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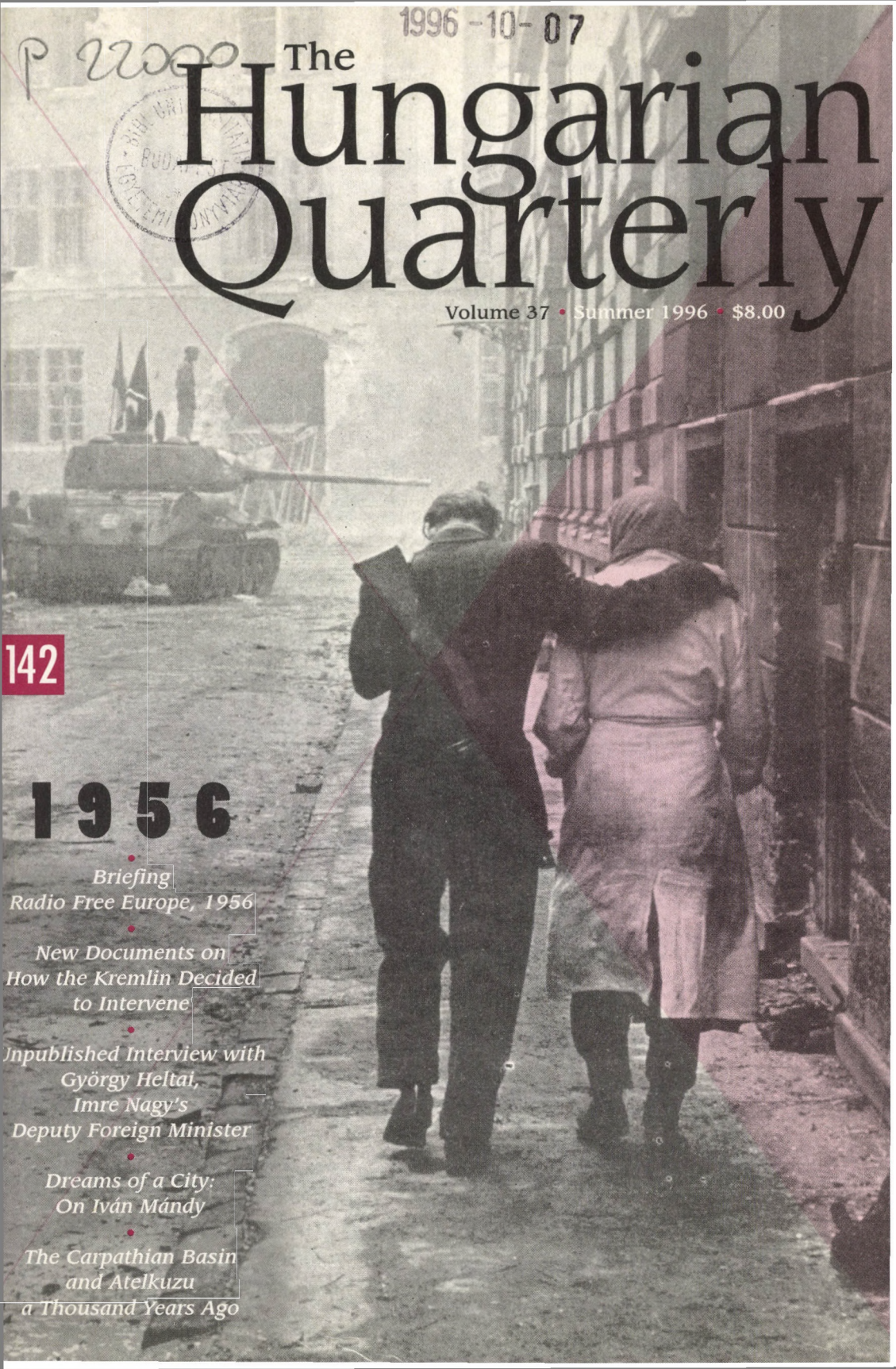

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Simon Bourgin

The Well of Discontent

A Senior American Correspondent's Briefings on Budapest, 1956

Part One

Simon Bourgin came to Hungary immediately after the Second World War for Time *magazine. Based in Vienna, he visited Hungary frequently over the next ten years, cultivating many friends in Budapest. He briefed Radio Free Europe in Munich on what he had seen and heard;* Time*'s publisher, C. D. Jackson, was also Chairman of the Committee for a Free Europe, RFE's parent organization.*

The reports that follow are excerpted from edited transcripts of talks Bourgin gave in Munich after three visits to Hungary just before the Revolution. Simon Bourgin followed events in Budapest closely and was respected among his Western colleagues for his knowledge of Hungarian affairs.

Time *magazine ignored Simon Bourgin's reports, despite his attempts to make his editors aware of the troubled situation in Hungary. He quit Vienna a few weeks before the Revolution, to take over* Newsweek*'s Los Angeles Bureau. He is currently Consultant on Eastern Europe for the Aspen Institute, Washington.*

*

May 22, 1956

I presume to have a very good knowledge of Budapest. I was there frequently just after the war. I arrived there first in September 1945 and made seven or eight visits there until the end of 1949. I was there for the last extended visit in the summer and autumn of 1948 and then was not able to get a visa until just a couple of weeks ago. I spent sixteen days in Budapest. I was prepared for some great changes and for some great shocks but I should say that the changes and shocks were much greater than I was prepared for. I drove in my car, I drive an Oldsmobile 98 which is a big job, blue and cream colour, three years old, and it doesn't cut much of a figure around here any more. I went to Budapest and learned that I was the sensation of the town because of my car. That was just the beginning.

Budapest is a town that is almost completely cut off in this sense. This whole world that the motor car represents they just don't know anymore because they don't see Western movies. I met people after I had been there a week who said, "So you're the man who has that big car! We've been watching it all over town now for ten days." This is not very important except that it suggests how much the town is cut off. During the time I was there, there were perhaps three or four foreign cars that were in town. I visited Yugoslavia frequently as well and I remember the sensation that a foreign car used to make when it came into Zagreb or Belgrade after the break with the Russians in 1948. The newspaper men used to call those towns one-car towns because it created such a sensation when a new car came to town. Budapest is that kind of town now. Also in other ways Budapest today suggests the kind of Belgrade and Zagreb that we used to know just after the break; not Belgrade and Zagreb today, mind you, but before. The deterioration of public life is so great that, to people who used to know the city, it simply can't be realized. Everything is, if not quite dirty, at least soiled. There are no spotless, white tablecloths, the trams are dreadfully rundown, even the buses which used to be the pride of the city in '48 and '49, all looking so new and sparkling, are now in a dreadful state of disrepair. People look soiled. Their clothes are not quite clean. The hotels, with the exception of the two or three that are reserved for foreigners, are also unclean. People appear to have made a desperate effort to keep their clothes tidy but they are beginning to let down even on that. Budapest is not as dirty as I observed that Prague was when I was there last summer but it is still a town where the depreciation in public standards of all kinds was [striking].

The predominant colour of Budapest is grey and the greyness of it is difficult to over-emphasize. An American who was at one of the big soccer games at the stadium (which is one of the few big, new and shining public works in the whole town, (it's a stadium which would be the envy of any American university or city), told me that what he couldn't get over when he looked down over that crowd of 60 or 70,000 was the fact that it was grey. He was used to football crowds in America being very very colourful and there was one single monotonous colour about all of this. Now this goes for shops as well.

It is very difficult to describe what has happened to the main shopping streets. Perhaps you can summarize it by saying that where there used to be twenty shops along the block of one street there are now mostly twenty empty shop windows of various kinds with paper advertisements in them representing some kind of state activity and then on one corner there will be a big bustling state shop that sells either conserves, either groceries, or sells delicatessen goods. More than one Hungarian warned me not to be taken in by the shops. He said that they look good, there are hundreds of people patronizing them, but I should remember that where twenty or forty shops used to be there was now one and it doesn't represent anything like an increase in merchandizing. The big

impression that these shops made upon me was the uniformity of goods displayed in them. There is one kind of meat, more or less one kind of pastry and, of course, goose liver which used to mean so much in Hungary is now represented by exactly one kind of goose liver paté that is the same in every single delicatessen in Budapest. There are two kinds of shops that show an unexpected brilliance: one are the antique shops which sell for next to nothing most of the goods that the middle and poverty classes have given up because they can't afford them any more, and the other are the bookshops which are probably the best in Europe for the simple reason that this was a highly literate city and all these people who had great libraries have now surrendered them to the second-hand shops, and the cultivated Americans and Britishers at their embassies have been having a field day, those who love books, going around bookshops picking up things that simply can't be obtained in any other city in the world.

There is one new feature of Budapest life that people who don't know Prague or Budapest wouldn't recognize and that is the stand-up buffets. There used to be a small number of them in Budapest, now there are many of them. They are the predominant form of eating and serving food. Where there used to be a small restaurant, now there is a stand-up buffet where people will come in and buy a bowl of soup or coffee or some fairly cheap food. Most of them are dirty and shabby by pre-war standards; this doesn't mean that the espresso isn't around, it is very much. Every place that had an espresso, that I remember, still has one; in fact, there are a lot of new ones. The price of a cup of coffee in Budapest is 1 ½ forints at the very cheap places, at the more or less luxurious gardens or the places that foreigners frequent, it's up to 5 forints. The people who hang around these espressos are a kind of so-called reactionaries. The Vár espressos still attract the kind of faces that you used to see all over the Vár and over the Váci utca and all over Central Budapest before the war. Perhaps one of the most remarkable changes is the disappearance of the kind of cultivated, bourgeois, intelligent family faces that used to be characteristic of this city, which was a great middle class city. They scarcely exist any more. As a matter of fact, during the first five or six days after I was there I was convinced that it didn't exist at all and I found it very hard to get used to. On the Váci utca there was occasionally a face with intelligence, a good looking girl, a well-dressed man, something of interest—when you saw their face. Elsewhere in town, almost none at all. Some Hungarian friends told me it would be different when I went to the opera and suddenly it was. There we saw the same kind of people that one used to take for granted in Budapest—but almost only at the opera. One didn't even see them in the two or three great middle class cafés that have been specially reopened by the government. I'll tell you a little more about that later.

There are two cafés that have been set up as show places. These, it's important to remember, while they look pretty good now and they've been repaired and rehabilitated at very great expense, are simply the kind of middle class cafés

that used to be taken for granted in Budapest before the war. The reason they look so different now is that the others are so dreadfully rundown that these look luxurious and are show-pieces by comparison. One is the old New York which is now called the Hungaria and which attracts a better class of people—better class in the sense that they're better dressed and they look a little bourgeois. And the other is the Belvárosi which I believe had the same name before the war. It now looks very good again and it has a good Gypsy orchestra—I was there on its opening night and suddenly this place was filled with exactly the same types of Hungarians that one used to see up and down the Andrássy út and the kind that one used to see in all the great cafés and they were only there for that night. My Hungarian friends whom I met said that they hadn't seen such faces either since perhaps when the New York Café was opened six months ago. Such people surface really for such occasions like that but otherwise one doesn't see them. They're lost to Budapest public life. There is no longer a middle class that is identifiable as such. Only at Gerbeaud does one see them. It's no longer called Gerbeaud, of course, and the Swiss family that owned it have left Budapest. It is now called after the Hungarian hero[1] who has named that whole square there, and I forget what it is. And, Gerbeaud, of course, was the great pastry shop of Central Europe before the war. It was to Budapest what Demel's is now to Vienna and it was internationally famous for its pastry and for its elegant crowd. Floris, just across the street, is gone, it's now an espresso. But Gerebeaud still attracts almost the only elegant people in town—not elegant by our standards, but after you have been in Budapest for a week, they look elegant. The women here are somewhat better dressed than the other women and they have the kind of old faces that one used to see in Budapest and occasionally you still see a well-dressed man—even a man with gloves on. And, at Gerebeaud you can still get really excellent coffee and real chocolate cake and all these other things that in almost the whole rest of Budapest are very second class.

People look drab. The men are all wearing suits that they either were left with or were presented with back in 1947 and 1948. Shirts, you can always tell whether a man is wearing an old shirt or one of a Communist make simply because even an old shirt, no matter how frayed, looks better than the new kind. Women look almost as drab, make-up very bad, quite a lot of it but very bad. Hungarian women of Budapest have lost their elegance. There are almost no good looking women any more. This shocked me very greatly of course and (it was a side of Budapest life that I was acquainted with) my first night in town I ate at the Bristol which used to be one of the hotels for foreigners and now it's the cheapest, most obvious hotel for foreigners, mostly for travelling businessmen and journalists. The most obvious foreign businessmen in town were British men, there seemed to be a lot of them there for some reason at that particular time.[2] The Bristol every Sunday night is the hangout for the young set.

They come there to dance and there is a lot of fairly good jazz and fairly abandoned dancing. I asked the headwaiter where the pretty girls were now and he said, "Well, if you go up to such and such a street and begin at the corner and walk a half a block down you'll see them." I said, "That isn't what I meant." I pursued this question because it has a certain importance and I came up with a series of answers that throw a good deal of light on what has happened in Hungary in regard to the way people live. One person said there's too much work and too much worry for a woman to make herself attractive anymore. And then a girl told me that if you want to look well in Hungary today you're taking a chance. Unless you are protected by somebody it is almost certainly inadvisable to make yourself up to look so pretty or dress so attractively that you stand out. She explained, and it was later confirmed to me, that you saw beautiful women in a restaurant or in a public place—beautiful in the sense that there were hundreds of them before—because they were almost certainly protected by the communist boyfriend or had a job or were foreign or some other thing that made this possible. There is a certain crowd of what a diplomat called state tarts who work out of a specific list of bars, who were reporting to the police and who were not apparently subsidized directly but who, by their income, were able to get better clothes than the other girls. But you can pick out the attractive people in this way. Another thing is the overly starched diet that most Hungarians eat today—it's a diet of potatoes and spaghetti and noodles and it rather resembles the diet that continental peoples lived on during the war and it's a diet, of course, under which figures sag and slump and in a country where there are no longer any foundation garments all this is very obvious. I told a certain Hungarian girl that she was the best looking Hungarian girl in Budapest and she shook her head and said, "Ah, my poor Budapest, what has happened to it that it should be said that I am the most beautiful girl in town." [...]

The opera, which I visited twice is excellent, it would be a credit to Vienna or another city that could boast a great opera house. One of the reasons, of course, is that they've got a captive cast of singer. Every other opera director in the world has got to worry about paying the singer more money and bigger inducements to keep him there so that he won't go off to seven or eight different opera houses in the same month and in Budapest, that's no problem. They all have to remain there. It's one of the few opera companies in the world that still functions with everybody singing in the same town without running around and the director, with whom I renewed my acquaintance—a man whom I respect, runs a good opera house. [...]

It should be observed that the best dressed, the best fed, the best cared for citizens of Budapest are the children. One sees them everywhere, one sees them in the parks, and in groups of ten to twenty being taken around town by the nursemaids who look after them in the so-called crèches while their mothers and fathers are working in factories and they always look happy and always look well looked after.

Restaurants have of course always been a separate episode in Budapest life and any foreigner who comes to town can't help experiencing the whole pattern all over again. It's important because like everything else the restaurants have proletarianized but not so much as one might think. First of all, the whole town has only three or four restaurants where one can eat as one used to be able to almost anywhere in Budapest before. The most obvious is the Grand on Margit Island where visiting communist delegations usually stayed and which is sort of a first hotel in town. Incidentally, we sat down to eat at a table there and we noticed a flag at our table which we didn't recognize and the waiter kept trying to hustle us out of the place and he practically rammed the food down our throats and we couldn't understand why. Towards the end of our meal about six oriental types came up, gave us a dirty look and walked on to the next table and it turned out that we were sitting at the table of the North Korean delegation. But you can also eat well at the Golf on the hill—I mention this only to point out that there are three or four hotels in town that are maintained on an entirely separate standard with a very extensive menu. And, of course, there is Gundels, once the city's most elegant restaurant but now a shadow of its former self. [...]

I have many Hungarian friends in Budapest. I got most of my information from them rather than the people at the Legations. And they all complain, even the ones who are relatively successful, about not being able to leave the country. Even some of the Party people whom you get into friendly conversations with will say, in an unguarded moment, how they would like to get out somewhere. They will ask you how it is in Vienna and how it is in Munich and so on. The one thing that even the people who are well off resent is the fact that they can't get out of the frontier. And when I, on the day that we were leaving town, met several people I'd had contact with, I told them, in the due course of events, that I was going, they said, "when?", and I said, "now," and they looked at me so pathetically and said "now?" "right now?, you mean you are just going to go right out of Hungary?" and I said, "yes." But you see for people who have been there and can't leave, it's impossible to imagine leaving. And the other things they resent, and now I'm getting back to the cost of living again, and to living problems, is this seething on incomes which is standard, universal and unchangeable and almost everywhere in Hungary.

Everybody has got his racket and the story is told, and I'm told that it comes out of other occasions like it, that a certain worker was leaving work at his factory every night and taking out a wheelbarrow full of sand. And the guard who was watching for things being stolen watched this every night for about two weeks and finally took the guy aside and said, "Look pal, I know that something is going on here but surely you aren't stupid enough to be taking all that sand out", and the worker said to him, "Don't be silly, I'm stealing wheelbarrows." And the other story is about a Hungarian and an American who met and the Hungarian asked the American how much money he made. The American said

$500 a month and the Hungarian asked how much of it was used on food and the American said $150. The Hungarian asked what the rest went for and the American said that about those things one doesn't ask. The American asked the Hungarian how much money he made and the Hungarian said 1,200 forints. The American asked how he possibly got by, what was done with the rest of the income and the Hungarian said about those things one doesn't ask. And that tells the story you see. Now the same thing goes for nightclubs. There are lots of them. They are all full. They're full of the same kind of people mostly. Some of them are so typically like they used to be—the upstairs bar at the Bristol, a little place called the Pipacs, and there's a place called the Budapest that used to be the Moulin Rouge before. These places have the conventional state girls in them, not very pretty, however. Drinks are very, very expensive and the customers in such a place as the Bristol bar are exactly as they used to be in 1948 and one realizes how little really communism has changed things. But I'll get back to that in a little bit.

I would like to point out that the first impression is false. After we had been there for about a week we were convinced that everything had been levelled down, ironed down, pressed down; that the colour was unrelievedly and unchangeably gray and that the whole spirit of the city had been flattened out. That isn't so. The first impression is erroneous and after you're around long enough to gain perspective and depth it becomes apparent that there is still enormous vitality in the people that live in Budapest. If you take the trouble to go around remote parts of the city at night, somehow life hasn't changed so much. It changed much more in the so-called Western part of Budapest where the great restaurants, hotels, cafes, used to be than it has in the rest of the city. This is so much so that we were convinced after a couple of weeks there, and this requires much more explaining than I have time to go into, but the kind of hold that communism has on this country, at least in so far as is exhibited in the capital, is more superficial than not. One Hungarian put it to me this way. "Just give us one year under the kind of conditions that the Austrians have and you'd see what we'd do, we'd make the Austrians look silly." People don't talk that much about change, as a matter of fact they don't talk very much about anything of the kind of thing that you and I would expect them to talk about. They are rather, well, I'll get into it another way. I'll lead into it through some notes that I have here about Rákosi.[3] Because it's all part of the piece. Rákosi of course is the key to change in Hungary and everyone calculates that if he goes there may be some change and if he stays there will be none at all. During the rather critical two weeks, it was critical because so much was happening in that regard, there were bets going on around town. It was talked about openly among the diplomatic people and the Hungarians had begun to talk about it, about the chances for staying. This was right after Chervenkov[4] had gone and the changes had begun to accelerate in Poland and the big question was about whether Rákosi could stay on. Now the informed diplomatic opinion is that while they

thought previously that he might have a 50-50 chance of staying around, this is moved up so that he almost certainly will remain permanently now. This has got to do mostly with the fact that there is almost no possible successor, Nagy[5] is apparently out. He is a sick man, the mistakes made under his new course were so great, the deterioration so rapid and so much out of control that the Russians, as well as the local communists, are appalled at the prospect of reverting to anything like that. He is a negative factor in Hungarian politics and everyone apparently agrees that he has no chance whatever to make a comeback. [...]

There was a considerable story about ten days previous to that at which the writers' federation had had a meeting. That was about the third meeting in a row for a period of months[6] in which the communists were going to reorganize them to stop all this nonsense of a revolt. At this meeting they sent the deputy editor of *Szabad Nép,*[7] a well-known woman communist,[8] and they sent the editor of *Szabad Nép*[9] as well and they tried to nominate a candidate[10] who was believed to be a place agent and the writers all got up and asked him if he was a writer, what did he write. He had written nothing and eventually a man was elected[11] to this job who is rather well agreed to be a friend of the West and a strong individual, so much so that we were cautioned not to mention this in our dispatches because it would weaken his position. So you should probably bear that in mind accordingly. I would like to say that this is interpolation of opinion, combined with experience in regard to de-Stalinization of Hungary and the lifting of the Iron Curtain. We heard in Budapest from several communist sources that the mines are being removed and that the barbed wire was going to be lifted and we didn't believe it. We got back to Vienna and the story broke there a couple of days afterward. I offer this as an idea, there has been less de-Stalinization, fewer concessions to it in Hungary, than in any other satellite[12] almost altogether because of Rákosi, the strongest Stalinist left. We were convinced that this ordering of the curtain lifted is obviously something he had to do in spite of himself, that the Russians have ordered that this be done as Hungary's great and obvious gesture in the direction of de-Stalinization. We think in Vienna that it's real and that the Hungarians actually intend to do this.[13] We discount the idea that they might move the curtain further back later to a hundred yards or five miles from where it is now. It would be too expensive and it wouldn't do any good because after a few dozen people got out the story would be told everywhere, the loss of face would be considerable and it isn't the way things are being done with a guy like Rákosi running things in Hungary. I talked with an extremely well-[informed] Hungarian who used to be a professional in politics, he was probably the most objective man that I talked to there, American, Hungarian or otherwise, despite the fact that he has been a factory worker for the last five years. He was very straight, very clear and very outspoken in the things that he told me. He wanted it emphasized very strongly that Hungarians were bored

with almost all forms of public affairs. They were completely and utterly bored with propaganda of any kind. They were even bored to the extent where the whole impact of the changes in the satellites and the de-Stalinization changes in Russia and the great new contacts that Russia has had with the West. They are not talked about by workers at the bench, by workers at lunch hours, by workers when they return home. Now, the reason for this, and [he] wanted me to be very sure to absorb this, that these are not things that affect [them]. The only two things that my friend felt that Hungarians want to hear about is: is whatever they are going to hear going to change the living standard and is it going to get rid of the Russians, who are the key to the Russian system that they have to work under. He said that neither of these things could happen; that the living standards cannot be changed, the Russians cannot be gotten rid of so long as the Red Army remains in Hungary and the Russian system remains. Now this perhaps is the biggest curtain that you people are fighting to get through in terms of whatever your method is simply because, and I am convinced more or less that my friend was right, people have set up an automatic barrier to hearing almost anything except insofar as it effects those two key things. Now, incidentally it ought to be observed just about here that this whole idea about how the Americans are going to rescue the Hungarians inevitably, which has produced more legends in Hungary than anything else since the war, is pretty much dead. The typical joke about this used to be that an American soldier was mobbed and killed at the West station because he came along and anybody who has been in Hungary since 1945 knows that every week produces a new rumour which people accepted to be a fact that the Americans were coming in some form next month. Now this is practically gone altogether, it's not talked about much any more, there are still a few echoes of it in the form of a rumour on Mayday that everybody was going to get a permit to leave Hungary if he wanted to. But you see already it's less than it used to be. Now there is no public opinion as such in Hungary, according to this friend and many other people I talked to. The Party press is universally unread and ignored except for the sports news. The leaders in *Szabad Nép* and the other cheap papers are read apparently almost only by the people who write them and the people who monitor them. Almost nobody even makes a pretence of going through this material and one person emphasized to me that it was a mistake to debate these things in specifics simply because that goes into a vacuum, people have no interest or contact with this kind of thing in their daily life. He felt that the biggest form of public opinion there was or, let's say that it's formed almost exclusively by foreign radio. Now I talked to many informants about foreign radio, they have different feelings about it. This particular man whom I told you about felt that RFE[14] was more popular than the Voice,[15] but he felt that its biggest fault was that it's "unreal." He felt that the general tone of unreality about RFE was so great that even genuine friends of Western radio talked about it openly and regretted it. Now, he gave me some

specifics which I will repeat and please understand that I'm not debating them or urging them or stating them, I'm passing them on because I think they're important for you to have in the form in which he gave them. [...]

With regard to RFE: don't excite the Hungarians when it won't serve any practical purpose. This has been done too often. Don't provoke the Hungarians to sabotage or even openly to pasive resistance. He felt that the Hungarians, by their own spirit, will enter into passive resistance without being told. As a matter of fact they would be more probable to do it without being told because if they are urged to do it they feel that they are being patronized. The people who are telling them to do this are in a perfectly safe position and they resent it.

Question: Did he give any example of what he thought RFE had done along these lines?

No, there is a certain apathy that it's hard to stir people out of when you try to get down to specifics. We lean on it keenly and we remember things out of programs because it's business, but people there in general don't. I got a few specifics on programs but not very much, they don't remember them, they have very general ideas. And he said also don't make them look small. This in the end makes any foreign radio that did it look small. He pointed out that there were a million and a half Hungarians who had been in Russian prisons or in Russia for Army service and they knew Russia perfectly well. They knew what bad conditions there were without being told, they also knew how effective and how powerful the Russians were at any time or place that they decided to be and they were not impressed by suggestions on the Western Radio, they were mostly unimpressed, that the Russians are weak. Don't, he said, tell them that the Russians can be defeated by a short war or by a couple of H-bombs. He did not mean "tell", he meant to suggest because he felt that this was the same kind of mistake. This is not being done. The presentations we are getting now are too abstract, too academic and too much in the department of fuller explanation. He listed here a few things that people want. That they aren't getting. First of all, of course, and everyone agrees about this, they want news. He felt that RFE news was directed and whether it is or not isn't important so long as listeners such as he think that it is. He felt that it ought to be more objective. BBC was still way ahead in the department of presenting objective news and it still has the highest credence of any foreign radio. Now, he felt that they ought to give more in the way of entertainment. [...]

He thinks that foreign radio is very important in this respect and that's why he took the trouble to talk to me about this in some detail. Now he says that in his opinion the Americans have got to change their propaganda and produce something like this order of priority. And you'll find a curious similarity between this and the list I already gave you. He says first comes objective news, second more knowledge on technical problems such as agriculture and science, and third, more emphasis on the western side of cultural affairs—that's very vague

but I just offer it. And he says you can scarcely speak of "liberation" at all. Nobody wants to hear it, it's a negative word, it's pretty badly corrupted and it goes back to Dulles[16] and at this point apparently the Hungarians—I was told by another man that the Hungarians were convinced that Dulles had established a special division in the State Department in charge of liberalizing Eastern Europe and that they weren't doing anything. They blame the Americans for not having done anything and it's such a negative element that this man, the diplomat, and a lot of other people, felt that it was a bad mistake to bring it up at all. He felt that to go on [about] anti-Stalinist tendencies was the main problem today on radio or otherwise. And several of the diplomats, incidentally, in Budapest, felt very strongly about that. They felt that the big problem was to switch Hungary and the line with what is going on in Poland for instance and that the only way you could do it would be by weakening Rákosi.

I was informed incidentally that the Yugoslav frontier with Hungary is completely normalized, there are only the conventional frontier sentry-posts there. There are no troops, it's no longer a military area. Since the last three months, anybody who has a job in that area doesn't need a permit to either go there or to move right up to the frontier. There are no longer troops or fortifications there. The normalization between Yugoslavia and Hungary is proceeding in other directions as well.[17] There are arrangements being made now for several thousands of Hungarian tourists to go to Yugoslavia this summer. Some three hundred private Hungarians went last year so it gives you an idea of the difference. [...]

There are two names as possible successors to Rákosi, the ambassador to Moscow Münnich,[18] and another was Kádár[19]. Both of those should not be discounted because they might very well move up to the top.

Question: What about the situation in the Communist Party? Is the split which is being talked about in existence and is it so active as the news indicates?

This was talked about but it's a subject that I didn't pursue at very great length. It was talked about with regard to Rákosi's unpopularity and the fact that he was much too closely associated with repression to please a lot of people in the Party and that there were a lot of people who wanted to get rid of him. It wasn't discussed in terms of personalities. I don't think that there's any question of a split in the Party where there might be an organized faction building up against Rákosi, it hasn't reached anything like that.

July 5, 1956

Intellectual Revolt in Hungary and Petőfi Circle Discussion

I was in Budapest for seventeen days. The last time I was there the diplomatic people were debating openly whether Rákosi would last; the odds were that he would remain. This visit I found that the political situation had changed considerably. Hungarians were debating openly about Rákosi, and it wasn't even so much of a debate. They were all saying that Rákosi had to go, that this was the minimum of what the people would stand for; and this was the sort of talk that you heard from mechanics in garages and middle-class people and hotel porters—anybody whom you could manage to take aside and to talk to for a bit. This doesn't at all mean that Rákosi is going. The best guess in Budapest is that unless Tito, in his last visit to Moscow, has absolutely insisted that Rákosi has to go, he will remain. A diplomat who is close to the communists, who has their confidence, told me that the Russians were quite satisfied with Rákosi's new line, that he was not going so far as they were going in Poland, but that he was still doing enough so that he couldn't be accused of doing nothing. Rákosi, as far as the Russians are concerned, is relieved, he is loyal, he is able. In short, from the Russian viewpoint, it is pretty generally agreed that he is indispensable.[20]

When I left Budapest Rákosi was in Moscow. He was noticed first to be out of the city when he was not present at the departure of the North Korean delegation about ten days ago. There were a lot of rumours about why he was in Moscow, but the best probably was that he had gone there to get some kind of instructions about what should be done in Hungary further in connection with the "New Course".

But, of course, the events that started in Moscow with the de-Stalinization program have more than ever begun to have some kind of influence in Hungary now, and they are travelling at a pace where the results cannot be predicted. Of course, they found their climax in the meeting at the Petőfi Club[21] the night of June 27th.[22] The accounts that I have read in the Western press, in the German and English press, seem to be rather to distort the actual events and their meaning. It so happened that the Central Committee's scolding of the people for having gone too far in this meeting,[23] which was published on Sunday morning, was made the subject of the first AP and UP dispatch that has come out of Budapest in many months. Mrs Ilona Marton, whose husband Andrew was still in jail, and who was released some weeks ago,[24] was re-accredited as the American news agencies' correspondent on Saturday night, wrote her first story about this on Sunday, which means, incidentally, that one should pay rather more attention to the American press agency dispatches that come out of Budapest because

Mrs Marton is an extremely competent reporter. However, she was limited in what she could say; and the other dispatches which covered the events at the Petőfi Club meeting more or less attempted to put them into some kind of context in connection with what happened at Poznan. I think that is incorrect mostly because the Hungarian events never went that far. They were an open manifestation against the regime, and a much more violent one than anything that has been seen in Hungary so far; but so far as the Party scolding of the people for having gone too far, it's rather doubtful that it might even have been issued had it not been for Poznan, which gave the regime an easy out and a wonderful opportunity to tie a moral onto a tale that otherwise might not have had such a large one.

The Petőfi meeting was staged, of course, by the regime. It was one of a series of meetings that have been held to rebroaden the base of the Communist Party support. I learned upon arriving here, talking with some of your colleagues, that the rest of these meetings have been almost entirely unreported here. Now, the last meeting that preceded this had gotten some attention in the press; and some of the reports tied it in with the Petőfi meeting, but it was separate. That was the event in the Petőfi Club on June 19th,[25] at which the people assembled there were addressed by Mrs Rajk.[26]

This was a meeting of so-called partisans, former underground workers, so-called "Freedom Fighters" and in general former illegal communists, some of whom had been purged from the Party and were now invited individually to be at this meeting. Mrs Rajk requested permission to speak and was given it. She made a very bitter speech. She remarked that she did not want to be made a hero over what had happened to her husband. She only wanted that the people who had murdered him should be pushed out of office. She said that the prisons in communist Hungary were a disgrace to a people's democratic country, that prison conditions under the Horthy regime were much better. During the time that she was in jail herself, she was permitted neither visitors nor packages nor mail. She was completely isolated for some years from her newly-born child, and she thought that these conditions were a disgrace and ought to be changed. When she finished her talk, she was given a standing ovation by the audience, which applauded her roundly. There were about 2,000 people in the audience, about one third of them army officers.

She was followed by a young lady who requested permission to speak, a faculty assistant in the University of Budapest in the Philosophy Faculty.[27] This also was an impromptu speech. The young lady remarked that the people in the regime had lost touch with the rank-and-file of the Party and with the common people altogether. They bought their clothes and their food out of special commissaries in Budapest, they lived in five-room villas in Buda, they had forgotten that most people were crowded one family to a room and that a lot of people in Budapest did not have enough to eat, that there absolutely had to be a change in

Party leadership. The person who gave me the account of the young lady's speech told me that she had not been arrested yet.

That was the setting for the Petőfi Club meeting. The word about Mrs Rajk speaking her mind spread around the town. It was the strongest attack that had been made on the regime by anyone of prominence to date, and everybody in Budapest talked about it. And, of course, when another meeting was set for the Petőfi Club it was pretty well acknowledged that a lot of people were going to crowd in and blow their tops, if they could possibly get an opportunity to do so. That was why, when the next Petőfi Club meeting assembled on June 27th, there had been a crowd waiting since 4.30 in the afternoon.

Just a word about the Petőfi Club. It is made up of a group of intellectuals who are not particularly well known. The club itself is obviously a regime device to hold such "free expression" meetings. It has had no standing whatsoever in the past. It is formally attached to the DISZ, which is the workers' youth federation, but this seems to be only a kind of holding-company device. In fact, the Petőfi Club is whatever the people on the top, the people who pull the strings, decide that it shall be on any night of the week.[28] This particular meeting had been called for the purpose of rehabilitating several hundred so-called bourgeois newspapermen who had lost their jobs as the result of various Stalinist decrees during the last years and whom it was desired to draw back into the fold.

The meeting was scheduled to be addressed by Márton Horváth, the editor of *Szabad Nép*; and two other communist newspapermen were going to act as chairmen. The Petőfi Club has been meeting in a small theatre on the Váci utca, which has about 800 seats. The meeting was scheduled to get underway at seven o'clock. In fact, the house was full at 4:30; and the crowd continued to arrive in such numbers that the ushers, who had been demanding tickets (all entries were on the basis of invitation), finally shrugged their shoulders and let anybody come in who wanted to. Soon people began to sit in the aisles, anywhere that there was space. The hallway was crowded to such an extent that Horváth himself, who arrived late, was almost unable to get into the building.

It was finally decided to get the meeting underway a bit early, at about 6:30. Horváth made a short, nervous, introductory speech. He said that this meeting was called for the purpose of self-criticism, which he was going to indulge in, and criticism by anyone else who wanted to make it, so that the Party could be examined by writers and newspapermen in the light of 20th Congress decisions. The meeting went on after that without interruption until 3:30 in the morning. It was one of the hottest days of the year, of course the air inside was absolutely humid, and by universal consent it was agreed that there would be no smoking. There was also no eating or drinking. Nobody left the room for nine hours until the meeting broke up.

