in a presidential election and where the chastened ex-rulers of the land are voted back in power in 1993—admittedly a year not covered by Eva Hoffman's book.

The question, how does a "normal" person behave in times of historical change, comes up again in the chapter on Czecho-Slovakia, where one of Eva Hoffman's main informants is an ex-professor of Marxist philosophy turned restaurant-owner, Zdenek Sofar. He is basically a "pragmatist" who (though he had served the old and blatantly corrupt communist regime well enough) now complains that people have not yet really internalized the changes occurring in 1989. Some did, though, for example Vladimir Zelezny, a spokesman for Civic Forum, who (we know) will become a success in the New World of the Market Economy. From Hoffman's account, however, it remains unclear which streak in Czech society she thinks will prove to be stronger in the long run—Havel's idealism or Klaus's hardheaded pragmatism? From Prague our author proceeds to Bratislava and here her impressions are not all that favourable, though they are based on a rather superficial contact with Slovak society. All in all, she devotes 60 pages to what is now the Czech Republic and a mere eight pages to Bratislava. Here she meets a certain "Jozef" (a Slovak writer and translator) with whom she discusses the thorny problem of a "Slovak identity" and is genuinely baffled to find that this friendly Slovak intellectual is ready to defend the role of Father Tiso, rightly branded as a war criminal in 1945. Unfortunately, this individual is much more representative of Slovaks than the chain-smoking editor met by Hoffman next day who, at this time, still hopes that "sanity will prevail" and Slovakia will not opt for full independence. As we all know, ex-boxer and ex-informer Meciar, not sanity, followed.

The chapter on Hungary is sympathetic and fairly balanced, although most of Eva Hoffman's informants are picked from the same westward-looking, liberal intellectual milieu of Budapest. We all know how much the image of a country depends on the kind of people you happen to meet there. In Hungary Hoffman meets people, whether old or young, who speak foreign languages, are pleasant, friendly and enlightened in their views—is this typical of all Hungarians? I wish it was. Budapest is different from the rest of the country and various parts of the country are again rather different. Even the village which Eva Hoffman visits, Köröm, is an unusual place: Tony, the local priest is not a typical representative of his vocation but is a well-travelled writer/editor who put together a book on the Catholic poet János Pilinszky. In this chapter, though, there are errors both of spelling and fact—Eva Hoffman spells a number of Hungarian names not in the English but in the Polish manner (e.g. "Miszkolc" for Miskolc, "Tomás" for Tamás); Ferenczi was not Freud's "closet" but surely "closest" disciple (p. 259); Leopold I was not "Hungary's first Haps-

burg master", only the first Habsburg king who managed to drive the Turks out of the country, and, finally, in 1956 the second Russian intervention took place not on November 1, but on November 4 (p. 219).

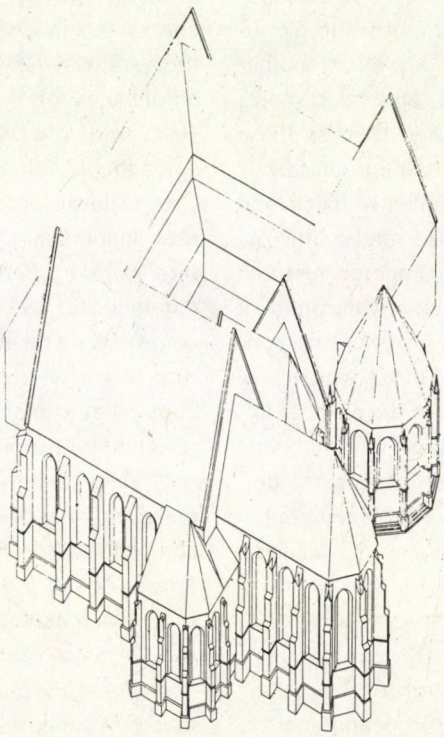
I am not entirely sure that I would trust my Fodor guide when it comes to the difficult subject of Romanian history. Eva Hoffman, I fear, trusts it too much. She should have read a bit more before claiming that Transylvania "changed hands and masters with an exemplary frequency" (p. 267—exemplary to whom?). It was a fairly stable semi-independent principality throughout the 17th century and Hoffman's description, "servitude to the Turks", does not justice to the quality of life and government under Gábor Bethlen, or even Mihály Apaffi. To pretend that out of the blue "it was annexed" by Hungary in 1867 is a gross misinterpretation of history, offered by Romanian historians who (on the basis of the "Dacian" past) regard Transylvania as an "alienated" part of a metaphysical Greater Romania. And this territory, by the way, could not have been "given back" to Romania in 1918 (p. 267), since Romania as a state had never owned it! (Apart from the one year at the end of the 16th century when Michael the Brave exercised *de facto* control over all three Romanian-inhabited territories).

However, when Miss Hoffman can tear herself away from her Fodor Guide, things improve. She describes the mood of Bucharest in 1990 and again in 1991 with great perceptiveness. Romania, in the grip of transition, is a country of the absurd; everything is amorphous, vaguely defined, slightly scary, and, as our reporter puts it, "life here seems practically impossible" (p. 301). Once, however, you have dropped your Western standards you find the place quite tolerable. In Romania, as everywhere else, Eva Hoffman visits the countryside, makes a visit to a tolerably run psychiatric hospital in Cimpulung. It is during this visit that she concludes that somehow "the Securitate is still around". This is, at least, what people think; whether there is much in these suspicions, she cannot tell,. but she certainly records an experience of "shadowy fear" unlike anything she had experienced further West.

And finally, Bulgaria. this is again one of the more interesting chapters and it is easy to see why—everything in Bulgaria is new to Miss Hoffman. "In coming to Bulgaria, I've travelled beyond my preconceptions and prejudices", she says quite candidly. With such an open attitude she is able to appreciate Bulgaria's long and turbulent past and its fierce insistence on its "specificity". She begins her series of contacts by meeting some leaders of Bulgaria's still fledgling opposition (Degan Kiuranov and Dimitrina Petrova) and she is particularly impressed by the "daunting intelligence" and charm of the latter. She also notices a certain "indefensive openness" about problems, which she finds attractive in Bulgarians of both sexes. (Apparently Bulgaria is the only country in the region where feminist isssues are taken seriously). Hoffman finds a large store of untapped energy in Bulgaria and at one point asserts that "Sofia... has more philosophers per capita than Harvard or the Sorbonne" (p. 367). She also visits an ethnically mixed region in the country which gives her the opportunity to discuss at some length the persecution of Bulgaria's Turkish minority. Trying to account for the relative strength of the Communist

Party in Bulgaria, Eva Hoffman discusses various issues with "reformed" communists and claims, among other things, that Bulgaria was the only country under communist rule "where the economy improved" (p. 402). I, for one, find this hard to believe, though everything is relative and heavily dependent on the kind of statistics used. For example, when compared to the situation in 1939, the per capita earnings of the Bulgarian skilled worker must have risen immeasurably by 1979 or 1989. What *is* specific about Bulgaria is the fact that the opposition movement "Eco-Glasnost" must have grown as much out of the reformist wing of the Communist Party as out of the non-communist strata of society. Perhaps socialism (in its de-Sovietized form) can still attract a fairly large number of people who prefer equality to economic freedom which also entails deprivation for some.

Altogether, *Exit into History* is both entertaining and useful. It is by no means a "definitive" study on the subject but a book one might read before going East. Eva Hoffman's style is readable and her formulations are often epigramatic; while she skirts many issues that could be classified as important in a given country, she leaves us, none the less, with a sketch of an interesting part of the world drawn by an intelligent, well-informed and perceptive traveller. ❧



*Budaszentlőrinc, Paulite monastery, presumed state in the 1510s.*
*The Paulites were the only monastic order founded in Hungary, and this was their mother house. Destroyed down to its foundations.*

Johnathan Sunley

# An End to Illusions

Jody Jensen and Ferenc Miszlivetz, eds.: *Paradoxes of Transition*. Budapest, The Center for European Studies, 1993. 199 pp.

Although output has fallen across Central and Eastern Europe since 1989, one small sector of these countries' economies has witnessed a striking boom. This is the conference industry. Not a week passes without historians, politologists and economists from at least two countries in the region descending on a third, for another round of paper-giving and workshops. Paradoxically (a much-used term on these occasions), this pastime would be scarcely imaginable without a number of habits and structures that flourished under the old system: without those pampered research institutes essential to the organization of such gatherings, or the cross-border contacts developed in opposition which now supply a high proportion of the discusants.

At the centre of this mini-industry, nonetheless, lies the present. For, the present in this part of the world is a period of such rapid, complex change, that analysis can't keep up.

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In 1990, for example, the question most often asked was: is there some kind of third way between socialism and capitalism? By 1991 it was clear there was little room for compromise between the two systems. This, in turn, gave rise to anxieties about the "velvet revolutions" losing their softness—as manifested in the heated debates over "decommunization". In 1992, with the war in former Yugoslavia spreading, and with the crisis in the Czechoslovak state reaching its climax, now "nationalism" had to bear the weight of a myriad different interpretations. This continued in 1993, though with the outcome of the Polish election seeming to entrench a new trend, a rival phenomenon demanding explanation had appeared: the return to power of ex-communists.