The meeting was quite orderly at first. People began to make speeches and were applauded by the audience. Later on things got out of control, but during

those nine hours Hungarians, for what may well be the first time since the beginning of communism, really were able to say what they pleased. And hearing others say it, they took courage so that in the end almost everybody had his say. I found that almost none of the newspaper accounts commented in detail upon exactly what some of the people in the audience who got up and made speeches said. Now, the opening speech was made by Tibor Déry, who is a well-known novelist. He is a member of the Party and was an illegal communist during the Horthy days. Although he is a member of the Party, he has not always gotten along with it; and as recently as a year ago, a novel that he had published was condemned by the Party because it presented a too-sympathetic portrait of a bourgeois professor.[29] Déry got up and began his speech by commenting that a lot had been heard about the effective censorship of literature in the most general way and that he thought it was about time that "we got down to specifics. Specifically, Márton Horváth here, the editor of *Szabad Nép.* He doesn't stand for himself at all, and sometimes it's hard to tell whether he even stands for the Party. On one day he's extreme right and other days extreme left, and one never knows where he stands."[30] Then he moved on to the case of József Révai,[31] the former Minister of Culture. Révai, he said, is like a Jewish talmudist; he knows what he says isn't the truth, but he goes ahead saying it anyhow.[32] And as for József Darvas,[33] the Minister of Culture, "He's afraid of himself. That's all there is to be said about him." And then he asked the rhetorical question, "What is the source of all our troubles?" And his answer was, "There is no freedom. I hope there shall be no more police terror. I am optimistic and I hope that we shall be able to get rid of our present leaders. Let us bear in mind that we are allowed to discuss these things only with permission from above. They believe that it's a good idea to let some steam off the over-heated boiler. We want deeds and we want the opportunity to make speeches. I do not entrust the future of literature to Márton Horváth. He is responsible for the distortion of literature in art." Then Déry remarked to the effect that "we've been fighting and struggling for so many things, but we've forgotten the chief thing, that is, humanism."

The next speech was by Tibor Méray,[34] the novelist who became a sort of pseudo-expert on germ warfare at the time of the Korean war. He reported the Korean war from Korea for the Hungarian press, and he provided a lot of testimony with regard to how the Americans were conducting bacteriological warfare in the Far East. He is a man of not very much stature, but considerable reputation; and he was quoted as saying, "We need a purifying stream from top to bottom and from bottom to top. This stream must not be rationed into a gentle breeze." Then he attacked Mihályfi,[35] the Deputy Minister of Culture, and said, "How is it that he's made a professor of journalism at the University? He's already got about ten jobs."

Alexander Fekete,[36] another journalist who had come in on the Moscow plane a few hours before, addressed the meeting, saying that he had spoken just a few

hours before leaving Moscow with the highest Yugoslav and Russian officials and members of the Party and that they had told him with regard to the cultural revolution in Budapest, that "If you want it, you journalists have got to build it yourselves."[37]

Then a young physicist named Jánossy[38] spoke. He used to be at Trinity College in Dublin, doing research on atomic physics. He returned to Budapest about 1949 to visit his mother and was kept there. He is now one of the regime's best physicists. He said, "The fact is, it's impossible to get information and mediocre journalists are bringing about nation-wide frauds. The Togliatti speech[39] was published only partly in Budapest and parts of it were left out. Only from the Western radio stations could we get the full text of Khrushchev's speech.[40] Western broadcasts are also being jammed. Western newspapers must be allowed to reach this country. Classes must be rehabilitated. The closed shops (meaning the AVH prisons) must be rehabilitated. This belongs to democracy."

György Nemes[41] remarked that cadre policy is bad and that bourgeois journalists were better educated than ours are now. People must not be judged by their background. Then Nemes listed the names of about fifty journalists who had been restricted or put in prison, and he closed by remarking that out of fifty-two journalists who worked for *Szabad Nép* in 1951 only six still had their jobs there.[42]

Probably the most direct attack on Rákosi was made by Péter Kuczka,[43] who, I was told, is a gifted young poet. Kuczka said, "A good journalist is not characterized by a car, a chauffeur and a special shop. He must write the truth. In our country, however, the truth must not contradict the Party line. In 1949 Rákosi said that Rajk was a Titoist, and in 1955 he said Rajk was a palace provocateur. This year he calls Rajk a comrade. The masses have lost confidence, not in the Party, but in its leaders. It should rather be a tragedy of one or two men than a whole nation. Truth can be spread where there is freedom. We demand a free press which is also guaranteed us by the Constitution.[44] What kind of press is it that attacks Imre Nagy in *Szabad Nép* and then doesn't give him space to defend himself in the same paper? There must also be rehabilitation of the press. How ridiculous was Rákosi's mocking remark on the British socialists, referring to the fact that our social democratic prisoners had been released two weeks before it appeared in our press. How could they have known about it if our press kept silent? It was the nationalization of the press that brought about the decline and present low level of the Hungarian press. We want the publication of the full text of the Khrushchev speech."[45]

These speeches proceeded one after another through the night, and when people heard them they took heart themselves; and the meeting got more and more disorderly. Pretty soon the people on the stage who were talking began to be talked back to by the audience. Trying to make sense out of what took place became very difficult. I managed to collect some exchanges that did take place, and they're rather remarkable. Horváth got up to defend the regime and was

shouted down three times. He remarked in reply, "Don't insult the Party." Someone got up and shouted, "We're the Party." Another time someone said, "Let's take Rajk's corpse out of the ditch and give him a funeral." And then somebody remarked, "How come we call this the Sándor Petőfi Club? Petőfi fought for freedom of the press." And then somebody jumped up and said, "Which we don't have." Then Horváth said, "That's right." And someone else said, "You're telling us that? You're the editor of *Szabad Nép*." And he shrugged his shoulders.[46]

So you see, the atmosphere inside was very infectious. Probably the greatest point of sedition from the government's point of view was when a bunch of people in the audience got up in applauding some speech and said, "Down with the regime! Long live Imre Nagy!"[47]

That's as far as they went. Of course, word had already gotten around Budapest that night; two hours after the meeting started the Váci utca was blocked with crowds of people, several thousand in the street. Upon someone's order, loudspeakers were strung up so that the people in the street heard all of this commotion as well. The next day there was an atmosphere in Budapest that had not been felt there for a long time. The events of the night before had in a way electrified the town, and people were talking of nothing else. A lot of people said this was the second Hungarian revolution, that this was the way things were going to be from now on. Other people who were a little more cautious said that for the first time people had spoken up, and as yet, a day or two later at least, they weren't in jail for it. [...]

MTI Photo Archive

A Petőfi Circle discussion. Tibor Tardos, the writer, interjects.

When I talked to various cultivated and intelligent people about Western radio, they pleaded over and over again for objectivity. They said they did not want pessimism and they did not want optimism. They could get along well without both. They wanted objective reports. Also, they deplored what they called the "emigration tone" of Radio Free Europe. They said, concerning the people who write the programmes, "One feels the emigration from them. One feels as if perhaps they have their bags packed and are waiting longingly to go back to Budapest. We in Budapest feel differently because we know this thing is going to last awhile, that it is here more or less to stay and that nothing is going to

change it very easily. In the meantime, this tone, although it might change suddenly and probably will change, irritates us when we know that it is not so." As a matter of fact, on this visit it seemed to me more than ever that the Hungarians regard communism as a peculiar kind of, I suppose one can say, temporary irritation that is lasting too many years. They feel that if they just continue going on, it may eventually disappear. [...]

I would like to mention a word about Archbishop Grősz.[48] There was considerable surprise at his rehabilitation. It was regarded as the triumph and vindication of the late Archbishop Czapik's[49] policy of conciliation with the communists. It was felt that Grősz must have realized that he simply could not go on championing Mindszenty[50] forever and that if the rest of the bishops followed him, sooner or later they would all be in jail. It is felt now that Czapik's policy of conciliation with the regime's demands has paid off. Also, that the restoration of Grősz to his rights and to his position as head of the Bench was a considerable gesture of pacification in the direction of the Vatican. It is also noted that the Vatican has been very conciliatory with regard to tolerating Grősz's lip-service to the Peace Movement.

A word about two other personalities. First of all, Imre Nagy. He had his sixtieth birthday party two weeks ago,[51] and it turned into a remarkable demonstration of confidence from a lot of unexpected quarters. First of all, Mr Suslov was in town from Moscow and made an unexpected call on Nagy that afternoon to pay his respects to him.[52] Secondly, almost every writer of eminence in the country was there. One of them, in the presence of the others, paid a tribute to Mr Nagy. The writers also told him that collectively they felt a very great debt to him because it was he who, by standing up to Rákosi in 1952[53] and 1953, particularly after he was dismissed, had given them an inspiration for the Writers' Revolt. They felt, in fact, that his courage was greater than Tito's standing up to Stalin since he was within Rákosi's reach. The birthday party was also attended by such independents as Iván Boldizsár,[54] Péter Veres[55] and Zoltán Kodály.[56]

Another word about Mihály Farkas.[57] I was told by a diplomat who is close to the Hungarian communists that in all probability it is he who is being prepared for the role of complete scapegoat in connection with de-Stalinization. It is pretty generally felt that the explanations given by Rákosi so far are incomplete, that unfortunately Gábor Péter[58] was arrested too soon to be blamed entirely, and that the Beria[59] explanation is not satisfactory at all. So the whole question of guilt has to be enlarged upon. It is not anticipated, however, that there will be a trial. It is quite likely that it will be done within the framework of Party punishment, but the device will probably be used to enlarge the responsibility for Stalinism. This diplomat pointed out that during the period in question Farkas had responsibility in the Politburo for the AVO, and it is noticeable now that Rákosi's reports constantly stress the abuses that took place in connection with illegal practices. ❧

(To be continued)

NOTES

1 ■ The square now bears the name of Mihály Vörösmarty, the 19th century poet.

2 ■ Financial and commercial discussions between Great Britain and Hungary started in 1953. They resulted in a trade agreement in June 1956. The presence and interest of British businessmen was no doubt connected with the expected result of the discussions.

3 ■ Mátyás Rákosi (1892–1971). Epitomizes Stalinism in Hungary. The No. 1 leader of the Communist Party betwen 1944 and July 1956, when he was forced to retire and go into exile in the Soviet Union where he lived for the rest of his life.

4 ■ Vlko Chervenkov (1900– ?). General Secretary of the Communist Party of Bulgaria between 1950 and 1954. In 1950 he was also appointed Prime Minister. In 1956 he was also relieved of the post of Prime Minister.

5 ■ Imre Nagy (1896–1958). Communist politician, Prime Minister between 1953 and 1955 and after October 24th 1956. Sentenced to death, and executed in June 1958.

6 ■ Members of the Writers' Federation met on March 30th, April 13th, 16th and 18th.

7 ■ *Szabad Nép* was the Party daily.

8 ■ Erzsébet Andics, who took part in the meeting of the Writers' Federation, was not Deputy Editor of *Szabad Nép*, but the head of the Science and Culture Section of the Communist Party headquarters.

9 ■ Márton Horváth.

10 ■ Party HQ nominated Tibor Csabai, an apparatchnik, to be Party secretary at the Writers' Federation. Determined resistance by the writers, however, aborted this move to strengthen Party control.

11 ■ Communist Party members of the Writers' Federation elected Mihály Gergely and not Csabai.

12 ■ This judgement did not accord with the facts. Pace Rákosi's huffing and puffing, the communist regime in Hungary was forced to make a number of concessions by May 1956. The general state of things was better only in Poland.

13 ■ On the Austro-Hungarian border they started on removing security devices on May 10th 1956 and finished the job in September.

14 ■ Radio Free Europe.

15 ■ Voice of America.

16 ■ John Foster Dulles (1888–1959). Secretary of State between 1953 and 1959.

17 ■ In May 1956 Hungary and Yugoslavia concluded a trade agreement involving the paying of $85 million as reparations by Hungary. Political issues were discussed in Belgrade between October 15th and 23rd by a Hungarian Party and Government delegation.

18 ■ Ferenc Münnich (1886–1967). Between 1954 and July 1956 ambassador in Moscow, from August to October 25th minister, then ambassador in Belgrade. After November 4th 1956 Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Armed Forces in the Szolnok Kádár Government. Prime Minister between 1958 and 1961.

19 ■ János Kádár (1912–1989). First and then General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party between 1956 and 1988; between Nov. 4th 1956 and 1958, and between 1961 and 1965 also Prime Minister.

20 ■ Suslov, a member of the Soviet Presidium, was in Hungary between June 8th and 14th and confirmed Rákosi in his position. A month later, however, the Soviets decided to get rid of Rákosi. Mikoyan came to Budapest on July 17th to tell the Hungarians.

21 ■ Petőfi Circle. A discussion group established by the communist youth movement in 1955. Came under the influence of the inner Party opposition, particularly after the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. Arranged numerous meetings in 1956 where the issues of the day were discussed.

22 ■ A reference to the June 27th 1956 discussion at the Petőfi Circle on the subject of the press and information.

23 ■ On October 30th the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Workers' Party condemned anti-Party manifestations by the Petőfi Circle, which, in practice, meant a suspension of its operations.

24 ■ Endre Marton and his wife, née Ilona Nyilsi, the UPI and AP stringers in Hungary, were arrested in November 1954 and charged with treason. As a result of the thaw, which was given an extra impetus by the 20th Congress of

the CP of the SU, they were both released in the summer of 1956.

25 ■ The so called Partisan meeting of the Petőfi Circle, held on June 18th 1956.

26 ■ Júlia Rajk (1914–1981). Rajk's wife, arrested in 1949 at the same time as her husband and sentenced to five years imprisonment. Rehabilitated in 1954, and after that one of Imre Nagy's associates. As such deported to Romania.

27 ■ The contribution to the discussion here mentioned could not be identified since there are large gaps in the surviving minutes. See: *A Petőfi Kör vitái hiteles jegyzőkönyvek alapján* (Authentic Minutes of Petőfi Circle Discussions) .ed. András B. Hegedüs and János M. Rainer. Múzsák-1956 Institute. Budapest 1991

28 ■ At first the Party leadership endeavoured to keep the Petőfi Circle under control, but by June 1956 it had fully come under the influence of the inner Party opposition and a platform for a growingly radical criticism.

29 ■ A reference to the discussion of Tibor Déry's novel *Felelet* (The Answer).

30 ■ What is printed in quotes here and below only reproduces the substance of what was said and is not a word for word citation.

31 ■ József Révai (1898–1959). Chief ideologist of the Communist Party, Minister of Popular Education between 1949 and 1953.

32 ■ There is no trace in the minutes of this judgement supposedly expressed by Déry in his criticism of Révai.

33 ■ József Darvas (1912–1973). One of the populist writers, a noted fellow traveller after 1945, Minister of Culture between 1953 and 1956.

34 ■ Tibor Méray (1924–). A prominent young Communist journalist after 1945. The story of alleged American bacteriological warfare in Korea is linked to his name. Following 1954 a member of the opposition centred on Imre Nagy. Edited *Irodalmi Újság* in the West after 1956.

35 ■ Ernő Mihályfi (1898–1972). Journalist, member of the Smallholders Party, Deputy Minister of Culture in 1956. It was in fact György Nemes and not Méray who referred to Mihályfi.

36 ■ Sándor Fekete (1927–). On the staff of the Party daily *Szabad Nép* between 1951 and 1956. Sentenced to nine years imprisonment in 1959 because of his role in the Revolution and because of a polemical writing signed Hungaricus which he published in the West. Released in 1963.

37 ■ There is no trace in the minutes of this observation. Fekete stressed that the reform process in the Soviet Union could not be stopped and also that the Yugoslav leaders unambiguously supported the anti-Stalinists in Hungary. But he insisted that reformers in Hungary would themselves have to fight and could not merely rely on support from abroad.

38 ■ Lajos Jánossy (1912–1978) Physicist, Member of the Academy, György Lukács's adopted son. Before 1950 he lived in Germany, England and Ireland, returning to Hungary in 1950. Headed the Central Institute of Physics between 1956 and 1970.

39 ■ *Szabad Nép* on June 22nd 1956 only published an abridged version of the interview which Palmiro Togliatti, the Italian communist leader, gave to *Nuovi Argumenti*. There was considerable outrage at this. It was not Jánossy, but Gábor Mocsár, who followed him, who referred to Togliatti, as did a number of people who spoke later.

40 ■ The reference is to Khrushchev's address to a closed session of the 20th CP SU Congress. The minutes of the discussion do not include this observation either in Jánossy's or in Gábor Mocsár's contribution. The latter, of course, was speaking in general terms about the popularity in Hungary of western broadcasts.

41 ■ György Nemes (1910–). The editor of the journal *Béke és Szabadság* in 1955 and 1956.

42 ■ According to the minutes, Nemes's subject was that of fifty-seven journalists on the staff of *Szabad Nép* in 1949, only nine still worked for the paper in 1956.

43 ■ Péter Kuczka (1923–). Poet and translator, on the staff of *Irodalmi Újság* between 1950 and 1952, after 1953 active amongst the opposition intellectuals centred on Imre Nagy, and a member of the executive of the Petőfi Circle.

44 ■ These declarations attributed to Kuczka were spoken by Tibor Méray.

45 ■ These declarations attributed to Kuczka were spoken by Géza Losonczy.

46 ■ There is no trace of the verbal exchange here described in Márton Horváth's speech,

which was in fact very self-critical as well as being frequently interrupted.

47 ■ The minutes do show that Imre Nagy was cheered and that they demanded that the Communist Party readmit him, but there is no trace of interjections explicitly hostile to the regime.

48 ■ József Grősz (1887–1961). Archbishop of Kalocsa after 1945. He signed the agreement between the Catholic Church and the State in 1950. In 1951 he was arraigned on trumped-up charges and sentenced to imprisonment, on May 12th 1956 he was released and became Chairman of the Bench of Bishops.

49 ■ Gyula Czapik (1887–1956). Archbishop of Eger. Chairman of the Bench of Bbishops after 1951, died in April 1956.

50 ■ József Mindszenty (1892–1975). Prince Primate of Hungary, Cardinal Archbishop of Esztergom after 1945, as such head of the Roman Catholic Church in the country. Arrested in December 1948 on trumped-up charges, and given a life sentence in 1949. Freed on October 31st. Took refuge in the American legation, where he stayed until 1971 when arrangements were made for him to leave the country.

51 ■ More than sixty public faces, including two members of the central leadership, were present at Imre Nagy's birthday celebrations, held in his home in Orsó utca on June 6th 1956.

52 ■ Suslov stayed in Hungary between June 8th and 14th 1956, at the time also engaging in discussions with Imre Nagy.

53 ■ The date (1952) is mistaken. Albeit there were earlier antecedents in 1949, Imre Nagy's political battle with Rákosi started in July 1953 when Nagy was appointed Prime Minister.

54 ■ Iván Boldizsár (1912–1988). At one time editor of *Új Magyarország,* a weekly. Deputy Foreign Minister between 1947 and 1951 as the nominee of the National Peasant Party. Associated with the Imre Nagy group betwen 1953 and 1956. Held high offices in Hungarian and International PEN. Founded *The New Hungarian Quarterly* in 1960 and edited it up to his death in 1988.

55 ■ Péter Veres (1897–1970). A peasant writer. After 1945, President of the National Peasant Party, from 1954 to 1956 President of the Writers' Federation.

56 ■ Zoltán Kodály (1882–1967). In November 1956, the composer was the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of Hungarian Intellectuals.

57 ■ Mihály Farkas (1904–1965). A member of the top Party leadership after 1945, Minister of Defence 1948–1951, expelled by the CP in the summer of 1956, later arrested, and sentenced to sixteen years imprisonment in 1957. He was released in 1960. On his role in the Rajk trial see an article by Tibor Hajdu, together with a transcript of an interrogation of Rajk concluded by Farkas, in *The HQ* No. 141, pp. 83–99.

58 ■ Gábor Péter (1906–1994). Headed the political police (ÁVO=State Security Organization, later ÁVH=State Security Authority) between 1945 and 1953. Arrested in 1953, given a life sentence in 1954, which was reduced to sixteen years imprisonment in a new trial held in 1957. Released in 1960. See *The HQ* 141, pp. 83–99.

59 ■ Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria (1899–1953). Headed Soviet State Security after 1938.

János M. Rainer

The Road to Budapest, 1956

New Documentation on the Kremlin's Decision to Intervene

Part One

Some Soviet documents relating to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution were handed over by President Yeltsin on his visit to Hungary in the Autumn of 1992. As a consequence, the chronology of events has become clearer, and an insight into the kind of information the masters of the Kremlin had based their decisions on is now possible.[1] However, one crucial link was still missing: no evidence was available on the discussions and debates in which the decisions were conceived.

The documents providing an answer to at least the majority of these questions are quite unparallelled of their kind. In the 1950s and 1960s, full minutes were not taken of the sessions of the Soviet Presidium. The head of the General Department of the Central Committee, Vladimir Nikiforovich Malin, however, was present at the discussions, and as a kind of aid to the formulation of decisions, he recorded who was present and made sketchy notes of what was being said. Through the efforts of Russian researchers, mainly of Vyacheslav Sereda, eighteen of these notes, including all those about discussions on the agenda concerning Hungary between 23 October and 4 November 1956, have been found in the Presidential Archives of the Russian Federation. The notes, in pencil and never actually used after the recording of the decisions, are fragmentary, making the work of the editors something of puzzle-solving. These rough notes nevertheless cast light on some major issues which were, up to now, pure guesswork for historians and laymen alike. Drawing amply on them, I shall concentrate only on a few of the crucial elements concerning the history of the Hungarian Revolution.[2]

The events of spring 1956 in Eastern Europe thoroughly upset the policies of the Soviet Union *vis à vis* its satellites. Well before the 20th Party congress, there were marked signs that those policies were changing. From 1953 on, Stalin's successors were making efforts to "consolidate" or stabilize the internal political situation in those satellite countries which had been pushing forward too eagerly in building a Soviet-type society (mainly in the GDR and

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Hungary at the start); they were also trying to end the conflict with Yugoslavia. A policy of small steps and caution prevailed. They were weary of the inevitable disturbances and incalculable consequences that came in the wake of the changes.[3] From 1953 on, but even more following the 20th Congress, the Soviet leadership took great pains to promote the country's image. That attempt, alongside constant efforts to give evidence of peaceful intentions and tolerant, reasonable policies, was also manifest in the handling of the satellite countries. Moscow tried to avoid open and brutal intervention, made efforts to become "attractive", a kind of wise old patriarch whose authority came from the well deserved (and obligatory) respect due to the most experienced and much-suffered member of the family, one reasonable enough to learn from his own mistakes, rather than one taking a stick to children regularly.

In the spring of 1956 the Presidium of the Soviet Party was confronted with a dilemma. The question was, in fact, twofold: what to do about the East European freedom movements unfolding in various areas and in various ways, and in what manner to react if a reaction were needed. Should the new style in foreign policy continue, which was still just taking shape, or should there be a resort to the old means which, in fact, were entirely new, since after 1945 Stalin never had to dispatch the Red Army anywhere in a similar situation.

The handling of the succession crises in Hungary in July 1956, and even more so in Poland in October of the same year, pinpointed the dilemmas of Soviet foreign policy, and brought out the divisions within the top Soviet leadership. It also became clear that unexpected, or seemingly unexpected events were bound to create confusion within the Soviet leadership. Since, however, there was no danger of a military sort, the Presidium—not without disagreements— preferred a political solution even in the case of Poland.[4]

Up to now, most information on the circumstances of the Russian intervention on October 23 was provided by Khrushchev's report of October 24. He had actually meant to invite the Hungarian First Secretary to Moscow when the latter told him over the telephone that "the situation in Budapest was serious, so he had rather not go to Moscow at this time. As soon as the conversation was over, Comrade Zhukov informed Comrade Khrushchev that Gerő had asked the military attaché of the Soviet embassy in Budapest for the intervention of Soviet troops to halt demonstrations which were taking on unprecedented dimensions."[5] Thus, up to that point, according to Khrushchev, only two members of the Soviet leadership, he himself and the Minister of Defence, knew anything about the events in Budapest where, at that time, to their knowledge, only demonstrations were taking place. "The Presidium of the the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party did not approve the intervention," Khrushchev added next day, "because no request has come from leading Hungarian functionaries." In Malin's notes, however, there is no trace of such a decision. If what Khrushchev says was true, then he must have discussed the issue only with a few members of the Presidium personally or over the telephone. "Shortly afterwards I received a phone call from the Soviet embassy in Budapest that the situation was highly dangerous, and the intervention of Soviet units was necessary."[6] As opposed to this account (written a day later), Malin's notes read as follows:

"Note on the October 23 meeting

On the situation in Budapest and in the whole of Hungary.

(Comrades Zhukov, Bulganin and Khrushchev)[6a]

Report by Com. Zhukov

Hundred-thousand-strong demonstration in Budapest.

The Radio building on fire.

The headquarters of the county party committee building and the county chief department of the Ministry of the Interior occupied in Debrecen.

According to Com. Khrushchev *troops should move into Budapest.*

Com. Bulganin *agrees with Khrushchev's proposal— troops should move in.*

Com. Mikoyan: *Without Nagy, the movement cannot be controlled. In that way it will be cheaper for us, too.*

He has doubts about the use of troops. What can we lose? Let the Hungarians themselves do the job of restoring order. If our troops intervene, we will only make things worse for ourselves. Let us make an attempt at political action first, and have the troops move in only afterwards.

Com. Molotov: *By relying on Nagy, we will only undermine Hungary. Supports intervention.*

Com. Kaganovich: *The government is being overthrown. This cannot be compared to Poland. Supports intervention.*

Com. Pervukhin: *We must intervene.*

Com. Zhukov: *This is different from Poland. We must move in.*

A member of the Presidium of the CC should go there.

A state of emergency should be declared in the country. A curfew must be imposed.

Com. Suslov: *The situation is different from what happened in Poland. There must be intervention.*

Com. Saburov: *Intervention must be carried out in order to maintain order.*

Com. Kirichenko: *Supports intervention.*

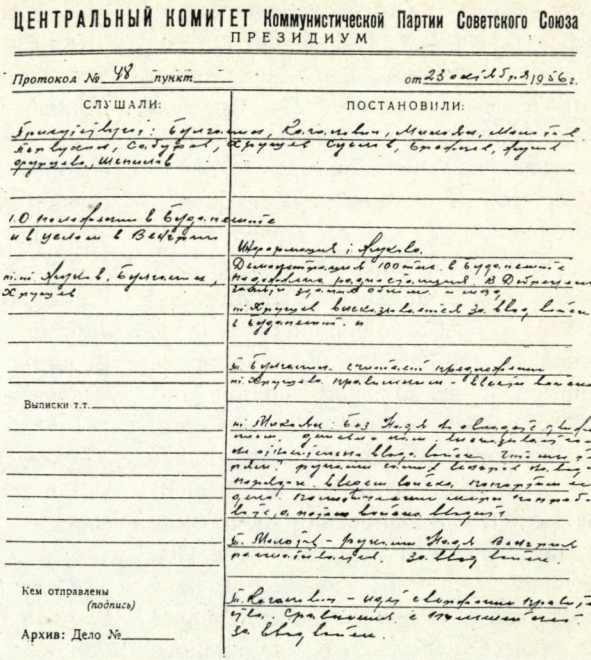
Coms Malinin and Serov should be sent to Budapest.

Com. Khrushchev: *Let us involve Nagy in political action. But for the time being, let us not make him Prime Minister. Let us have Comrades Mikoyan and Suslov fly to Budapest."* [6b]

The time of the formal collective decision may be roughly established from the three-line summary of Zhukov's report. The army had reported on what was happening in the provinces (Debrecen) as well as on the "hundred-thousand-strong" demonstration and on the Radio being on fire at the same time. In Budapest, between 8 and 9 o'clock p.m. local time, the ÁVH [State Security Authority] units defending the Radio headquarters made several attempts to clear the area of demonstrators and to prevent the invasion of the building by the crowd calling for their demands to be read over the Radio. They used a variety of means: warning shots, teargas and smoke grenades and, by 9 o'clock at the latest, targeted fire.[7] It must have been the spreading smoke of the grenades and vehicles set on fire by the crowd that made the Soviet informants believe the Radio building itself was on fire. The army's report must have found the Presidium in session.[8] It met at 11 p.m. Moscow time to discuss the Hungarian situation. Following Zhukov's report, Khrushchev at once proposed that "troops should move into Budapest". Khrushchev (and Zhukov) wasted not a single word on any request by the "Hungarian comrades", nor was that mentioned in the decision (which, characteristically, was never put into writing as a formal resolution). They considered that, among themselves, a mere formality that had little to do with the substance of the matter.

Anastas Mikoyan was regarded as the number one expert on Hungarian affairs by the others (he had been the most recent to visit the scene, and he had the best personal knowledge of Hungarian leaders. It was this personal element that was re-

garded as the most important by the entire Soviet leadership). He was the only one who attempted to put forward a proposal of his own. He suggested the "Polish scenario" with Moscow's assistance; he proposed the inclusion of Imre Nagy in the Hungarian leadership; he then continued to pursue this train of thought on a more general level: political rather than military moves should be made, and a restoration of order by force should be left to the Hungarian leadership (i.e. to Imre Nagy). He thought, probably on the basis of his experiences in Warsaw, that intervention could have far-reaching consequences; for instance, like Gomulka, some of the Hungarian party leadership might turn against the Soviet Union. The necessity for crushing the Budapest uprising was not doubted by him either but he hoped for a "cheaper" solution achieved by relying on the local forces, possibly on Imre Nagy.



ЦЕНТРАЛЬНЫЙ КОМИТЕТ Коммунистической Партии Советского Союза
ПРЕЗИДИУМ

Протокол № 48 пункт ___ от 23 октября 1956 г.

СЛУШАЛИ: | ПОСТАНОВИЛИ:

Выписки т.т. ___

Кем отправлены (подпись)

Архив: Дело № ___

First page of the notes taken at the October 23 session

That of Mikoyan's initiatives, however, failed: all the others supported the immediate sending in of troops. The hardliners speaking after him responded with a complete rejection of such a "liberal" point of view: Molotov was opposed to Imre Nagy playing a part, and Kaganovich rejected the Polish parallel. So did Marshal Zhukov who, however, was willing to accept a few elements of Mikoyan's proposals. He conceded, for instance, that political moves were needed too, but in his view, those had better be made under Soviet supervision (which was why he proposed that a member of the Presidium should travel to Budapest). The final word was left to Khrushchev who, like Zhukov, did not completely reject Mikoyan's argument, but "synthesized" it with his own proposal, which was accepted by all. He gave his approval to Imre Nagy's involvement in the "political action", but "for the time being" not as Prime Minister. He sent not one but two Presidium members to supervise the political solution: its proposer, the "liberal" Mikoyan together with Suslov, an ally of the hardliners. The entire meeting is unlikely to have lasted for more than half an hour, and when it was over (or perhaps while it was still in process), the Task Force stationed in Székesfehérvár received orders from Moscow to occupy Budapest.[9]

"The Presidium instructed Comrade Khrushchev to discuss this (i.e. military assistance) over the telephone with

Comrade Gerő," Khrushchev summed up the events of the previous day for the Bulgarian, Czechoslovak and East German party leaders on October 24. "This was done. Comrade Khrushchev let Comrade Gerő know that their request would be fulfilled, provided that the Hungarian government put it in writing. Gerő replied that he had no possibility to convene the government. Comrade Khrushchev then proposed that the request be submitted by Comrade Hegedüs as the President of the Council of Ministers [Prime Minister]. Although this did not happen up to this day, the situation developed whereby Comrade Zhukov was given orders to occupy Budapest by the use of troops stationed on the territory of Hungary and in Uzhorod."[10] The First Secretary of the CPSU, wanting to take firm measures to prevent the loosening of the alliance but also to base relations within the camp on the "softer", post-1953 methods, chose to emphasise the elements of "mutuality" and "legitimate request for help", rather than describing what really happened at the meeting of the presidium.

For four days following 23 October, the most important Soviet decision-making body did not discuss the Hungarian situation. This was because they were practically "on the scene" via their emissaries who kept sending basically optimistic reports underestimating, sometimes belittling, the dimensions of the popular upheaval, and also because on 24 October, a top-level Chinese delegation led by Liu Shao-qi arrived in Moscow. Their negotiations focussed precisely on the "new type" of relations between the members of the camp—interestingly enough, mainly with regard to the Polish October.[11]

It was on October 28, with the formation of the Imre Nagy cabinet, a dramatic change in the assessment of the events in Budapest (what happened was not counter-revolution but a national democratic movement), the ceasefire and the demand for the withdrawal of Soviet troops, that the masters in the Kremlin were confronted with the fact that the situation was more serious than they had believed. On October 28, the Presidium began discussing the Hungarian situation, and met every day right up to November 6.

On October 28, the meeting of the Presidium of the CPSU CC must have begun around mid-day, with reports from Budapest. This was recorded by Malin as follows:

"Notes on the session of 28 October.

On the Hungarian situation (Khrushchev)[12]

Com. Khruschev: *The situation is getting worse. It is an organized demonstration. Kádár is inclined to enter into negotiations with the resistance centres*[13]

Sobolev must be rectified at the UN.[14]

The workers support the uprising (that is why they want to change the description "counter-revolutionary uprising").

Com. Zhukov *reports.*

They[15] *wish to refrain from crushing the single remaining core of resistance.*

Instructions have been given to halt the demonstration.

The railway tracks have been pulled up in many places.

In Debrecen, power was handed over to our troops.[16]

Com. Khrushchev *reports.*

The situation is complicated.

Com. Suslov must fly to Moscow.

The Directorate has not been declared.

It was suggested that Hegedüs be omitted from the Directorate (4 for, 6 against).[17]

The meeting is in full session now."[18,19]

The introductory statement by Khrushchev already indicated that the mood had turned grim. One of the reasons was the

change—unexpected and uncoordinated from Moscow's point of view—of the line taken by the leadership in Budapest. The other reason was that the popular movement in Budapest had developed differently from the way on the 24th.

Zhukov's report, or more exactly, Malin's note, lacks any mention of the fact, in all likelihood reported to Moscow by the generals on the spot, that the forces available in the city had turned out to be insufficient, and their composition inappropriate, for eliminating the armed groups.[20] This was followed by a discussion of the situation in Hungary.

*"**Com. Voroshilov**: We have been badly informed.*

Comrades Mikoyan and Suslov are behaving passively. They have been badly informed.

We are in a bad position. We must work out a line of our own, and have a group of Hungarians join it. Com. Mikoyan is unable to do that job.

What we have planned must be carried out (we must send some of the comrades over there.)[21]

We will not withdraw the troops—it (the uprising) must be put down firmly.[22]

Nagy: a liquidator.

***Com. Molotov:** Things are going badly.*

The situation has deteriorated, things are moving slowly toward capitulation.

Nagy has almost turned against us now.

Our comrades behave hesitantly.

We must agree on how far we are willing to go in making concessions. It is the composition of the government, the Directorate, that is at issue. Hegedüs has been expelled, which means they no longer care about us.

Friendship with the Soviet Union, the assistance of our troops: that is the minimum.

All Com. Mikoyan does is making reassuring noises.

If they do not agree, then we must discuss what should be done about the troops.

***Com. Kaganovich:** The counter-revolution is becoming increasingly active.*

The hesitancy of the Hungarian communists.