Today, five years after the *annus mirabilis*, only one thing can be said with complete safety: that Central and Eastern Europe is still in transition. For the multitude of scholars employed in the industry, this is good news. For them the term "transition" is equivalent to the "eastern markets" supposed to have been so vital to the centrally-planned economies: remove it and you would lay waste whole sectors of enquiry and expertise.

*Paradoxes of Transition* is a product fairly typical of this industry. It comprises edited versions of ten papers delivered at a conference held in the autumn of 1992 under the auspices of the Budapest-based Center for European Studies. Like all such collections, the volume is a rag-bag of essays of ill-matched lengths and approaches. On the other hand, all of the contributions are—without exception—stimulating, and possess the added merit of appearing to engage with one another.

Two main themes keep resurfacing. First of these is the relationship between political and economic transformation. As Ferenc Miszlivetz observes in his introduction, those states whose economies have made the greatest strides in the postwar era—the so-called "Asian Tigers"—did so unencumbered by democratic procedures. Since the same also appears true of those countries which earlier pioneered the industrial revolution, the question arises whether political and economic progress can ever be synchronized. For, as Wojtek Lamentowicz puts it in his article: "In a democracy, highly unpopular economic measures may be targeted by angry majorities."

On the face of it, the validity of this insight has been borne out by the results of the elections in Lithuania, Poland and now Hungary. What else did these signify if not a rejection by "angry majorities" of the high costs of economic reform?

Were this the case, however, then it would be difficult to account for the continuing popularity of the present governments in the Czech Republic, Estonia and Albania—the only three post-communist countries in which, according to a poll conducted last November by the European Commission, a majority of respondents believe they are headed more-or-less "in the right direction". (Hungary and Lithuania tied for last place, with only 19 per cent of those asked taking this view.) What these three countries have in common is certainly not an instant economic miracle. True, unemployment in the Czech Republic is low, but the rate of GDP growth there in 1993 was only a fraction ahead of Hungary's and well behind that of Poland. Equally, inflation in Albania was three times higher than in Slovakia (another country where interviewees were tended towards pessimism), while if one starts to take into consideration such indices as foreign currency reserves, then none of this trio score very highly.

The point is, of course, that statistics can be used to show anything. This is particularly true in present-day Central and Eastern Europe, where the official figures still fail to record the true volume of private-sector activity (not to mention that of the grey and black economies). All of which is reflected in the honestly confused answers most people living in these societies will give, even if you ask them such a straightforward question as whether their own living-standards have improved over the last few years. And, indeed, how are they to weigh the rise in prices against the greater overall availability of goods, or the possibility of visa-free travel to the West against the cost of the journey?

In other words, it is doubtful whether economic measures themselves are either popular or unpopular. What counts more, arguably, are the general *perceptions* people have both about themselves and the alternative political options facing them. To

be sure, the importance of what might pompously be called the "subjective element" in post-communist societies is acknowledged by nearly all the authors of this volume. Words like "cynicism", "nihilism" and "rationalism" crop up time and again. The problem is, however, that there appears to be a consensus among them that the best way to promote positive attitudes among the populations exposed to such bewildering change is by avoiding the rhetoric of confrontation.

Thus, "shock therapy" is denounced for instrumentalizing societies and stopping up their creative energies. Rather than this strong-arm approach, we are told, what is needed are "higher levels of social responsibility and sensibility" (Miszlivetz) or "a series of economic and social pacts conducted with political parties and extra-parliamentary, organized democratic forces" (László Bruszt).

And yet—judging by the current mood in Estonia, Albania and the Czech Republic—the three countries in the region whose governments most freely identify with shock therapy—people do seem to prefer this kind of treatment. Why is this? One reason is that they can relate to the brutally clear, simple message of "Enrichissez-vous" transmitted from the top in these countries, far better than they can to the wooly if well-meaning "pactism" urged here by Bruszt and which has actually been the practice in recent years in Hungary (where trade unions were given a controlling say over health and social security spending) and Poland (where negotiating the famous "Pact on State Enterprises" occupied much of the agenda of the last six months of the government of Hanna Suchocka).

Yes, shock therapy is more "painful". But that, as Czech Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus is inclined to remark, is the point. For, the majority of people in Central and Eastern Europe desperately want change even as they cling to the securities of the past. For them, the pain of shock therapy is proof that change is occurring and that there is no going back. Offer them more of the same, by contrast, in the form of carefully-mediated consultations embracing all sections of society (which was one part of the communist package) and they might as well have it in its original version.

Paradoxically (that word again), the fact, already mentioned, that unemployment in the Czech Republic is so low suggests that the reforms there have not gone as deep as they might. This is true. Again, though, it is what people think is happening which matters. And on this level Klaus's radical free market rhetoric has had the desired effect of creating the constituency for changes, some of which are still to be implemented. Another factor which might be used to explain the popularity of the Czech, Estonian and Albanian governments is their no-nonsense approach to dealing with the communist era. Possibly more ink has been spilled since 1989 over this difficult issue than any other. Yet it now seems indisputable that the softly, softly strategy enjoined in this volume by (among others) Dimitrina Petrova, and which for most of the region has been the norm, has failed to accomplish what it set out to do, i.e., to lay the past to rest.

On the one hand, failure to confiscate all the assets of the old communist parties (a measure specifically criticized by Petrova) or to debar their leading members from remaining prominent in public life,

has given them a second chance in the literal sense. In the eyes of the electorate, more importantly, it has left open the return of these parties to power as a reasonable, indeed respectable, option. Which is precisely what voters in Hungary and Poland chose.

In sum, then, it appears perfectly possible for political and economic reform to take place concurrently. It depends—to a large extent—on the performance of the political and intellectual elites given the responsibility of managing these changes. And, in the opinion of this reviewer, shying away from social confrontation is unlikely to result in success.

This brings us to the book's second main leitmotif, which is that confrontation or polarization of this kind is partly to blame for what one author terms the "ethnification of politics" in Central and Eastern Europe. The disastrous consequences of this process need hardly be spelt out. Again, it seems that the intensification of the war in former Yugoslavia—not to mention the mushrooming of conflict across the former Soviet Union—which have happened in the two years since most of the contributions to this volume were written, only substantiate their authors' worst fears.

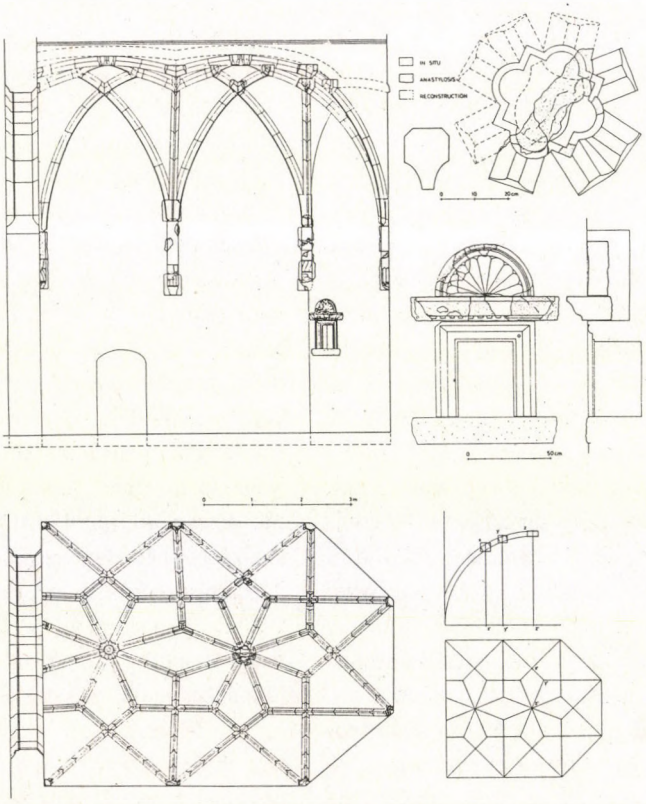
In the space remaining, two brief comments on this might be made. First, that it is extremely misleading to reduce what conflict there is in the region today to its "ethnic" origins. There are still thousands of Serbs (and Croats) in the Bosnian Army, for example, fighting against an aggressor whose total disregard for ethnicity as such was demonstrated at an earlier stage in the war by the onslaught on Dubrovnik (the obviously non-Serbian character and population of which were such, it will be remembered, as to deter Rebecca West from spending much time there even in the 1930s). Similarly, across the old Soviet Union, where most of the "hot-spots" reflect nothing apart from the pursuit of purely strategic goals by the Russian military (e.g., Transnistria, the Tadjik "civil war", Abkhazia, etc). What these troubled areas have in common—and here might also be listed Slovakia which, as Miroslav Kusy convincingly shows, is not suffering from an excess of nationalism—is not the "ethnification" of politics so much as the complete annihilation and substitution by cold, calculating force.

This distinction made, it is true, nonetheless, that since the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe there has been a flowering of authentic national feeling which in turn has found political expression. Yet it is not clear why this should be regarded as a negative phenomenon preventing increased democratization and modernization (the assumption of most of the authors here). Surely, Slovenia and Lithuania are today more democratic and, if not yet already, then on their way to becoming more prosperous than they were five years ago? Of course, nationalism and progress do not always go together. Serbia is an example of the downward spiral that nations can get stuck on when they become blinded by expansionism. Which is precisely why Ivan Vejvoda, in his article on Yugoslavia, is mistaken in putting all manifestations of national feeling on the same level.