Certain concessions must be made to the workers and peasants. Kádár must be given instructions to neutralize [the movement] in that way. We must take firm action against the counter-revolutionary centres. We must not back down.

***Com. Bulganin:** The HWP CL [Central Leadership] acts indecisively.*

Kádár wavers. What matters is to demand more resolution from Kádár.

The following must be done: let us call Mikoyan to the telephone, and tell him: the Political Committee of the HWP CL must act decisively, or else we are going to act for you. It may come to the point where we may have to appoint a government ourselves.

***Com. Malenkov:** Let us not shift the situation to our comrades. The line directed toward the putting down of the uprising is being carried out firmly. And on the government's part, Nagy must provide a programme.*

***Com. Zhukov:** On the role of Com. Mikoyan—it is unjust to condemn him now.*

When we decided on moving in the troops, the situation was different.

Political flexibility must be shown.

The CL must be mobilized for more flexible action.

Armed workers' units must be organized.

Our troops must be kept on the alert.

The main centre of the resistance must be crushed.

***Com. Saburov:** Agrees with Com. Zhukov, our bases must be assured in the big industrial plants.*

A programme must be provided."[23]

Thus the outlines of a "hardline" camp were beginning to emerge (Voroshilov, Molotov, Kaganovich and Bulganin), one opposed to the halting of military operations and the inclusion of the withdrawal of troops (only from Budapest, for the time being) in the political declaration, still under preparation, of the Imre Nagy government. The hardliners did not necessarily reject any concessions but only within narrow limits. Voroshilov already raised the "working out of a line of our own" and making "a group of the Hungarians" join it. Bulganin went even farther than that by hinting at a point "where we may have to appoint a government ourselves".

Since Voroshilov's criticism, however, was directed at least as much (if not more) at the Presidium members operating in Budapest, i.e. Mikoyan and Suslov, as at the Hungarians, it raised the spectre of a split within the Presidium. For after the "hardliners", the other side also went into action. Malenkov, Zhukov and Saburov rejected the criticism of their colleagues. They, too, urged the taking of certain measures (the creation of a suitable programme by the Hungarian government, the organisation of workers' units) but they also insisted that, as Zhukov put it, "political flexibility" must be shown. Coming from the mouth of the Defence Minister, this must have been quite astounding to hear. The emerging "liberal" wing urged, for the time being, accommodation to the situation in Budapest, through the emissaries, whom it defended.

The more respected Presidium members present had all expressed their opinion. A deep anxiety settled on the meeting, partly because of the developments in Hungary, and partly because of the obvious but somewhat latent differences in principles and the fairly open personal differences. However, the particular and main cause lay in the "complicated situation"; a full assessment of the events was lacking, and so was an overview of the possibilities of action deriving from that assessment. By that time, the Presidium had received the draft declaration of the Nagy government, to be announced later that day; this included the request for the immediate withdrawal of troops from Budapest, and raised the possibility of future negotiations about a complete withdrawal from Hungary. As it is well established, the declaration meant a radical turn in the judgement taken of the revolution. Thus, someone had to speak up, and Khrushchev took the responsibility.

Khrushchev must have thought that even worse than a split was the fact that, quite obviously, no one had any idea about what to do when the momentary situation was changing, and no one had a sufficient vision of the alternatives for action. That raised the danger of incapacity for action and/or precipitousness. His thoughts may have gone somewhat farther forward than those of the others: if Imre Nagy and the Hungarian leadership had already been brave enough to disregard the Soviet instructions (for instance, on October 26, they let Mikoyan and Suslov know that negotiations should be started with the rebels, the students and the intellectuals, that politicians from other parties should be included in the government) then, should Moscow support the declaration including a radical change, they might go even further. When he spoke next, Khrushchev, unlike the others, openly expressed the dilemma that was on everyone's mind:

*"**Com. Khrushchev**: We are responsible for many things.*

The facts [must be] faced. The question is whether there will be a government that is with us or one that is not with us, and will ask for the withdrawal of troops.

What is going to happen then?

Nagy said that if we take action, he will resign.[24]

Then the coalition will disintegrate.[25]

There is no firm leadership there either in the party or in the government.

The (uprising) may spread to the provinces.

The military may go over to the rebels.

Let us not insist too much on Hegedüs.

Two variants.

The government acts, we help.

That may end the whole thing fast.

Or Nagy turns against us.

He will demand a ceasefire and the withdrawal of troops, next there will be capitulation.

What are the possible variants?

1) The formation of a committee which takes over[26] *(that is the worst variant) when we [...]*[27]

2) To keep this government.

Send officials of the government to the provinces.

A platform is needed.

Perhaps [to issue] an appeal to the population, the workers, peasants and the intelligentsia—because [without this] we are only shooting.

3) Ought not the Chinese, the Bulgarians, Poles, Czechs and Yugoslavs send an appeal to the Hungarians?

4) Let us firmly put down the rebels. Let us persuade the fraternal parties to turn with an appeal to the Hungarians. The documents should be drafted by Comrades Brezhnev, Pospielov, Shepilov and Furtseva.[28] *Should we support the present government when it issues declarations like this?*

Yes, we should. There is no other way out."[29]

In the Soviet view, the Hungarian revolution was not a popular movement. Its multiplicity of aims struck no special chord in the Kremlin, and it was not the masses that created fear and uncertainty but the character, composition and actions of the government likely to come to power as a result. Within this, the aspect weighing heaviest was how the leaders in Budapest viewed the Soviet military-political alliance. What was happening in Hungary was judged ultimately on the basis of the behaviour and statements of a few individuals, of party, government, military and domestic political leaders. Khrushchev, too, was thinking along those lines when, for the first time since the outbreak of the crisis, he formulated alternatives: an optimum one for the Soviet leadership (that the Hungarian government would take action) and another one drawn up on the basis of the principle of the "highest probability", and finally, for this latter case, he sketched out the basics of a set of guidelines, of a "scenario". It would, however, be an exaggeration to say that all this was set out by Khrushchev in such a "strict" logical sequence for the Presidium.

The basics of the "scenario" may be reconstructed as follows: first, the establishment of a new political centre which he spontaneously called a "committee" (item 1). Second, the drawing up of suitable "documents" (the political "platform" of the committee, the appeal of the Soviets to the Hungarians—item 2), and finally, a showdown with the rebels (item 4). Most of Khrushchev's "variants" were thus not real alternatives but possible elements of a programme for action. But he seemed to recoil after spelling out the first point ("that is the worst variant" i.e. establishing a counter-government), and in the second, he repeated, quickly and illogically, the consensus reached thus far as an alternative: "To keep this government".

Khrushchev finally formulated a few resolutions. A four-member group (Brezhnev, Pospielov, Furtseva and Shepilov) would be given the job of work-

ing out the "documents" to be issued by the Soviets. Another resolution concerned the involvement of the "fraternal parties" (they were to be asked to appeal to the Hungarians). After that, all that had to be done was to set up the "committee".

Yet, Khrushchev ended his speech not on this note but by asking the Presidium to support the moves of Imre Nagy. After having detailed the alternatives and going as far as to the final, worst option, the First Secretary actually joined the still undecided "liberals"! He had done his job, he had drawn up the "scenario" for a solution of the crisis. He must have thought that now he could give his own view, but he may also have been led by tactical, "technocratic" considerations: in the possession of more or less clear alternatives, the debate would gain new momentum, the divisions within the Presidium would become more evident and, of course, he obviously hoped that his proposal would be accepted.

A long debate ensued, in the early stages of which the balance appeared to be tipping toward Khrushchev's last proposal: Imre Nagy's October 28 declaration should be accepted, and the new Hungarian government should be—or rather could be—supported. It seemed as if everyone were weary of a situation in which the implementation of Khrushchev's "scenario" might become necessary, the consequences of which were hard to calculate. As Bulganin said: "Otherwise we have to resort to occupation. That would make us adventurists." Kaganovich put this in even clearer terms: "If we do not support (the government), the occupation of the country (would come next). That will lead us far." Khrushchev even brought a new argument into the discussion: "The British and the French are just beginning to make trouble in Egypt. Let us not end up in the same company."[30] Since the actions of the British and French in Egypt were later to be characterized as "agression", and "military adventure" by the Soviets, refraining from acting likewise may even appear as a matter of principle or of ideology. However, it is much more likely that Khrushchev was hinting at the severe difficulties facing the British and the French following military action.

In the meantime, Suslov arrived, and made his verbal report. First he analysed the military situation, then the scale of the popular movements. After that, he turned to their own efforts aimed, after October 26, at creating what he described as a "relatively stable" government consisting not only of communists. He dealt with the political debate of the HWP PC that morning on changing the assessment of the popular movement (laying special emphasis on Kádár's role—it seems that he had actually received his latest information from him) and on the ceasefire (which had been supported also by the representatives of the Soviet Party Presidium). Finally, Suslov spoke of Imre Nagy, pointing out that the "thesis" on the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary had been "inserted" in the government declaration by Imre Nagy personally.[31]

The "message" of Suslov's report was clear: the Hungarian situation had turned dangerous and incalculable. In the last stage of the October 28 meeting, the hardline approach won out in at least one respect: by the time the meeting ended (it must have lasted well into the 29th), supporting the Imre Nagy government was out of the question. On the contrary, the conclusion after the first day of genuine discussion was that "A new stage (has begun). We do not agree with the government." In criticism of Mikoyan, not only did Suslov return to Budapest but reinforcements were to be sent there in the persons of the hardliner Molotov along

with Malenkov and Zhukov. For the time being, however, there was no decision for the implementation of Khrushchev's "scenario".[32]

During its debate on October 28, the events of the next three days, the period leading up to the decision, had been practically "played out" in advance by the Presidium. Almost all the pros and cons had been discussed, most arguments had been raised. The particular angle from which the Soviets perceived the crisis became clear. The two camps—the active group of the hardliners (Molotov, Voroshilov, and Suslov in Budapest), opposed by the much less self-assured "liberals" (Mikoyan in Budapest, and in Moscow, somewhat waveringly, Zhukov)—had taken definite shape. Between them, there were the determined yet sometimes self-contradicting statements of the "senior" members of the Presidium, of whom Bulganin and Kaganovich rather favoured the hardliners, while Malenkov was a shade closer to the "liberals". The others hardly made a move, with the exception of Saburov who, in the October 28 debate, came out definitely on the side of the "liberals". The position of the "lowlands", as they were called, obviously hinged on the direction the real decision-makers were moving in, on the ultimate balance between them.

All that depended mainly on the man who was Number One. It was precisely Khrushchev's attitude up to then that had been least consistent. His proposals made on October 28 placed him closer to the "liberals", yet he had been the first to suggest military intervention on the 23rd. He rose above his fellows not only by the strength of his formal position: he was also the man with the best grasp of the full complexity of the situation and most able to place all Moscow's potential interests in the balance at the same time. An awareness of all that, as well as of his key role, must have weighed heavily on him. He knew that a decision had to be made. It was Khrushchev alone who, at the beginning of his longest speech, made reference to the responsibility of the Soviet leadership, and tried to create some kind of harmony between the brutal logic of power and the principles professed by all of them, formally at least. He must have sensed that his word would be crucial when the final decision was made, and he wanted to avoid making the wrong decision—wrong from the point of view of the Empire, that is. And at that time, he was not able to come to a decision. The words of the final decision on the 28th (29th) were characteristic of Khrushchev's position: "We shall have our final say later on."

Following the long meeting of the 28th, the most important of the Soviet leaders attended two receptions on the 29th. One was in celebration of the Turkish national day, the other on the occasion of the visit to Moscow of the Prime Minister of Afghanistan. At the first, Ambassador Bohlen of the United States had an important conversation with Marshal Zhukov; Bohlen once again called attention to Secretary of State Dulles's speech delivered two days earlier in Dallas. Dulles had said that the American administration would not consider a Hungary liberated from Soviet rule as a potential ally. In accordance with the deadlock reached at dawn of that day, Zhukov could not say anything final, only that the troops would leave Budapest.[33] Bohlen's reports are not clear as to whether the Soviet leaders were "grim" or actually "in a much better mood" than before. On the other hand, he drew an interesting and partly correct conclusion from his conversation with Zhukov: "...from the general tenor of his [Zhukov's] remarks, as well as statements

to press by Shepilov and him, it looks as though Soviet decision was to support the Nagy government to end, although possibly primarily in Budapest leaving provinces and other towns for subsequent moping up if resistance can be broken in capital, thereby hoping to avoid total military occupation of Hungary by Soviet forces."[34]

By October 30, the Soviet leadership was confronted with the international response to the Hungarian events, the latest developments in Budapest and another international crisis, following the Suez invasion, all at the same time. Although in the debate of October 30, not a word was said either about the American position or about Suez, they must have been on everyone's mind.

The morning began with another round of negotiations with the Chinese delegation carried on this time by Khrushchev alone. In the meantime, the other members of the Presidium began their meeting, listening to reports, including that day's report by Mikoyan and Suslov—the latter was back in Budapest—on the deterioration of the situation and the potential threat of the Hungarian army going over to the rebels.[35] That report was, in essence, a call for military intervention, and was corroborated by another from military sources (this was summed up by Zhukov). It may be presumed (the notes are fragmentary) that transport planes landing at Vienna carrying aid had been identified by military intelligence as signs of preparation for an outside military intervention. Under the influence of that report, those attending the meeting immediately decided, in accordance with Mikoyan and Suslov's proposal, to send Marshal Koniev to Budapest. The sending of Molotov, Zhukov and Malenkov to Hungary "in reinforcement" had already been decided on the 28th, although that decision was not final.

Khrushchev, who had been negotiating with the Chinese alone until then, must have arrived in the conference room after the decision had been taken. By that time the decision-making process, beginning to get under way, almost according to the "scenario" of October 28, was halted again. The turnaround was due to a new declaration made by the Chinese (which may have been formulated jointly with Khrushchev). "The... statement regarding the withdrawal of troops from the people's democracies must be accepted (these things should be discussed at the next session of the Warsw Pact), taking the opinion of the country into account, in which our troops are stationed," Khrushchev declared, adding that "relations with the countries of the socialist camp must be based on the principles of Pancha Sila." (The five basic principles of peaceful coexistence: national indepedence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, non-intervention in domestic affairs.[36]

Up to then, the Chinese position had been fairly consistent. Liu-Shao-qi's first statements on 24 October had already made it clear that the Chinese did not unconditionally recognize the leading role of the Soviet Union, and wanted to take advantage of the Soviets being under pressure from several sides to make them accept the Chinese interpretation of that leading role. China undoubtedly favoured greater equality within the socialist camp, where the Soviet Union would be "first among equals", or rather "between two equals", a position in which the "second equal" might, in time, become a true equal or even a first. The hesitation of Khrushchev, worrying about the Soviet image, benefited them. It gave greater weight and a wider validity to their criticism of mutual relations. The leaders of China did not agree with several features of de-Stalinization but as far as mutual relations were concerned, they were certainly happier without Stalin. Khrushchev must have informed Liu Shao-qi of the final result of

the debate of October 28. On his side, he must have been worried that a brutal intervention in Hungary would give momentum to the hardliners, a power struggle could restart, resulting in a return to Stalinist methods in other political areas. He was the one who had committed himself most at the 20th Congress, thus he would be the first to be swept away by re-Stalinization. The first turnaround of the debate on the 30th must have been due to the convergence of the interests of Khrushchev and the Chinese. This was what followed:

*"**Com. Bulganin:** The Chinese comrades had an incorrect view of our relations with the Socialist countries.*

On our appeal to the Hungarians: it must be prepared. The statement must be prepared.

***Com. Molotov:** The appeal to the Hungarians must be drafted today so that negotiations of troop withdrawal could start immediately.*

The Warsaw Agreement exists.

Things must be talked over with the others.

On the position of the Chinese comrades—[in their view] relations with the countries of the socialist camp must be based on the principles of Pancha Sila. Relations maintained on the governmental level are based on one set of principles, those between the parties on another.

***Com. Voroshilov**: Let us look forward, too. The statement [should be] worded in a way that does not get us into an embarrassing position.*

Let us criticize ourselves, but justly.

***Com. Kaganovich:** Pancha Sila—but I don't think they actually suggested that we should base our relationship on the Pancha Sila principles.*

Two documents [must be drafted]—the appeal to the Hungarians and the Statement.

It is not necessary to exercise self-criticism in that document. There is a difference between governmental and party relations.

***Com. Shepilov:** Developments have shown that our relations with the people's democracies are in a crisis.*

There is now a widespread mood of anti-Sovietism.

The deeper causes must be disclosed.

The fundamentals must remain unchanged.

There must be no ordering about of others.

Let us not allow that the present situation be taken advantage of.

A whole set of measures must be worked out concerning our relations.

The Statement—the first step.

It is not necessary to make an appeal to the Hungarians.

On the armed forces: we profess the principle of non-intervention.

We are ready to pull out with the agreement of the Hungarian government.

An ongoing struggle must be fought against national communism.

***Com. Zhukov:** Agrees with what was said by Com. Shepilov.*

Most important: to resolve [the situation] in Hungary.

There is a widespread anti-Soviet mood.

The troops should be withdrawn from Budapest; if necessary, from all of Hungary.

This is a military and political lesson for us.

The problem of the troops in the GDR and Poland is much more serious.

It has to be discussed in the [Political] Discussion Panel. The Discussion Panel must be convened. If we go on being stubborn, who knows what might happen?

A brief resolution must be passed; already today a statement must be made concerning the most important matters.

Com. Furtseva: *A general statement should be accepted rather than an appeal to the Hungarians. It must not be long. The second:*

important from the point of view of the internal situation. The relations maintained with the people's democracies should be investigated from other aspects as well.

On meetings with the leaders of the people's democracies (on the issue of relations).

A meeting of the CC must be convened (i.e. to inform the members of the CC).

Com. Saburov: *Agrees on the issues of the Statement and the troop withdrawal.*

We did a good job at the 20th Congress but afterwards we failed to take the lead in mass initiatives. We did not change over to the genuine Leninist principles of leadership.

We may find ourselves overtaken by events.

I agree with Com. Furtseva. Ministers, CC members are asking questions.

As for Romania: they owe us 5 billion roubles for property which was created by the people.

Relations should be reviewed.

Relations must be based on equality.

Com. Khruschev: *[You spoke] unanimously.*

The first step: to issue the Statement."[37]

The "hardliners" had become confused, and the "liberals" went to the limit, not just in general but also with regard to settling the Hungarian situation. From the aspect of the final outcome, with hindsight, there is just one question that emerges in connection with that meeting: how was it possible for some of the Soviet leaders, including some in high positions, to use such words? How was it possible that some of them got to the point where they were actually thinking about giving up Hungary militarily? However, Marshal Zhukov arguing in favour of a troop withdrawal from Hungary will look a great deal less unlikely, if we place him into the ongoing, still unfinished process of decision-taking. No matter how little it was detailed or how uncertain the support for this was, one of the alternatives before the meeting, now into its third day, had indeed been, for some time, a partial reduction of the Soviet military presence in Eastern Europe. On October 30 that position also received open expression, rather belatedly, too, since the opposite alternative had been employed in practice in Budapest on the 23rd of October, and, on the 28th, a "scenario" had been constructed by Khrushchev for later use. The October 30 statement of the Soviet government may be regarded as a temporary victory—indeed, the last up to the mid-eighties—of the "liberal" view in the international area, the kind of thinking which dared to mention the withdrawal of troops.[38] Even though the actual decision ultimately went the other way, that statement, when it was created, was by no means a cynical maneuver meant to mislead, but a genuine mirror of the debates and power struggles going on within the Soviet leadership, one of the rare moments when the Empire sent signals to the outside world that it might be opening up. The initiator, Khrushchev, must have still believed in the usefulness of the October Polish formula, if in very different circumstances.

The plan of military withdrawal was motivated by uncertainty, lack of information, confusion, anxiety and haste. The clearest reference to this was made by Zhukov: "If we keep on being stubborn, who knows what might happen?" As a military commander, he may have felt intimations of a series of armed uprisings in several countries, and of a conflict with the West including the threat of a world war. One of the principal motives was, thus, to

lessen the risk of conflict. Another was also referred to several times, retaining the image developed of the Soviet Union after 1953, and even more after the 20th Congress. The West must accept Stalin's conquests though there was no Stalin and his methods were not to be used. Since 1955, at least in certain areas, even the withdrawal of troops was a feasible option (Finland, Austria). A third motive was the "self-critical tendency" in some of the Soviet leadership, and especially in Khrushchev, under the influence of the 20th Congress. Holding onto power and the avoidance of the constant use of force to do so were both manifest motives. The convictions and personal interests of the Soviet elite both dictated that the communist regime and the world empire had to be maintained, but Stalin's death, followed by his "exposure" at the Congress, planted a sense of doubt and ambivalence in some of them. These doubts were intensified by each dramatic climax (like the Hungarian Revolution) that came as a consequence of de-Stalinization. The process went as far as the actual realization that retaining the system required that it be changed, at least to a limited degree. The "military and political lesson" mentioned by Zhukov lay precisely in the manner in which this idea, incoherent as it still was, was to be put into practice in resolving the Hungarian problem, then turned into a set of bilateral rules and normatives in everyday relations.

In the case of Hungary, the "liberal" alternative rested on the assumption that even after the departure of Soviet troops, Hungary would remain a member of the Warsaw Pact, and the communists would continue to play a dominant (or hegemonic) role in political life. Thus the "liberals" had no intention of giving up the two fundamental priorities of Soviet policy: maintaining the unity of the Empire, and the communist system. Shepilov laid great emphasis on this when he said: "The fundamentals must remain unchanged". In other words, if "the fundamentals" came to be threatened, then this solution would no longer apply. It is clear from another of Shepilov's sentences that in the mind of the "liberals" the danger lay in "national communism", that is, in a greater independence and autonomy of the local communist parties remaining in power, more or less in the fashion of Gomulka in Poland or Imre Nagy in the stages of the crisis up to then. The "national communist" alternative would have assured far greater independence to Hungary than the rule of Rákosi or Gerő. At the same time, however, it would have produced a hotbed of conflicts with the Soviets. Thus the "liberals" were also far from unequivocal in accepting the main objectives of the Hungarian revolution.

MTI Photo Archive.

The other weakness of the "liberal" alternative lay in the relative weightlessness of its representatives. The most prestigious,

Zhukov, was not only a political leader but the representative of officers of field rank in the Presidium, and the army—although presumably there were disagreements among the generals, too—was basically pro-intervention. Saburov and Shepilov were not among the most prestigious members of the Presidium, which meant that the position of the "liberals" depended on Khrushchev. In contrast to the "hardliners", they were not in a position to oppose the First Secretary. And Khrushchev himself embodied the "liberal" ambivalence described above more than anyone else.

For the moment, he was waiting. The discussion of the text of the statement was suspended twice because Khrushchev spoke directly with Mikoyan (Khrushchev did not report any special deterioration), then the ambassador of the Soviet Union to Beijing made his appearance, bringing a message from the Chinese delegation still in Moscow. This consisted of questions only ("What is the situation? Is Hungary leaving our camp? Who is Nagy after all? Can he be trusted?"[39]) However, it was meant as a clear warning: the far-reaching measures planned were viewed doubtfully by the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. The Chinese position, or at least this warning, confirmed the earlier assumption of the "hard line" that, although the Chinese urged the "five principles" in general, they had no intention of applying them to the current situation in Hungary. Only Khrushchev had argued in favour. Nevertheless, the final text of the Soviet government statement clearly shows that the actual decision was not taken under the influence of the Chinese message. It indicates that the "liberals" gained the upper hand, and also points out the limits of their victory: "Keeping in mind that the continued stationing of Soviet military units in Hungary may serve as a pretext for a further deterioration of the situation, the Soviet government has instructed its military command to withdraw Soviet military units from Budapest as soon as this was considered feasible by the Hungarian government. At the same time, the Soviet government is ready to start negotiations with the government of the Hungarian People's Republic and with the governments of other countries taking part in the Warsaw agreement on the stationing of Soviet troops in Hungary."[40]

Subsequently, the entire Presidium again sat down at the negotiating table with the Chinese. Liu Shao-qi reported the opinion of the Peking leadership, this time not in the form of questions but as a declaration: "...the troops must stay in Budapest and in Hungary." What had changed? On the back of his note made on the negotiations with the Chinese, Malin hastily scribbled down the composition of the narrower four-party cabinet formed in Budapest on October 30. Could it be that the Chinese delegation had learned about this somewhat earlier? What is known is that Khrushchev and Molotov, representing the Soviets, responded to Liu's words with the newly carried resolution (perhaps already with the actual text of the statement as well). They both declared that the Soviet Union would begin negotiations on the withdrawal of troops—which, in the given case, involved Hungary. Both of them, especially Molotov (the latter not unexpectedly), made reference to the other alternative, intervention. In other words, they made it clear that there had been a disagreement.[41] Nevertheless, the October 30 statement remained in force even though the Chinese view had become known. The possibility of the withdrawal of troops flashed up for a moment, just as did the possibility of a different kind of relationship within the camp. That possibility stayed alive for a whole night.

(To be continued)

NOTES

1 ■ See *A Jelcin dosszié – Szovjet dokumentumok 1956-ról* (The Yeltsin File. Soviet Documents on 1956) Ed. by Éva Gál, András B. Hegedüs, György Litván, János M. Rainer. Budapest, Századvég – 1956-os Intézet, 1993; *Hiányzó lapok 1956 történetéből.* Dokumentumok a volt SZKP KB Levéltárából (Missing Pages from the History of 1956. Documents from, the Archives of the Central Committee of the Former Soviet Communist Party), Sel. and Intr. by Vyacheslav Sereda and Aleksandr Stikalin, Budapest, Móra, 1993. In English, see János M. Rainer: "1956—The Other Side of the Story. Five Documents from the Yeltsin File," *The Hungarian Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 129, Spring 1993, pp. 100–14 and János M. Rainer: "The Yeltsin Dossier: Soviet Documents on Hungary, 1956," in: *Cold War International History Project Bulletin,* Spring 1995, p. 22.

2 ■ The notes were published in Hungarian: *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956. A szovjet pártelnökség vitái Magyarországról* (Decision in the Kremlin, 1956. The Debates of the Soviet Party Presidium on Hungary), ed. by Vyacheslav Sereda, János M. Rainer, Budapest, 1956-os Intézet, 1996. They appeared in Russian in Nos. 2 and 3 of the Moscow journal *Istoricheskii Arkhiv,* ed. by Vyacheslav Sereda.

3 ■ See Tibor Hajdu: "Szovjet diplomácia Magyarországon Sztálin halála előtt és után" (Soviet Diplomacy Before and After the Death of Stalin). In: *Magyarország és a nagyhatalmak a 20. században. Tanulmányok* (Hungary and the Great Powers in the 20th Century), Ed. and Intr. by Ignác Romsics, Budapest, Teleki László Alapítvány, 1995, pp. 195–201; See: "1956 nemzetközi háttere" (The International Backdrop of 1956), *Társadalmi Szemle,* Nos 8–9, 1989; See: "1956—Magyarország a szuperhatalmak játékterén" (1956—Hungary in the Playing Field of the Superpowers), *Valóság,* No. 12, 1990.

4 ■ On Rákosi's replacement in July 1956, see János M. Rainer: "Szovjet döntéshozatal Magyarországról 1956-ban" (A Soviet Decision on Hungary in 1956), in: *Évkönyv* (Yearbook), Vol. II, 1993, Budapest, 1956-os Intézet, pp. 24–29. On October in Poland, see János Tischler: "A lengyel pártvezetés és az 1956-os magyar forradalom" (The Polish Party Leadership and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution), in: *Évkönyv,* Vol. III, 1994, Budapest, 1956-os Intézet, pp. 180–81; Leo Gluchowski: Poland 1956. "Khrushchev, Gomulka and the 'Polish October'", in: *Cold War History Project Bulletin,* Spring 1995, 1, pp. 38-49. On both, see *Döntés a Kremlben,* op. cit., pp. 19–25. Notes on the 9–12 July and 20 October 1956 sessions of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and Ibid.: Notes on the 24 October sessions on Poland.

5 ■ For Khruschev's report see Mark Kramer: "Khrushchev's CPSU CC Presidium Meeting on East European Crises, 24 October 1956," in: *Cold War International History Project Bulletin,* Spring 1995, pp. 50–56.

5 ■ Present at the session were Bulganin, Kaganovich, Mikoyan, Molotov, Pervukhin, Saburov, Khrushchev, Suslov, Brezhnhev, Furtseva, Shepilov and Kirichenko. No official (decision-recording) protocols were taken. The individuals were those who reported on the issue on the agenda—verbally, in this case.

6a ■ The names in brackets are of those reporting on the items they are responsible for on the agenda.

6b ■ *Döntés a Kremlben, op.cit.,* pp. 26–27.

7 ■ László Varga: "Egy nap, amely megrengette a világot, 1956. október 23." (A Day that Shook the World, 23 October 1956), in: *Az elhagyott tömeg* (The Abandoned Crowd), Budapest, Cserépfalvi – Budapest Főváros Levéltára. 1994, pp. 95–98, and Mihály Berki: *Hadsereg vezetés nélkül* (An Army without Leadership), Budapest, Magyar Média, 1989, pp. 37–40.

8 ■ The difference between Budapest and Moscow time is two hours.

9 ■ E. I. Malashenko: "Ossobiy korpus v ognie Budapesta" (Task Force In the Fire of Budapest), *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal,* No. 10, 1993. Despite Soviet advice, by the dawn of October 24, Imre Nagy was Prime Minister.

10 ■ See Mark Kramer: *op. cit.*

11 ■ Notes on the October 24 and 26 meetings of the Presidium of the CPSU CC. In : *Döntés a Kremlben, op. cit.,* pp. 30–3.

12 ■ No official minutes were taken. Those present were Voroshilov, Bulganin, Kaganovich, Malenkov, Molotov, Saburov, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Zhukov, Shvernik, Shepilov, Furtseva, Pospielov, Zorin.

13 ■ This is probably a reference to Kádár's discussions with trade union leaders on 27–28

October. In its declaration of 26 October, the National Council of Trade Unions (SZOT) calls for an end to the description of the events as "counter-revolution", and also demanded a ceasefire. But the reference may also concern Kádár's views expressed at the meeting of the Political Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party on the morning of October 28. For records of this latter see "A kormány vezető szerveinek dokumentumaiból, 1956 október 23–november 4" (From the Documents of the Leading Organs of the Government, 23 October to 4 November 1956), published by Ferenc Glatz, in: *História,* 1989, Nos 5–6, pp. 36–40. Records of the October 27–28 session of the HWP PC. No report on this is known from Soviet sources.

14 ■ The UN Security Council began discussing the Hungarian question on 28 October. The Soviet ambassador, Sobolev, spoke about an uprising by "a handful of Fascists". Halfway through the meeting, however, a translation of Imre Nagy's radio broadcast of 28 October arrived, which referred to a "great national democratic movement". Moscow had already been informed about the intention to change the description of the events, and tried to save Sobolev from the embarrassment. It failed. See *A Jelcin-dosszié, op. cit.,* pp. 57–60 and Csaba Békés: A magyar kérdés az ENSZ-ben és a nyugati hatalmak titkos tárgyalásain (The Hungarian Question at the UN and the Secret Negotiations of the Western Powers), In: *Évkönyv* II, 1993, Budapest, 1956-os Intézet, 1993, pp. 50–53.

15 ■ i.e. the Hungarian Party leadership. On October 27, the HWP PC decided that no aggressive action would be taken against the only remaining centre of resistance in Budapest, the Corvin-köz group, unless the troops were attacked. At the morning meeting of 28th this was confirmed in the presence of Mikoyan after Imre Nagy had said that Gerő and Hegedüs wanted action to be taken despite the earlier decision. See *História,* Nos. 5–6, 1989, pp. 36–40. Records of the October 27–28 meetings of the HWP PC.

16 ■ See Tibor Filep: *A debreceni forradalom, 1956 október* (The Debrecen Revolution, October 1956), Debrecen, 1990. The town was under the control of the local revolutionary committee. At the dawn on the 29th October, the county's leading government and party officials flew to the Soviet troops positioned at the airport and its surroundings. This was probably what this announcement meant.

17 ■ Once again, the October 28 morning meeting is meant. The body called "Directorate", elected at the PC meeting of October 28, came to be referred as "Party Presidium" from that time on. At the October 26 meeting of the Central Leadership, András Hegedüs was "voted out" of the body but the issue of its composition was raised again at the October 28 PC meeting. Kádár proposed again that Hegedüs be included. After a longer debate, however, the proposal was rejected, with the voting as indicated. Mikoyan was present at the meeting, and supported the resolutions. *História,* 1989, Nos. 5–6, pp. 36–40. Records of the 27–28 October meetings of the HWP PC.

18 ■ The last meeting of the Central Leadership of the HWP, around noon, October 28, which approved the resolution passed at the morning session of the PC on changing the assessment of the revolution, and accepted Imre Nagy's governmental declaration.

19 ■ Note on the October 28, 1956 meeting of the CPSU CC Presidium (excerpt) in: *Döntés a Kremlben , op. cit.,* p. 35.

20 ■ E. I. Malashenko, op.cit., Parts 2 and 3. *Voyenno-Istorichesko Zhurnal,* 1993, Nos 11, 12.

21 ■ On October 26, the Presidium of the CPSU CC proposed that the Hungarian cadres staying or studying in the Soviet capital be sent home. The decision was put off then. The reference was made either to that, or to the sending of other Presidium members to Budapest.

22 ■ Voroshilov again reacts to the 28 October meeting of the HWP PC. That was where Imre Nagy, in the presence of Mikoyan, asked for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the area of Budapest.

23 ■ Note on the October 28, 1956 meeting of the CPSU CC Presidium (excerpt). in: *Döntés a Kremlben, op. cit.,* pp. 36–37.

24 ■ Imre Nagy threatened to resign in case armed action was taken against the Corvin-köz group.

25 ■ The inclusion of non-communist politicians (at the given moment, of Zoltán Tildy and Béla Kovács as well as—at least formally—József Bognár and Ferenc Erdei) was called "coalition" by the Soviets.

26 ■ The term "committee" comes from the vocabulary of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and the

Civil War. That was when "revolutionary military committees were formed."

27 ■ The sentence is unfinished.

28 ■ The leaders mentioned would be instructed to prepare the planned appeals (that of the counter-government to be formed by the Soviets, perhaps an ultimatum to the rebels and a joint declaration or common platform with the allied countries).

29 ■ Note on the October 28, 1956 meeting of the Presidium of the CPSU CC (excerpt), in: *Döntés a Kremlben, op. cit.*, pp. 37–39).

30 ■ Note on the October 28, 1956 meeting of the Presidium of the CPSU CC, in: *Döntés a Kremlben, op. cit.*, pp. 39, 40, 42.

31 ■ Ibid. , pp. 43–44. A reference to the initiation of discussions on the withdrawal of troops at some future stage had cropped up in Imre Nagy's radio broadcast of October 25. Imre Nagy did not coordinate with the Soviets in advance that move, although he explained it the next day, bringing up the widespread demands as a reason. For Imre Nagy's speech, see: *A forradalom hangja. Magyarországi rádióadások 1956. október 23–november 9.*, Budapest, Századvég – Nyilvánosság Klub, 1989, p. 72. For Mikoyan and Suslov's Oct 25 report on it, see *A Jelcin-dosszié, op. cit.*, p. 51. Mikoyan also took part in the October 28 morning session of the PC, where he made no objection to the part of the resolution proposal (made by János Kádár, not Imre Nagy) that the "Nagy Formula" should be adopted into the declaration. For the PC meeting, see *História,* Nos 4–5, 1989, p. 37.

32 ■ Note on the 28 October 1956 session of the Presisium of the CPSU CC. In: *Döntés a Kremlben, op. cit.*, pp. 44–46.

33 ■ *Titkos jelentések, 1956. okt. 23–nov. 4.* (Secret Reports, 23 October – 4 November, 1956), Sel. Sándor Geréb, Budapest, Hírlapkiadó, 1989, pp. 81–82, 83–86. On the American attitude, see John C. Campbell: "Az Egyesült Államok kormánya és a magyar forradalom" (The Administration of the United States and the Hungarian Revolution), *Világosság,* No. 10, pp. 739–749, Brian McCauley: "Hungary and Suez. The Limits of Soviet and American Power", *Journal of Contemporary History,* Vol. 16 (1981), pp. 777–800.

34 ■ *Titkos jelentések, op. cit.*, p. 86.

35 ■ Note on the October 30, 1956 Meeting of the Presidium of the CPSU CC, in *Döntés a Kremlben, op. cit.*, p. 51. For Mikoyan and Suslov's October 30 report, see *Hiányzó lapok, op. cit.*, 125–126.

36 ■ Notes on the October 30 Meeting of the Presidium of the CPSU CC, in: *Döntés a Kremlben, op. cit.*, pp. 51–52.

37 ■ Note on the Oct 30, 1956 Meeting of the Presidium of the CPSU CC (excerpt), in: *Döntés a Kremlben, op. cit.*, pp. 52–54.

38 ■ The statement was published in the October 31, 1956 issue of *Pravda,* and was also carried by the Hungarian papers on the same day. For its text, see: *A Jelcin dosszié, op. cit.*, pp. 65–67, and *Döntés a Kremlben, op. cit,* pp. 200–2.

39 ■ Note on the October 30, 1956 Meeting of the Presidium of the CPSU CC, in: *Döntés a Kremlben, op. cit.* p. 56.

40 ■ See, *A Jelcin-dosszié, op. cit.*, p. 67, *Döntés a Kremlben, op. cit.*, p. 202.

41 ■ Note on the October 30, 1956 Meeting of the Presidium of the CPSU CC, in: *Döntés a Kremlben , op. cit.*, p. 57.

Reform to Revolution

Detailed Interview Given by György Heltai to an American Journalist, dated 12th December 1956 and Submitted to the UN Special Committee on the Question of Hungary

When I was released from prison in September 1954, my party membership was offered back to me. It took a great deal of soul-searching to take back my party membership again, because I was disgusted with politics and wanted to have nothing more to do with it. But I also had a bad conscience, along with many of us from prison. Although I disapproved of Rákosi's[1] activities, I had served him, and thus I was equally responsible with him for what he had done to my country. But I am also a Hungarian, and I felt it was my duty to do what I could to save my country from these people. So I, and many others, decided to re-join the Party, because it was only from within the Party that we could bring about change and reform.

Although Nagy[2] offered me a post in the foreign ministry in 1954, and then a judgeship, I felt that I must not become involved in government activities in this way, and I was still distrustful of Nagy. I was able to get a position as an editor and lecturer in the Institute of Literary History, which was a part of the Academy of Sciences.

You spoke of change and reform within the Party. What kind of reform did you envisage?

It became even clearer after Nagy was ousted in 1955 what changes must be made. First Nagy must come back to power, because only within the Party could the changes be made. In a way, Nagy's dismissal was a good thing because it clearly defined the sides—the Stalinists and our group. And Nagy was clearly one of us. Nagy had a very clear idea of what he must do. He knew the only road to freedom for our people was free and secret elections. He also realized that this would mean voting himself out of office, for, as he often said to me, Communism will not receive more than five per cent of the votes in Hungary in free elections. I said, two per cent and he said, "Maybe. The Party will get what it merits."[3]

Nagy knew how basic the change must be, and many others of us, such as Losonczy[4], Donáth[5], and others from prisons, decided to maintain very close liaison with Nagy, with the Writers' Association, and with the Petőfi Circle[6]. For the past year, Nagy was constantly in touch with the Petőfi Circle members and was informed of their activities, as they were of his ideas.

Nagy was determined to regulate the relations between the USSR and Hungary, but his task was made difficult by his sentimental ties with the Soviet Union, and his close connections with many communists from the old days. We talked about Hungarian neutrality as early as 1955, as one method of normalizing relations with the USSR, and as a possible prelude to getting the Russians out of Hungary.

György Heltai (1914–1994)

After the Germans occupied Hungary on March 19th, 1944 György Heltai worked with the Communists. When the Arrow Cross Party took over in October of that year, he was engaged in providing fake Red Cross papers for those in danger. He joined the Hungarian Communist Party early in 1945 and was delegated by them into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was active in preparatory work for the 1946 Paris Peace Conference involving negotiations with Czechoslovak and Yugoslav Communists with a view of settling the disputes concerning the position of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia.

Once the Communist Party had fully taken over, when preparations were being made for the Rajk trial, the Party leadership lost confidence in Heltai. In October 1948 he was transferred to the Ministry of Justice, and then, on August 20th 1949, he was arrested and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment in one of the trials associated with the Rajk prosecution. He was released in 1954. Albeit he did not accept any official position, he was closely associated with Imre Nagy, primarily as a foreign policy advisor.

On November 1st 1956, Prime Minister Nagy took charge of the Foreign Ministry as well. Heltai was appointed Deputy Foreign Minister, a post he occupied in the most critical days of the 1956 Revolution. As such he had a major role in the steps leading to Hungary leaving the Warsaw Pact and in the Declaration of Neutrality.

After the Soviet intervention on November 4th, Heltai, unlike Imre Nagy and some of his associates, did not seek asylum in the Yugoslav Embassy but left for Vienna at the end of November with his family. He later settled in Brussels where, between 1959 and 1964, he headed the Imre Nagy Institute of Social Science and Politics established there with American support. A centre for left-wing exiles doing research into contemporary history and politics, it published its findings in Hungarian, English and French. When American support was withdrawn in 1964, the Institute was wound up and Heltai and his family moved to the U.S. At first he did research at Columbia University in New York, and later taught history at a university in Charleston, S.C.

At the time of the 1989–1990 changes, the state of his health made it impossible for him to even consider returning to Hungary. The International Board of Trustees of the Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution chose him to be their Life Honorary Chairman. In June 1994, President Árpád Göncz awarded him the Nagy Imre Memorial Medallion in absentia. He died the following month.

After 1956, Heltai gave numerous interviews and wrote many articles reporting on his role in the events. To the best of my knowledge the interview here published was the very first he gave after leaving the country. It took place in December 1956, in Vienna, at the time of the brief stay of the Heltais in that city. It is strongly marked by recent experience. Heltai gave the interview to Dean Koch, an American journalist he had met in the Parliament building in Budapest at the time of the Revolution. The text survived in the archives of the UN Special Committee on the Question of Hungary, which makes it likely that it was used when preparing the report issued in June 1957 after hearing 111 witnesses. It was put at the disposal of the Institute for the History of the 1956 Revolution by Claire Hédervári from her collection of documents pertaining to the UN Special Committee on the Question of Hungary.

In spite of the brief period which had elapsed since the Revolution, errors and imprecisions occur. These are put right in footnotes.

Csaba Békés

It was Nagy's programme to bring freedom to Hungary by permitting multiple political parties, leading to free elections. He was not stampeded by the people when he came to power in the last days of October, because these were the aims he had been working for for two years. But he was too honest to be a real politician.

When did you, personally, come to the conclusion that Communism as a system was not good for your country?

Jail was a good school.

The background of the Revolution

The Hungarian revolution began with the Rajk[7] funeral.

Mrs Rajk[8] was told in July that she could have a public funeral for her husband, but the body could not be found. On 30 September Mrs Rajk came to me and said that she had just visited Antal Apró[9], who said that the ÁVH had found out who had buried her husband, and the grave had been discovered in Gödöllő. She was told that she could have the funeral in three days, and the government would arrange for 700 persons to attend. She was permitted to invite 40 friends.

On Monday October 1st she went through a horrible and trying ordeal, for she was forced to identify the bones of her husband for his subsequent burial. Rajk, Pálffy[10], Szőnyi[11], and Szalay[12] had been dumped into a common grave and covered with lime. All that remained was a confusing welter of bones; they identified the skull, but then began pulling out thigh bones and asking her if they were from her husband. She finally had enough, said they should take what they wanted, and left. When she came to us, she was terribly upset, and decided to refuse completely to the Party's suggestion for his funeral. She told Apró that her husband had been a Minister, and he should have a funeral as a Minister.

We, her friends, with connections in the Petőfi Circle, in the factories, and the Writers' Association, immediately informed people and began making plans for a funeral the way she wanted it. Apró said that she would be informed of the Party's decision the next morning at 9 a.m. Mrs Rajk wanted the funeral on the 13th, in two weeks. By 3 p.m. she had received no call, and soon the Party had over 100 telegrams from workers' delegations, protesting. By nightfall there were over 500.

On Wednesday, 3 October, the Party agreed that the funeral would be open to the public, but that only the small personal group would be permitted to enter the cemetery; the funeral would have to be held on 6 October instead of the 13th, because it would conflict with the Yugoslav visit.[13]

Mrs Rajk was also privately informed by friends that although the Party had ordered the Police to participate, the order had been deliberately misinterpreted and they had been ordered to parade in gala uniform; she was also warned that the ÁVH[14] would be present in civilian clothes and would be instructed to shoot if anything happened.

Mrs Rajk said that if the Party wanted to forbid the people from entering the cemetery, it was all right with her. But she would not appear.

On Friday at 3 p.m. the Party capitulated and said that the people would be permitted to enter the cemetery. The Party also agreed to organize delegations of two or three trusted workers from various factories to represent them at the funeral. But we were also busy organizing people.

I must stress that everybody realized that nobody in the Party took this "rehabilitation" business seriously, and were only do-

ing it because they had to. But the people decided to make it into a serious matter. Rajk was the government-given symbol of anti-Stalinism and was the first admission that the government and the Party had been bad. So Rajk was the first chance the people had to demonstrate their opposition to Stalinism. And all the old prisoners also determined to utilize this opportunity to demonstrate their opposition to present Party activities.

Because it began to appear to Mrs Rajk and the rest of us that this was going to be considerably more than the Party anticipated, and because of what friends had told Mrs Rajk, she determined to forestall difficulties by sending a letter to the Party stating that this was going to be nothing more or less than a funeral, and if there were any incidents, it would be a provocation by the Party itself and not by Mrs Rajk.

Because the participants had in effect been forbidden to attend by the Party's decision to limit it to two or three people per factory, the workers turned out by the hundreds and thousands, precisely because it was forbidden. But this was the first opportunity that they had ever had to force the Party into a public admission of error, and the first time they had the chance to demonstrate against the government, against the will of the government, and with impunity.

It was this day, and this demonstration by 200,000 people against the government, which was the first day of the revolution. And as it was said at Rajk's grave, it was also the funeral of Rákosi and his regime.

Nagy comes to power

At 20.30 the night of Tuesday, October 23, representatives of the students came to Nagy's home and asked him to accompany them to Parliament. Nagy appeared in Parliament Square that night at 22.00[15] and said, "I agree to your demands, but I am not in power, and I am not the government, but if I do come to power, I will fulfil them. Now go home quietly." Even at this late hour, he still did not know that the end result would be revolution.

From Parliament he went to the Party House, where he was held a virtual prisoner until the following Saturday and incommunicado the whole of Tuesday night. He was not officially informed of his elevation to Prime Minister until the next morning at 9 a.m[16]. His wife called at 7 and could not talk to him. He was called by Benjámin[17] of the Writers' Association at 8 a.m. and congratulated, although he did not know why.

He did not sign the decree of martial law which was declared at 8.45 a.m. On the contrary, at 10 a.m. he stated that he completely disagreed with it.[18]

It is now, and was soon afterwards apparent that Gerő[19] consented to the appointment of Nagy because he thought that by making him Prime Minister, and calling in the Soviet tanks, "There would be some people killed, and the Russians would shoot the town up a bit, but nothing more would happen." But by this manoeuvre he hoped to discredit Nagy once and for all with the people and he would be able to remove Nagy for good when he demonstrated his inability to run the country without recourse to the force of arms[20]. So it was Gerő who called in the Soviets.

The consensus is that Gerő called in the Soviets at 1 p.m. of the 23rd. It is certain that the Soviet garrison in Székesfehérvár was on the move to Budapest by 4 p.m.[21] that afternoon, and the first Soviet tanks were met outside Budapest that night by Boldizsár[22]. The first tanks entered the city by 4 a.m. on the 24th and the fighting began.

What Gerő didn't know was that the issue had already been joined by the events outside the radio station Tuesday after-

noon and evening. By then, the people had already made up their mind to fight, although it would have been difficult to find anybody to fight except the ÁVH if the Soviet troops had not been called into the city. This was something that Gerő never considered. He thought the people would be cowed the minute they were confronted by Soviet armour.

I've always felt that there was something vastly suspicious about the events in front of the radio station. We knew that the ÁVH had taken the precaution of blocking all streets leading away from Bem's statue[23] earlier that afternoon, so that if the demonstration there got out of hand they would have been able to channel it to destruction.

Whether the students demonstrating in front of the radio station frightened the ÁVH in the building, or whether the ÁVH were prepared to be frightened, I don't know. Anyhow, they were frightened, and tear gas was fired into the crowd. Then shots were fired, but a ricochet wounded a woman and the students began throwing stones. Hungarian army units began to come up then, and the ÁVH, apparently thinking that the army was about to attack them, fired and killed an officer.

When this happened, the military went over to the side of the people, saying, "This is a fight between the ÁVH and the army. You go home. We'll handle this." But the fighting continued until late at night in front of the station.

Suslov and Mikoyan[24] arrived in Budapest the evening of the 24th, Nagy having become Prime Minister early that morning. Fighting went on all day Wednesday and was severe by that evening. The meeting of the Central Committee was held in the Party Building Thursday the 25th, and from the time Nagy arrived Tuesday evening he was a virtual prisoner until Saturday except for receiving a workers' delegation from Borsod, on Friday, 26 October.

At the Thursday meeting, Suslov personally ordered Gerő out of his position as Party Secretary. Losonczy, Donáth, Haraszty[25], Vásárhelyi[26] and Gimes[27], the only support Nagy had within the Central Committee[28], became very worried after the Thursday meeting when Nagy permitted Gerő to remain active within the Central Committee, and they decided to refuse to continue to work with Nagy, saying that he was too weak in dealing with the Stalinists and, moreover, he simply couldn't cope with the Russians.

The writer Tibor Déry[29] came to me later and said that without the support of Losonczy and his friends, Nagy was completely isolated and I must do everything in my power to persuade Losonczy to support Nagy, and not abandon him at this crucial time. I called Losonczy but he refused even to discuss the matter with me. I called others and after four or five attempts I finally persuaded Losonczy to listen to me. About midnight Losonczy changed his mind and agreed to continue his support if Nagy called him. This, of course, I was able to arrange.

The second meeting of the Central Committee was called for Friday morning early. Gerő and the whole Rákosi gang was present, but Nagy's supporters were also there. Suslov and Mikoyan were again present. Nagy insisted on the repeal of martial law, and a general amnesty for all participants. The discussion actually centered around whether the movement was to be called revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, as the Gerő clique insisted. Nagy's victory was only made possible by his threat to resign, whereupon the resistance collapsed[30]. Although the government consisted of some 20 old Communist Party members, plus Nagy and three Smallholders (Béla Kovács[31], Zoltán Tildy[32], and

József Bognár[33]) and one Peasant Party (Ferenc Erdei[34]), Nagy was still able to insist that the amnesty be proclaimed Friday night or Saturday morning. I don't quite remember.

What concern was this of Suslov?

Suslov was our chief. He was present at Rákosi's dismissal[35], and we heard that he personally wrote out the order dismissing Nagy the first time. He was a great antagonist of Nagy.

On the other hand, Mikoyan was pro-Nagy. Mikoyan was in Budapest in September[36] and held long talks with Nagy, during which he said that he hoped to avoid all these troubles and intra-party disputes. He apparently offered support to Nagy because Nagy was greatly excited after the Mikoyan visit, and was encouraged to work much harder.

It was after this Friday meeting that Nagy saw that he must take a very strong position or lose everything. He could see that the only way was that which had been insisted upon by Losonczy and Donáth, and the others. It was at this meeting that Nagy decided that there was no longer any possibility of working within the Central Committee of the Party, and that the future lay only outside the Party. This was a very painful decision for him because of his sentimental attachments for the Party, but it was then that he decided to move the Communists out and bring in only his own followers and non-Communists.

Nagy as a man

If Communism is what the Russians say it is, there is no place in it for an honest man.

Nagy is an honest man. Too honest, perhaps, to be a politician.

I remember having read Koestler, and even Orwell's *1984* before I was imprisoned. I thought it was nonsense. But when I was arrested and was taken into the underground chambers of the ÁVH and... the flickering red lights... I was horrified: here it is, happening to me!

But in retrospect, my years in prison were good years, because I learned there that if a man wants to be true to himself, he must experience the whole story, not just part of it... We couldn't receive mail until 1953... then I asked for a copy of Shakespeare.

I first met Nagy in 1945. We were friendly after my release, but it was not until after he was dismissed as Prime Minister the first time that we really became close. But he was courageous. He greeted my wife whenever he met her in public. We were near neighbours. Most people were afraid to even recognize the relatives of the people involved in the Rajk trial.

Nagy was very much isolated right after his deposition. Perhaps only six or eight people visited him in the first month. There were actual preparations for his arrest. One man was tortured in an attempt to make him confess that Nagy had incited him to open revolution, but this man attempted suicide and managed to escape from a hospital and make his way to Nagy. Nagy immediately wrote to the Party denying the whole thing.[37]

Nagy was not really very active in the months after his removal. He wrote a lot on questions of Party policies. He insisted on sending copies to the Party and the Russians.[38] We asked him at least to stop sending copies to the Russians, but he was too much the honourable man. He was too honest. He believed until the very last days of October that the Communists actually wanted to help the country. He was completely bound to the idealism of Communism. It was horrible at times, his naivety. He saw that Rákosi worked against the interests of the country, but it took him so

long to see that Gerő was exactly the same. He rehabilitated István Kovács[39], for example, and he became immediately the strongest supporter of Rákosi.

It wasn't until he was fired in March or April 1955[40] that he began to see the whole picture and suspect how terribly wrong things were. Despite this, his honour forced him to continue to send his exposés to both the Russians and the Party.

I remember discussing a chapter, or rather, several lines, on foreign policy that he included in this work in 1955. It was then that we first talked about the neutrality of Hungary, and then only in tentative terms. But he felt that this was the only way to work out a modus vivendi with the Soviets, and the only way to get them out of the country.

This was a long document. Some two hundred pages in Hungarian.[41] I'm sure the Russians never read it. He could never have been returned to power if the Russians had even read the five or so lines about Hungarian neutrality.

I'm absolutely certain that Gerő or Rákosi never read it. He outlined completely his programme for the dissolution of the collectives and for restoration of small merchants and the return of small industries to the individuals. They would have been horrified.

But until the end, he felt that he owed the Party and the Russians the loyalty of telling them his own mind. You know, he was like a French mayor of a little provincial town: cultured, he loved his family and his garden. He was loyal to his friends. His great weakness was his idealism. He thought that basically the Soviet Union wanted something good for the people, that the Party wanted something good for the people, and the function of the Party leadership is to fulfil the wishes of the people.

How did Nagy achieve his great popularity?

The transparency of the Party's opposition to Nagy in his first government caused many people to take notice of him. He was completely alone, and the entire party apparatus opposed him then. When he issued orders for stopping forced collectivization, everybody could see how the party machinery slowed this down to a standstill. But he did very positive things. He stopped internal deportation, he dissolved the work camps, he decreased the delivery quotas for farmers, he repealed the law confiscating land from farmers to expand kolkhozes, and finally he managed to get thrown out by the Stalinists. Then the people knew that Nagy was their last hope.

We were all quite worried about Nagy when we were released from prison, although it was he who made our release possible. We thought he was a Moscovite, a nice one, perhaps, but basically just the same as the others. That was one of the reasons I didn't take any job he offered me. Perhaps it was a mistake, because he was so very alone then. Perhaps we might have helped, but in the long run, I don't suppose it made any difference. It was great luck that Nagy was ousted. The lines became clear and he had the support of the people. We could see that there was a small group of Russophile leaders against the people. And it was clear that Nagy belonged to us.

It is strange. The Rajk case is the key to everything. The first thing Nagy did when he became Prime Minister was to ask for the Rajk case file. Gerő, who was then Minister of the Interior, procrastinated, refused, delayed, until finally Nagy was able to make a three man commission to re-investigate the Rajk case. This commission consisted of Nagy, Rákosi, and Gerő. Nagy read the entire material and he was con-

vinced of what he had already suspected: the case was phony. He then said that they should release all the participants at once. Rákosi was horrified and asked Nagy if he were crazy. "We can't let these people out," he said. "Everybody will think we're scoundrels for arresting innocent men."

So Nagy agreed, on the condition that the case be officially re-opened for investigation, and that Gerő immediately improve conditions in the prisons. That didn't happen for six months, but finally we received our first visitors in December 1953.

In the spring of 1954, when Nagy and Gerő were in Moscow, Malenkov[42] asked what had happened on the Rajk case. Nagy said immediately that he could see no evidence of crime, and although he had ordered Gerő to do so, Gerő wouldn't even improve conditions in the prisons. Gerő was terribly flustered by this and never forgave Nagy. He even repeated it again not six months ago. Gerő said it had to be done gradually, and Malenkov asked, "Why? We did it fast here."

A few months after this, we were released.

It wasn't until two or three months after his dismissal as Prime Minister that Nagy began to feel his own popularity with the people. He didn't have a car, and sometimes we rode the bus together into the city. The bus drivers used to stop for him even before he had arrived at the bus stop, and people on the bus always wanted to offer him a seat. And within the Party, people began talking about him at meetings, demanding to know the truth rather than the lies which were being published about him in *Szabad Nép.*[44] The young Communists in the universities were also pro-Nagy, because it had become apparent that he was the only hope for the Party to maintain its identity as a party, rather than a group of resentful people led by a few Moscovites. I was glad to be back in the Party then, because within the Party, action was possible. And I also found how many people thought as I did, and I became sure I was correct and not acting out of disillusionment.

The second Nagy Government

It was not until Saturday afternoon, October 27, that Nagy was able to leave Party Headquarters for the first time since Tuesday night. He moved then with his staff to the Parliament building.[44] Radio Budapest, which until this time was in the hands of László Piros[45], got a new director, Jenő Széll[46], a man loyal to Nagy. Then came the famous declaration that Radio Budapest would no longer lie. It was also on this day that Nagy managed to establish permanent liaison and negotiation with the revolutionaries through such intermediaries as the writers Déry and Illyés.[47]

But it wasn't until Sunday the 28th that Nagy was for the first time able to act freely. My only contact with Nagy from the 24th to the 29th was by phone. I had determined that I would never enter into active support of Nagy as long as the remnants of the Gerő clique were in the cabinet. I was not happy with Nagy's actions, because I felt that he was being much too lenient with the Gerő group, much the same as Losonczy. Since I knew Nagy so well, I felt that he was still bound to these people by Party sentiment and he was reluctant to use forceful, perhaps brutal methods, against his former Party comrades in order to rid himself of them. What I didn't realize at the time was that Nagy was determined to get rid of them all since the Suslov meeting, but felt he had to go slowly.

On Monday the 29th, Nagy called me and said he was going to take over the responsibility for Foreign Affairs, and he ur-

gently needed me to assist him. I felt it obligatory to respond to this appeal and decided to enter the Civil Service as Deputy Foreign Minister.

Our first discussions again turned to the theme of Hungary's neutrality, which we had discussed the previous summer in theory, but now had to face as an actual fact. I felt that it was now the only "way out" for the Russians, and in face of a declaration of neutrality, they could withdraw their forces without seeming to have suffered a military defeat. I drafted the declaration on a piece of note paper in my own hand. I remember taking it home to my wife to keep as a souvenir, but when the Russians arrested Nagy later, we decided to burn it.

Gerő had sent Imre Horváth[48], who was then Foreign Minister, Endre Sík[49] and the other members of the UN delegation to New York via Prague. On Tuesday, October 30 Nagy recalled Horváth from Prague and told him to return to Budapest. They were arrested by the Czech police in Bratislava on Wednesday, 31 October. We heard that Horváth "had been taken to Moscow". That was the last we heard of Horváth until he turned up again with Kádár[50] in Szolnok.

By Thursday, 1 November, reports of Soviet troops pouring into Hungary had become very alarming and at about 10 a.m. Nagy called in Andropov, the Soviet Ambassador, to complain about their troops' movements. Andropov replied that the Soviet government maintains its previous declaration[51] and is ready to negotiate regarding the withdrawal of Soviet troops. He was called back at 1 p.m. and was told that new troops were coming toward Budapest, At 2 p.m. Nagy protested to the UN about the entrance of Soviet troops into Hungary.[52]

At 4 p.m. the cabinet accepted the neutrality declaration and we invited the United States, British, French, Polish and Yugoslav Ministers and Ambassadors informing them that we are going to declare Hungary's neutrality and asked them to guarantee it.[53] Andropov was called back at 5 p. m. and informed of the declaration. He was not particularly upset about it, but said that Moscow had only one request: that these matters be settled among ourselves, and that we should withdraw our protest to the UN against the new troops coming in. He said that the whole matter could be arranged.

It was at this interview with Andropov that Kádár held his impassioned speech in which he took the Soviets seriously to task for reinforcing their units in Hungary. He said that he knew full well that the declaration of neutrality meant the end of Communism for Hungary, and that meant the end of his life, because he had dedicated his whole life to the Communist Party. Without the Party, he would be nothing, because the Party was his life. But if the Soviets attempted to intervene in Hungary with the further use of arms, it would be the Soviets themselves who brought the counter-revolution to Hungary, and he would take to the streets with a pistol against Russian tanks and give his life for his country.[54]

At 10 p.m. that night, Kádár and Münnich were called to the Soviet Embassy. According to the driver, they got out of their car in front of the Embassy, got into another car waiting there, and were never seen again until the Soviets marched in on the 4th.

We again directed an appeal to the UN that night at 8 p.m. as reports of Soviet reinforcements continued to pour in. This time we requested the UN to intervene.[55]

On the 2nd of November we again discussed with Andropov the matter of neutrality. He said his government was willing to accept the wishes of Nagy and was willing to discuss all problems in a conference. The conference about the withdrawal

Who's Got the Warsaw Pact?

Let's not forget a tragicomic episode.

After the decision had been taken to leave the Warsaw Pact, indeed after we had given verbal notice, and all that was needed was to put it in writing, we wanted to have a look at a copy of the Treaty itself, to discover what exactly we were repudiating. Of course we suspected that there might well be a clause which makes the entry of foreign troops into the country conditional on a request by the Hungarian government. If that was so, then the Russians had broken it, and there was need to refer to that. It was also possible that there was a secret clause of some sort. Well, then, let's read it. None of us, including Imre Nagy, had ever seen the Warsaw Pact. We had a search through the Foreign Ministry's Registry. No Warsaw Pact. The Prime Minister's Archives contained the Foreign Archives, a copy of all the more important foreign agreements was at hand there too—we had a look—nothing there. Where the hell could it be then? We sent a message to the Ministry of Defence. They searched high and low. No luck! The Ministry of Finance also had archives of their own. That was taken apart too. Nothing—they knew nothing of it. Feverish, headless rushing around all along the line. Where was the Warsaw Pact?

Jóska Szilágyi had an idea.

"Perhaps the ÁVÓ (State Security) have a copy."

He rang the ÁVÓ and there it was, the single copy of the agreement.

In next to no time an ÁVÓ messenger brought it.

Just by the way: no secret clause of any kind. And we had been right. It was there, in black and white: the troops of the signatory countries could only enter the territory of any of the contracting countries at the written request of the government concerned, plus its Minister of Defence.

From an oral history interview made by Zsolt Csalog with György Heltai in 1983, in Charleston, S.C.

of Hungary from the Warsaw Pact should be held outside of Hungary; we preferred Warsaw. A second conference, to be held in Budapest, should concern itself with the technical aspects of the withdrawal. It was also on Friday that Béla Kovács arrived in Budapest from Pécs. He attended his first cabinet meeting in the morning of 3 November. On Saturday the 3rd, the technical meeting began. We were represented by General Pál Maléter[56], Minister of State Erdei, and General István Kovács[57]. During the course of that Saturday, our military people told us that up to 4,000 Soviet tanks had entered the country and most of the members of the Government were deeply concerned over this. The Hungarian staff said, however, that Soviet intentions were not certain. There were characteristics of an attack and a withdrawal under duress which were common to both and even Soviet occupation of the airfields two

or three days before could well be interpreted as a Soviet defensive measure to protect their rear.

The new government of Nagy was finally announced Saturday afternoon after the morning cabinet session. Nagy had finally succeeded in ridding himself of all Communists except János Kádár, whose whereabouts we still didn't know, and General Pál Maléter. Maléter was a latecomer to the revolution. Previously we had always considered him a too rabid Communist to work with. And along with Nagy was his friend and supporter, Géza Losonczy. The rest of the cabinet was composed of members of all the newly founded democratic parties, including, as Minister of State, Anna Kéthly, the only member of Nagy's government who found herself in freedom when the Russians began their second attack.

Soviet good intentions were further boosted by the results of the morning technical military meeting, which broke up at 4 p.m. The Soviets were very friendly, wanted to leave with the greatest possible saving of face, and requested that the Hungarians give them farewell parties and in general make it seem like a gala occasion. They also asked that the Soviet military monuments be restored. Nothing was said about the Stalin monument. The Soviets suggested that the meeting be continued that night at 10 p.m., and it was from this meeting that Maléter, Erdei and Kovács never returned.

Nagy slept in Parliament the night of 3–4 November, his son-in-law, Jánosi[58], who had been functioning as his aides, went home. At 5 a.m. on the 4th, a car sent by Nagy came to take Mrs Nagy and the rest of the family to the Yugoslavs. Nagy met them there later in a separate car. Two days later he wrote a note to me asking me to go to his house and get all his personal papers. From then on, I was in constant touch with Nagy. I asked Mrs Rajk to come out, for she had also taken refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy although she had no real reason to, but she was frightened.

During the first week of the Soviet intervention and the Kádár government, nobody of the Nagy group was arrested. The first was Boldizsár, who was held for two days.

Finally Nagy asked me if he should come out. After talking with Déry, I told Nagy that he would have to come out. There was a growing feeling that the people were fighting the revolution by themselves while their leader was sitting in relative comfort in the Yugoslav Embassy. All Nagy had was his popularity with the people, and he would have to risk his life if he wanted to run a revolution. He had to risk it. If he were killed, it would be better to be killed than to lose the faith of the people and end in dishonour.

Three days before Nagy did come out, Lukács[59], Szántó[60] and Zoltán Vas[61] left by themselves and were promptly arrested by the Russians. We decided that if the Yugoslavs made an agreement with Kádár, it might offer some advantage of safety to Nagy. There was never any pressure by the Yugoslavs to get him to leave.

Nor is it true that Kádár ever tried to negotiate with Nagy while he was at the Yugoslav Embassy. He did tell one workers' delegation, "I would kiss Nagy's hand if he took over the government again... but only if he took it on a socialist basis."[62]

Who runs Kádár?

Some Sergeant from the NKVD[63]. Of course, that's too simple, but that's what it means.

But I don't understand what Kádár did. He went through some pretty difficult times at the hands of the ÁVH himself, and was in jail with you. Why didn't he support Nagy fully?

Well, you see, Kádár arrested *us*. Kádár always supported the Party, although he was opposed to Rákosi. And Kádár always believed in his heart that Rákosi and Farkas[64] one day would come to him and talk over the 1949 evidence and clarify his role in that problem. Even when the question became acute, he continued to support the Party and Gerő against Nagy, and continued to oppose Nagy as a Party rebel until the last minute. There are two kinds of Communists: those who believe in the Party, and nothing else; and those who believe that what they are doing is for the good of the people. Kádár is a Party man, and the Party is his entire existence, just as he said to Andropov.

Kádár never understood the aims of Nagy and the people around him. As late as at the Rajk funeral, he said to Nagy and Mrs Rajk, "What do you want of the past? We must now unite and build up a new party and new life."

I suppose we were stupid to believe in Kádár, but we did because he was Hungarian, he was a proletarian, and he had never been to Moscow. We actually thought he had been kidnapped by the Russians that night.

When Nagy and his party emerged from the Embassy, he and the entire group were taken by the Soviets, as you know. He spent two days in Soviet Headquarters in Budapest, and then disappeared.

I think he is probably still alive, because they don't want any real martyrs. They saw what an artificial martyr like Rajk could do after he had been dead several years. Besides, they have their methods. Perhaps they think they can soften up Nagy in due time and bring him back a changed man to play on his popularity. But I don't think Nagy will be broken, and if he does return, it will again be on his own terms.

Why did the Soviets arrest Nagy? It was such a cynical move that it denied Kádár any semblance of support from the people forever.

First, if Nagy were really permitted to live in Budapest a free man, deputations and demonstrations would inevitably take place before his house and this would tend to keep the revolutionary spirit stirred up. And secondly, it was a good thing to get the whole Nagy clique at once.

The Nagy arrest denied any support to Kádár, but he could see by then that he didn't have any anyhow.

The problem of which Hungarian rules in Hungary is no great problem in Russia anyhow. The Soviet empire is the real problem. Probably somebody today is asking in the Kremlin, "By the way, what is going on in Hungary these days?" But there can be no real concern, because the army is there in full control. ❧

NOTES

1 ■ Mátyás Rákosi (1892–1971). Epitomizes Stalinism in Hungary. The No. 1 leader of the Communist Party between 1944 and July 1956, when he was forced to retire and go into exile in the Soviet Union where he lived for the rest of his life.

2 ■ Imre Nagy (1896–1958). Communist politician, Prime Minister between 1953 and 1955 and after October 24th 1956. Sentenced to death and executed in June 1958.

3 ■ That Imre Nagy should have urged the restoration of multi-party democracy before 1956 is not confirmed by other sources. What he had mentioned was coalition government under communist leadership.

4 ■ Géza Losonczy (1917–1957). Journalist and communist politician, prominent within the inner-party opposition group centred around Imre Nagy. Minister of State in the Nov. 2 1956 government,

deported to Romania with Imre Nagy and others of his associates. Died in Budapest while force-fed during pre-trial detention.

5 ■ Ferenc Donáth (1913–1986). Lawyer, communist politician, member of the Imre Nagy group. Among those deported to Romania. On Imre Nagy's personal staff at the end of October 1956. Sentenced to twelve years imprisonment in 1958, released in 1960. Prominent in the democratic opposition of the seventies and eighties.

6 ■ Petőfi Circle was a discussion group established by the communist youth movement in 1955. Came under the influence of the inner party opposition, particularly after the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. Arranged numerous meetings in 1956.