Yet Vejvoda is not alone in this collection in arguing for a more "rational politics" based on the individual as opposed to the collective. Indeed, this is in a sense the conclusion of the book, and the point

where its two main themes overlap. In place of what we have now in Central and Eastern Europe, it is argued, rather than neo-liberal economics and ethnic politics, what is needed is more pluralism and more participation enabling the populations of these countries to become fully fledged citizens. Or, as Miszlivetz puts it in praising what he calls the "N-th" (rather than the Third) Way, "the reconstruction and strong reorganization of the civil sphere".

However, as Chantal Mouffe demonstrates in her dissenting contribution (which is easily the most challenging and original of the articles here assembled), this conclusion is based on an illusion. Difference, antagonism, a sense of the other, are ineradicable aspects of being human. In our social and political relations these become collective identities—based, for example, on national background, material success and achievement, or even on not having been a member of the communist party. Suppress these identitites or prevent their free interaction, and they are likely to re-emerge in a far more hardened, threatening form. Hence her conclusion that: "The illusions of consensus as well as the calls for 'anti-politics' are harmful to democracy and must be discarded." Like the illusion of the "eastern markets". ❧



*Nagyszekeres, at present a Calvinist Church. The former late Gothic vaulting of the chancel. 1510s. The church is still in use.*

Péter Mihályi

# Versions of Economic Transition

László Csaba (ed.): *Systemic Change and Stabilization in Eastern Europe.* Dartmouth Publishing Company Limited, Aldershot, etc., 1991. 141 pp. Roman Frydman and Andrzej Rapaczynski: *Privatisation in Eastern Europe: Is the State Withering Away?* Budapest–London–New York, Central European University Press, 1994. 221 pp.

It is never too late to praise a good book. In fact, with a long enough delay, the lazy reviewer can do a better job than someone just grabbing the book hot from the hands of the printers. The present volume, which contains eight papers presented at a conference under the aegis of the European Association for Comparative Economic Studies (EACES), is a classical example to prove this point with. Sitting in an armchair in Budapest, just after the completion of the four-year term of the first democratically elected Hungarian government, it gives me a great amount of intellectual pleasure to read the prophecies and the recommendations of those Eastern and Western academics who—in September 1990—were brave enough to put their views on paper.

***Péter Mihályi***'s *publications include a book on the West German economy, published in Hungarian in 1989, and a monograph on socialist investment cycles published in 1992 by KLUWER Academic Publishers (in English).*

The transition from planning and bureaucratic coordination to a liberal private capitalist economic order is a historic challenge on two levels. Though it may sound paradoxical, chiefly this is a task for bureaucrats. These bureaucrats are of a new type, but they are paid civil servants nevertheless. At the same time, this transformation gives a unique opportunity to economic science to prove its market value. The primary role of academics is to see, to describe, and to explain in clear analytical terms what is going on. This is not easy either. The risk of not seeing the wood for the trees is considerable. Four years later, your colleagues will laugh at you. Like most conferences in our days, the 1990 EACES meeting was a large gathering of specialists who represented different schools, traditions and adhered to divergent research methods. Csaba, in his double capacity—as editor of this volume and Vice-president of EACES—had the courage to select. The quality of the papers he accepted varied, but I would not criticize him for that. László Csaba had his own strong views on Eastern Europe, thus he was looking for support to express his own ideas on a broad range of issues with the help of experts representing a philosophy

and an approach which are similar to his own. He wanted to present a book with a coherent message on privatization, convertibility, exchange rates, and other matters rather than a fine selection of papers on a single issue.

Four messages run through the book. It is often heard that the main problem of transition is that the old system doesn't work any more, while the new is still not in place. This is a commonplace which doesn't contribute much to understanding. The authors of the present book see continuity, where others only see the vacuum. Unlike many analysts who were Kremlinologists or became "East Europe watchers" only recently, the contributors to this volume discover more subtle mechanisms in seemingly market-conforming developments. Continuity in stock variables and in the behavioural norms of economic agents are of particular importance to them. The key to understanding our times is that, in Eastern Europe, transition and transformation go hand in hand. In some countries and under certain conditions this is a fortunate combination, where parallel forces can push society ahead. In other cases, the same combination results in regression. This is the real explanation why theoretically clear propositions of mainstream economics may bring success in one country and end in catastrophe in another.

"Radical gradualism" is the second common theme. This means a good dose of determination on the part of the government to pursue economic policy goals without arrogant messianism or proposing single best solutions to all dilemmas. Radical gradualism pre-supposes that the public is convinced that there is no "third way" and accepts the authority of the government. Once again, the societal heritage from the old system can help us to understand the country-specific differences, which are so clearly observable. Though this book is entirely devoted to Eastern Europe and the problems of transition in the countries of the former Soviet Union are mentioned only *per tangentem*, this is a very important message. Shock therapy failed in virtually all post-Soviet successor states—the three Baltic countries being the exception to a certain degree—precisely because of this intellectual unpreparedness. The broad populations of Russia, the Ukraine and the other republics were simply unprepared to accept capitalism. Moreover, radical gradualism presupposes not only the understanding of the uneducated, but also the spiritual readiness of the ruling elite. This was missing, too.

Thirdly, the reader will find allusions and hints in the papers to the fact that reform measures are never free from side effects. Whatever you do, positive and negative adjustment processes are triggered. Easy and single-best solutions are usually flawed. If simple solutions could work, one may legitimately ask why were the communists unable to put their house in order. A good case to demonstrate this point is fiscal policy. It is extremely interesting to see that the democratically elected new governments, staffed with trained economists and assisted by Western advisers, are typically unable to keep the central budget in balance. The only exception to this is the Czech Republic, the only country in the region where budget problems were unknown prior to 1989 as well.

The fourth idea, explained at great length in Roland's paper but touched upon by all authors, centres on successful se-

quencing. The importance of this subject does not require long explanations. Cookery books are the archetypical examples. If you have the ingredients of a good meal but no clear instructions on what to do first and what to do next, the chances of botching things are high. In the context of economic transition, correct sequencing can progressively relax the political constraints arising from the transition itself while keeping the inconsistencies of the transition period at a minimum level.

In the book the following sequencing tactics are formulated: 1) democratization, 2) privatization, 3) liberalization, 4) restructuring. With the benefit of hindsight, however, the present reviewer wishes to express his doubts about this order. In 1990, it was assumed by Roland—but by others as well—that once these four tasks are completed, the Rubicon has been crossed, thus the transition to the market economy has been essentially completed. Then comes the time for the consolidation and the handling of the 'routine' problems of the market economy: inflation, unemployment, poverty, etc.

Unfortunately, these neat analytical distinctions didn't work in practice. The transition tasks have proved to be inseparable from the routine problems. Democratization, for example, has immediately led in all post-Soviet societies to inequalities in income and wealth, creating Western type luxury and Dickensian misery at the same time. Liberalization of prices and foreign trade has been exerting enormous competitive pressure on domestic producers and the result is bankruptcy and unemployment. In a way, massive layoffs are the condition for successful privatization. As experience has showed, foreign investors are not keen on acquiring stakes in large companies before the government or the market pressure sheds the unnecessary "fat".

As a concluding remark, it is worth quoting the opening sentence of the book: "This volume has been called into being by the growing international interest in affairs of systemic transformation and economic stabilization in what used to be termed 'Eastern Europe' in the political parlance of the post-Yalta period." Speaking on "growing international interest" in 1991 was a riskless statement. As 1994 approaches its end, "declining" appears to be a correct adjective. Misery, war and other man-made disasters abound on our planet. Eastern Europe was at the centre of attention for three or four years. It is a pity that in many countries of our region, this was not enough to cross the Rubicon. In the past four years, we got much attention and some assistance. In the next four years, there will be less of both.

The 1994 volume is the result of a persistent effort on the part of the authors to push the Polish government towards a carefully designed privatization programme. The book's six chapters trace the development of this idea since 1990, when the two authors became personally involved in the reform treadmill. All but the last chapter are slightly revised versions of papers published earlier (often in Polish only), the by-product of their active involvement in policy making and/or academic discussions around the burning issues of major privatization.

For the non-specialist reader, it is important to recall that privatizing the large, previously state-owned industrial enter-

prises (SOE for short) is the most controversial issue of post-communist transition. In most related issues, such as privatizing agriculture, the housing stock, small shops and service units, there is a firm consensus among economists. By contrast, large privatization is indeed controversial, even at the theoretical level. In addition, the large variety of possible solutions is also reflected in the diversity of paths the most advanced of the reforming countries—the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia—have already embarked upon.

The proposition of Frydman and Rapaczynski, elaborated in the subsequent chapters in the book, is highly original. It combines voucher-based mass privatization with the creation of a new, efficient banking sector in order to establish Western-type corporate governance over large industrial enterprises. The intention is to kill two birds with one stone: to rejuvenate industry and to modernize banking. In the process of a quick and determined mass privatization programme, they would like to see the emergence of "German universal bank"-type investment funds, which would be licensed to acquire the existing SOEs. Thus citizens would deposit the vouchers issued to them by the government with the investment funds of their choice, while the investment funds would use the vouchers deposited to bid for the SOEs they target in a series of auctions for vouchers. Without going into technicalities, it is enough to emphasize that the main thrust of the idea is to take the existing SOEs out of the hands of the incumbent management and (a consideration very important in the Polish context) out of the hands of the labour force in the firm in question.