7 ■ László Rajk (1909–1949). Communist leader after 1945, Minister of the Interior between 1946 and 1948, later Minister for Foreign Affairs. Sentenced to death on trumped-up charges, executed in 1949. His reburial on October 6th 1956 was a milestone in the radicalization of the country.

8 ■ Júlia Rajk (1914–1981). Rajk's wife, arrested in 1949 at the same time as her husband and sentenced to five years imprisonment. Rehabilitated in 1954, and after that one of Imre Nagy's associates. As such deported to Romania.

9 ■ Antal Apró (1913–). Communist politician, Deputy Prime Minister between 1953 and Nov. 3rd 1956, member of the Political Committee between 1946 and 1951 and 1953 and 1956. After Nov. 4th 1956, one of the top leaders. Deputy Prime Minister between 1957 and 1971.

10 ■ György Pálffy (1909–1949). General, headed Military Intelligence after 1945. Condemned to death in a trial linked to Rajk's in the autumn of 1949, and executed.

11 ■ Tibor Szőnyi (1903–1949). Between 1945 and 1949 he was in charge of organizational matters in the central apparatus of the Communist Party. One of the accused in the Rajk trial. Executed in 1949.

12 ■ András Szalai (1917–1949). After 1945 deputy head of the cadre (staffing) section of the Communist Party. One of the accused in the Rajk trial. Executed in 1949.

13 ■ A CP and government delegation headed by Ernő Gerő left for Yugoslavia on October 15th 1956 and returned to Budapest on the morning of October 23rd.

14 ■ ÁVH are Hungarian initials of the State Security Authority.

15 ■ At 9 p.m. Imre Nagy addressed the huge crowd assembled outside the Parliament building.

16 ■ Imre Nagy had official notice of his appointment as Prime Minister. He had been present at the Central Committee meeting which, late at night on November 23rd, had nominated him.

17 ■ László Benjámin (1915–1986). A poet and, after 1953, a member of the inner party intellectual opposition centred on Imre Nagy.

18 ■ Heltai must be referring to Imre Nagy's radio address at 12.10 p.m. on October 24th. At that time, however, Nagy merely mentioned that those who laid down their arms by 2 p.m. that day would not be court martialled. The time was repeatedly extended in the days that followed.

19 ■ Ernő Gerő (1898–1980). One of the top communist leaders after 1945, in charge of economic policy. While in Moscow exile between the wars, worked for the Comintern, later became the Soviet OGPU's man in Spain during the Civil War, executing dozens of communists as "Trockyites", for which he earned the epithet "Butcher of Barcelona". First Secretary after Rákosi's fall in July 1956, in exile in the Soviet Union until 1960, earned his living as a translator after his return to Hungary.

20 ■ The provocation theory here mooted by Heltai was widely believed in 1956. Recent research, however, suggests that there was no such intent on Gerő's part. He asked for Soviet help in the belief that the presence of Soviet troops would restore order, as it had done in East Berlin in 1953.

21 ■ Recent research does not confirm any move towards Budapest by Soviet troops as early as the afternoon of October 23rd. The Soviet command only agreed to carry out Gerő's request in the evening hours, issuing the order to occupy Budapest at 9 p.m.

22 ■ Iván Boldizsár (1912–1988). Edited *Új Magyarország*, a weekly, in 1956. Deputy Foreign Minister between 1947 and 1951 as the nominee of the National Peasant Party. Associated with the Imre Nagy group between 1953 and 1956. Held high offices in Hungarian and International PEN. Founded *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, the predecessor to this journal in 1960 and edited it up to his death in 1988.

23 ■ The statue of General Bem, a Pole who commanded Hungarian troops in the 1848–49 Revolution. The October 23rd demonstration started at different points in the city, the demonstrators all headed for General Bem's statue.

24 ■ Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan (1895–1978), Mihail Andreevich Suslov (1902–1982), members of the Soviet Presidium, Ivan Alexandrovich Serov (1905–1991), the KGB Chief and Mihail Sergeevich Malinin (1899–1960), the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, travelled to Budapest together, arriving on October 24th.

25 ■ Sándor Haraszty (1897–1982). A communist journalist who, in 1951, was sentenced to death on

trumped-up charges, reprieved, released in 1954 after which he became a prominent member of the inner party opposition centred on Imre Nagy. Deported to Romania in November 1956, with Imre Nagy and others of his associates. Sentenced to six years of imprisonment in 1958.

26 ■ Miklós Vásárhelyi (1917–). After 1945, foreign editor of *Szabad Nép*, the Communist Party daily, in 1954 and 1955 Deputy Head of the Office of Information. A close associate of Imre Nagy in the inner party opposition. The Spokesman of the Imre Nagy government in 1956. Deported to Romania with Imre Nagy and his associates, condemned to five years imprisonment in the Imre Nagy trial. Founding member and first President of the Committee for Historical Justice in 1989.

27 ■ Miklós Gimes (1917–1958). A journalist who was one of the most active members of the inner party opposition centred on Imre Nagy. A leading figure of the post November 4th 1956 intellectual and political opposition. Tried with Imre Nagy, condemned to death, and executed.

28 ■ Of all the listed associates of Imre Nagy, Losonczy and Donáth were the only members of the Party Presidium.

29 ■ Tibor Déry (1894–1977), the writer, was a prominent member of the intellectual opposition associated with Imre Nagy. A spokesman for fellow writers during and after the Revolution. Condemned to nine years imprisonment in 1957 and released in 1960.

30 ■ It was not then that events were reevaluated but at the meeting of the Political Committee on October 27th and 28th.

31 ■ Béla Kovács (1908–1959). General Secretary of the Smallholders Party after 1945. Arrested in February 1947, and released in 1956. Minister of Agriculture, then Minister of State in the Imre Nagy Government.

32 ■ Zoltán Tildy (1982–1961). A Calvinist minister who became a leader of the Smallholders Party. Prime Minister in 1945, President of the Republic from 1946 to 1948. Minister of State in the second Imre Nagy Government. Condemned to six years imprisonment as part of the Imre Nagy trial.

33 ■ József Bognár (1917–). Prominent member of the Smallholders Party, held various ministerial posts between 1946 and 1956, Deputy Prime Minister in 1956, as well as a member of the second Imre Nagy Government. After 1956 held numerous academic posts and honorary functions in a number of associations.

34 ■ Ferenc Erdei (1910–1971). A sociologist who was a founding member and later General Secretary of the National Peasant Party. Between 1948 and 1956 he held a number of government posts. He was arrested by the KGB at Tököl, on November 3rd 1956, where he negotiated on the withdrawal of Soviet troops as a member of a Hungarian Government delegation. He was released after a few weeks. General Secretary of the Patriotic People's Front between 1964 and 1970, and General Secretary and later Vice President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences between 1957 and 1971.

35 ■ Suslov stayed in Hungary between June 8th and 14th, that is a month earlier, confirming Rákosi in his position on behalf of the Soviet Union.

36 ■ The reference is to Mikoyan's above mentioned July visit.

37 ■ There is no confirmation so far that the arrest of Imre Nagy was considered by the central leadership. The case described above, however, was reported by Imre Nagy in a letter addressed to the Central Committee and the Central Control Committee on October 6th 1955. That letter mentions that the local State Security people tried to force Károly Györffi, who had been a communist in Kaposvár in 1919, to bear false witness about an alleged conspiracy organized by Imre Nagy. (The letter was published in: György T. Varga: Nagy Imre politikai levelei 1954. december 14.–1956. október 9. ["Imre Nagy's Political Letters, Dec 14th 1954–Oct 9th 1956"] in: *Új Fórum* 1989. No. 4).

38 ■ These writings were first published abroad. Imre Nagy: *On Communism. In Defence of the New Course,* London, Thames & Hudson, 1957,

39 ■ István Kovács (1911–). A communist apparatchik. On Rákosi's personal staff.

40 ■ On April 14th 1955 Imre Nagy was dismissed as Prime Minister as well as losing his positions in the Political and the Central Committee.

41 ■ The chapter devoted to foreign policy in fact made up twenty to twenty-five typewritten pages. Heltai probably remembered the length of the entire manuscript, which was around two hundred pages.

42 ■ G.M. Malenkov (1902–1988). Prime Minister between 1953–55.

43 ■ *Szabad Nép:* the Party daily. See note 26.

44 ■ Imre Nagy moved to the Parliament building on October 28th.

45 ■ László Piros (1917–). Minister of the Interior in 1956. Heltai is probably referring to the fact that the radio was controlled by the Ministry of the Interior.

46 ■ Jenő Széll (1912–1994). An active member of the inner party opposition centred on Imre Nagy. Appointed Government Commissioner in Charge of the Radio on Nov 1st 1956.

47 ■ Gyula Illyés (1902–1983), the poet and writer.

48 ■ Imre Horváth (1901–1958). Diplomatist, Foreign Minister from July to November 2nd 1956 and then from November 7th to his death.

49 ■ Endre Sík (1891–1978). Diplomatist. Deputy Foreign Minister (1957–1958), Foreign Minister (1958–1961).

50 ■ János Kádár (1912–1989). First and then General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party between 1956 and 1988, between Nov 4th 1956 and 1958, and between 1961 and 1965 also Prime Minister.

51 ■ Reference is to the Soviet government declaration of October 30th 1956.

52 ■ This is an error. Imre Nagy's telegramme to the UN General Secretary was sent after the Declaration of Neutrality and after Ambassador Andropov of the Soviet Union was informed at 5 p.m.

53 ■ The heads of diplomatic missions en poste in Budapest were also informed after Andropov. It was explained that Hungary had left the Warsaw Treaty and that the government had declared the country's neutrality. The assistance of the four Great Powers was requested in the defence of neutrality.

54 ■ Heltai's is the only evidence available for the passion shown by Kádár. Andropov, in his report, mentioned that Kádár had supported Imre Nagy. In Moscow, on Nov 2nd, Kádár had indeed warned Soviet leaders that if order were restored by military means "the moral position of the communists would be equal to nil." (*A Jelcin-dosszié* [The Yeltsin File] Soviet Documents on 1956 ed. By Éva Gál, András B. Hegedűs, György Litván, János M. Rainer, Századvég – 1956 Institute. Budapest, 1993, p. 74 and *Döntés a Kremlben, 1956. A szovjet pártelnökség vitái Magyarországról.*. [Decision in the Kremlin Soviet Leaders Discuss Hungary] – ed. by Vyachslav Sereda and János M. Rainer, 1956 Institute, Budapest, 1996, and also János M. Rainer's article on pp. 24–41 of this issue.

55 ■ The telegramme was sent on November 2nd. Imre Nagy asked the General Secretary of the UN to call on the Great Powers to recognize the neutrality of Hungary, and he also requested that the Security Council should instruct the Hungarian and the Soviet governments to start negotiations immediately on the withdrawal of troops.

56 ■ Pál Maléter (1917–1958), a professional soldier and one of the military leaders of the 1956 Revolution. Appointed Minister of Defence on Nov. 3rd. Arrested by the Soviet authorities at Tököl in the night of Nov. 3–4th in the midst of negotiations on troop withdrawals. Tried with Imre Nagy, condemned to death, and executed.

57 ■ István Kovács (1917–). Chief of the General Staff at the time of the 1956 Revolution. Arrested at Tököl during the negotiations. Sentenced to six years imprisonment in 1958.

58 ■ Ferenc Jánosi (1916–1968). Calvinist minister, Imre Nagy's son-in-law. An active member of the opposition centred around Imre Nagy. Deported to Romania in November 1956, and condemned to eight years imprisonment in the Imre Nagy trial.

59 ■ György Lukács (1885–1971), the philosopher was Minister of Education in the second Imre Nagy Government. Deported to Romania, confined himself to philosophy after his return.

60 ■ Zoltán Szántó (1893–1977), an apparatchik and ambassador after 1945. At the end of October one of the six-man presidium of the Hungarian Communist Party (Working People's Party), on Nov. 1st member of the Executive Committee of the Party. Deported to Romania, after his return in 1956 he disassociated himself from his fellows.

61 ■ Zoltán Vas (1903–1983). Helped direct the economy after 1945. Removed from all his offices in 1952, Commissar for Victualling of the second Imre Nagy Government. Deported to Romania. Confined himself to authorship after his return.

62 ■ No such declaration by Kádár is known. It is true that he said, in the course of discussions on Nov. 14th with the leaders of the Central Workers' Council of Greater Budapest, that he did not think of Imre Nagy as a counter-revolutionary, and that it was up to Nagy to decide whether he wished to take part in political life.

63 ■ A Soviet political and military mission directed the restoration of order in Hungary. Its members were: Suslov, Aristov, Malenkov (all members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party), Serov (Chief of the KGB), Malinin (Deputy Chief of the General Staff) and Koniev (Commander in Chief of the Integrated Forces of the Warsaw Pact countries).

64 ■ Mihály Farkas (1904–1965). A member of the top Party leadership after 1945, Minister of Defence 1948–1951; because of his role in arbitrary actions he was expelled by the CP in the summer of 1956, later arrested, and sentenced to sixteen years imprisonment in 1957. He was released in 1960. On his role in the Rajk trial see an article by Tibor Hajdu, together with a transcript of an interrogation of Rajk concluded by Farkas *et al.* in *The HQ* No. 141, pp. 83–99.

François Fejtő

The Timeliness of Baron József Eötvös

A Great 19th-Century Social-Liberal Thinker

"This heir to the Enlightenment is the author of a prophetic work: in 1854 already he feared that the countries of the West were heading for levelling by the will of the state, a total bureaucratization of society, and the putting into jeopardy once again of the supreme value which individual freedom ought to be by the 'false and dangerous' notion of the sovereignty of the people."

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Of all the 19th-century Hungarian liberal thinkers Baron József Eötvös, novelist, essayist and statesman, was the most interesting and original, and the deepest. His work also best illustrates the importance of French culture as the dominant influence in Hungarian politics and intellectual life between 1830 and 1867.[1] In 1838, at the age of 27, Eötvös spent a year in France. In his youth, even before that date, he had been enthusiastic about the romanticism of Victor Hugo, devoting two of his early essays (1835 and 1837) to the author of *Hernani* and *La Légende des Siècles*; he had been passionate about the ideas of Lamennais, Pierre Leroux, the followers of Saint-Simon and the utopian socialists but in his maturity it was Guizot and later, and primarily, Tocqueville who stimulated his thinking.

Eötvös had been one of the leaders of the moderate reformers amongst

François Fejtő *is a noted French journalist and historian of Hungarian birth, a specialist in East–West relations and one-time editor of* Preuves. *His works include* Histoire des democraties populaires *(Seuil). The above was a contribution to a Round Table arranged by the Hungarian Cultural Institute in Paris, first published in French in* France-Forum.

1 ■ Baron Eötvös was born in Buda in 1813, the scion of an ancient aristocratic family loyal to the House of Habsburg, and completed his education in Pest and Vienna with the customary Grand Tour. Becoming involved in the patriotic movement of the thirties and forties, he took the side of those who prescribed an Anglo-French rather than a Prussian course for the future development of Hungary. His early novels, *The Carthusian* (1839), *The Village Notary* (1845), and *Hungary 1514* (1848) were protests against the exploitation of the serfs and the abuses of feudalism. In 1867 he was appointed Minister of Education in the first representative government elected after the Compromise with Austria of which he, Deák, and Andrássy had been the architects. He piloted legislation on the emancipation of the Jews and an extremely liberal National Minorities Act, which his successors did not implement. Eötvös died in 1871.

the aristocrats, a moving spirit in the great fight for reform in the eighteen forties; in September 1848, however, when the peaceful reform he had hoped for changed into a clash between the dynasty and the Hungarian nation, and also a civil war, Eötvös retired from politics and took refuge in Munich. After 1859, in exile in Germany, he wrote his major work, *The Influence of the Dominant Ideas of the 19th Century on the Evolution of Societies and States,* which appeared in German before it was published in Hungary. Although this work already bears the mark of Tocqueville's ideas, whose books Eötvös had carefully studied, and of Montalembert, whom he was to meet in 1853, in his reflections on democracy Eötvös went further than the author of *L'Ancient régime et la Révolution*. Eötvös thought of étatisme, of the bureaucratization of society, as an even greater danger to a liberal society than egalitarianism as such. It required considerable clairvoyance to predict in 1854—when his monumental work in two volumes appeared—that, if the Western countries did not change course, the road to levelling by the will of the state would confront them with the pathetic alternative of authoritarian regimes charged with assuring the safeguarding of private property and a communism which, through its radicalizing the democratic spirit, would lead to the total bureaucratization of society.

More than a hundred years later, after experiencing various turns of fascism and communism, we cannot help being amazed by the visionary powers of this aristocratic reformer whose predictions chime in with those of another great Hungarian writer, his contemporary Imre Madách, the author of *The Tragedy of Man*. It is not surprising, merely derisory, that István Sőtér, Eötvös's last biographer, an opportunist historian, trying hard to apply Marxist methods to his subject but with only clumsy success, should present the mature Eötvös, the prophetic Eötvös, as a traitor to his youthful Saint-Simonian utopianism. Eötvös did not betray it, he fulfilled it.

According to Leszek Kolakowski, what is primarily characteristic of the Romantics is a nostalgic quest for the beauty of a world that has gone, the world of the *ancien régime*. The romanticism of the young Eötvös, fed on Hugo and Lamartine, was of a different kind. It was essentially progressive, an heir to the Enlightenment, both liberal and social. There was nothing he scourged with greater force than the worship of the past of aristocratic contemporaries who were fond of appearing in a liberal guise. He condemned witch hunts, he argued for the emancipation of the Jews, of serfs and of Negroes, availing himself of the arguments of the Abbé Gregoire and of Macaulay. Few have drawn conclusions of the revolutions of 1789, 1830 and 1848 in France and Europe with greater objectivity than this liberal reformer who was never in the thrall of the revolutionary myth. Yet this is precisely what the above mentioned Hungarian historian reproaches him for, using arguments borrowed from the school of György Lukács and József Révai, the Hungarian Zhdanov.

In my view, Eötvös's book on the dominant ideas is one of the most intelligent analyses of European events of his time, and the peak of 19th-century Hungarian writing on politics.

Here, as an example, is what he wrote in 1851: "Where, as in France, social organizations were destroyed, where people were habituated to tutelage by the state, and the people were so to speak deprived of any potential for autonomy, the transition to another system will prove difficult, and recourse to Cesarism was predictable before the events of December." Eötvös asked why revolutions inspired by the glorious ideas of the century of the Enlightenment had to go bankrupt. Why did 1789 lead on to the Jacobins and Bonaparte? According to him, this was not due to errors inherent in the ideas themselves but to their mistaken application. He identified two factors as the source of this failure. First of all the replacement by the Jacobins and their successors of the ideology of liberty by the "false and dangerous" notion of the sovereignty of the people which implied the absolutization and deification of the inarticulate placed above that supreme value which is the liberty of the individual. This substitution of the people for individual liberty inevitably ended up, according to Eötvös, in the progressive strengthening of an *étatisme* which the revolution had inherited from the monarchy, an *étatisme* at the opposite pole to that desire for freedom which had imbued the best spirits of 1789. The English model was much more reasonable. That was concerned primarily with preventing absolute power on the part of the state, taking the precaution of limiting it and of creating countervailing powers.

According to Eötvös, the bureaucratization of society, associated with egalitarianism, was bound to end up in despotism, since only despotism could force people to be happy against their will. "In fact if a people has fought for freedom and won, this liberty must be defended less against its old and disarmed enemies but against those who, on the excuse that liberty can be safeguarded only with the help of an absolute power exercised in the name of the sovereign people, use that liberty purely as an instrument of their own power." Stalin had not yet been born when these lines were written.

The sole domain which, following the political revolutions, would escape the absolute power of the state was private property, "the foundation of respect for individual liberty." But it is highly likely, he added prophetically that as a logical consequence of evolution, the State would extend its powers to cover property as well, desiring to administer and govern it, claiming that it was serving the common good. The day would then come when the dispossessed would no longer put up with submission and humiliation. Eötvös cited Lamennais who predicted a more just distribution of goods. He did not agree with that Christian progressive French thinker. According to him, taxes, as such, and as instruments of redistribution, could reach a point where they absorbed a good part of income, if not all. At the next stage the absolute power of the State could lead to the unlimited power of certain individuals and the world would be on the way towards Caesarism, either in the service of the property owning classes, or as a communist tyranny.

For Eötvös the second factor which threatened liberty was the principle that every nation had a right to self-determination and to form its own state. Eötvös participated in the 1848 events without, however, wishing to take Hungary out of the Habsburg Empire. He opposed the national principle since the latter, according to him, could not be truly asserted except by destroying historic rights and the framework of established states. In his view, the unification of Germany could well imply aggression threatening the frontiers of Denmark, Austria, France, and even Russia. In the name of the self-determination of nations the French could claim Belgium, and Spain could claim part of French territory. Switzerland would be partitioned. "To speak of the equal rights of nations," Eötvös wrote, "was as absurd as taking the egalitarianism of individuals to excess."

It is interesting to compare Eötvös's ideas with those of Louis Dimier, a forgotten French historian. In his *Histoire de causes de nôtre décadence,* published in 1934, Dimier deplored "the barbarian regression towards which the national principle carries us." Dimier was one of those who understood the damage done to Europe at Versailles by the destruction of Austria-Hungary. "Its situation in the marches of Germany, in the Slav confines... made it a gathering point of peoples. The state, based on the reverse of the national principle, maintained the ancient Roman heritage that had cemented Europe for fifteen centuries. The capital of Austria was the meeting place of knowledge, of manners and of the arts."

Eötvös claimed considerable autonomy for Hungary within the framework of the Empire but, like Dimier almost a hundred years later, he was convinced that "neither Prague, nor Pest could replace Vienna." He also understood that the national principle applied where nations were inextricably intermingled could only lead to regression in Europe, to "trouble, terror, the greed of conquest, and megalomania," as he was to write à propos the Balkanization of Central and Eastern Europe as the inevitable consequence of the destruction of the last multinational empires.

Eötvös's critique of nationalist ideologies has lost none of its validity; the tragedy of former Yugoslavia offers striking confirmation. But history has denied his conviction that the Austro-Hungarian Empire could be reformed. Federalization alone could have prevented a falling apart. If it is true that all nationalism contains, at least in the bud, an unacknowledged imperialism and a tendency towards homogenization, it is equally true that this can only be transcended—in the absence of an authoritarian force of integration—by the satisfaction of a legitimate desire for autonomy on the part of the peoples who live in the Central European area. Integration and the transcendence of nationalism will not be possible—as has become more obvious since 1989—except after a period of the effective acquisition of national autonomies and the democratic regulation of the problem of national minorities.[2] ❧

2 ■ See my "Nations, minorités, Europe", *Esprit*, October 1994.

Ágnes Deák

József Eötvös and Lord Acton

Meeting at the Crossroads of Liberalism and the Critique of Nationalism

The opportunity rarely occurs to trace a process whereby the work of a Hungarian thinker was assimilated by his contemporaries in Western Europe. Such an exception is an essay by the statesman, political thinker and novelist Baron József Eötvös (1813–1871), *A tizenkilencedik század uralkodó eszméinek befolyása az államadalomra* (The Influence of the Dominant Ideas of the 19th Century on the Evolution of Societies and States). Through a German edition, the first volume of which appeared in 1851 and the second in 1854, it elicited a considerable response in Europe. In a study of Eötvös's critical reception abroad, Győző Concha surveys in detail the contemporary responses, both the published reviews and the private letters addressed to the author. Those who responded in one way or other included Charles Montalembert, Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, K. J. Anton Mittermaier, F. L. Georg von Raumer, Joseph M. von Radowitz, Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer, Alexis de Tocqueville, Julian Schmidt, E. R. Laboulaye, Victor Cherbuliez and Johann Kaspar Bluntschli.[1] Concha's study, and the original commentaries and letters in particular, make it quite obvious that this general appreciation was accorded to Eötvös for his fundamental ideas on the relationship of liberty and equality. Among his century's dominant ideas, however, Eötvös also included nationality, and he thoroughly examined its historical and political role and the desirable direction it should develop in. The lack of response to this was a telltale silence on the part of his commentators. Cherbuliez flatly stated that he would not broach this question; Julian Schmidt offered a half-sentence to Eötvös's emphasis on nationalism which, in his view, constituted an important element as to the character of a state; Radowitz expounded on the principle of nationalism as a distinctive feature of contemporary Europe and the soul of the state when properly joined in the course of historical development. Yet none of these statements tally with either Eötvös's premises or conclusions; indeed, they seem indirectly to refute them. An examination of the works regarded as parallels to Eötvös's *Dominant Ideas,* such as *L'Ètat et ses limites* by Laboulaye, *Ideen zu einem Versuch, die Grenzen der Wirksamkeit des Staats zu bestimmen* by Wilhelm von Humboldt, *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill, *La liberté* by

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Jules Simon and *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* by Tocqueville, we find no theories that could be studied in comparison with Eötvös's ideas on nationality.

In his *Joseph Eötvös and the Modernization of Hungary, 1840–1870,* Paul Bödy calls attention to the fact that Lord Acton, the highly respected liberal historian of the second half of the 19th century, held historical and political views on the idea of nationalism very similar to those of Eötvös's. Both averred that "absolute popular sovereignty and the theory of nationalism based on it would destroy individual rights and establish an absolute tyranny in modern society."[2]

In his "Nationality", Lord Acton expounded on the role of nationalism and national movements in the philosophy of history and politics. We know that the Hungarian public of the time had strong reservations on the nationality policy Eötvös proclaimed in his work; they saw in it a critique of the efforts to create a Hungarian nation-state. Parallels to Acton's theory of nationality are similarly hard to find in the history of political thought in 19th century Britain. For the Victorian public the idea of the British Empire was a point of departure, and this provided no place for the nation-state, the idea of which elsewhere on the Continent had a crucial role in the national movements. Belief in the superiority of British culture and a sense of political and cultural mission were also strong. Recently, there has been a trend in British historiography itself to revise the long-accepted general view that elements of nationalism, as it developed on the Continent, were absent in Britain, patriotism being present instead. Much research now testifies to the strong presence of cultural and political nationalism in British political thought in the last century.

For reasons of birth and upbringing, Lord Acton did not really feel at home in this Victorian intellectual climate. On his father's side he was connected to the English Catholic squirearchy, and he was connected to the old Whig landed aristocracy through his stepfather, Lord Granville, a liberal foreign secretary; his mother was a member of the Bavarian nobility and he was born in Naples, where his grandfather had been Admiral and Prime Minister. His schooling was in Munich; he was equally fluent in English, German, French and Italian. Cosmopolitanism was for him a natural condition. "Lord Acton was a European. At any rate, he was not exactly English....", John Nurser says of him in a book published 1987.[3] This sense of being alien was enhanced by his being a Catholic, which at the time was a considerable disadvantage in British political, if not in social, life.

Lord Acton's concept of nationalism and the nation-state was as special, and as atypical, in British thinking as were Eötvös's views in Hungary. It was in the 1940s that his views were rediscovered and "modernized", as it were, to earn acclaim for him as a seer who had predicted the dangers of fascism as an extreme version of nationalism, and as a defender of national minority rights.

The historical philosophical framework of Eötvös's *Dominant Ideas* and Acton's essays of the early 1860s, (primarily "Nationality"), in which their nationality concepts appear, offer themselves for comparison. Identical points can be found in important aspects.

Both take as their points of departure the observation that individual liberty derives from Christian values and teaching and that modern political ideas originate in Christianity. Both view the development of European culture from a perceivably

Catholic standpoint. Specialists in Acton's work agree that in the first period of his working life Catholicism was the most important motif in his theoretical and political activity. His intellectual development was strongly influenced by his teacher at Munich, Ignaz von Döllinger, an eminent German liberal Catholic theologian. In the early 1850s Acton spent some years in Döllinger's home, and contacts between them remained strong right up to the beginning of the 1870s. On his return from Germany around 1858, Acton immediately joined the editorial staff of the liberal Catholic journal *The Rambler.* Between 1859 and 1865 he was a Whig member of parliament, representing a Catholic constituency in Ireland. He regarded the spiritual and political authority of a strong, independent and universal Catholic Church as the direct and strongest safeguard of individual liberty. His writing in this period reveals a degree of tension between his liberal political views and the political interests of the Catholic Church, on which his thought focussed. Conflicts with the Church hierarchy and its embodiment, in the form of papal authority, developed only after 1864, when the encyclical *Syllabus Errorum,* in which the Pope condemned liberal Catholic views, was issued.

Christian ideas meant a source of inspiration and the safeguard of individual liberty for József Eötvös as well. In his appraisal of the role of Protestantism in history, he emphasized the strenghthening of the monarch's despotism, just as Lord Acton did. However, he did not tie his political and historical principles to the actual political interests of the Catholic Church, as Lord Acton did in the early 1860s.

Their views also tallied in assessing the spiritual and political trends of contemporary Europe. Both argued against feudal absolutism of the old type, as well as despotism of the new type as represented by Napoleon III in France in the 1850s, interpreting the latter as French liberal democratic ideas come true. In their view, Napoleon's rule carried to fulfilment the two principles that had existed earlier in French liberalism—the emphasis on values of equality as against values of liberty, and the principle of the omnipotence of the state against the individual. Acton and Eötvös both argued against the two types of absolutism and both idealized English liberal constitutionalism, which safeguarded individual liberty by limiting the authority of the state. They also added two more principles to that of limiting the power of the state; these were decentralized self-government bodies and cultural, religious and other forms of self-organization through associations, leagues and societies independent of the state.

In their appraisal of contemporary political relations in Europe, both held as a basic principle that the line of development led towards large states and that large states had features especially favourable to civilization.

Austria occupied a central place in both their thinking. This is not surprising in Eötvös's case, for liberalism in Hungary had from the very beginning unequivocally maintained that the Habsburg Empire guaranteed the defence of Hungarians, wedged between a Russia with territorial ambitions and the great cultural block of the Germans. Events of the 1848–49 Revolution and the subsequent Hungarian War of Independence shook this belief in the case of some of the leading liberals who, in their subsequent exile, sought other modes of safeguarding Hungary's place in Europe. Secessionism, however, did not really become dominant in Hungary.

In the late 1850s and early 1860s, a period in which the power relations were being rearranged in Europe, Acton paid spe-

cial attention to the problem of the Austrian Empire. Austria for him was a defender of Catholic interests, with a calling to lead a unified Germany and spread German culture among the less developed nations in Central and Eastern Europe. An enthusiastic supporter of German unification, Acton was an unequivocal partisan of Grossdeutsch ideas and Catholic Austria as opposed to Protestant Prussia.

Acton's attitude to Austria is crucial when interpreting his essay on nationalism. Direct political experience and goals are as much evident in his work as they are clearly outlined in Eötvös's, primarily in those parts of *Dominant Ideas* on the idea of nationalism inspired by specific political events and goals, the 1848 revolutionary movements in Europe and the political and intellectual incertitude that set in in their wake. Acton's essay "Nationality" was published in the first, July 1862, issue of *Home and Foreign Review,* the successor to *The Rambler.* From 1859 onwards, *The Rambler* had devoted attention to the events of the Franco-Austrian war and the ensuing domestic crisis in Austria. Lord Acton's library, (now in the Cambridge University Library) includes dozens of contemporary pamphlets printed in Austria at that time. His interest in Austria was most likely awakened by Ignaz von Döllinger, who already in August 1850, shortly after his arrival in Munich in July, took Acton to Austria with him. That journey was followed by several other visits. By the time Acton was involved with *The Rambler,* his interest in Austria resulted in a systematic examination of the political situation there. We know from his correspondence with Richard Simpson, a fellow *Rambler* editor, that he was already working on his essay "Nationality" when he wrote his articles on the political situation in Austria for the Current Events column of the review. It is hardly surprising then that his essay devotes several paragraphs to the country. His interest is further borne out by the autograph notes he made on the title page verso of a political pamphlet on Austria's domestic situation in his collection; these concern what was to become the basic idea of his essay, that nations constitute an obstacle to liberty as they interpret individual liberty as collective independence. Just as in the literature on Eötvös, some argue that he adjusted his policy too much to the interest of the preservation of the Habsburg Empire, so one critic of Acton's, Hugh Tulloch, also claims that his main motive in arguing against nationalism was the danger he thought it posed to the Catholic Church, and his preference for diversity as opposed to uniformity was nurtured by his admiration for the multilingual Austro-Hungarian Empire.[4] These may be over-simplifications, yet it is beyond doubt that the restoration of Austria's great power status, a rejuvenation of the Empire's structure and the constitutional transformation of its neo-absolutism were challenges and goals for both thinkers, and all the above can be traced in their political philosophy.

In "Nationality", Acton distinguished two types of contemporary national identity—the French and the British. He describes the French type of identity as one based on common language, the belief in a common origin as well as natural and racial factors. As opposed to this, the British type puts emphasis on and represents the significance of historical bonds and the power of political and moral cohesion. Acton's goal was to produce a critique of the French type, and in doing so he combined several different elements.

To begin with, Acton firmly rejected a concept of nation based on ethnic, linguistic and cultural factors. From this aspect,

incidentally, he was wrong in directing his criticism against the French concept of national identity, as the modern French nation at the end of the 18th century was not formulated as a linguistic and cultural unity. The French nation was conceived as the embodiment of a new type of political community based on the sovereignty of the people as its legitimizing factor. This is true even though elements of linguistic nationalism had already appeared at the time of the French revolution.

Acton, however, extended his criticism also to this new type of political integration. In other works he wrote in the early 1860s, he provided in a more generalized form a critique of the principle of the sovereignty of the people as the main element in modern political legitimacy, and this is the foundation on which he argued against democratic principles and movements. In this respect he emphasized that, "the idea of the sovereignty of the people, uncontrolled by the past, gave birth to the idea of nationality independent of the political influence of history."[5] This statement is debatable, for the French concept of nationality took as its point of departure the community of citizens embodied by the institution of the state. True, this political community was defined as one deliberately breaking with a feudal state based on estates. In this respect, rejecting the authority of the past was a fundamental element in the French concept. Acton focussed his criticism on "that absolute right of national unity which is a product of democracy", an idea of national based on "the perpetual supremacy of the collective will",[6] which for him was the most dangerous form the principle of democratic equality could manifest itself in. As opposed to this equality and the striving for egalitarianism that follow from it, Britain embodied "that claim of national liberty which belongs to the theory of freedom"[7]. His thoughts on the French idea of the national are therefore closely linked to his more general views on the philosophy of history and politics based on an opposition of liberal and democratic principles.

For Acton, the two European concepts of nationality, one based on common language and culture, the other on the political community of the state, were equally unacceptable. He spoke of the sentiment of nationality as something given by Nature and nurtured in Antiquity by the geographical isolation of nations and by religious and cultural differences. These differences, however, greatly diminished in the Christian civilization of Europe, though this did not mean that such sentiments disappeared. In Acton's opinion the main mistake and shortcoming of modern nationalism was the transformation of the sentiment of nationality into a political ideology and the endeavour to make the national unit the basic political and state unit; nationality "finally became the complete and consistent theory, that the state and the nation must be co-extensive."[8] The main target Acton directed his criticism of nationalism at was the concept of the nation-state.

The nation-state, based on the principle of the sovereignty of the state leads, according to Acton, to the total subordination of the individual to the state that embodies the collective will; thus the nation-state carries the germs of absolute state power more unlimited than has hitherto been seen. This leads to the subjugation not only of the individual but also of the minority ethnic groups living alongside the majority in that state, since they cannot be equal to the dominant nation, for then the state would not be a "nation-state". "The greatest adversary of the rights of nationality is the modern theory of nationality," is how Acton sums up his view.[9] He admitted that nation-

states developed in Europe through a cultural and linguistic unification process within the existing framework of the states—not that he thought this was either beneficial or desirable—but he flatly rejected the idea of redrawing frontiers in Europe in harmony with the national idea of the nation-state: "A State may in the course of time produce nationality; but that nationality should consitute a State is contrary to the nature of modern civilisation."[10]

As opposed to nation-states, Acton directed attention to multi-national empires in which the principle of nationality is important, though not dominant, and where nations can coexist without oppression. The political sphere of the empire is one of a unity in which no special national differences and aspects are allowed to play a decisive role and where the area in which to cultivate specific national features is taken by society organizing itself in associations, religious denominations, educational institutions and so forth. It is possible to create harmony of this kind between nations, just as various denominations can live side by side within a state. Acton also touched upon the fact that this harmony did not automatically follow from the existence of an empire; Britain had achieved it, but it was an unanswered question still within the Austrian Empire. A centralized empire counterbalanced by the principle of autonomy for local government, can ensure a framework for national diversity and individual liberty. In the context of a "divided patriotism"[11] which is recommended instead of nationalism, the existence of the various "nations" may act as the most effective counterbalance to excesses of state power. In Acton's autograph notes in the Cambridge University Library, the recurring thought is that national movements are unconscious reactions to the growing power of the state and it is onto them that the important role of containing it will fall. Accordingly, the idea of nationality is no longer a factor limiting the liberty of the individual and the development of civilization, as in his view is inevitably the case within a nation-state; on the contrary, it is one of the most important safeguards of individual liberty: "While the theory of unity makes the nation a source of despotism and revolution, the theory of liberty regards it as the bulwark of self-government, and the foremost limit to the excessive power of the State."[12]

Acton came to the conclusion that the theory of nationalism was a historical regression in the course of civilization. The basic units of modern politics were states, not nations, and empires offered a more favourable framework in which to safeguard the values of progress and liberty for mankind than did nation-states. In his view the causes of political liberty and national sovereignty could only make a short-lived alliance, for genuine liberalism was incompatible with the programme of the nation-state.

The views expounded in Eötvös's *Dominant Ideas* are at many points close to those of Lord Acton. Eötvös also held that national diversity was the natural state among peoples, ethnic and nationality groups being the natural social formations of human coexistence, originally based on ties of blood. Their identity is rooted in the myth of a common origin in the past and a common language, religion, historical memories and geographical isolation. Through its spirit of universality however, Christianity brought the peoples of Europe closer in their culture and traditions in a considerable measure. It was with the emergence of Christianity that the modern individual was born as he was breaking away from his traditional communities, thereby loosening ties with the national community as well. National col-

lectivity was replaced by the individual as the protagonist of history and nationality ceased to be a political force for the integration of society and was relegated to the private sphere, similarly to what the modern interpretation of the freedom of worship implies. The main agent of social integration in European civilization is the state, and conceiving of states on the national principle, under the aegis of the nation-state, is a regression to an earlier historical condition. In other words, just like Acton, Eötvös criticizes the basic tenets of modern nationalism—the concept of nation as the main form of political community based on the principle of the sovereignty of the people and the ideal of the nation-state. He too explicates that reorganizing state power under the principle of nationality would constrain individual liberties, as majority rule based on the sovereignty of the people entails the rule of the majority nation above others. Eötvös, however, propagated the programme of "depoliticizing" the national idea: the sphere of nationality is neither politics nor the state but autonomous self-governments (independent of centralized state power), education, and the free association and religious practice of individuals. In a state organized in this manner, he claims, emotions and ambitions induced by nationality act as a welcome and useful counterbalance to excessive state authority. He is perceptibly thinking in terms of the framework of an empire.

The proximity of the two views could justify Paul Bödy's claim even if no direct influence between them could be detected. However, an examination of Acton's bequest in the Cambridge Univerity Library brings up clear evidence that we are not dealing here with a mere parallel in the history of ideas, as the result of a sensitivity towards similar contemporary problems. The surprising and hitherto unknown fact is that Acton had read Eötvös's *Dominant Ideas* and that, together with other thinkers and their works, it contributed to the shaping of his views.

No evidence of any personal encounter between them is available, even though spatially or temporarily it cannot be excluded. Acton arrived in Döllinger's home in Munich in July 1850; Eötvös spent the winter of 1849–50 in Munich and in the summer of 1850 until December 1850 he lived in Tutzing, an hour from Munich by train. Nor have we any knowledge of contacts between Eötvös and Döllinger. Indeed, Eötvös said in a letter to Menyhért Lónyay dated 2 October 1866, that since Johann Kaspar Bluntschli had moved to Heidelberg and Guido Görres had died he knew no-one at the University of Munich, nor did he correspond with anyone.[13] We can nevertheless safely assume that it was Döllinger who directed Acton's attention to *Dominant Ideas*. Acton became a passionate collector of books and the two-volume German edition of *Dominant Ideas* is there in his library, alongside a number of other works on Austria and Hungary.[14]

Acton's notes are evidence that he had read Eötvös's work and did not merely own it. From the late 1850s, Eötvös's name appears in his notebooks several times under the headings of federalism, national character and problems of nationality—unfortunately without any explication. In a list of articles planned for publication, not necessarily to be written by himself, that has come down from the time he was associated with *The Rambler*, we find the following note: "Hungary, political or literary. Eötvös."[15] (No essay on the subject was eventually published in the review.) The pencil marks Acton made in the pages of his books are also revealing as to what he was most interested in (he rarely wrote any notes in the margin). In the contents page of the first volume of Eötvös's

work, for instance, pencil marks appear solely at Chapters 3, 5 and 7, the three chapters in which issues of nationality are discussed. In the first volume, the pencil marks appear in the text itself only in the first eight chapters, in the second volume some marks are found only in the last chapter, a summary.

Győző Concha, who has made a painstaking survey of the reception of *Dominant Ideas* abroad, comments that very little is known of an echo in Britain. This is true even though an English translation of Eötvös's novel *A falu jegyzője (The Village Notary),* thanks to Ferenc Pulszky's good services, appeared as early as 1850, as Lóránt Czigány's study on the reception of Hungarian literature in Victorian England points out.[16] Thus Eötvös was not totally unknown to educated readers in Britain. Nevertheless, language difficulties and the still perceivable anti-Catholic sentiment in Britain provide ample explanation for the lack of response to *Dominant Ideas*. A short account of it appeared in *The Westminster Review* in 1855.[17] Acton also expressed his appreciation in the September 1861 issue of *The Rambler* in an article entitled "Austria and Hungary" which, though unsigned, was almost certainly by him. In this he writes: "His work on the 'Influence of prevailing ideas on the state' is the best existing confutation of the theories of democratic Liberalism, and an excellent defence of the principle of the limitation of authority."[18] Acton introduced Eötvös and Ferenc Deák to English readers as conservative politicians with sincere Catholic convictions, whose political views are based on historical law and whose characters and abilities match those of any statesmen of their time. Of the thoughts in *Dominant Ideas,* he singled out the critique of the sovereignty of the majority and the omnipotence of the state, in opposition to which Eötvös professed the autonomy of moral entities, among which he included nations. In this way, says Acton, the rights, and liberty of all nations become, similarly to individual rights, factors limitating the authority of the state.

Dominant Ideas was not the only work by Eötvös to have been found among Acton's books; his library contained also the German edition of the pamphlet on the guarantees of the power and unity of Austria, *Die Garantien der Macht und Einheit Oesterreichs (Ausztria hatalmának és egységének biztosítékai).* Acton's attention may have been called to this work during a visit in Austria in the autumn of 1859. In his letter of 7 April 1859 to István Széchenyi, Eötvös contrasted the "mighty irritation" his pamphlet had been met with in Hungary with the favourable reception it had elicited in both Vienna and Germany.[19] Acton's diary of his travels bears this out.[20] He cited Bernhard Meyer, author of the pamphlet *Rückblick auf die jüngste Entwicklungs-Periode Ungarns* (1857)[21], several times, whom he first met during his stay in Munich in the early 1850s and who had tutored him in German. Meyer thought highly of Eötvös's work which was remarkable coming from a great admirer of Bach's, the Habsburg minister who gave his name to the age, Acton comments. Meyer held that Eötvös was right in emphasizing that provinces should maintain their specific features and in part, he added, their government. Yet the great goal of creating the unity of the empire should not be lost from sight, indeed that should be foremost. He did not approve of Eötvös's proposal to divide the provinces of the empire into three groups—Slav, German and Hungarian—because in his view this would lead to a total "annihilation" of the German element in the empire. Acton's opinion is, his notebook tells us, that "the truth about Austria" is be-

tween these three, namely the pamphlet *Rückblick*, under the name of Meyer but reflecting rather directly Bach's views, Meyer's own programme as presented in the 1859 issue of *Historisch-Politische Blätter für das Katholische Deutschland*, and Eötvös's pamphlet.[22]

Acton then acquired Eörvös's pamphlet and read it too, as the pencil marks he made in it testify. He must have paid especial attention to Chapter 6, "Are Efforts Made by Various Peoples to Obtain National Rights Really Contrary to the Security and Authority of the Austrian State?", since the largest number of marks are found here. The volume also contains a note or two. Describing the status quo on page 19, Eötvös says that the Viennese government must reckon on complete passivity and a total lack of cooperation. Acton must have found this a momentous statement, for he jotted down the following note at the bottom of the page: "without resistance but without support". On page 71 we find the following note: "In Austria they ask what nationality shall prevail; whereas not nation, but state ought to."

Eötvös's pamphlet followed the lines he had marked out in his programme earlier in the 1850s taking as his starting-point the acceptance of the comprehensive interests of the empire. He emphasized that while in the past the legitimation of the Empire rested on personal union based on dynastic ties, in the present no such ties could guarantee the great power status and the inner stability of the Empire. At the same time, a new type of organization for state unity could only be built on the foundations of historical law and the historical development that had taken place till then. Therefore, the post-1849 neo-absolutist policy, aimed at totally abolishing the historically separate provincial entities, Hungary included, and at restoring an absolutist regime, was doomed to failure. Eötvös held that the unity of the Empire could only be strengthened given the principle of constitutionality, that the common portfolios of foreign affairs, defence, finance and commerce should be delegated to the authority of the Empire's parliament and government, while other matters should be left to provincial legislative bodies yet to be reinstituted and to the executive officials they would appoint, and administrative autonomy should be ensured for the provinces. In this case, within the framework of limited autonomy for the provinces, the demands of nations based on historical law, including Hungary's demand for a separate status, could be ensured, while the right to using the native language can be given to the various "non-historical" nations within local autonomy. Eötvös stressed that Hungary could lay no claim to a special legal status vis-à-vis the other provinces of the Empire, yet acknowledged that Hungary deserved predominance within the same context of provinces, because of the size of its population and its territory; in his view, this would be counterbalanced to some degree by the high economic levels of the hereditary provinces.

Acton had in his library the pamphlet *Oesterreichs Politik in Italien und die wahren Garantien seiner Macht und Einheit,* published by Ottokar Lorenz in 1859 in Vienna as a critical response to Eötvös's pamphlet to which its very title refers. The author of this averred that Eötvös's principal shortcoming lay in the fact that, while glorifying the historical character of the constitutions of the provinces, the tendency towards imperial centralization had prevailed in imperial politics for at least as long as the separatist claims of the provinces had, and creating the unity of the Empire remained the main task for the present as well, to which all other political goals are to be subjected. In the inner

page of the back cover of the pamphlet, Acton's note shows he agreed with that criticism: states with a single nationality may base their strength on patriotic devotion, rely in time of war on enthusiastic irregulars—in other words, on the power of the national movement. In multi-national states this is impossible, therefore a centralized state structure is called for as a counterbalance, consequently the coexistence of several national groups within a state does not in itself justify efforts at decentralization. Among Acton's notes there is a plan for an article on Austria which he never got round to writing: "Theory of legitimate centralization, against Eötvös."[23]

In an article in the September 1861 issue of *The Rambler,* Acton broaches Eötvös's pamplet in a few sentences. He mistakenly appraises Eötvös's programme as propagating a division of the Empire according to national principles. Acton's own idea for a constitutional transformation of the political organization of the Austrian Empire centred on the imperial parliament. Notwithstanding his biting remarks on Austrian politicians both in his articles and private notes, there was at least one person he never attacked, at least publicly, Anton Schmerling, who advocated a policy of constitutional and liberal centralization for the Empire. However, he was generally critical of the one-sided centralization policy of liberal parties on the Continent, the Austrian liberals included. He held that in order to contain excessive state power, the principle of decentralized self-government should be followed as a counterbalance. He proposed the decentralization of self-goverment for Austria as well, yet thought that dividing the empire into autonomous provinces was a mistaken idea.

We find no trace in Acton's library, correspondence or notes that he knew Eötvös's pamphlet published in 1860 in German, *Die Sonderstellung Ungarns vom Standpunkte der Einheit Deutschlands,* whose Hungarian version came a year later *(Magyarország különállása Németország egységének szempontjából).* We can only surmise that he knew of it and of the pamphlet, *A nemzetiségi kérdés* (On the Question of Nationality), as a result of a personal acquaintance of his, M. E. Grant Duff, mentioning both works, commenting briefly on the 1860 pamphlet, in his account summarizing several political works which *The North British Review* published in March 1866.[24] After the *Home and Foreign Review* had folded, Acton contributed to *The North British Review* and presumably read it as well. This 1860 pamphlet was much closer to Acton's own position on German unification. While Eötvös's 1859 pamphlet took as its point of departure the separate status of Austria and Germany, the main line of argument in the latter concerns the conditions and consequences of all-German unification. At the same time, however, in Austro-Hungarian relations any return to a personal union as its legal basis, as proclaimed by Eötvös, was unacceptable to Acton. The personal union was also endorsed by the liberal Hungarian political elite at the 1861 Diet. As already mentioned, *The Rambler* provided continuous coverage of the political events in Austria and Hungary in the late 1850s and early 60s, and Acton gave a detailed account of the Hungarian Diet of 1861 in the article already cited of September 1861. In spite of his words of appreciation for Deák and Eötvös, he clearly rejects their programme. He gives a detailed account of Eötvös's address in the Diet on 17 May, in which, following the line of arguments in his latest pamphlet, he maintained that a united Germany with Austria at its head would make the existence of the Habsburg Empire as a centralized state unfeasible, as only the German provinces could take part

in an entity like that. The very power ambitions Austria entertains in Germany call for a re-acknowledgement of the legitimation of the personal union as it originally existed in the Empire, and a rejection of the idea of a unified Empire. In Acton's interpretation, Eötvös in this address turned against his own views in *Dominant Ideas,* and practically surrendered the historic-conservative basis of his policy. "Admitting the right of each nationality to govern itself as a political unit, he preferred the natural physiological definition of the nation to the historical and political definition. His nation is the product of the family, not of the state. This is the fullest negation of history and tradition, and a thoroughly democratic idea."[25] These charges of Acton's are grave, and unjustified. The differences in their views on which political institutions were desirable for the Empire result much more from differing interpretations of historic law than from the difference between historic law and national legitimation, which consciously disregards the former. Acton viewed the existing unified imperial structure as legitimate and the only possible starting-point; for Eötvös the basic status of historic law was the situation that had been legally brought about in 1848 and, with this view, he returned to the mainstream of Hungarian liberal thought. By endorsing a programme for personal union, Eötvös did indeed accept the most important demand of the Hungarian liberal national movement, yet he remained a sober critic of linguistic and nationalist efforts made at creating a unified nation-state, which his contribution to preparing the 1868 Act on Nationalities clearly shows. Acton's claim that he detected some turning-point in Eötvös's views also testifies to the hypothesis that he considered that Eötvös in the 1850s as supporting the idea of nationality that he himself held desirable.

Acton's interest in Austria was at its most intensive between 1858 and 1862, after which it seemed to have slackened off. His not entirely voluntary giving up of editorial work was also a factor, since the liberal *Rambler* and *Home and Foreign Review* were constantly under attack from conservative Catholic circles in Britain. After 1862 Acton never published anything on Austria, and few references to Austria are found in his correspondence. He continued to acquire a good number of books and other publications on Austria and Hungary, but nothing by Eötvös is amongst them. Eötvös's name appears in his correspondence later, around the time of the first Vatican Synod when he attempted during his stay in Rome in 1870 to rally opposition within the Synod to the dogma of papal infallibility and to act as go-between between the minority in the Synod and Döllinger, who had remained in Munich keenly following the Synod's developments. The Hungarian church dignitaries were also part of this minority. Acton became friendly with Lajos Haynald, Bishop of Kalocsa, and established an especially close relationship with Bishop Strossmayer of Vukovár. Eötvös also maintained close contact with Bishop Haynald at the time he attempted to realize plans for Catholic autonomy; during the Synod, in his capacity as Minister for Religious Affairs and Public Education, he acted as go-between between the government and the clergy. Through Bishop Haynald, Acton was well-informed about the views of the Hungarian government; however, his relevant notes no longer carry any reference to either the personality or the work of Eötvös.

After decades of total neglect, Lord Acton's essays in recent years have become quite fashionable in Hungary, though neither the entire oeuvre, nor the

historical background to the essays is fully known. They are of especial interest to Hungarian historians, since strengthening the legitimacy of the Austrian Empire and constitutionally transforming its structure were issues of vital interest for Acton in the early 1860s. This is also why he followed events in Hungary. His objections to the ideas of democracy and nationalism can only be properly interpreted in juxtaposition with the articles on topical political issues that he was concurrently writing. This is also borne out by his interest in Eötvös's work, in which an appreciation of Eötvös the thinker and the kinship of their ideas is joined to an appraisal of Eötvös the politician, from his unequivocal position in support of the centralization of the Empire. A survey of Acton's views also reveals that we are still far from being conversant with how Eötvös's work was received abroad at the time. ❧

NOTES

1 ■ Győző Concha: "Eötvös József és a külföldi kritika" (József Eötvös and His Foreign Critics), *Budapesti Szemle*, 1908, vol. 134, pp. 187–212, 374–391; vol. 135, pp. 91–113. Letters written to Eötvös on his work by foreign thinkers are preserved in the Manuscript Archives, Letters Section, of the National Széchényi Library, Budapest.

2 ■ Paul Bödy: *Joseph Eötvös and the Modernization of Hungary, 1840–1870. A Study of Ideas of Individuality and Social Pluralism in Modern Politics.* East European Monographs, Boulder, 1985, p. 70.

3 ■ John Nurser: *The Reign of Conscience. Individual, Church, and State in Lord Acton's History of Liberty.* Garland Publishing, Inc., New York and London, 1987, p. 1.

4 ■ Hugh Tulloch: *Acton.* Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1988, p. 28.

5 ■ John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton: *Essays on Freedom and Power.* Meridian Books, New York, 1956, p. 148.

6 ■ Ibid., p. 158.

7 ■ Ibid., p. 158.

8 ■ Ibid., p. 156.

9 ■ Ibid., p. 168.

10 ■ Ibid., p. 162.

11 ■ Ibid., p. 160.

12 ■ Ibid., p. 159.

13 ■ József Eötvös: *Levelek* (Letters). Magyar Helikon, Budapest, 1976, p. 472.

14 ■ For a catalogue of Acton's library, see *Cambridge University Library Bulletin* (extra series), Acton Collection, vols. 1–4, Cambridge, 1908–1910.

15 ■ Acton Papers, Add. 5752. Acton's notebook for 1857 and 1858, p. 117. Cambridge University Library, Manuscript Archives.

16 ■ Lóránt Czigány: *A magyar irodalom fogadtatása a viktoriánus Angliában, 1830–1914.* (The Reception of Hungarian Literature in Victorian England, 1830–1914) Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1976, p. 117.

17 ■ *Westminster Review,* New Series 7 (1855), pp. 230–231.

18 ■ "Austria and Hungary". *The Rambler,* September 1861, p. 416.

19 ■ Eötvös József: *Levelek* (Letters). Magyar Helikon, Budapest, 1976, p. 295.

20 ■ Acton Papers, Add. 5528. Collections of notes from Acton's connection with *The Rambler,* pp. 181–5. Cambridge University Library, Manuscript Archives.

21 ■ Berhard Meyer was employed by the Home Office and was commissioned by Alexander Bach, to publish in 1857 his pamphlet aiming to popularize the Hungarian policies of the Habsburg administration abroad.

22 ■ Acton Papers, p. 184.

23 ■ Ibid., p.173.

24 ■ *The North British Review,* New Series 5 (1866), March, p. 92; Tibor Frank: *The British Image of Hungary 1865–1870.* ELTE, Budapest, 1976, p. 185.

25 ■ "Austria and Hungary". *The Rambler,* September 1861, p. 421.

Péter Kántor

Poems

Translated by Michael Blumenthal

Moonlight Monologue for the New Kitten

Holdfény-monológ: az új cicára

The old kitten is replaced by a new baby kitten
the old dog by a new pup
like a dead Monday by Tuesday.

They stroke the new kitten in their laps
so that their excess affection won't go sour,
so that it will love them in return, like the old one did.

But for me they aren't replaceable,
not the kitten, not the Monday, not anything else;
for me they never die.

They only distance themselves, or dwell in me
disappearing into the distance: they dwell in my heart and ears,
like the Moonlight Sonata dwells in a piano.

Gone? No new rain rinses the shower-scent
of an old Monday from me,
no matter how hard it pours, hisses, streams.

Ridiculous, maybe, but it feels good to me,
like an old stone in the cemetery,
on which a bird might drop its feather.

Péter Kántor

has published eight volumes of poems, including one for children. He edited an anthology of contemporary British poets in Hungarian a few years ago. He translates poems from English and Russian.

Out there in the City Park and everywhere,
where forgetting fattens fresh ice,
how many, attentively oblivious, are skating!

I understand them, that on slippery ground
they alone possess life while living,
as long as is possible, and as best as is possible.

But for me easy grief's loathsome,
and the easy solace of what's easily replaced;
if I'm no more, they'll replace me soon.

I know, if I'm no more, they'll have someone else,
who'll lie in their beds for me,
pant, talk, suffer, love.

But why shouldn't it be this way? It might
need to be this way—why expect the unexpectable,
the too hard, the too much?... I understand.

And yet, for me, it's irreplaceable
and what used to be dear doesn't stop being dear.
And it is still too early to love the new kitten.

I don't put it in my lap, because the old one's
absence still burns there. I know
if I'm no more, there'll be someone else.

My Beloved

Az én kedvesem

My beloved
doesn't go to conditioning class,
she conditions herself on the bus ride home,
with a really heavy bag in her hand,
with a knee in her gut,
a stranger's breath on her neck.

My beloved
is neither poor, nor rich,
she owns a car, a small lot,

a color TV, to which she falls asleep
while her automatic washer goes,
an iron, with which she irons before dawn.

My beloved's life
is not too exciting,
she sits in her office from 9 to 5,
and is informed only by the radio
whether it's raining or the sun is up;
it's said that air's her major element.

My beloved
rarely finds the time to read,
in the evening she returns dead tired,
out of six griffins she's lucky to spot one,
and if I blame her for the way she lives,
her face falls and grows increasingly drab.

My beloved is among those
who don't even notice when they help,
she can bear an awful lot,
though no one promises her a thing,
when she cries, it's always for a trifle's sake,
and if she's glad, she titters without cause.

My beloved looks about with utmost care,
yet it's not a new world she explores,
as she expects me to on each and every day,
or, if not every day, at least just once,
such an America—or, rather, India,
that's hers as well, of which she too can have a share.

Little Night Prayer

Kis éji ima

Lord, I'm tired,
the bunion on my right foot is throbbing,
I worry about myself.

Who is this anguished man, Lord?
it can't be me,
so woeful and sluggish.

I would like to trust quietly,
but like waves in the ocean,
tempers bubble up in me.

I try a smile,
but some hairdespair
impedes me.

This isn't all right, Lord,
feel pity for me, be scared,
reward my endeavors.

Evaluate things with me,
delete with my own hand
what isn't needed.

Taste with me what needs to be tasted,
and say to me:
this is sweet! this is sour!

Remind me
of the small red car,
of something that was good.

There was a lot that was good, wasn't there?
a lot of sunken islands,
crumbled glamour.

Place a net into my hands
to fish with, in the past
and in the present.

I'm a fish too, in the night,
puckering silver,
bubble-lifed.

Turn me inside out, freshen me up,
throw me up high and catch me!
What's it to you, Lord?

If you must,
lay down your cards,
show me something new.

How your leaves fall!
your sun scorches
your wind whistles.
Speak to me!
Talk with me through the night,
it's nothing to you, Lord!

It's in Place

Ez kész

If their social safety nets
would just tighten
beneath those socially
impoverished acrobats
who, alas, miss a little jump or two,
and should they fall,
they'll fall only as far as the safety net,
and there in the safety net, they'll
be welcomed with warm tea, warmly
protective hands, protective smiles, protective vaccines.
So it's gonna be all right, it's in place.

The River Poet

A folyami költő

I'm forty-five years old and I'm the poet of rivers.
It means what it means,
one must accept it, take it into account,
if not the others, then at least myself.
A river poet, on the left bank of the Danube,
Hungarian, and on top of it all a smoker.
But everyone has his own troubles.
Otherwise I don't want to complain,

I wouldn't even dream of it,
I'm just looking out the window,
I'm gazing at the Danube,
and I'm thinking of my river poetness,
and of what follows from it,
obviously of sweet and bitter things,
and meanwhile I'm listening to the noises filtering in,
the susurrus of car wheels,
the twittering of sparrows,
the rumbling of trams, barking of dogs,
sounds in the distance.

Truly the sea!
The sea in which time gathers, widens, and stops!
If I lie on my back on it,
and spread my arms,
as if I were spread out against eternity,
that would swing me,
and I would float on it.
If I swim in it,
in a world which has no other dimension,
I forget the taste of bread,
my favourite bridge doesn't come to mind,
Petőfi's My Mother's Hen doesn't come to mind,
but why should I need it?
It terrifies me,
I turn back quickly,
thicket, postmodern grass, or something else,
the main thing, to have, to have the possibility of turning somewhere.
I am the river poet, no question.

And here is the Danube!
This grayish, brownish, greenish, yellowish,
golden, silvery, black river—
the metaphor of transitoriness.
Drop after drop, minute by minute,
no one can step twice into the same river,
vainly you don't believe this, vainly you shake your head,
sooner or later you will know it,
when you step for the tenth time into the same pit,
on the bank where you have your house, your keys, your armchair.

The river is permanent, of course,
it's flowing permanently,
uninterrupted farewell and arrival,
unbroken coming and going, is the river.
Generations of drops are undulating,
they rush head over heels against each other,
the boys are killing the fathers,
early adolescent girls
are stumbling among solid old men,
but gazing out from the bank
they seem completely identical
the river of yesterday and the river of today.
When the wind blows, when it rains,
it proceeds in its own channel,
and there is no power
to stop it,
because at that time the river
momentarily
stops being the river,
and the poet of rivers
will close up shop.
Because the poet of rivers
lives from transitoriness,
the fact that nothing lasts forever,
only the river flowing,
if the water doesn't dry up from the channel.
But why should it dry up?
We aren't in Arizona or Mexico,
those channels (arroyos)
don't give birth to river-poets,
but to other poets
and big white and black dogs,
who are excitedly running in the died-out,
dried-out river channels,
sniffing after some life
that was and that will be
but that's only concealing itself.
It's not a question,
all of them are relatives of the river-poet;
who wouldn't *be a relative of his,*
who is fed by the sweetness of the passing of time,
and the bitterness of it,

who from the moment of his birth
is a prisoner of memories,
who himself is just memory projected onto the future,
a daguerrotype walking on two legs,
if you touch it you heal yourself,
or you lose your vision,
and you are crying and crying without tears,
and he is crying and crying without tears,
and his crying is mixed with pigs' grunting and horses' neighing,
because he must hurry,
he must love and hate,
build and destroy,
draw his foggy vision
into the foggy tomorrow and aftertomorrow,
because all his unifying
contains the seeds of separation,
so he's climbing up and swinging
like a monkey from branch to branch,
from day to day which, as it must be,
flows like a river flows
and on the bank just a stream
just that *is gathering,*
that beloved and shining rubbish,
soaked with foreign materials,
that eternal fidelity
to the transitory passing,
the poems of the river-poet
among the cans of preserves.

The river-poet,
Hungarian, in addition a smoker,
I'm standing up, opening the window,
a car alarm shrieks,
kindergarten children on the square
attacking the jungle Jim,
a bird takes its place
on a barren, stunted tree,
I think everything is in order,
it should mean what it means,
I think I've taken it all into account
from the very beginning.

Miklós Györffy

Dreams of a City

On Iván Mándy (1918–1995)

This century has produced several writers who have created imaginary worlds of universal validity, personal mythologies, from the elements of particular and real cities. In *Ulysses,* James Joyce crafted a symbolic stage confined to the city of Dublin for a novel. Kafka's fantastic labyrinthine world was composed of the buildings and the streets of Prague. Faulkner zeroed in on Oxford, Mississippi, in creating Jefferson. The late Iván Mándy may be included among these great writers, for he built up his own incomparably personal world using details garnered from a few districts and a certain period of Budapest. His world is that of Budapest in the middle third of the century, that of ramshackle tenements, courtyards where the sumach tree reigns, dilapidated stairwells, open outside corridors looking down onto courtyards, shabby little cinemas, smoky editorial offices, timeworn coffee-houses, coffee bars and hotels, the football grounds of third division teams, and legendary outdoor markets. Iván Mándy spent his whole life on these sets, and knew all there was to know about them; he knew the characters that frequented them, while at the same time he himself wandered through them as if he were just dreaming the whole thing. At times this world presented itself to his imagination as some unreal, grotesque underwater stock-breeder. It was, in his eyes, at once intimately familiar and cosy, while also frighteningly strange and ghostly. Thus he became, through his writing, a conveyor of the absurd state of existence that marks our age of alienation, loneliness, and resignation.

This world is composed of nothing but fragments. Everything in it crumbles, decays, loses meaning and purpose, is orphaned, comes apart. Perhaps this, too, helps explain why Mándy's preferred art form was always the short story. Throughout his working life he alternated between the same themes and motifs, and since their common denominator was a resigned acknowledgement that abandonment, slipping away, dejection, and being left behind were inevitable, Mándy could hardly do otherwise than conjure up the images and atmosphere of this disintegration again and again in sparse, dispassionate stories. He wrote short novels, too, but these are strings of loosely linked short stories. Indeed, his entire oeuvre is best described as a single, large, coherent cycle.

Miklós Györffy
is our regular reviewer of new fiction.

More than once Mándy experienced the sensation of being swept to the edge of existence. His parents had divorced, so Mándy, as a child, lived with a father who moved fitfully about as a bohemian newspaperman, from hotel to hotel, and fell headlong from one stillborn venture into another, providing anything but the feeling of cosiness and security of a close-knit family. No sooner had he himself become a journalist, an editor, then a promising short story writer than the communist takeover cut his career in half in one blow. The "remnant of a bourgeois upbringing", as he was, he could not publish his writings, given their sombre tone and their stamp of "pessimism". For a decade Mándy was relegated to the "edge of the pitch", and when, at the end of the fifties, he was finally allowed to step back onto the pitch of his choice, soon enough he published a novella aptly entitled *A pálya szélén* (At the Edge of the Pitch), which depicted the world of football, that of the amateur game of old, played on the outskirts of town and, as it were, as the grotesque stage of struggle between Good and Evil, raised to the level of myth.

Yet another reason Mándy roused the suspicion of party-oriented critics was his presentation and style, which clashed with the obligatory canon of flat realism. By transposing reality several times over, *A pálya szélén* created an imagined, sovereign microcosm whose "reality" was limited to the work of art. In *Fabulya feleségei* (Fabulya's Wives, 1959), another of his early short novels, writing itself was the main theme, that is, the passion of the writer to seize the characters and objects of his environment and shape them into an image all his own. In Mándy's view, writing had meaning and credibility only to the extent that it succeeded in portraying reality in accord with the internal truth of one's prevailing, personal vision. Not surprisingly, it was difficult to reconcile this subjectivity with the official cultural policy of the period, subordinated to ideological propaganda. So it was that Mándy remained the subject of suspicion, a writer just barely put up with, even long after his works were once more permitted to be published. Among those of his readers who were devoted to his art, however, Mándy's world began to take shape as a readily familiar, accessible reality they revisited with delight again and again, one whose validity was no more in doubt than anyone's tangible reality.

This too is one of the things Mándy's art is all about—the continual convergence in our lives of reality and imagination, wakefulness and dream, present and past, person and object, so that there is little point in drawing such distinctions in the first place.

Movies of bygone days, silent films, the cinemas of his childhood: these became Mándy's ritual sets. Audiences could abandon themselves to an illusion in a cinema as surely as they could from the terraces at a game of football, stepping into an imagined world whose rules, while matters of life or death at such times, are in fact without validity in the day-to-day world. A film transposes a dreamworld into reality in the same manner as a short story by Mándy turns the destitute, grey everyday world into a dreamworld of myth. In the world of Mándy, however, the various planes of life never lose touch with one another, and his characters hover in the textual space of his stories. In "Diákszerelem" (Student Love), for example, the reel breaks during the showing of a dime-a-dozen dreamy Hollywood flick, so the film ends prematurely. The viewers are simply unable to resign themselves to the fact that they can't dream to the end the dream the film has promised them. At a loss for what to do, they make it known

that they expect the usherette to tell them how the film ends, but the usherette only "sat, impossibly shrivelled, before the enormous white screen and didn't say a thing." She knew it would be futile for her to tell them the end of the film, for it would be precisely the magic that would be missing—the magic, that is, which drew the audience to the cinema in the first place.

Mándy creates a sensation of dreamlike hovering by being simultaneously inside and outside his characters. He, too, hovered among them. Mándy faded into his environment, sinking into the cloudy, weedy "deep water" in which his heroes, kindred spirits they were, likewise swam along stroke by stroke, while observing them, from a vantage point, living their lives, a humble, marvelling stranger, recording his observations on slips of paper which, slowly but surely, came to life themselves and took shape as disquieting shadows that haunted the writer with their proliferating, enigmatic messages. Mándy never belonged to any literary côterie; neither aesthetic nor political programmes captured his interest, he wasn't one for delivering speeches, nor did he take any oaths of allegiance. He just lived his own life in the "deep", and he couldn't help marvelling at it. Up to the very last he treasured within himself a sort of child's naiveté with which he could marvel at people, objects, and even himself, his own manner of stumbling about, as if he were someone looking upon all this from another dimension.