For Frydman and Rapaczynski incumbent management and labour are basically insiders with short-term vested interests. They would like to see the industrial firms in the hands of outsiders who are able to press relentlessly for restructuring the inefficient SOEs, even if the necessary changes would imply loss of managerial privileges and fewer jobs.

What makes this book uniquely interesting for a Hungarian reader is the apparent contradiction between the soundness and well-preparedness of the Frydman-Rapaczynski blueprint and the total lack of progress in the direction suggested by no fewer than five Polish governments, between 1990 and mid-1994.

Though the two Polish authors do not make any explicit reference to the fact, their proposal is very close to the so-called holding concept advocated by some Hungarian economists in the early 1970s.[1] At that time, it was thought that with the creation of a few profit-maximizing financial institutions (holdings), to embody state ownership, Hungarian state enterprises could be forced to improve their economic performance, because the holdings would constantly re-direct capital from the less efficient to those where a higher rate of return is expected. Soon after the publication of this first rough blueprint, Hungarian developments took a different turn and reform suggestions along these lines were not allowed to make progress for two

1 ■ For a seminal article in English, see Márton Tardos, "A Development Programme for Economic Control and Organization in Hungary", *Acta Oeconomica,* 1972. Nos. 3–4.

decades. In 1990, the whole idea was briefly reconsidered in the atmosphere of free academic discussion, but it failed to attract enough specialist support.

In Poland, by contrast, the collapse of communism in 1989/1990 helped the resurrection of the holding concept. When Frydman and Rapaczynski, two Polish expatriates, returned to their native country from their academic positions in the US, they brought with them a fully elaborated plan, which was strongly underpinned by the fruits of modern Western economic theory—something that had not even existed in the 1970s. Furthermore, the two authors had the time, the resources and the energy to prepare their proposals in great detail, which helped them to win the "contest of ideas"—at least on the theoretical level. After the election of the first, non-communist government, the holding concept was clearly *the* Polish model of privatization. It not only gathered considerable support from Polish economists and prestigious Western advisers[2] but it was also moulded into legislative action and the selection of suitable SOEs had started.

For a number of reasons, however, the programme has so far not made irrevocable headway in real life. The relevant legislation has been rediscussed and amended on a number of occasions, thus the proposed 15 to 20 investment funds were never set up and there are still discussions concerning crucial operational details. This, of course, does not mean that large privatization has not even started in Poland and that large state firms continue to exist in their old forms. This is far from the truth. Privatization has started, but it has gone along ways different from that suggested by Frydman and Rapaczynski.

Judging from a considerable distance, which may blur the vision of an observer in Hungary, the original concept seems to have had a weak point. This was immediately identified by its opponents and by its authors, as well as the subsequent Polish governments that were unable to provide politically convincing answers to the sceptics.

As we have seen above, the main concern of the two authors was to find suitable managers for privatized large industrial companies. As they had strong theoretical reservations concerning the Polish managerial class—the old *nomenklatura*—they had to arrive at the logical conclusion that this job has to be given to foreigners. ("Foreigners would be entering here primarily not as buyers... [although some part of their compensation may, and should, include stock options], but as managers of the fund working on behalf of the local owners of the underlying assets." (p. 39). This is the point, where the proposal impinges on national pride and there is little wonder that any democratically elected government—Polish or any other—has difficulties in embracing it wholeheartedly.

Independent experts can, of course, be invited from abroad, but this is not a cheap solution. Very often these "foreigners" are returning expatriates (hired for language reasons). Their independence is therefore open to question. It is also questionable,

2 ■ Throughout its work on the programme, the Ministry of Ownership Transformation was assisted by the British investment bank, S. G. Warburg & Co.

whether the increase in objectivity, better education and business experience can sufficiently outweigh the lack of country-specific knowledge.[3] Another weak point in the blueprint, which in fact has been repeatedly underscored by the two authors themselves, is related to the possibilities of limiting managerial abuse.[4] Once they are firmly seated in their jobs—a 10-year management contract was proposed in one version of the relevant Polish legislation—the fund managers may have all kinds of perverse incentives, beginning with maximizing their own power, and ending with trying to siphon off profits from the companies in their portfolio to their own truly private ventures. This is an inherent danger of the holding solution, which is only acerbated if these managers are foreigners.[5] It is only the state which can act as a supreme controller above the heads of the newly created financial aristocracy, but this would obviously run against the logic of the entire privatization programme.

Controversial as it seems, the Frydman—Rapaczynski proposal deserves admiration. It is presented with strong arguments, and is well written, with many interesting theoretical détours. The authors are aiming at a moving target. Large privatization has not been completed in Poland, and even less progress has been made in many other post-communist economies. God knows which country will finally embrace the proposal in its original or in a slightly modified form. One has to wish success to the two authors and the country they would like to serve foremost. ❧

3 ■ In fact, the example of two countries—Estonia and Hungary—shows, that when expatriates are nominated to lead the privatization process, such accusations arise immediately and it becomes politically very costly for the Government to reject them.

4 ■ See e.g. pp. 71–74.

5 ■ E.g. the fact that they carry foreign passports may limit their accountability in a Polish court.

Zoltán Kocsis

# Dohnányi and Bartók as Performers



It is impossible to write about the life, personality and oeuvre of Ernst von Dohnányi without the name of Béla Bartók cropping up sooner or later. The converse is almost never true. Writings on Bartók make some marginal mention of a modicum of Dohnányi's influence during Bartók's formative years. Yet, their careers ran side by side; the surviving documents tell us that they maintained friendly relations right through and, most importantly, there were quite a few productions in which both musicians participated as complete equals.

The fact that today Dohnányi's name is mostly remembered as a performer and Bartók's as a composer speaks more of our time rather than of the two musicians. We have reached a stage of specialization where all types of activity call for a whole man. It is all but unthinkable that anyone can do anything other than the work he is publically known for, let alone do it at a similar level. All forms of polymathy are considered as "straying into other fields". It is rarely considered that, despite the apparent lack of success in one activity, skills and talents can be stimulated, thereby enriching the other activity. The separation of various fields of music is accelerating today. One should, however, keep in mind that such parochial, increasingly rigidifying activities, unable to look beyond their own confines, can at most produce a local impetus and thus cannot really further musical culture as a whole.

This was not always the case. On the contrary, up to the second half of the twentieth century, there existed a single main type: the composer–performer. It was taken for granted that a composer was able to play his own work on the piano (or some other instrument); equally it was also only natural for *every* gifted musician to compose music,[1] with greater or lesser dexterity, but in any case to try to offer something here as well, to express his own artistic ideals in this way too. It has only become fashionable in our times to oblige a musician, in most cases far too early, to decide in what field he wants to work, thus creating limits for himself in a sphere where the infinity of spiritual freedom is not only desirable but downright ineluctable.

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It is perhaps not even necessary to discuss at such length the vital importance of the symbiosis of creating and performing for the survival of music. It is sufficient to examine the multi-faceted oeuvres of Dohnányi and Bartók themselves to clearly appreciate this. How far each of them got along the course they charted for themselves depended on their personalities. One thing, however, is certain, when it comes to musicians of their stature, it would be absurd to rank their separate activities according to any consideration. There was no falling off in Bartók's work as an ethnomusicologist even when he left off composing for years, and indeed, he himself always stressed that he regarded his work in this field as a priority, albeit one of many. One cannot say that performing came first to Dohnányi, and was merely of a secondary character for Bartók, and perhaps not even that Dohnányi was the more important as a performer, and Bartók as a composer. Looked at from the angle of a doctrinaire demand that one be a master of one's trade, Dohnányi's knowledge as a composer was perfect, while Bartók's accomplishment at the piano met the highest standard. Staying with an examination of craftsmanship, if one were to compare their works and recordings of the same period, Dohnányi often appears as the "more clever" composer, while Bartók's pianism surpasses Dohnányi's, as regards grounding and faithfulness to the score, Dohnányi's performance often being more relaxed than need be.

The different approach of the two composers to performing practise sheds a fairly clear light on their personalities, their sense of responsibility, and their judgment of their own abilities. Only legends have survived on Dohnányi's improvisatory skills, veritable "dissipations", bordering on irresponsibility. Bartók, however, defined repeatedly and most accurately the limits of his relationship to the concert platform.[2] The initial years undoubtedly went a long way to contribute to this. During Bartók's years of study, Dohnányi, four years his senior, obviously also had a negative as well as positive influence of him. One might suspect that the critical tone often evident in the letters of the young Bartók, objecting to Dohnányi's lack of patriotism, was a compensation for the quickly achieved and spectacular successes of a colleague held in high esteem, though far from idolized, rather than a real accusation. At the same time this parturition may have furthered in Bartók a critical appraisal of his own abilities as an instrumentalist, so that he came to a decision perhaps at the optimal time, and this remained decisive throughout his life. We have every reason to believe that as early as 1905, Bartók did not take the piano part of the Rubinstein competition in Paris too seriously, nor did he complain overmuch because of that fiasco. It is also probable that Kodály's desire to recruit him for ethnomusicology in the mid-1910s appeared as an alternative to a career as a performer, a profession which in any case was overcrowded. It is almost certain that it was not simply Bartók's legendary consistency that led him to fields never trodden by Dohnányi.