It was this ability which endowed him with the sensitivity to perceive and portray the grotesque absurdity of his age. Mándy belongs with Hrabal, Mrozek, and Örkény among the great portrayers of the East European grotesque. He bears an even closer kinship to the Czech filmmakers of the Sixties, including Forman, Menzel, and Passer. Indeed, it was in the Sixties that he, too, focussed on the type of story in which the facts of day-to-day reality, passing through increasing degrees of exaggeration and hyperbole, passed over into the sphere of nonsensical grotesque. Yet, in Mándy, one encounters only acrid irony, not the ruthless black humour of the absurd. Mándy's unreality is composed largely of the iridescent, gentle world of dreams, and his absurdities are almost apologetic. Indeed, they are invested with something of the essence of those childhood tall tales which occasionally induce cold feet even in a swashbuckling storyteller. Mándy's children's novels, the tales of the legendary horse named Csutak (Wisp), addressed both children and those adults who, like Mándy, have forever half-remained children, are kept alive by this enchanting double-edged game: the self-abandoned freedom and daring of the imagination is restricted and regulated by facts which children, having a feel for things, instinctively recognize as such. Mándy thus devotes an eye to also observing as a child would, that is, whether the audience believes the story he tells is "true".

In reading the Vera short stories in the volumes *Az ördög konyhája* (The Devil's Kitchen) and *Mi van Verával?* (What's up with Vera?), it is apparent that Mándy delighted in those of the young, who in the Sixties dared to be different from their intimidated parents—those of the young who, in short, dared to dream big dreams. They, rather than him, seem to have expanded the constricted sphere of reality, pushing off from the fossilised, woebegone life of the city, and Mándy, in the stories he wrote about them, through his perspective from the outside and through his acrid resignation, saw that the grand aspirations of youth generally fail in this part of the world. Rebellious, emancipated Vera leaves for the West, her parents stay be-

hind (along with the writer). They have no other choice but to somehow continue to live with this impossible, yet existing East European mentality, composed entirely of mutually exclusive extremes.

In the Sixties Mándy's stories more often than not merged the poles of everyday life and the miraculous, of meek reality and daring imagination. From the start of the Seventies the overlapping of present and past became a key to the development of his narrative style. In his collection *Mi az, Öreg?* (What's Up, Old Man?), the narrator, shifting between the first and the third person, confronts the penurious, sober present of the old and ailing father with the illusion of the past— the vanished world of a rash, adventurous young man and of a child with a roving imagination. This contrast is painful and sad, but even in these stories the irony of dispassionate observance assuages and softens the blow. While disillusion and failure are once again fatal, the past does not disappear without a trace: its memories, its shadows live here among us and within us, helping us to bear the inevitable loss.

The past haunts us in the form of dream images. The novel *Egy ember álma* (The Dream of a Man) presents characters in familiar variations of situations, above all the Father, in such a way that they seem to be the marks of 20th century Hungarian history. What Mándy did, in short, was to take a person suited to his discretion, examine his dreams, the nightmare scenes within his soul, and in them discover traces of a common history. Through the medium of dreams, Mándy indulged his double penchant for the absurd and for reality. Just as it was he, through his grotesque vision, who became close to the Czech filmmakers, Hungarian filmmakers such as István Szabó and Pál Sándor, in turn became close to Mándy—to his dreamlike approach to recent history, an approach focussed on the individual. Even if none of these Mándy-inspired films were masterpieces, at least they left no room for doubt as to just how cinematic Mándy's prose was, through its closeness to reality and its fragmentation, despite its subjectivity.

Mándy was also a master at hovering between the personal and the impersonal. In the collection *Tájak, az én tájaim* (Landscapes, My Landscapes), he went on to examine the locales and props of Budapest, which in their regular appearance in earlier stories had mostly functioned only as components of an urban landscape, as shabby and threadbare as the slapdash lives of his characters, or as material for similes and metaphors. The tables were now turned: the images step to the foreground, and as if reaping rewards for their performance, are entrusted with leading roles one after another—pieces of furniture, washrooms and toilets, tobacconists, the tram, the lift, the laundries. These settings and objects live the same way people do; indeed, they live the same lives as their users. They slip away, are swept aside, wear out, and in the end are thrown out, just as Mándy's characters in other works. Only here, his characters are visible only in the background, as shadows devoid of personality. At the same time, the transfiguring of these objects and scenes, their endowment with personality, is free of all forced symbolism. In Mándy's works, trams, stairwells, furniture, hats, and sport jackets primarily represent themselves: outworn, ramshackle, shabby stuff. They receive human features because Mándy knows and loves them. He knows their stories: these are objects which have their histories, which is to say they were part and parcel of a mode of life.

From the late Seventies, Mándy began to bid adieu to his disappearing world, in which there was still a personal connec-

tion between man and his environment: sometimes harmony, sometimes discord. If for no other reason that they would surely recognize each other in their downward slide. From the very beginning this close affinity was marked by the fact that the borders blurred between people and the outside world. People are often no more in Mándy's work than a characteristic and vivified accessory of theirs—an umbrella, a moustache, a winter coat—and objects are people, as they sit or sulk, as they blink. In the stories in *Landscapes, My Landscapes* it becomes quite clear that the human traits and histories linked to Mándy's Pest locales are the elements of a personal, self-regulating mythology. The events and actions that occur have something of a ritual about them; most often they are encounters, coffeehouse conversations, and festive socializing—events that constitute the experience of common humanity. Bizarre, casual circles of people gather in Mándy's stories, whether in stairwells or even public washrooms. Swimming pools, elevators, stairwells, and coffee bars are frequently the setting for ritual meetings of people who are close-knit and of like mind, even when they don't know each other. The ancient, mythical import of the city and its community life perish when these places with human faces disappear. Or rather, they become depopulated, are left on their own, or are impersonalized. In a collection of stories, *Magukra maradtak* (Left on their Own), Mándy depicts a world from which people have moved away and died out. They have left their faithful companions on their own. This world exists only in memory and the imagination. From the Eighties it was through the prism of this world, that Mándy delineated his familiar themes and motifs as vanished, betrayed, and abandoned objects of memory.

Mándy himself became such an object, and simultaneously a hero, in his own eyes as well. At the start of his working life, he created his literary double in the character of Zsámboky, who went on to become one of the most typical of Mándy's *shlemihls*. From first to last he illustrated himself from within and without, just as he did his objects and scenes. This is a perfect example of how a writer such as Mándy can hover between the writer's personality and the impersonality of objectified doubles; sometimes Zsámboky speaks in the first person, at other times the narrator speaks of him in the third person, and thus Zsámboky's role virtually merges both with the narrator's voice and with like-minded Mándy characters. The title story in *Önéletrajz* (Autobiography, 1989), is the broken monologue of a nameless old man mumbling away while half-asleep, or rather, a third person in crotchety dialogue with himself. Names, memories, images, and slips of paper emerge along the way, the hovering, scattered pieces of a man's life, as if the old man were just taking stock of them all in departing, in the name of Mándy, a little gruffly and with resignation.

In taking leave of life, the old man also bids adieu to the spirit of the place, for in Mándy's world the two were one and the same. In the title story of the collection *Átkelés* (1983, The Crossing, see p. 87 of this issue), Mándy sees life as nothing other than a laboured, bitter crossing of a square in Budapest. The drunk old tramp who steps forth on behalf of the writer here worms his way from bench to bench and tree to tree, reeling and tripping, while an old woman watches him from a balcony up above—a woman who, it seems, had something to do with him in the past. She may be the shabby old man's abandoned wife, who now fears that this slovenly figure might come up and visit her. In the end she goes down to him, so that she'll be on hand if he chances to take a sprawling fall. It is also characteristic of the other

stories in *The Crossing* that everyday, familiar things are perceived from a transcendental perspective. Images of contemplation and memory increasingly become the visions of an inner eye, and they seem to summon not just shadows of the past, but also reflect the glimmer of a profane world beyond. In any case, this world beyond hardly differs from Mándy's mythologised everyday world. In it, God resembles a passer-by who can be met with at a coffeehouse table or in a cinema lobby, and who can be talked to about, for example, what became of his former superb sense of humour. He seems indeed to have lost this because his thoughts, too, are ever-more depressing.

But God is nonetheless God precisely because he never changes, because he is never as he was before. And in the eyes of the old Mándy, this makes him all the more attractive. God the passer-by, too, is a kindred spirit, for he doesn't want to change either, nor to be renewed, nor for that matter to keep in step with the age, as is occasionally expected of him. He even shrinks from travelling, feeling that he has no business in places he has nothing to do with. Even a sheer change of locale feels unnatural, since it signifies the upsetting of the very permanency which is his last hope in a world of hysterical and ravaging changes.

Mándy's immobility is a defiant perseverance to values condemned to death, or rather, to be transcended. This commitment lacks pathos or heroism; indeed, the writer is ashamed of his reluctance, his awkwardness, his clumsiness not only before his wife, but so too before himself, when he, reluctantly, ventures to go to England ("Reggel utazás előtt", [The Morning of the Journey]). If his wife were not to see to things for him, he wouldn't even get around to packing his bags, for the mood of impending farewell sees him consumed by an incessant stream of memories associated with the objects before him—memories constituting a lifestyle, a milieu which confines him but which at the same time must be protected. This paradox of confinement and protection explains just why, from the start, Mándy played variations on the same themes. He could not do otherwise, he was chained in place to his world, a world which infused him completely. With his death, the spirit of a city which existed once upon a time, that of a Central European microcosm which was both a tangible reality and the creation of a myth-making imagination, departed from the dreams of its last resident. From now on we can compose a notion of just what it was like by following the tracks Mándy left behind in his writing. ❧

Iván Mándy

The Crossing

Short story

The sea opened before him. Gave way. The waves rose high. For a moment it seemed as though they would break over his head. But then they fell back silently, parted. Made way for him.

Onwards he walked, with that unearthly smile, a bottle in his hand. Matted, reddish beard, a faded raincoat buttoned up to the chin. Neither jacket nor shirt under the coat. Even the trousers seemed to hang irresolutely somehow. But this did not bother him. He held the bottle high. Not flaunting it, no, nothing of the sort! The label had long since rubbed off. Just as everything had rubbed off him. On and on he walked, not the least bit hurried. Taking his time rather. There was no need to fear the waves any longer. The sea could be depended upon absolutely. But it wouldn't do to hurry on such a journey. Someone had given an order to the sea. Had commanded it to be still. A lord. The lord of the seas. Had honoured him with his friendship. But a friendship like that must not be presumed on.

He sensed that he was being followed. Tracked. They had massed up behind him. Were dogging his footsteps. Sniggering. Whispering. He did not turn round. Did not look back. Did not want to see them. He had nothing to do with them. Parasites. Predators. The lord had made way for him. Only for him.

He held the bottle up to his eyes, turning it. There's got to be a couple of swallows left in it. Just a few swallows. And if they're counting on his giving them a taste... No fear! If there's anyone he'll offer a sip to, it won't be anyone other than...

He raised the bottle high. Held it there. Any minute now and a hand will beckon to him from up there. Thanks, old chap!

The sky darkened. You couldn't really call it angry, but still...

He hid the bottle under his coat. Hugged it tight. Blinked contritely. I didn't mean to offend you. You mustn't think I did.

On he went, head hanging. Just my luck. I've made him angry, exasperated him.

No, the lord was not angry. His brow had darkened for a moment, perhaps. But he had not lashed the sea into fury. Keep going, old man! Continue on your way.

And he continued on his way.

Like the others. No doubt about it, they too had stopped short for a moment. Had been startled, taken unawares. But when they'd seen there was nothing to fear...

They're coming after me. What do they want? To reach the shore? What shore? That's the question, what shore?

Slender saplings in the wet sand. As though they had just risen up out of the deep. The depths of the sea. The sea had withdrawn. Left them to themselves.

The old man stood before them. Hugging the bottle. His only friend. The only friend he could still count on. He blinked distrustfully. Benches behind the trees. Must reach one of them. Sit, lie down. Easier said than done. He felt giddy. Perhaps from the air. The harsh, relentless sunlight. He staggered as he started off towards one of the benches. He caught hold of a sapling with his free hand. It almost snapped under his weight. Startled, taken aback.

Slowly he slid down to the ground beside the tree. The bottle between his feet. Alright. Who said he had to reach the bench?

He sat. Gazed about him.

Grey houses. Doorways, windows, balconies. Tiny black dots, thin lines. As the square began to stir. As men and women began to emerge from the houses, the shops.

Well! So they'd already arrived! Arrived and settled in. A clever move. Crafty. They were behind me on the road just a short while ago. Not one had thought to cut ahead of me then. No one had had ideas of the sort. And now look at them. They've got here ahead of me after all!

They stood around him. Men, women, children. A woman in a blue smock from the video rental on the corner leaned over him.

"Good Lord!"

"What's the matter?"

"Look at him. Just look at him! How could they let him go out looking like this! They should be punished..."

"Who should be punished?"

"Why, whoever it was that let him out on the streets!"

"Who said he was let out? Turned out."

"All the more reason, then!"

"Why? Would you have kept him in?"

"The smell!"

"Smell? You call that a smell? Stink's more like it. Stinker!"

"Someone should take that bottle away from him."

"What for?"

The old man over by that tree! He's watching me! How long has he been watching me?

A balcony high up. A woman on a tiny chair. Sunbathing. Suddenly leaning forward. Leaning over the railing.

The old man over by that tree! He's watching me! How long has he been watching me? Blinking his eyes... winking. Yes, yes, positively winking. Any minute now and he's going to wave. Does he know me from somewhere? No, impossible. Or is it?

And in fact the old man did seem to be nodding familiarly. He did not wave. Why should he? He closed his eyes. But only to look up again.

The woman drew back. Pressed back against the wall. Pressed close against the wall of the balcony. *He came to see me. He's going to come up. No, he hasn't the strength to move. Can't even stand. Hold it! Any minute now and he'll be springing to his feet.*

Then her mind went blank. She faded herself into the wall.

Down below the woman in the blue smock.

"We should phone."

"Who do you have in mind?"

"What do you mean, who? Who do you think? An ambulance! Don't you think we should phone for an ambulance?"

"Weeell..."

A police car glided past the square.

"They could at least have stopped!"

"Why should they?"

"Why? Why? You're always finding fault, aren't you."

"What d'you mean, finding fault? Why do you say that?"

He stood up. Got to his feet slowly. As someone who had grown bored with all their nonsense. Enough of this twaddle! He grabbed the bottle by the neck. Steered himself towards a bench. With his quagmire beard, twitching face, reeling.

"He got there!"

"I could have sworn, you know, that even at the start..."

"Start! What a word to choose!"

He lay on the bench, his eyes open. They bent over him.

"Those eyes! So innocent and clear, like a child's."

"Like a child's! Innocent and clear!"

"A child's gaze!"

"Gaze? He hasn't even got a gaze left!"

"You don't have to talk like that."

Any minute now and the storm would break. But no. They all fell silent, as if someone had rebuked them. And now they just stood, watching the old man on the bench. The bottle beneath the bench. A ball rolling past it.

A boy snatched at the bottle. The hand hanging down limply from the bench clutched the boy's wrist. Its grip so weak it could scarcely be felt, but firm nevertheless, determined. It loosened as soon as the boy let go of the bottle. The boy drew back, rubbing his wrist.

"Did he hit you?"

He shook his head no, no. But he kept rubbing his wrist. And watched the bottle all the while, his eyes hot, antagonistic.

The woman on the balcony watched only the man. *He's down there now, lying on the bench. On a bench close by. The closest bench. But then, later, up here.*

He'll stretch out on the couch. His legs hanging down, or tucked under him. I'll have to put newspapers under him. Why did I have to look down? Why am I forever looking down! If I'd just stayed by the wall, sunbathing... well, never mind. He'll come up anyway.

An ambulance by the square. Two men in white got out. Approached slowly, leisurely.

"Who rang for us?"

"I did." She pointed to the corner. "From the video store."

The ambulance men turned in the direction of the store. Planning maybe to pick a film to take home. Or to sit down and watch one. Why not?

The old man sat up. Reached under the bench for the bottle. Perhaps he should offer the guests a sip after all. But the way those two stopped and stood before him! Unmoving, hands deep in their pockets.

The driver got out too. Stretched in the sun. Began loosening up his cramped limbs.

Up on the balcony, the woman's face brightened. *They're taking him away. They'll stick him in the car and take him away!*

They came closer to the old man. They'd maybe take hold of him under the arms. One of them was about to lay a hand on his shoulder. The hand began to shake before it came to rest.

The ambulance men exchanged glances. Turned away from the old man. Started to walk back to the car.

The woman in the blue smock rushed to block their way. Practically threw herself before them.

"You can't leave him here!"

"Why not?"

They pushed her aside gently. Then, over their shoulder:

"There's no hospital that'll have him."

"Have him?" (The word frightened her.)

"They won't admit him. Please try to understand, madam! The state he's in..."

And, before the car door swung shut behind them,

"There's no room! Anywhere... no room at all."

The driver stopped stretching. Got in. Started the engine.

The ambulance disappeared.

They were left standing there. In the wake of a vanished vision.

They left him. They didn't take him away. And now...

She drew back from the balcony. Went inside. Walked up and down with her arms crossed. Stopped in front of the couch. Patted the cushion.

His head'll lie here. His perspiring head. When he throws himself down on the couch. But perhaps he won't lie down straight away. Maybe he'll move about in the room first. Look into the mirror. When was the last time he looked in a mirror? Has he ever seen his own face? Maybe this will be the first time he'll come face to face with himself. He'll blink. Prod the pouches under his eyes. Comb his

beard with his fingers. His shaggy, matted beard. Sit down at the table. His head falling forwards. Striking against the table. He'll fall asleep. His hat rolling away somewhere. I shall have to pick it up. Where shall I put it? Where can you put such a hat? On the hatstand? Will it be hanging there on the hatstand?

A boy and a girl ran towards the bench. Did they come for the old man? Will they pick him up and take him away with them?

When they reached the bench they separated. Continued running on either side of the bench. Did not even glance at the old man. Did not even see him. Just ran by him, laughing with innocent, childish laughter. Making the tips of their fingers touch lightly in the air.

The old man leaned back. Slipped his hand in his pocket, as though wanting to pull something out. A letter or a note of sorts. Swayed, toppled over. Slumped down full length onto the bench. His hat fell off, rolled away. Lurched, teetered. Stopped, wavering. A tin hat grown stiff, turned upside down.

The woman in the blue smock picked it up. She seemed somehow surprised at her own movement. She just stood there with the hat in her hand. Then slowly, solemnly, almost ceremoniously, began to walk towards the bench. Holding the hat high, like some dreadful relic. That's how she stood above the man.

"Go on, stick it on his head!"

"We should wash his forehead. It's bloody... blood all over."

"Nonsense! It's just a streak, and anyway it's all dried."

And she, as if she'd never be able to rid herself of the hat. „It should still be washed off."

She put the hat on the man's chest. Placed it there.

He isn't there on the bench anymore. They've taken him away, driven off with him. The ambulance came back for him after all. Whatever! If I were to go out on the balcony now and look down...

She went out on the balcony, but she did not look down.

Her gaze slid downwards slowly. Her intimidated gaze. The trees in the square. She examined them practically branch by branch. The house opposite, behind the square. An open window. A pillow, just recently beaten up. A quilt, pounded flat.

The bench!

The bench in the square was suddenly there before her. The crowd gathered around the old man. Why are they rummaging in his pockets? What do they want of him?

Hands fumbling in the filthy raincoat. Just a short while ago they had been afraid to touch him. And now they were practically setting upon him.

"Papers! He's got to have some papers on him!"

"Papers? On him?"

"Identification papers... Name... address..."

"Oh, tell us another! This one has got no address! He hasn't even got a name!"

"Everybody's got a name!"

"What makes you think so?"

She sank down on the end of the bench. "He came up from somewhere to see his daughter. He's looking for his daughter."

"Why his daughter?"

"He's been living at his son's up to now. But his son's had enough of him."

"I can understand that."

"There's got to be an address, a bit of paper..."

"We turned out all his pockets. You saw us do it. And what did we get?..."

The old man sat up. Looked at the woman. The others retreated slowly. The two of them on the bench, like a couple, a rather odd couple.

A sparrow came to settle between them. Turned its head left and right. Watched now the one, now the other. Then flew away. My blessings upon you!

"Please ..." the woman began, "if you could just tell us..."

She faltered.

That bearded head! It seems even larger now. Has grown alarmingly large. And he's steaming... how he steams! And his raincoat is coming apart. And what will waft out from under it!

The man appeared to have sensed something. He bunched his raincoat together with an arch half-smile. He slid his feet off the bench. And now he was sitting properly, decorously even.

"So, if you could just tell us..."

Something's happening. Never mind how or what, but something is happening. And, as if she were reading it in an old novel. *Things are coming to a head.*

The old man stood up. Rose slowly. Clutched the ends of his coat on both sides. Childishly, clownlike.

The other stood up too. Wanted to scold him. Sit down! Sit back down, please! But she simply could not open her mouth. Like her, the others just looked on as the old man slowly passed round the bench. Leaned over its back. His hand sliding along the back of the bench. His body following through.

The bench was gone.

But he kept his hand in the air. And reached the next bench with his hand still in the same position.

On and on.

From one bench to the other. One bench passed him over to the next.

Beside him, the woman. In case he should fall. But he does not fall. He totters, staggers, grabbing at benches. Or at nothing. But he's not going to fall again. I can leave him to fend for himself. Set him on his way. Well then? What do I want of him?

What does she want of him? How much further are they going to continue walking together? Is she going to take him in? Take him under her wing? She's trailing after him like a deserted wife.

A deserted wife. She does not make a scene. Does not kick up a fuss. Does not say a word. Just cannot part company with him.

Someone called after her:

"Gizike!"

She stopped. Did not turn round even then. Stared after that slowly retreating back.

He'll come back. He's going away now, but he'll come back. In a couple of days. Or perhaps even tomorrow. He'll be sitting there on that bench again. Sitting, lying down, sprawling. He'll blink towards the balcony with that arch look of his. Scramble to his feet. Begin to walk, lurching, tumble through the doorway, come up the stairs. He'll stumble on the stairs several times, but he'll reach the third floor in the end. He won't ring the bell, probably doesn't know what a bell is for, just fall against the door, or stand there swaying before the glass.

He has left everything behind. They have all fallen behind, vanished. Even the woman who accompanied him for so long. The trees, the benches.

Only the air. The rippling air. That cold shimmering, sometimes translucently bright, at times suddenly fading

For a moment he stopped. Plunged into this shimmering.

A bottle beneath the bench in the square. A blackened bottle without a label. With the dregs of some dark liquid at the bottom. ❧

Translated by Eszter Molnár

MTI Photo Archive

The first meeting of the Nagy Government. From left to right: Béla Kovács, István Dobi, Antal Apró, Imre Nagy, Zoltán Tildy.

László Cs. Szabó

Venice Stole a Horse...

(From Theft to Theft)

László Fehér stole a steed
below the black hillside.
So loud did he crack his whip
Gönc town heard it clear...
(Folk ballad)

Well, the multiple thefts of this ancient four-in-hand have always been heard far beyond Gönc. I am not being eccentric, setting off with a Hungarian folk ballad, since the musicologists tell us that its music has origins in northern Italy. And the horses we are talking about are Italian, too... How careless of me, of course not Italian, they are Venetian! Which is vastly different. They are Venetian—that is, since 1204.

You may already have guessed that I am speaking of the four shapely, haughty bronze horses adorning the balcony of St. Mark's Cathedral. Their closely-cropped manes end in smart forelocks, their eyes are wild, like the eyes of our legendary animal spirits, the original mercury-gold alloy gilding is well preserved from their heads to their chests. They must have been dazzling on their first birthday. The Venetians themselves truly thought of them as their protectors, which is why they placed them so ostentatiously in their incomparable main square, in front of the main western window of their basilica, over the arch of its main entrance. They were the divinely shining, golden symbols of Venice's sea power. In Venice's Mediterranean imagination, just as in the beliefs of the Athenian sailors of the golden age, the horse and the sea are one, the white-crested breakers rushing towards the land are a white-maned herd galloping free, and Poseidon, the god of the deep, was a horse-tamer. Sophocles tells us he was the first to put a bridle on a horse.

And what the Venetians believed about the four horses, so friend and foe believed: Pietro Doria, admiral of Genoa, when besieging the city boasted that he would curb St. Mark's horses. He never did.

László Cs. Szabó
(1905–1984) was a noted essayist, critic and teacher of art history at the Budapest Academy of Arts when he left the country in 1948. After spending some years in Italy, he eventually settled in London in 1951 and worked for the Hungarian Section of the BBC, continuing to publish volumes of essays, short stories, poems and autobiographical writings in Hungarian.

There are not many four-in-hands in the entire world that are as well-known as this. Partly because there isn't another four–in–hand in history that has been stolen so many times—I am surprised that the hero of our ballad, the horse-thief László Fehér didn't get his hands on them.

One of the four is now a temporary guest of the Royal Academy in London. It was lent after one and a half years of negotiations, partly to obtain a few more millions (in hard currency) for the repairs to the peeling, sinking, collapsing magic city, and partly out of an art historian's detective instinct, that with the help of the thirty-odd loans that were herded around the guest of honour—all antique horses, horse upon horse—and by dint of comparisons, examinations, chemical tests, their age and mysterious origin could at last be clarified. There are a few amazing discoveries in this herd, very recent ones, fresh from the bottom of the Italian seas, the Italians themselves haven't seen them yet in public. The cost of the exhibition is enormous, sponsored by Olivetti, the typewriter-king. Not by the Italian Government, who years ago, shhh!—quietly used the proceeds of the first great Save Venice campaign to finance its own budget deficit. It borders on the unbelievable, even after a Marathon of negotiations, that Venice allowed this horse go, given the obstinate local belief that Venice is doomed if the four horses ever leave it. Rather a self-centered belief, after all they are not natives of Venice; indeed as I have said, these are the four horses most often stolen in history. Stolen, robbed, pillaged, looted. We can make our own choice of word. Any one of them testifies to the admiring appreciation of the looter and may add to the pride of the bronze horses.

Originally, they certainly pulled an emperor's triumphal chariot; of hundreds and hundreds, this is the only such four-in-hand to have survived intact. The bronze chariot and its deified, laurel-wreathed occupant are lost. But where is the stud-book these finely-bred horses are registered in? Are they Greek or Roman? Glittering names have long debated this. If they are Greek, dating back to the age of Alexander the Great, 300 B.C., then Chios, Rhodes or Delphi may claim their paternity, and their maker would have studied in the school of the master Lysippos; if they are more recent, then one of the Hellenic cities of Asia Minor, perhaps Halicarnassos or Pergamon, may claim the glory. But could they be Roman? Judging from a number of ancient coins, they may have stood on top of the lost triumphal arch of the sleazily Greek-loving Nero, and they may have been cast at that time. Or did Trajanus drive them on top of his triumphal arch; or did they adorn the tomb of Hadrian, today's Castel San Angelo? At the time it had a flat roof garden, it could easily have taken a bronze horse-chariot. Or would they be of the same age as the still-standing equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius on the Capitol? All right, all right, but what if they had simply been packed, along with many thousands of looted treasures, when Greece was conquered, and taken to Italy by the rapacious "Greek-loving" conquerors on their overloaded ships? Or, on the contrary, suppose they had never been to Rome, never left the Greek world? All riddles and open questions.

The first clear clue comes from Constantine the Great, in the fourth century A.D. From his theft. Or shall we politely call it his urban development plan? He founded a new Rome in the ancient but relatively undistinguished city of Byzantium, that meeting-place of two seas and two continents; there he brought, probably from that other Rome, that unattractively aging mother city, the four beautiful horses (and shiploads of other things, besides), and putting each on a towering high pillar, he placed them in the Hippodrome, the race-course, near Hagia Sophia and next to the palace, which after the Turkish conquest was turned into a lushly planted pleasure-house, a seraglio, by the breezy-caftaned sultans. Since one of Constantine's close successors, Theodosius, brought an obelisk from Egypt to be placed in the centre of the racecourse, and there that obelisk has withstood all the storms of history to this day, we can determine to within a few meters the spots where the four horses, the future property of St. Mark's, free of their chariot, raised their proud heads for almost a thousand years. But their next theft is coming.

Up to then, their tall columns had preserved them well. In 1204, the Doge Enrico Dandolo, blind and aged but all the quicker and harder-driving, Byzantium's mortal enemy, forced the empty-pocketed grasping Frankish knights of the Fourth Crusade to attack the fabulously wealthy Christian city instead of the Arab invaders of the Holy Land. You don't have the money to pay for your sea journey, all right then, my dear children, this way, if you please, rob, loot, I'll be with you of course. A horrifying destruction followed the succesful siege, even the Hippodrome was burnt to the ground, only the obelisk remained standing, high above the thick smoke and flames—and the four horses. Which Doge Dandolo, as shamelessly as any ancient emperor, brought back to Venice on galleys loaded to the gunnels with fabulous treasures, gem-studded altar-pieces, marble carvings, relics. His blindness didn't bother him, he knew exactly where to find each treasure, he knew every square foot of Byzantium, after spending years there as an ambassador, that is, as a spy.

The horses remained many years in the Arsenale, watching, not without danger, the feverish shipbuilding. They were placed on the façade of St Mark's looking onto the square, around 1250: it was there that Petrarca admired them. From then on they never ceased to be an object of wonder—Pisanello and Donatello and Leonardo and Dürer and Michelangelo and Giambologna marvelled at them. Their place in the admiration of great minds has not changed, as witnessed by a medieval mosaic in the Cathedral and a number of Renaissance cityscapes.

But why do I speak of their unchanged place? In 1797 Bonaparte, the First Consul, annihilated the Republic of Venice with a flick of his pen, threw it to the Austrians, removed the protecting bronze horses from the balcony (was the old superstition true after all?) and on July 27 in the following year, he displayed them in Paris in his triumphal parade. The parade was a lifesize replica of the

ancient Roman tradition, well suited to the Caesaromaniac conqueror. Between 1802 and 1807, the horses watched, through the iron gates of the Tuilleries, Napoleon's frequent troop inspections in the gravelled courtyard; then they were placed near the Louvre atop the brand new Arc du Carrousel, the triumphal arch commemorating the lightning victories of 1805. They had a stressful time—no wonder, since their new owner was quite a nervous man. Born fawners know no limits: the architect wanted to add a new triumphal chariot with a gold statue of the emperor, but Napoleon, prompted more by a measure of good taste than by humility, seemed to have recognized that that was really too much and vetoed the plan. Even a parvenu has some modesty sometimes.

After his fall, the masters of the world returned the horses to Venice at once. Their concern was of course mostly territorial, that is, to gain the allegiance of faithful taxpayers, but there was also among them a foolishly enthusiastic, romantic young man, the heir to the throne of Bavaria, the future king Ludwig I, who was at least as devoted to Greek statues, Etruscan vases and old Italian paintings as he would be devoted in his old age to half-Amazon, half-dancer adventuresses. At the Congress of Vienna he made the strongest arguments for confiscating Napoleon's war booty, in the name of a shamelessly plundered Italy and of the Old Order. What an irony! The four horses were greeted on their arrival back in what has by now become their home, by the new lawful ruler of Venice, the Habsburg Emperor, greeted by an Austrian guard of honour, by a gun salute, in front of the Basilica.

The film rolls on faster now, of course, as the 20th century brings ever more burning, razing storms towards the as yet untouched ancient cities of Europe. If the bronze horses' memory is good, since 1914 they must often have remembered 1204 and the burning of the Hippodrome of Byzantium. Four days after Italy declared war against the Central Powers, preparations began to take the holy totem animals to safety. Heavens! Take them away? Many superstitious and surly Venetians regarded the risky project as cowardly and thoughtless, after all, come on, what's the hurry, how many miles away are the enemy guns? And Venice is a unique wonder, who would dare as much as to singe it with his godless hands? Yet some guardian angel may have inspired the act. Five months later, on October 24, everyone shuddered when—death from the sky—an Austrian airborne bomb, this surprising new invention, missed the railway station and pulverized the baroque cupola of the neighbouring Scalzi church, with one of Tiepolo's most beautiful Italian frescoes. "On my word of honour, it wasn't me!" was the reply, when we jokingly accused József Balogh—translator of St. Augustine, founding editor of *The Hungarian Quarterly*, and later a victim of the Nazis—who was one of the first airforce pilots, and had made some reconnaissance flights over Venice, but without carrying bombs. The horses languished in an undignified darkness, deep under the palace of the Doges, for two years. Then in autumn 1917 came the panic, the catastrophic Italian defeat at Caporetto, and the horses were taken up the Po, then by railway, all the way to

Rome and to the Castle S. Angelo. When the war ended in victory, they pranced on their proud dancing feet in the garden of the Palazzo Venezia—who knows, perhaps their ancient birthplace—until on November 11, 1919 they took up their old watch again on the balcony of St Mark's, under a bomb-free sky. For just twenty years of grace.

The second armageddon began under seemingly more favourable conditions. Germany is now an ally, France collapses unexpectedly, England's only concern for a while is bare survival, the Yugoslav partisans have no bombs, the sky is clear all around the Adriatic. The four horses are left in place at first, protected by sandbags that exclude all light and even mists. Only in 1942 are they hidden in a remote monastery near Padua, but three years later, between August 8 and 10, Italian sailors, masters of knots, haul them up again with ropes— where to? Dare we say to that place which, except for their Napoleonic kidnapping, has been theirs for seven hundred years? Poor steeds, they are beginning to get used to dancing at the end of a rope. Which is no joke for them, weighing as they do 835 kilograms each.

They have never been shy in their sensual, noble beauty: holding up their shining, coiffed bronze foreheads, they show no false modesty. Do we please you? Of course, we were created to please. But the mystery of their origin, that is a secret they will probably keep even after the cold examinations and chemical tests of this exhibition, like magic horses from a legend. Their height is average, their muscled necks short and arched, their ears small, their trunks are dense, compact and full of strength, their steps are quick, their turns tight, they are excellent in a quadriga or ridden by a lancer. Since the early Renaissance the eyes of the greatest artists have been taking their measure, in order to draw, paint or carve masterpieces after them.

May they come after all from the stud of Alexander the Great? Their blood brothers reached the Indus, accompanying the short-lived favourite son of the Sun-God.

I had the peculiar good luck that they were pulled down again in the 1950s, to be checked or cleaned, I don't remember. The air of Venice was beginning to be poisoned then, polluted by the swiftly industrializing mainland. I step into the courtyard of the Doges' palace, and I pause breathless. There they are behind a rope barrier, set in a circle, like the horses of a roundabout. Oh, was it horses like these that enticed children to the funfair, in old legendary times when, before little men came, rock-hewing titans lived on the earth, this is what their roundabout looked like! I reached over the rope and stealthily patted one of them on the rump. Did I really see it or did I imagine it? The horse turned back and winked.

But in the glittering exhibition at the London Academy, even the one horse evokes instant awe. Its traditional place in Venice is the second from the left as we look at the basilica. They have placed it between whitewashed walls, in a real Senate council-chamber, on a high podium like a temporary altar. There it gra-

ciously raises its front leg, maybe in a Roman salute. It deserves respect, true respect. Much lower down and all around, the other antique horses, some whole, some mutilated, Greek and Roman, a head and neck here, a body full of holes there, life-size or miniature, but all true to their breed, each more noble and more beautiful than the one before. Were there no bad artists among the bronze casters of antiquity? Many soulless imitators, no doubt, but not a single bungler.

How could I have taken them for giant roundabout horses, that other time? Only because they were at eye-level, in a ring? This time I was warmed by a happy respectful feeling. They are the partners of divinities, winged protectors of eternal deeds. I understood why the favourite subject of the ancient Greeks and Romans, after legendary gods and epic heroes, are horses, on the friezes of temples, on triumphal columns, arches, sarcophagi, tombs, mosaics, painted vases. An animal is an animal, a horse is a horse. A horse is something else, there are animals and then there are horses, my father used to say, and he made his living out of horses and lived for them.