Nonetheless, there are a number of features which link Bartók and Dohnányi more profoundly and lastingly than the extent to which they are divided by apparent differences. The most essential of these is the musical idiom. However much Bartók may have enthused over French music at

the beginning of the century and over anything new in general, he was never able to efface the benefits of the years of study he spent under Hans Koessler or the influence of German culture. Fortunately so, as it was precisely these elements that helped him through his difficulties in composition; finally he achieved his unmistakably individual style through reliance on these. On the other hand, Dohnányi, who has been labelled a retrograde, later on performed—also in a double capacity—far too many Bartók works to allow one even to suspect that it was merely a gesture on his part to include Bartók in his repertory, with only a superficial understanding of the compositions. The effect of Bartók can be shown even in Dohnányi's *works*; how then could it not have been present in his performing style? This is a key issue, which, at the same time, also puts Dohnányi in his "proper" place, as it were.

Bartók was compensating during his early years, Dohnányi in his later years. As borne out by a great many performances, both in Hungary and abroad, his desire to promote Bartók went far beyond simple gestures made for a fellow-countryman, who by that time enjoyed a reputation akin to his own. The repeated inclusion of Bartók's works in Dohnányi's repertory also stands for an effort on his part: his 19th century view of the world possibly excluded Stravinsky and Schoenberg, but he had courage enough not to disown his roots. Because—and this cannot be overstressed—the music of Bartók and Dohnányi grows out of the same soil—something that can also be said about Richard Strauss and Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Rachmaninov, or Prokofiev and Shostakovich. A list of such parallells could be continued *ad lib*.

For those who know of Dohnányi's performances only from legends, listening to his records must, in most cases, be a disappointment. Indeed, it reveals that Dohnányi, as in so many other things, was not consistent in recording either. No guiding principle can be discovered in the recorded oeuvre, his records are of an *ad hoc* character, and provide no adequate representation either of his proverbially extensive repertory or of his gifts as a pianist or conductor. A strong aversion to recording must have played a part in this, but what perhaps counted even more was the elusiveness of his art as a performer. The ideals he represented inevitably led to an idiosyncratic style totally unsuited for capture. "Everything alive changes moment by moment; music fixed by machines, grows inert and rigid," Bartók said.[3] After more than half a century, we know that this is not all that simple; in any case, by that time, there existed already, at least in the bud, certain tricks and stereotypes for the performer as enforced by the requirements of playing in a studio (they can be traced in the overwhelming majority of Bartók's recordings); Dohnányi, however, found neither the time nor the inclination to elaborate them for himself. Bartók, known for his meticulous precision, spoke of the impossibility of recording the "world between the notes": "It is generally accepted that our musical notation sets down the composer's ideas in a more or less deficient manner, and so it is really of great import to have machines that can exactly fix every intention and idea of the composer."[4] This conveys an odd sort of meaning indeed in the context of a performing attitude such as Dohnányi's, which tends to take liberties and

clearly demonstrates the lack of information provided by the score. This is true even if one surmises that Dohnányi must have regarded recording with a kind of nonchalance (perhaps not even in the noblest sense of the word) because he did not really feel persuaded of the importance of this form of communication with posterity. Hungary has always been a long way from the centres of the great recording companies, and Dohnányi did not really take it amiss that recording firms failed to bombard him with projects, since that perfectly fitted his own plans. With the appearance of His Master's Voice in Hungary, it would have seemed the most obvious thing to do to record the principal works of Dohnányi's repertory, but—who knows because of whose carelessness, blunder or business considerations—this did not happen. The few recordings of the early 1930s sound more like a celebrated and prolific writer who publishes greeting cards rather than a new novel. It would be useless to belabour the point to what extent Dohnányi took the gentlemen bustling about in the studio seriously, and whether he did not actually look upon the whole thing as a kind of souvenir business. It is even possible that HMV were keeping in mind the demands of Western customers eager for exoticism and wanted to produce "Hungarian" material, for which Dohnányi the performer was not found to be sufficiently "national". All these, of course, are mere hypotheses. The fact, however, remains that the pianism of Dohnányi at the peak of his powers has only come down to us in morsels.

Naturally, pianola rolls have survived of Dohnányi at the piano; these, however, allow us even less to assess the real merits of his art than the worn, crackling, low quality discs. The pianola does not really make clear the differences even in determinable factors,[5] let alone indefinable ones. It is as different as chalk and cheese to try to compare the tiny quivers of Dohnányi's performance only measurable in milli-seconds and milli-decibels with the imperfection, clumsiness and sluggishness of what is possible technically when recording on a paper roll. Bartók is no better off with his pianola recordings: even his piano playing, relying on strict accentuating and clearly rendering the order of importance of the notes, fades in the mechanical interpretation. This form of mechanical recording does not provide sufficient information to give us adequate grounds for evaluating the performance recorded on disc. Its primary source value becomes evident only if the work concerned was *only* recorded on paper roll and in the composer's own performance.

At a rough estimate, the total playing time of recordings intended for commercial distribution Bartók and Dohnányi made is the same; this is mainly due to the fact that Dohnányi outlived Bartók by fifteen years and became gradually accustomed to the studio. The political campaign against him in the United States was in all probability instrumental in his not being able to sign a contract for life with any of the major recording companies. He also must have been discouraged by the attacks, at least to the extent of discarding any large-scale plans for making recordings. The rapid development in recording techniques that started in the early 1950s could have opened a new chapter in the Dohnányi discography. With this in mind,

the number of productions is insignificant and suggest obvious *ad hoc* arrangements. When one comes to think of the discographic heritage Stravinsky or Rachmaninov left us the proportion becomes downright alarming. Even Bartók's seems to be a complete discographic oeuvre compared to Dohnányi's, albeit no recordings of e.g., the *Sonata* or *Out of Doors* exist. Dohnányi's career as a recording artist was also dogged by a recurring, inexplicable fatality: the limited distribution of Remington records (which also affected Bartók's Remington recordings), and the fever which he suffered from during his last recording sessions forcing Dohnányi to break them off, as it later turned out, for good.

The majority of the concert recordings made in the U.S., mainly by amateur radio enthusiasts, has not yet been charted, nor have the few attempted publications so far met with the international or Hungarian response that would be the rightful due of one of the great musicians of the century. With the passage of time, however, it has become increasingly clear that these recordings are irreplaceable, regardless of their faults and deficiencies since, through the mediation of one of the outstanding musicians of the age, they are testimonies to a period decisive in Hungarian and universal music history. The information we need can only come from a scholarly collection and arrangement of the available material and the publication of a genuinely complete edition, such as the two Hungaroton albums for the Bartók centenary (which at the eleventh hour saved the joint recordings of Dohnányi and Bartók).[6] This work still waits to be done, and it is to be feared that no one will take the financial risk in the near future. ❧

## NOTES

1 ■ To mention just two surprising examples: Fritz Kreisler studied composition under no lesser master than Anton Bruckner, and Saint-Saëns—unlikely as it may seem today—was, as his recordings suggest, a devilishly virtuoso pianist, with a technique worthy of Liszt.

2 ■ From a 1925 letter to Dohnányi: "To be sure, I can cope even with these few concerts only with difficulty; I feel much too nervous and tired—if not by the performance, rather by the preparations and the travelling to and fro. I already start wondering whether to give up for good this role which was imposed on me.." Another excerpt from a 1935 letter, to József Szigeti: "...I am fed up with concertizing as a whole, I am sick and tired of it." (János Demény: *Bartók Béla levelei* [Letters by Béla Bartók], Zeneműkiadó, 1976, pp. 322 and 506.)

3 ■ Béla Bartók: "A gépzene" (Machine Music). Lecture given at the Budapest Academy of Music on January 13th, 1937.

4 ■ *Ibid.*

5 ■ Minor differences naturally exist: by the late 1920s, the Ampico–B system was already able to reproduce volume differences between the individual notes of chords as well, but certainly not to a degree desirable for a faultless reproduction of performances by the greatest pianists.

6 ■ *Bartók at the Piano*. Hungaroton LPX 12 326-33 and Bartók Record Archives. Hungaroton LPX 12 334–38. The recordings mentioned here are II:6 and II:9/2.

Paul Griffiths

# Uncommon Liszt and Bartók

Bartók's songs are twice-over special. Because of their language, they belong almost exclusively to Hungarian singers; because they are few, and come from a composer sharply alert to medium and genre, they stand rather apart from anything else he wrote. It is easy to form an image of him that leaves them out—and then, listening to Júlia Hamari's excellent new recording (Hungaroton HCD 31535), one hears them knocking at the door and is embarrassed not to know quite where to put them. The Ady songs connect with other works of that quick, brilliant period in the middle of the First World War—works such as the Piano Suite and the Second Quartet. However, the rhymes and repetitive verse forms—and perhaps too the fact of writing vocal melody, which was right at the centre of Bartók's research but not at all of his composing—together make for a unique atmosphere, of clarity in darkness, of probing, of remembering. Hamari and her accompanist, Ilona Prunyi, go deeply into that world, though for the almost contemporary op.15 songs, which are emotionally and musically so much simpler, Hamari's vocal quality is maybe too mature. Kodály's orchestration of this set—a late effort by him, dating from 1961—was surely a misguided homage.

The vastly more impressive rarity here is Bartók's own set of five orchestral songs, which he chose from the Twenty Hungarian Folksongs of 1929 and scored four years later. Katalin Fittler's note reminds us that this was a period of quintuple forms: the songs came between the Second Piano Concerto and the Fifth String Quartet. However, they follow a different kind of symmetry, with a big opening number ("In Prison") followed by a double pair of lament plus courting songs. They also, even in orchestral colour, cast back to an earlier time. In particular, the mention of tears in the first song seems to arouse memories of *Bluebeard's Castle*—memories that come swimming to the surface at the line "My room is vaulted", as if Judith herself were singing. Put in that frame of mind, one starts to hear the songs as fragment operas, helped by Hamari's ample, responsive singing and by the excellent support of the Hungarian State Orchestra under János Kovács. The record neatly

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makes this a handful of handfuls by including also the first five of the Eight Hungarian Folksongs, a group which belong together by virtue of their Transylvanian origin. But the prince, on points of performance, unusualness and importance, is the set of orchestral folksongs.

Uncommon Liszt, also with the participation of the Hungarian State Orchestra, comes on two other new records, one offering *De Profundis* (1834), and "instrumental psalm" for piano and orchestra (HCD 31525), the other a piano concerto in E flat, also dating from the 1830s (HCD 31396). *De Profundis*, playing for over half an hour, was written in a first rush of enthusiasm for the thinking of the Abbé de Lamennais; it was abandoned, and is heard here in a version by the Canadian composer Michael Maxwell, with a Canadian pianist (Philip Thomson) and a Canadian conductor (Kerry Stratton). Thomson's harsh sound must deter anyone not desperate to hear this minor monster; he also offers two other Lisztian oddities for piano and orchestra: the transcription of Schubert's *Wanderer* fantasia, and a fantasia on themes from Beethoven's *Ruins of Athens* music.

The "new" piano concerto is more soundly presented, by the poetic Jenő Jandó, with Lamberto Gardelli conducting. Long overlooked as probably an early version of the work published as "no.1", the score was recognized by Jay Rosenblatt as quite separate only in 1988. It is no sleeping masterpiece—trite ideas are shown up by an awkward handling of single-movement form—but this recording is worth hearing. Jandó also includes Liszt's transcriptions of six of his own Victor Hugo songs, very much in the drawing-room kitsch mode, and of three grand marches by Schubert. Another recent Liszt discovery is reproduced on the booklet cover: a daguerrotype of the composer, dated to 1856.

One of the much more familiar faces of Liszt—the prodigious virtuoso—is presented in Károly Mocsári's new record (HCD 31203), which features the *Dante* sonata, the B minor Ballade, *Funérailles*, *La leggierezza* and the Fantasy and Fugue on BACH. Mocsári is himself a prodigious virtuoso, and one warms readily to his skills and to his excitability. He makes us realise that Liszt was writing not scores but performances: music on show. ❧

Tamás Koltai

# Theatre and Politics

Shakespeare: *Julius Caesar* • Christopher Marlowe: *Edward II* • Georg Büchner: *The Death of Danton* • Sophocles: *Oedipus the King* • Steven Berkoff: *The Greek* • Heinrich von Kleist: *The Schroffenstein Family* • Alfonso Sastre: *Muzzle* • Samuel Beckett: *Waiting for Godot*

Not as before, but politics survives in the most important performances of the Hungarian theatre. Now that the foundations of democracy have been laid, the theatre no longer substitutes for outspokenness, nor does it serve to outwit censorship through theatrical metacommunication, but with the use of subtler means and the help of allusions, it does refer to the social processes that are taking place around us.

The Katona József Theatre's *Julius Caesar*, for example, portrays a Balkanized Rome. The stressed scene in the first act is the one in which Cinna the poet is murdered by the incited mob, simply because they mistake him for Cinna the Senator. Or not even because of that, but for his "bad verses" (which they have obviously never read). A slim, bespectacled Cinna is perhaps on his way home from a library or a literary club when he is assaulted; although the mistake in identity scares off some of his attackers, the rest of them lay into him with all the more fury. The destruction of the innocent intellectual—the scene lasts only a few minutes—is the emblem of the production. The street scene is familiar from television pictures of mobs whipped up by politicians. The second part, given more emphasis than the first, conveys the pain of wounded, bleeding soldiers, lingering amid the ruins of a city veiled in smoke—a Rome standing for Sarajevo.

There is reason in the conception of the director, Gábor Zsámbéki, even if it inverts the Shakespearean formula. Shakespeare has the survivors paying tribute to the stature of the dead: in his tribute at the end of the play Anthony raises Brutus, his vanquished adversary next to Caesar, and Brutus places himself on a level with Caesar when salving his conscience through suicide. It is the stature of the personalities that, as it were, elevates the tragedy in retrospect.

In this production, the "outcome"—a city in ruins and bloody shambles—relates back to what has gone before, but in this case it shames the characters both as politicians and statesmen. There are no heroic deaths, the series of those falling on their swords creates horror, quite the contrary to Peter Stein's recent production in Salzburg. Nor is there any heroic life either, the drab democratic coup led by Brutus

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does not seem to be morally superior to Caesar's genial dictatorship. There is no moral stake in the contest for power: power itself is at stake, which clearly means more to a vain and petty-minded Caesar than to a much less ambitious Brutus. The attempt on Caesar is like the clumsy slaughtering of a pig, and the assassins anoint themselves from a pool of blood as saviours of the country. Anthony shakes these blood-stained hands with the self-assurance of one who knows he has nothing to fear from the democrats, even allowing himself to unleash a provocative tirade over the body of Caesar. Yet the speakers themselves seem to have no faith in their oratory, nor do they even consider it important. Brutus explains laconically, and Anthony underplays the demagoguery inherent in his words. They do not rouse the mob that simply loiters listlessly, and only gathers strength after the leisurely disassembling of the speaker's rostrum. The dormant bestiality in them comes to life only when the innocent by-passer appears, the potential victim, Cinna the intellectual.

The definite feeling that comes over is one of watching a report on dirty local wars fought for power. No one could really be surprised if a documentary on Bosnia were suddenly projected on one of the white, screen-like sheets that form the set.

Christopher Marlowe leaves us an exceedingly brutal portrayal of political shambles in *Edward II*. The production at the Budapest Chamber Theatre betrays both undergraduate irony and stylistic discipline, the horror of blood-stained history and ritual deteriorating into farce; it is able to simultaneously recoil from the burlesque-butchery of massacre and to be overwhelmed by the victims that fall in the struggle for power. In all the main role does not belong to figurative allegory, nor to the slaughterhouse set, where peers and lords hang their butcher's aprons from meat hooks, hose down the blood, use a butcher's block to behead the victims and then hang them on the tackle for sides of pigs—all that is mere ironical ritual. What really counts is the equally ritualized depiction of human behaviour patterns.

That is, Edward II himself, not so much Renaissance as Gothic man, with his immobile face, calm, simplified bearing and sparse gestures. Contrary to psychological realism, he is unexpectedly, and irrationally seized by passion and uncertainty, primarily by infatuation for his favourite, an infatuation which is crucial to his disposition as a man, as king, and to his kingship. The characters are part of the historical meat grinder: they emerge out of the pulp and melt back into it when, after death, they reappear in a new role. Thus the hangman becomes a new victim and the victim a new hangman, something we here know from real life as well. The historical shambles is seen as the background on a tiny stage, with a narrow walkway projecting into the audience, where these characters from a chronicle play keep their minions, instigate dissent, fight for power, slaughter each other, and change their views according to their monetary interests. Dirty little massacres, mediocrity in a historical public role is how Christopher Marlowe, the Star Chamber spy, reveals the face of truth on stage.

In Georg Büchner's *The Death of Danton*, the children of liberty devour each other. If it is really children who play ball with hu-

man heads, the drama becomes unbearably cruel. On the studio stage of the Katona József Theatre, the play is performed by "under-age" actors. This seems logical, since the playwright himself was only twenty-one when he wrote his masterpiece on the frenzy of the guillotine. The Hessian revolutionary, a sans-cullotte intellectual, in his capacity as a writer, becomes alarmed by the torrents of blood shed as the ideals are debased. Nothing paradoxical in this, since *The Death of Danton* is no *drame à thèse* but a history play in the Shakespearian sense, in that it portrays the mechanism of history in an objective manner using poetic, metaphorical means. The youthful verve is felt not so much in its dramatic structure as in its passion, and these rhapsodic emotions have inspired the young director, who is still a student.

Premature disenchantment with ideas that shape history is bound to be tragic. This production smacks of loathing on the part of the young at the disgusting doings of the political big-wigs. Of course, the young political élite of today is not at all marked by the Jacobin resoluteness of a Saint Just, and today the struggle is not a matter of life and death, the republican ideal has not yet collapsed and for the moment there are gentler means of ousting the old than the guillotine. True enough, but outside the Convention there is the street, (the sets reflect this) and the two usually function simultaneously. Even if for the time being the street is still empty.

Demagogy, however, is present. The lumpen attitude, which via reference to Christian morality, soon turns Citizen Simon into a hangman's assistant wearing a militiaman's armband, is fairly familiar in these parts. But the clearest expression of the age-group is implicit in the way the production presents Robespierre. The director does not bother about bringing out of the Incorruptible the revolutionary petrified into dogma. This Robespierre is less than a Jesuit revolutionary, he lacks all trace of unctuous hypocrisy, he radiates the spasmodic aggression of pettiness. A frustrated, sorry-looking figure, short in stature and totally lacking oratorical gifts, who squeezes out his words with pursed lips—a petty dictator whom loathing of life has turned into an ideologue. His belated joining in the singing of the Marseillaise, turning a triumphant march into a threatening death march, expresses the young production team's opinion of the historical role of the generation of careerists, who have gone before them.

The endgame—shivering fear in the prison and the cruel ritual of starting on the ride to death—is noticeably better portrayed in the production than is the road that has led to it, loathing and faction mongering. The reason may be a certain inexperience in direction, but a gesture of alienation from the mechanism of politicking cannot be excluded. This could be the message for the present. The desperate air of disillusionment the production gives off should be taken seriously. When the group creating democracy out of dictatorship has consumed all its own children, when public life is being "purified" of its very best members, when all human values have been buried with the corpses of those who have transformed society, the widow of the most honourable republican of them all defiantly exclaims, "Long live the king!" This nadir of disillusionment, this cry for the *ancient régime*, is rarely heard so frighteningly as in this production in the Chamber.

Another group of politicking plays dwells on the crimes committed in the past and the responsibility of those who committed them, and looks for possibilities of forgiveness and conciliation. This is understandable at a time when it is not certain whether those responsible for firing into unarmed crowds during the 1956 revolution can be tracked down, and if so, whether they should be called to account legally or morally. Where does justice end and where does revenge begin? Where will it lead if the past cannot be put by for good and the adversaries unable to become reconciled to each other continue to continue to foster an atmosphere of accusations and animosity?

Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* is one of the seminal works on the disclosure of the past. It was recently performed by the alternative Independent Stage, and has now been staged by the Vígszinház company in its temporary home in a huge tent set up next to the Western Railway Station. The earlier production focused on the family drama taking place under the gaze of the community, and made it clear that community as known to the ancient Greeks no longer exists. The essence of their version was that Oedipus is one of us, a simple young man (the title even omitted the word "king"), who has come to power accidentally, thanks to his ingenuity. When he has to face up to the crimes he has unwittingly committed on his way to power, he first tries to brush aside the consequences in a childish manner, and then, yielding to the unrelenting laws and merciless public opinion as expressed by the crowd, he becomes resigned to his fate—to punishment. The production says that even the most innocent man can be a criminal, but also a victim, should he find himself part of the "machinery of power". At the end of the play, the blind Oedipus gropes his way off the stage dragging the "skin" of the Sphinx he has killed behind him. The, presumably intentionally, depoliticized performance, alternating ritual and realistic motifs, is a kind of requiem for the man in the street "involved" in politics.

In an interesting coincidence, another company, the Radnóti, is playing Steven Berkoff's Oedipus variation, *The Greek*, which has now reached Hungary with a delay of a decade. Berkoff gives the play a contemporary setting and thus completely desacralizes the ancient tragedy. He portrays a run-down urbanized environment with relevant human relations. The prediction of patricide and incestuous marriage comes true for Eddie too but his "kingdom" is a simple bistro, which for him signifies the possibility of rising into a better life. He does not want to lose his chance and defies tragic fate. The gesture is at least as drastic as is the frequent, ostentatious, use of four-letter words. The two, the essentially traditional interpretation of the Sophoclean tragedy and the somewhat belated, provocative Berkoff play, unexpectedly chime, inasmuch as both are dominated by the experience of refusal. The man in the street, the common citizen, protests against being saddled with the responsibility for crimes which society has committed against him.

Crime and revenge also appear in both a classical and a modern play. Heinrich von Kleist's *The Schroffenstein Family or the Revenge* has been staged by the studio of the Budapest Chamber Theatre. A paraphrase of *Romeo and Juliet*, it opens with one family accusing the other of murder and vowing vengeance. It soon turns out that the animosity is of much longer stand-

ing, though no one knows when it started or for what reason. The irrational emotions finally lead to carnage, and the victims, as in Shakespeare, are a couple in love, the daughter of the head of one of the families and the son of the head of the other. The unfounded rancours are sometimes treated ironically, and they clearly remind one of the political dissensions which take place in Hungarian public life between confronting camps.

*Muzzle,* written by Alfonso Sastre in the 1950s, takes place four years after the Spanish civil war. The protagonist, a former Falangist soldier, who terrorizes even his own family, shoots down a former republican adversary (whose family he had wiped out during the war) and who, on release from prison, has come to take revenge. The murder would have been hushed up if the family had not rebelled against their tyrant and delivered him to the authorities. Before the play ends, we learn that the arrested old man is murdered in prison before the legal proceedings have started. This drama of good intentions, a brave gesture during the Franco years, implies that endless vengeance depraves human relations and impedes reconciliation. The warning that the past must be put to rest, is timely. More's the pity that the Művész Theatre company has not found a better play than Sastre's, which tries to blend the sultry atmosphere of a play by Lorca with a thriller.

Sometimes gentler parables help interpret the present. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is also billed by the Művész Theatre. The metaphor of expectation and chasing illusions can be interpreted in many different ways, and this production does not offer dry theory. The two (star) actors playing the principal characters (one also directs) do not recite the compulsory Beckett catechism. They want to render life and not a philosophy. They begin as two tramps in a junk-yard. Along their way they make up themselves as clowns, one wearing a Russian cap with ear flaps, the other a long, black coat: dressing themselves out of their historical memories. The junk-yard, too, contains all the paraphernalia of the past, the wreck of a Trabant car, bricks, indiscernible graffiti on the horizon beyond the nowhere-highway, the discards of the revolutions and the Eastern European barracks heaped upon one other. When Vladimir says "we have botched our rights" and, tearing the faded tricoloured flag from its pole, thrusts his head through the hole in the middle, it becomes obvious that he refers to the nostalgia for 1956, a past in many respects irrevocably lost. With his fool's cap-crown, he looks like an unemployed King Lear who has been robbed of his country. His are the ruminations of a good-for-nothing ex-intellectual buffoon. Estragon, sticking to realities, is the eternal small-timer: the egocentric moaner, always being beaten.

By the end, when their patience in waiting seems to diminish, they sit down before the curtain, almost among the audience, a bit mawkishly, a bit defiantly, a bit in spite of it all. Estragon looks provocatively heavenwards, as if asking: "What do you want, how long are we to wait, how long will you still feed us with promises? We can do without you as well!" This awakening from illusions resembles the general mood now characteristic of these parts. The two ragged tramps who have been put out on to the roadside, into freedom, are perhaps also ourselves. ❧

Gergely Bikácsy

# Satan's Festival?

## Hungarian Film Week, 1994

Tamás Tóth: *Vasisten gyermekei* (Children of the Iron God) • János Szász: *Woyzeck* • Béla Tarr: *Sátántangó* (Satan's Tango).

"Without all the big shots" was one journalist's summation of the 1994 Hungarian Film Week: not one of the internationally known film-makers of the 60s and 70s (Miklós Jancsó, Károly Makk, András Kovács, Ferenc Kósa, István Szabó) had a film in competition.

Just as last year, when a film by a debutante, Ildikó Szabó (*Child Murderers*) took prizes to resounding, well-deserved praise, the 1994 festival was also one of young and unknown directors.

Sometimes the nationality of a movie is nothing more than a mere external fact of the production. *Children of the Iron God*, which took first prize, by Tamás Tóth (his first film) is a Russian, not a Hungarian film, and Russianness is obvious from the work itself, rather than from its title or the data of its production.

The film is imbued with Tarkovsky and in more than just its colours, setting or technique: Tarkovsky inspires the vision of the young director, who has studied and worked in Moscow. *Children of the Iron God* is set in a dehumanized past-destruction world (or one in the process of total destruction), without laws, waiting for consolation or grace. Setting and imagery can be described easily in spite of the difficulty of the enterprise, the obligation that the director set for himself to wander on an untrodden path.

This is an extraordinarily talented first film—if what we mean by talent is a strong, assertive style, a natural and sustained unity, the ability to stylize in a way that the bizarre, the grotesque, the Grand-Guignol are smoothly integrated into a grave and threatening basic tone.

The plot is not important. It is best to accept that. Apparently without logic, it takes different turns from what we would expect and none of the turning-points or episodes have any logical consequence, at least in the first half of the film. We are in an enormous, Chernobyl-like industrial complex, a decaying, exploding, gigantic factory that is about to collapse. A rescue team is at work; their voices are heard faintly: "It is over, we're going to die". Flames flare up, rusty structures and steel corridors are collapsing. The rescue team works without hope of success, as a displacemant activity that they themselves do not believe in.

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A few seconds before the disaster. Images of the control-room, before destruction: preparing for the fatal moment are once feared all-powerful managers, now pitiful self-parodies with their phones, loudspeakers and controlling equipment. Unnecessary, impossible instructions and commands intersect.

People trapped in the cogwheels of stalled time vegetate here: it is a bizarre, absurd world that is thrown at us, a world that had long ago crossed the borderline of the fantastic.

All this results in tense, memorable sequences. Once the director decides to follow a thread of action, however, he is much less convincing, and the clichés of westerns and adventure films creep in.

A human hell populated by shockingly, madly authentic monsters and freaks. No *Star Wars* make-up people would be able to create a more artful waxworks show of Szondi test figures, Kirghiz, Bashkir, Russian heads and faces, exclamation marks of both degradation and dignity. A "Sov-colour panorama", of those born of iron and coal dust, who have never seen the sun. In Eisenstein's *Strike* or in his *Old and New* we have seen such a threatening, barbaric portrait gallery.

In Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck,* the Bible is constantly quoted, almost compulsively, sometimes with unexpected associations. The world is stinking and full of sin, anything evil can and does happen, it is a vale of tears where the figures in the drama move spasmodically. Not much is said about Satan or his devils but we have one of the central questions of romanticism: what is the origin of Evil? Whatever the answer, each of the characters has something of the devil in him: the regimental barber has a sense of humour that is just as Luciferian and scaring as that of the disgustingly obtuse scholarly doctor.

In János Szász's film, Büchner's masterpiece becomes hell on earth, materialized in everyday life: contemporary Hungarian misery and police cars, contemporary pain and contemporary drinking dens. It is a worm's eye view to make us sense the silence and the truth of infinite spaces from such a perspective. The director succeeds in that.

In this film version of János Szász's, barely stylized Hungarian soup-kitchen poverty goes together well with beautifully motivated psychological solutions. In the final analysis, his film is no more romantic than tough and muddy naturalistic reality. One must be a "drunken Almighty"—to quote Büchner's drum-major's favourite expression—not to whine like a dog in this world.

A lake among slag-heaps at night. A wooden hut, like a snail shell. A maze of tracks at the snow-covered station. A ragged figure pushes a pram across the rails: Woyzeck. "Woyzeck!", a thunder from the loudspeakers, like a hideous parody of God's word, some stupid command by the superiors. "Woyzeck!", the Captain calls out from the rail-car in a stentorian voice. But Woyzeck, seeking ways to heaven and hell alike, does not answer. He huddles in his hut as God should huddle, ashamed.

János Szász is most talented in his moments of quiet beauty, simplicity and tension. These are moments that were barely glimpsed in his first film, the ambitious and overstylized, overly artistic *Vertigo*. Now he shows a rare talent for visual silence.

Thunder and fearful lightning are therefore perhaps superfluous: muteness says more. Immobile, silent camera, quiet, tense images remind us of György Fehér's *Twilight*. Like here, there also someone was trying to understand sin, and did not succeed in doing so.

"Look how beautiful, grey and solid the sky is; you could take a notion to stick a hook into it and hang yourself"—the satanic closeness of heaven and hell is felt more through Lajos Kovács's, the leading actor's, face and look than through his painfully poetic words.

The other actors do not get sufficient weight against Lajos Kovács's performance, though Péter Haumann—as the Doctor—and Aleksandr Prohovitshkov are both excellent. Diana Vacaru, in the role of Marie, is not a bad actress, yet the balance is disturbed. In the play, Marie is both biblically laconic and a hysterically seductive very young girl, a self-torturing and self-abasing Virgin Mary. In the film, however, we are too conscious of an effort to enrich the role with all these elements.

Perhaps, like the Doctor, a narrow-minded representative of the Enlightenment mocked in the play, I am also looking for logic where there is none, but it is not clear to me whether Woyzeck cuts the Captain's throat or not when he shaves him for the last time. The scene is, to say the least, ambiguous, and if the director intended so it was a mistake: the play and the film both end with the tragedy of Woyzeck and Marie. Woyzeck turns against himself, and not against the outer world, he can only destroy Marie (together with himself), whom he feels to be part of himself, part of his own body. Neither social justice nor traditional psychologizing are needed as motivations here. Szász somewhat overuses Purcell's and Pergolesi's music by making it almost intrusively loud.

Tibor Máthé won the Film Week's prize for best cameraman. His totals, shot with fixed camera, radiate the same tension as when he uses dissolves or slowdowns. But just as Szász sometimes comes under the spell of music, Máthé is sometimes absorbed by the play of light. His finest work is seen in his immobile camera positions, in these full shots of cold, desolate winter landscapes and his close-ups of faces, eyes flashing out from darkness.

The barker in Büchner's play says: "Come and behold the creature as God created him: and lo, you remain with nothing at all."

János Szász's *Woyzeck* is about the sinister force of this nothing-creature.

*Satan's Tango*, a unique enterprise of seven and a half hours by Béla Tarr, was this Week's most awaited production. It is not just the length that makes this film unusual, but also the fact that László Krasznahorkai's novel is practically impossible to turn into a conventional movie. Everything happens inside the characters, and the writer's meticulous, calm, yet tense, epic style is not the material for a traditional film. This was precisely the challenge that aroused the director's interest—and not for the first time. (*Damnation* was another film by Tarr based on a Krasznahorkai work, in which Krasznahorkai had created a world similar to that of *Satan's Tango* as raw material for the director.)

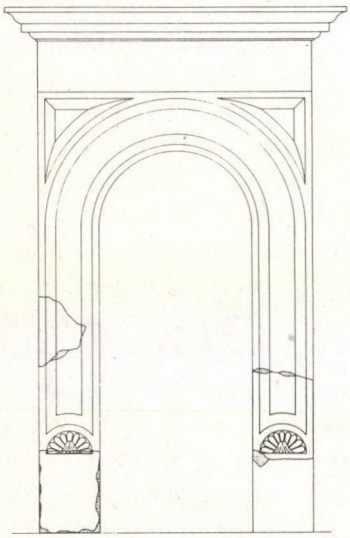
This is a dark, futureless, godforsaken world, populated by human wrecks, for whom time has stopped. Two impostors ar-

rive, perhaps agents of the police, perhaps they have duped the police as well. Whoever they are, they con people out of their money, before disappearing. Following their instructions, the people who were living in this decaying village disperse all over the country, waiting for further instructions that will probably never come.

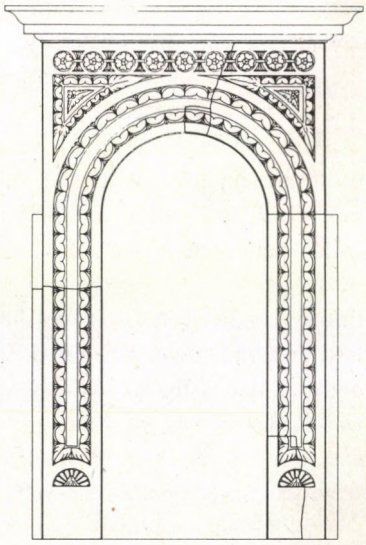
The novel is as far as possible from traditional realism, a philosophical novel on human existence forsaken by God, on hopelessness and faith. The film's rhythm is extremely slow, with every gesture, word, sequence and camera move carrying a sinister weight. Béla Tarr is not interested in the conventional rhythm of film narration, but follows one of his own. In the titles sequence, the camera tracks a herd of cattle as it passes slowly; the distance of the camera, its slow tracking almost defines what will follow. It rains almost all through the film. The human residents waiting for a miracle in the rain, vegetating in the void, seem to have never seen the sun. As in Tarr's *Damnation*, the most memorable scene is an extremely long dance scene. These anti-heroes wriggle with a leaden, desperate monotony to the sound of an accordeon on the muddy floor of a pub. Satan's tango, yes, but for them even the appearance or the spirit of Satan might well be a luxury, a bizarre gift.

A strange film, which will hardly reach a large audience but which, as its international festival prize and press reaction have shown, will not remain unremarked.

Hungarian Film Week 1994, awaited with much anxiety because of last year's flops as well as the uncertainties of production, ended positively because of these three important films, proving that the emergence and development of talents is only partly dependent on production systems and financial opportunities. ❧



*Nyírbátor, Báthori Castle. One of the Renaissance doors of the Reception Court.*



*Papmező, the summer residence of the bishops of Nagyvárad (Oradea, Romania). A doorframe reconstructed from its fragments. (After János Emődi).*

*Europeans are all alike. What is a European like? A European eats with a knife and fork. He doesn't cut the food up first, then puts down the knife and carries on with a fork. If you glance round a restaurant you can tell from a distance who the Europeans are. Europeans are capable of saying good morning without smiling, and even of not answering the question "How are you?" with "Fine", but possibly with "I've got a headache". Europeans smoke. Europeans wear lined winter coats. After five hours of walking they show signs of tiredness. The mountain climbers are the only exceptions to this. Europeans are conceited. They don't like beautiful fifty-year-old houses, they look right through them as if they were air. Europeans rarely laugh, and at different things from other people. Europeans are manneristic. They lack genuine unaffectedness, warm-heartedness, natural confidence and an open, cheerful way of facing the world. Europeans are insincere. If a siren sounds somewhere—ambulance, police, smog warning—a European winces. He doesn't like the humming of aeroplanes. Europeans are neurotic. Europeans are scared.*

From: *American Diary, 1979*
by Ágnes Nemes Nagy, p. 42.



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