I turned back once more from the door. This magic horse is not of our world, it belongs on an altar. Is this how unhappy, melancholy Swift imagined the intelligent, simple, innocent horse, in his vitriolic fourth volume of Gulliver's Travels, as a shaming counterexample to that unbearably beastly and stinking Yahoo, man?

Of the eight back legs, seven are original, but one had to be replaced, broken at sea between Byzantium and Venice. Domenico Morosini, the ship's captain, son of a great noble family, conscious of his responsibility, had another leg made upon his return to Venice, and kept the antique one as a memento.

One of these days I should open the Venice phone directory. The Morosinis were a history-making senatorial family, through the centuries they handed down from father to son the affairs of the Republic. Maybe the ancient name is still there in the directory, direct or indirect descendants. I could ask them what happened to the leg? ❧

(1979)

Translated by Barbara Piazza-Georgi

OBITUARY

Lóránt Czigány

The Passionate Outsider: Professor George Cushing

With the death of Professor George Cushing, Hungarian scholarship abroad has suffered a serious setback. He was the first (and only) full professor of Hungarian language and literature at any British university and a prolific and reliable translator from the language. His scholarly contributions in English and Hungarian on his chosen subject are scattered in a wide variety of learned journals, handbooks and encyclopaedias and await collection and editing.

George Frederick Cushing, son of a Methodist minister, was born into a comfortable middle-class background on February 17th, 1923, in Sheringham, a small seaside town in Norfolk. After attending Manchester Grammar School, Cushing went up to read Classics at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in 1942 on a scholarship. The war interrupted his studies, he was called up and served in the Special Operations Executive (SOE) mostly in the Near East where he lost his best friend, a loss he used to recall even decades later. It was in the Services that he had a chance to acquire a good grounding in Hungarian. At one particular time he was a member of a small unit with a special assignment. They were going to be parachuted into Hungary. The operation was eventually abandoned, since the end of the war was in sight.

After demobilization, Cushing resumed his studies at Cambridge and came down with a First in 1947. His interest in things Hungarian was rekindled and became a lifelong obsession. He enrolled at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies of the University of London, as a postgraduate student aiming at a PhD degree in Hungarian. His first mentors were two émigré scholars who had come to England before the war, and were now instructors in Hungarian for Service students. One of them, Béla Iványi-Grünwald (1902–1965), was a noted historian, the other, István Ullmann (1914–1976), a philologist who later became an authority on semantics and a respected professor of French at the University of Oxford.

To acquire firsthand knowledge of Hungary, Cushing applied for a schol-

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arship and was admitted to the Eötvös College in Budapest, which was modelled on the École Normale Supérieure and was undoubtedly the best breeding ground for young scholars. His eminent teachers included the linguist Dezső Pais (1886–1973) and János Horváth (1878–1961), the founder of modern Hungarian literary scholarship whose lasting influence can be detected in Cushing's attitude to Hungarian literature.

Cushing may have made one too many friends at Eötvös College or elsewhere and was consequently expelled from Hungary in 1949 as a suspected British agent. The information he gathered may only have concerned the timetables of the notoriously late Hungarian railways or the stock of secondhand bookshops; it did not matter, in an atmosphere of growing suspicion, a sure sign of cold war hysteria, he and all other western graduate students were asked to leave, including the language instructors of the Sárospatak College of English. The lowest ebb of cultural contacts between England and Hungary was reached with the expulsion of the British Council soon afterwards, and the Council was not to be readmitted formally until the early 1990s when Hungary managed to extricate itself from the grip of totalitarianism.

Back in London, Cushing had to make a fresh start since most of his notes had been confiscated by the Hungarian authorities. He successfully completed his thesis *(Széchenyi, Kossuth and National Classicism in Hungarian Literature)* in 1952. His PhD was the fourth higher degree awarded in Hungarian or related subjects at a British University. (The first dissertation concerned Hungarian balladry in the context of English and Scottish ballads, the work of M. Egger in 1927.)

By his appointment to a full lecturership in Hungarian in 1953, Dr Cushing became the first full-fledged British-born teacher of Hungarian at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, indeed, at any other establishment of higher education in the British Isles. Hungarian had been introduced at the School in 1937 with the appointment of Miklós Szenczi (1904–1977) who was recalled by the Hungarian Government shortly after the war, only to be forced into retirement in 1949, in the hectic days of the cold war. After his departure, Béla Iványi-Grünwald acted as a temporary lecturer until the return of Cushing from Hungary.

Although severed from the community of fellow-scholars behind the Iron Curtain, Dr Cushing, now secure in his post, might have become an unrecognized expert of a somewhat outlandish field of study, had the unexpected and ill-fated revolution of 1956 not shaken British public opinion through powerful images of burning Soviet tanks and of solitary teenagers throwing Molotov-cocktails. Things Hungarian were once more in demand, not unlike in the stirring days of the War of Independence in 1848–1849. Being on the wrong side in the war was forgiven and forgotten, and the romantic British imagination was fired by the Hungarians making a last stand against the forces of Soviet imperialism.

Britain took its fair share of refugees including a large number of students. The highest authority of British universities, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors

and Principals, hastily set up an ad hoc committee to one of its numerous sub-committees to oversee the allocation of Hungarian refugee students. Dr Cushing was their chief adviser in assessing the academic potentials of those who had little or no knowledge of English. This time-consuming task demanded versatility, efficiency and attention to detail, qualities which Dr Cushing possessed with an additional measure of the British romantic love of the loser. Hundreds of Hungarian would-be academics benefited by his initial assistance in getting scholarships from the Lord Mayor's Hungarian Fund, which was set up in the aftermath of the revolution, and which was the biggest single source provided for refugee students.

Professor Cushing spent the rest of his life uneventfully, as befits a scholar, commuting peacefully to the School from his Kent home which was first in Sevenoaks, later in Chislehurst. He never left the School, apart from a brief sabbatical in 1983. From the mid-1960s he was able to reestablish his connections with his colleagues in Hungary. He became a Recognized Teacher of the University in 1965, reader in 1967, and was finally promoted to a professorship in 1978, at the age of 55. For his inaugural lecture, delivered on December 11th, 1979, he chose to speak about the 20th-century Hungarian novelist, Zsigmond Móricz. For the academic year 1979-1980 he accepted the duties of Acting Director of the School, and after his retirement in 1986 he was awarded the title of Professor Emeritus. By this time he was also an honorary member of the International Association of Hungarian Studies. He died in hospital after a long and frustrating illness at the age of 73, on April 12th, 1996, at Sydenham, near London.

Cushing's main contribution to the cause of Hungarian literature abroad is undoubtedly his work as a translator. This is the field where his attention to minuscule detail paid real dividends. He worked slowly and laboriously, sparing no efforts to find the best equivalent of obscure dialect words which are an enigma to most native speakers, to follow up riddles inherent in colloquial phrases, which are the insider's pleasure and the outsider's curse. As Cushing always followed the original Hungarian text closely, he proved to be a reliable translator, an author's dream come true. He never experimented with the translation of modern poetry, let alone avant-garde texts which prompt a translator's imagination to run riot.

After the first visit of the poet Gyula Illyés to England in 1963, Cushing embarked on a programme of translations with Illyés's *Puszták népe* (1936), a work, which, in the words of its translator, "can perhaps be best described as a lyric sociography", *People of the Puszta* (1967), followed by a biography of Petőfi, substantially enlarged by Illyés for a new edition (*Petőfi,* 1973). Cushing was convinced that the prose-works (his *Úti levelek* in particular) of this 19th century Hungarian poet had been neglected by native critics, and proved his point by a selection of Petőfi's prose in a contribution to *Rebel or Revolutionary?* (ed. by

Béla Köpeczi, 1974). In The case of Endre Ady, who was perhaps solely responsible for the renewal of Hungarian poetry at the beginning of this century, critics have never disputed the qualities of his journalism. Cushing's translation of a selection by Erzsébet Vezér proved again that this prose holds its own in English (*The Explosive Country,* 1977).

Cushing's other translations include a meticulous retranslation of Ferenc Molnár's *Játék a Kastélyban* (1926), usually staged in English speaking countries in P.G. Woodehouse's version, *The Play's the Thing*, on which Tom Stoppard was able to base his adaptation, *Rough Crossing* (1984), thereby providing Molnár with a new lease of life.

Cushing's most useful work as a translator is to be found in *Old Hungarian Reader* (ed. Tibor Klaniczay, 1985) in which his unique qualifications in linguistics came in very handy. Most of the materials presented therein were in his translation, including texts from the Latin, which Cushing was singularly well-equipped to handle. After this excursion into old Hungarian literature, Cushing returned to modern authors with a selection of short stories by Zsigmond Móricz, *Seven Pennies* (1988) and Géza Gárdonyi's *Egri csillagok* (1901), translated as *Eclipse of the Crescent Moon* (1991), a tale of the 1552 siege of Eger by the Turks, in which his knowledge of Turkish and things Turkish acquired while in the Near East during the Second World War provided him with extra insight. He managed to complete the translation of two more novels before his death. *Rokonok* (Relatives, 1932) by Móricz and *Színek és évek* (Colours and Years, 1912) by Margit Kaffka, perhaps the most outstanding Hungarian woman novelist.

Cushing's output as a translator compares favourably to the most prolific English translator of Hungarian literature, R. Nisbet Bain (1854–1909) of the British Museum Library, who produced ten volumes of Jókai alone and one volume each of Károly Kisfaludy and Kálmán Mikszáth. The quality of Cushing's translation surpasses that of Bain who depended upon the German text and later abridged his version according to his own or the publisher's, Messrs. Jarrold's, caprice.

Cushing was an old-fashioned scholar in the best possible sense of the term, a *rara avis* in a world where fashionable theories, hastily formed and based on ill-conceived ideas or superficially digested data, are the order of the day. What he may have lacked in boldness of vision was amply made up for by his penetrating insight and relentless pursuit of philological ambiguities. The *Times* editorial obituary (April 17, 1996) claimed him as one of the last surviving specimens of a dying breed, the eccentric English bachelor professor, "who might be found in the pages of some Victorian or Edwardian novel". This may be so, if a lifelong passion for one of the lesser known literatures of Europe is regarded as an eccentricity. Cushing's articles and studies were, however, far from eccentric, he tackled controversial issues with an original approach, or described subjects which needed the innocent eye of an outsider.

To mention just a few examples, his treatment of the Hungarian Enlightenment (*The Birth of National Literature in Hungary,* 1960), *Problems of Hungarian Literary Criticism,* 1962, *Books and Readers in 18th-Century Hungary,* 1969, or a refreshingly balanced view of the critical activity of József Bajza (1958), and *The Irreverence of Petőfi* (1974) are all marked by originality of approach. His contribution to *EOS: An Inquiry into the Theme of Lovers' Meetings and Partings at Dawn in Poetry* (ed. By A. T. Hatto, 1965) is a real gem, unearthing pieces of unnoticed *alba*-songs in Hungarian folk poetry; there is no specific term for this type of verse in Hungarian. Many of his articles concern British-Hungarian cultural contacts (e.g. *The Cultural Scene in Hungary—Yesterday,* 1984). One of his major projects was to write on 18th century Hungarian memoir-writers, of which he only managed to publish a few excerpts.

His interest in linguistics is responsible for the adaptation of Péter Hajdú's handbook on *Finno-Ugrian Languages and Peoples* (1975), an essential guide in English to Finno-Ugrian studies, and at least one article on morphological oddities (e.g. *ehetnékem van/volt* = I have/had a desire to eat) elegantly explained. (*The Desiderative in Hungarian,* 1963). He produced the first analysis of the earliest Hungarian grammars for English lay readers (those of Zsigmond Wékey, 1852, and of János Csink, 1853) in *The Two Earliest Hungarian Grammars for English Students*, 1977. His growing interest in Finno-Ugrian folklore is responsible for splendid pieces on the cult of the bear in Ob-Ugrian folklore (1977) and on the traditions of heroic poetry of the Ob-Ugrian people (1980).

He was a master of writing concisely for encyclopaedias: anybody who has had to produce a clear, judiciously balanced portrait of a major writer in about ten lines can appreciate the enormous difficulty of this genre.

Cushing was a modest man and a very private person, somewhat reticent, occasionally verging on shyness, who carried his learning lightly and seemed to have all the time in the world for a good discussion with students and colleagues alike. His lively blue eyes contained a glimmer of impish humour, always on the lookout to snap playfully at unsuspecting customers. With his closely cropped, thinning hair and gold-rimmed spectacles he bore a certain resemblance to his one-time master, János Horváth (of which he was secretly proud). A somewhat larger than life, fictionalized portrait of Cushing was drawn by Miklós Gyárfás in a series of short stories, *Picking tanár úr Budapesten* (Professor Picking in Budapest, 1957), applying an equal amount of gentle mockery and genuine fondness to this sprightly little man who had decided to devote his whole life, for better or worse, to champion the unrewarding cause of Hungarian literature. ❧

Béla Pomogáts

After Sarajevo

Hungarians and Serbs—Past and Present
A Short History

More than three hundred thousand Hungarians live in the successor states to the former Yugoslavia—the federal states of Serbia and Montenegro, still called Yugoslavia, in Croatia and Slovenia. The majority are in the Vojvodina; tens of thousands in Eastern Slavonia in Croatia—in and around Eszék (Osijek) and South Baranya, still Serbian-occupied (the larger part of the Baranya belongs to Hungary), and over ten thousand in the Mura region around Lendva in Slovenia. Prior to the Treaty of Trianon, these territories had formed part of the Kingdom of Hungary.

The Vojvodina is the home of the majority of Hungarians in what was Yugoslavia. This region consists of three, historically more or less separate parts—the Bačka (Bácska) between the Danube and Tisza rivers, Bánság (or Banat) east of the Tisza; and Szerémség (Syrmia), between the Danube and Sava rivers. Of the 102,200 square kilometres of today's rump Yugoslavia, the Vojvodina occupies 21,500, or more than one fifth of the territory of the state.

The Vojvodina used to be part of the Roman Empire. In the Age of Migrations it was first occupied by the Huns, then the Avars. In the late 9th century, the conquering Magyars settled there and, in the Middle Ages, populated the whole area. Between the 11th and 16th centuries the South Slav territories south of the Sava and the Danube were also part of the Kingdom of Hungary; the banates of Macsó, Ozora, Só and Szörény had been vassals of the Hungarian Crown. Economically, the southern territories had formed the most developed part of Hungary at the time. In the Bácska and Temesköz (later part of the Banat) regions, agriculture flourished, Syrmia was famous for its wines. The towns in these southern territories carried out a vigorous trade with Venice and the Dalmatian cities—which accounts for the strong Italianate cultural influence in the region.

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The Hungarian settlers and the Serbs on the Balkan peninsula always had close economic, cultural and military links, especially in the 15th century, after the Ottoman Empire started its expansion in the region. The Hungarian and Serbian (generally South Slav) armies jointly tried to contain Turkish expansion. The Serbs who settled in Hungary in the 15th century had fled the Turks. After the defeat and collapse in 1459 of the medieval Serbian state, Serbs settled in Syrmia, the Bácska and Temesköz in greater numbers and even formed a majority in pockets in the middle of the country.

In 1526 the Battle of Mohács resulted in the destruction of the medieval Hungarian state and the southern and central parts of the kingdom came under Turkish rule. Hungarians who had earlier made up the majority in the southern regions, almost totally disappeared. These territories were most vulnerable to the ravages of war and their population was sold on the slave markets of Asia Minor by the hundreds of thousands. They were generally replaced by Serbian or other South Slav refugees. After the Turks had been expelled from Hungary by the Habsburgs at the end of the 17th century, Serbians settled in the southern territories in even greater numbers.

The imperial army advanced as far as Skopje and Niš, from whence it had to withdraw behind the Hungarian borders. Fearing Turkish vengeance, the Serbs of South Serbia and Kosovo, who had supported the imperial army during the campaign, fled to Hungary in 1690, led by the Patriarch of Ipek, Arzen Crnojević. Some 200,000 Serbs settled in the Bácska and the Banat at the time—and also in some small towns and villages around Buda, including Szentendre, later to become a religious and cultural centre of the Serbs in Hungary. In 1691, the Emperor Leopold I granted the Serb settlers a patent, providing them with wide-ranging autonomy and removed them from under the authority of county and central government bodies. This autonomy was further strengthened by that enjoyed by the Serbian Orthodox Church under the Patriarch of Karlowitz. Church autonomy survived even after feudal privileges were abolished. Similar to the arrangement in Croatia, Vienna organized Serbian marches in the southern territories as well. The population were granted freeman or soldier status, and as well as for fighting the Turks, the imperial government also used them to restrain the unruly Hungarians, as was the case during the 1703–11 War of Independence led by Prince Ferenc Rákóczi II and the 1848–49 Revolution. This led to conflicts between Hungarians and Serbs.

Ethnicity and culture in the southern territories before and after 1918

Ethnic and cultural make-up in the Vojvodina was defined in the aftermath of the Turkish wars—the majority of the Hungarians disappeared and were replaced by Serbs. In the 18th century, especially under the Empress Maria

Theresa (1740–1780), Hungarians repopulated the region and a large number of Germans were also settled there. The Hungarian ethnic presence was greatly restrained by the fact that right up to the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, Vienna favoured the Serbs, whom they considered more reliable. Hungarians suffered great losses in the 1848–49 Revolution and under the absolutist rule that followed their defeat. The Court organized an autonomous province, called the Serbian Vojvodina, covering the Bácska and the Banat, which they detached from the Hungarian Kingdom.

The Hungarian presence strengthened again in the southern territories after the Compromise of 1867. Hungarian administration was restored and the Hungarian ethnic community grew in numbers. At the same time, the southern territories remained a centre for the Serbs and Serbian culture in Hungary. Serbia itself, under Turkish occupation for much longer, was not part of the European processes of urbanization and civilization before the 19th century. The centre of the Serbian national Church was Karlowitz in Syrmia, and the Orthodox bishopric of Újvidék (Novi Sad) also played an influential role. Novi Sad had a Serbian theatre and secondary school. The association Matica Srpska, which transferred its centre from Budapest to Novi Sad, had a major cultural role; its huge library and archives are important in Serbian cultural life to this day. The German (Swabian) communities in the Bácska and the Banat also made a significant contribution to the economic and social development of the region.

Between 1867 and the end of the Great War, the three ethnic groups lived in the area later to be called the Vojvodina in more or less balanced proportions. According to the last Hungarian census, (1910), of a total population of about 1.5 million, 457,000 (30 per cent) were Hungarian, 384,000 (25.6 per cent) Serbian, and 323,000 (21.6 per cent) German. Other smaller ethnic groups were 56,000 Slovaks (3.8 per cent), 74,000 Romanians (4.9 per cent), and 13,000 Ruthenians (0.9 per cent). Of the towns, Szabadka (Subotica) with a population of 100,000 and, primarily, the northern Bácska towns had a Hungarian majority. Serbs dominated the southern part of the region, whereas Germans were dispersed over the whole area.

Following the Treaty of Trianon, the ethnic make-up of the Vojvodina underwent dramatic changes. Large numbers of South Slavs—Serbs, Macedonians and Montenegrins—were settled in the area in the inter-war period. The end of the Second World War saw a huge influx again, and the population grew to over 2 million, within which the Serbs quadrupled in number, while the number of Hungarians fell to nearly half the 1910 figure. In 1991, before the Yugoslav war, their number was 340,000; it has since diminished again by several thousand. The Germans have been practically wiped off the map of the Vojvodina. At the end of the Second World War, when the Wehrmacht withdrew from Yugoslav territories, almost all the Vojvodina Germans fled with the

retreating troops, and those remaining behind were largely massacred by Tito's partisans.

Despite historical conflicts, some traditions of co-existence between peoples, cultures and religions evolved in this area of mixed ethnicity (Hungarians have been Roman Catholic or Calvinist, the Germans Roman Catholic, the Serbs Greek Orthodox). Co-ordinating respective interests, and a routine of co-existence among Hungarians, Serbs, Germans and Romanians used to be general in the historical southern territories. Similar ways of life, whether peasant, middle-class or professional, led to communal, neighbourhood and trade connections between the various ethnic groups. In peacetime conditions, such connections created strong social bonds. After the fighting ceased in 1849, up to the Great War, a degree of tolerance and cooperation among the co-habitant ethnic groups and their educated layers defined everyday social life. This is testified in literature, by the works of Dániel Papp, Ferenc Herczeg, Izidor Milkó and Elek Gozsdu writing in Hungarian, or by Zmaj Jovan Jovanović, Jakov Ignjatović and Vejko Petrović writing in Serbian.

Whenever these traditions, so promising and always supporting the cultural (and mental) integration of the Central European region, were in jeopardy, the invariable cause was political nationalism. Especially at the neuralgic points of history, in times of war, political nationalism has destroyed much that everyday life and cultural development produced. Hungarian and Serbian political strategists have ordinarily prepared their plans in opposition to each other and refused to avail themselves of the advantages of a structured coordination of interests that everyday life in the community, rural or urban, has shaped. There were exceptions, naturally. The noted politician and advocate of Hungarian sovereignty, Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, published a book entitled *Helyünk és sorsunk Európában* (Our Place and Future in Europe) in 1941, not long before the German invasion of Yugoslavia, a book which was banned at the time, and has not been reprinted to this day. In it, he argued in favour of a strategic alliance between Hungarians and South Slavs. This proposal served to underpin historically and politically the Hungarian-Yugoslav treaty of friendship made under the premiership of Count Pál Teleki. The treaty was swept aside by history, just as were its initiators—Count Teleki committed suicide three days before the German invasion in protest against Hungarian participation in it, and Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was executed in 1944 by the Hungarian henchmen of the Nazis.

Conflicts and tragedies

After the failure of Bajcsy-Zsilinszky's grand plan and Prime Minister Teleki's ominous suicide, the Hungarian army marched into the Bácska. Although this seemed a retribution for the injustices of Trianon at the time, the move meant that Hungary had involved itself even deeper on Hitler's side, and this

greatly contributed to Hungary eventually finishing the war amongst the losers. There were massacres at Újvidék and Zsablya, when Hungarian troops shot some five thousand civilians in alleged retribution for Serb partisan actions; this was exposed in the Hungarian Parliament by Bajcsy-Zsilinszky and the Regent, Admiral Horthy, intervened. This, in turn, was followed by the Bácska bloodbath perpetrated by Tito's partisans; tens of thousands of Hungarians fell victim to the campaign of vengeance for the Újvidék massacre. The horrific story of partisan revenge has not been fully told to this day.

Hungarians have examined all this, as is indicated by two works by the distinguished novelist Tibor Cseres, *Hideg napok* (Cold Days) and *Vérbosszú Bácskában* (Blood Vengeance in Bácska)—an outstanding film, by András Kovács, was based on the first. It took a degree of courage to publish *Cold Days,* since a section of the public could never forgive the writer for having shed light on a shameful chapter in Hungarian history. As far as I know there is nothing in Serbian about the 1944 massacres. Authentic information of the actual events and the extent of the massacres is just as difficult to come by as an appropriate commemoration of the victims.

Tito and his supporters, after massacring not only Hungarians but also Serbs, Croats, Slovenes and Bosnians, simply turned over a new leaf and forbade any public mention of the blood-stained past. No mention was made of the tens of thousands of Serbs in the Krajina either, who had been massacred by Ante Pavelić's Ustasha.

The peoples in the southern territories undoubtedly gained something by the Tito regime. The Autonomous Province of the Vojvodina granted certain rights and a degree of cultural autonomy to ethnic minorities. A number of Hungarian cultural institutions were allowed to function, including a university department and a research institute for Hungarian studies, many schools, papers and periodicals, radio and television stations. Those in power spoke about the "unity and fraternity" of the nations and nationalities in the South Slav federation. However, under the surface the wounds—national hostilities, historical traumas and frustrations—continued to fester. When *raison d'état* could no longer keep this ethnically and culturally divided society together, the suppressed aggressions, hatreds and myths broke to the surface and led to a genocidal war. The autonomy of the Vojvodina was one of the victims.

The responsibility for the genocide that took place before our eyes and reached infernal proportions, and which the Western powers could not contain, must be borne by all—except the Hungarians, the Slovenes who have not waged, and the Albanians who could not wage, war. Serbs have persecuted or killed Muslims and Croats, who in turn have done the same to Serbs. Those who saw the innocent Sarajevo victims and the Bosnians fleeing from East Bosnian towns on television, will also have seen the Serbians beaten and bleeding, driven out of the Krajina. There is no Serbian or Croatian political leader, heads of state included, who could not be condemned for war crimes.

The Vojvodina Hungarians were not able to isolate themselves from the tragic disintegration of the Yugoslav federal state. This is not only because they had to share with the Serbs and other Vojvodina inhabitants the destitution caused by war and the embargo. They were called up and sent to a war that was none of their business, in which they could only lose. It happened in the Baranya that Hungarians conscripted by the Serbian and the Croatian armies had to kill one another. Tens of thousands of Hungarian youngsters fled the Vojvodina to escape this fate and may never return to their homeland. They will probably add to the Hungarian diaspora and will be lost to the nation for good, as one generation passes into another.

Europe has been taught the meaning of "ethnic cleansing" by the Yugoslav war. It sounds a technical term, but the reality is butchering people, laying towns waste, burning villages, raping women and driving hundreds of thousands from their homes. A silent and bloodless "ethnic cleansing" has taken place in the Hungarian populated parts of the Vojvodina. The number of native Hungarians has diminished by almost a hundred thousand, due to intimidation, the restrictions the Belgrade language law imposed on the use of their native language (further exacerbated by local petty chieftains), and the fact that Hungarian youngsters have been forced to emigrate. They have come to Hungary or dispersed all over the world, and they include a large number of the educated—writers, artists, teachers, engineers and doctors.

Already depleted and on the brink of collapse, the Vojvodina Hungarians then had to face a mass exodus of Serbs from the Croatian Krajina, some one hundred thousand in number. This influx has brought to the surface severe ethnic, political and moral issues. This mass of refugees, destitute, humiliated, and driven out of their homeland by force of arms, deserves sympathy and support. Their arrival in the Bácska and the Banat, however, was accompanied by the forced occupation of houses, extorted house sales, atrocities and abuse on the part of the authorities, the police, and individuals. The refugees were understandably desperate, and some thought that they should revenge themselves for the wrongs they had suffered in their homeland on the Hungarians and Croats who were that much better off.

All this has evoked the terrible memories among Hungarians of the late autumn of 1944, the indiscriminate atrocities perpetrated by the Serbian execution squads. Unless the Vojvodina Hungarians are effectively protected by the Belgrade government, an even greater number of refugees may be heading for Hungary than earlier and could cause severe problems for the Hungarian economy and society, which are unprepared for such an eventuality. As already pointed out, at the end of the Great War the Vojvodina was populated by three peoples in largely equal proportions—Hungarians, Germans and South Slavs (Serbs,

Croats and Bunevatz [Catholic Serbs]). The Greater Serbian colonization, followed by the expulsion of Germans in 1944, the massacre of Hungarians and the massive settlement of non-Hungarians over several decades, has radically distorted these proportions. In present circumstances, the current ethnic make-up of the region may again change considerably, and Hungarians, still over three hundred thousand in number, may find themselves dispersed and diminished to an insignificant minority.

Chances for dialogue

The dangers threatening Hungarians in rump Yugoslavia have produced great concern in Hungary and left their mark on Hungarian-Serbian relations, which have suffered damage in the last ten years. The relationship between the two peoples is now again defined by mutual suspicions, fears and passions. Antagonism is growing, new confrontations present themselves and memories of old conflicts are now looming.

In the light of the above, a meeting between Hungarian and Serbian intellectuals, which took place in the winter of 1995, was of great and pioneering significance. Noted Serbian and Hungarian individuals, among them Sonja Licht, well-known civil rights advocate, Zoran Konstantinović, member of the Academy, Predrag Palavestra, president of the Serbian PEN Club, Dragoslav Srejović, vice-president of the Serbian Academy of Sciences, Mirko Tepavac, former ambassador in Budapest and Yugoslav foreign minister, and, on the Hungarian side, the journalist Miklós Vásárhelyi, the writer György Konrád, György Granasztói, a former ambassador, writers József Tornai and Péter Módos, Sztoján Vujicsics, a Serbian critic from Hungary and László Végel, a Vojvodina Hungarian author.

The meeting took place in an auspicious atmosphere. Past and present conflicts were openly discussed, and concerns about the dangers threatening the Vojvodina Hungarians and the imminent transformation of the ethnic composition of the population were voiced by the participants from Hungary, including Sztojan Vujicsics. The Serbian guests spoke in appreciation of the earlier traditions of cooperation among the two peoples and of the figures thus involved—Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky and Pál Teleki, among others. The latter was especially acclaimed by Professor Zivorad Stojković, who suggested that a street be named after him in Belgrade.

It would be very useful if these noted representatives of the Yugoslav intelligentsia raised their voice in Belgrade about the plight of the Vojvodina Hungarians and in support of their political aims of self-government within Yugoslavia and of maintaining the multi-cultural traditions and character of the region. It has to be recognized that possibilities for a coordinated role to be taken by Hungarian and Serbian intellectuals are limited, for the Serbians engaged

in dialogue with Hungarians are mainly in opposition and have no direct influence on political processes and decisions (just as in Romania).

However, there is no alternative to dialogue; meetings and talks must be continued. Especially now, after Sarajevo, when the long and bloody war seems to have come to an end and there is hope for a political solution. The Western powers, which prepared and then forced a Bosnian solution by military means, primarily the United States, Great Britain, Germany and France, ought to attend to the situation in the Vojvodina and, of course, in the Albanian-inhabited Kosovo, to developments in ethnic conflicts there, and should exert their influence to dampen conflicts. More than one ethnic conflict of the Bosnian type is conceivable in Yugoslavia today.

It will not be easy to achieve the desired solution; it will not be easy to resolve the problems of the Vojvodina Hungarians. We are walking a long and winding path, through a minefield. But progress we must, with determination and patience, with mutual openness and sincerity, ready to reopen the dialogue. The fight for reconciliation must be fought wisely and bravely. The hopes and tasks of the future compel us to carry on this struggle. Reconciliation and cooperation in Central Europe is at issue for both Hungarians and Serbs, and every one else in Europe. ❧

MTI Photo Archive

Three freedom fighters of the Corvin-köz group.

Erzsébet Őrszigethy

Refugee Status

The Story of a Hungarian Family from Yugoslavia

The Kereki family moved to Hungary from Yugoslavia in the summer of 1992, from Nagybecskerek in the Banat. At the time Auntie Luca was 73, Miklós 53 and Zsuzsa 47. In November 1995, when I started to record this chronicle, they were still citizens of Yugoslavia, holding expired Yugoslav passports, in possession of Hungarian refugee papers and *permits de séjour*, waiting for limited rights at least, and perhaps, sometime in the future, Hungarian citizenship.

From times immemorial, people in the Banat have had their problems with citizenship, the states which claimed them as subjects changing almost from generation to generation. Hungarians settled there repeatedly and, even more often were forced to leave. At the end of the 20th century Hungarians moved on again, some as entire families, others on their own. For the majority Hungary was the destination, a country whose relationship with the Banat has always been complex.

The Banat of Temesvár, or simply the Banat, those lands between the rivers Maros, Tisza and Danube, prospered in the Middle Ages. At the beginning of the 15th century the Turks began to encroach. Serbian rulers were allies of the kings of Hungary against the Turks, and thus Serbians fleeing the Turks settled in the Banat, most of them after 1459 and the fall of Serbia.

Nagybecskerek, the seat of County Torontál in the Banat, first appears in records in 1331. The castle was built in 1527–28, by John Szapolyai, who had been elected king of a divided Hungary, in opposition to the succession of Ferdinand of Austria. The Turks took the town in 1551 and stayed 166 years. Nagybecskerek and the whole county were laid waste. "Canebrakes dotted rotting meadows... with lakes and dense forests, a sombre, terrifying country, a wilderness," the chronicler complained. Even the name of the county seemed to have been wiped out from the annals. There were times when the *Hofkanzlei* in Vienna made enquiries to establish where exactly the county of Torontál was located.

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General Mercy, the first Austrian military governor, brought in settlers, mostly Germans from the Reichsländer, to resettle the depopulated country. Hungarians, deemed hostile to Austria and rebellious, were not admitted. Many of the Hungarian inhabitants were forced out by the military government. At the same time, troublesome Austrian subjects were being deported there in the hope that they might mend their ways, or perish. Early 18th-century life was hard in the Banat. The settlers suffered from diseases they blamed on the air, but General Mercy drained the swamps, regulated the rivers, and turned one into a navigable canal. What had been a wilderness was turned into the larder of Central Europe.

Only Hungarians were undesirables; the German settlers were joined by Serbs and French, Spaniards and Slovaks, Romanians and Italians, Czechs and Bulgarians. By the end of the 18th century, the Banat was a motley mosaic of peoples. In 1770 the Hungarian Military Confines were abolished, County Torontál was reconstituted and, after 1779, once again part of Hungary. Restrictions on settlement by Hungarians were no longer in force. In the aftermath of the crushed Hungarian Revolution, between 1849 and 1860 the county was briefly turned into a *k. und k.* district.

At the end of the 19th century the county had half a million inhabitants, one-third of whom were Germans, one-third Serbs, one-sixth Hungarians, and there were also smaller numbers of Romanians, Slovaks, Bulgarians and Croats.

The county owed its prosperity to its fertile black soil and its merchants and artisans, who, along with officials and the free professions, made up the population of Nagybecskerek, the seat and intellectual centre. All the usual financial and administrative institutions were present. Before the Bega canal was dug, Nagybecskerek consisted of three islands surrounded by swamps. Draining and river regulation led to a wealthy district on one of the banks, still known as Little America, which is surrounded by orchards and gardens. The theatre, schools of various kinds, civic and religious associations and institutions showed that Nagybecskerek did not live by bread alone. Roman Catholics, Serbian Orthodox, Lutherans, Calvinists and Jews all practised their religion.

In the early twentieth century industrialisation took off. There were rail links with the north and east, and steam barges took products down the Bega to the Tisza and Danube. The 1920 Treaty of Trianon allotted much of County Torontál together with Nagybecskerek, to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later to become Yugoslavia. The Serbian Banat, together with the southern end of the Tisza-Danube interfluve, made up the Yugoslav Vojvodina. The eastern Banat, together with the city of Temesvár, went to Romania. Veliki Beckerek, the Serbian form of the name, was changed to Petrov Grad in 1930, and to Zrenjanin—after a partisan hero—in 1947.

Right from the start, socialist Yugoslavia attended to an adjustment of the demographic ratios. The Germans, who had turned swamps into fertile soil, were declared pariahs, expelled and exterminated. They were replaced by new land-

takers from the mountains of Bosnia and Serbia. Local lore abounds with tragi-comic tales of a change of guard between industrious German farmers and shepherds abandoning their flocks, tales which express the cultural gap between old and new settlers, and not ethnic hostility. Hungarians and Lulas—the descendants of Serbian frontier guards—together expressed their disapproval of the behaviour of the Serb and Bosnian newcomers who had come down from the hills. The *Lula*—the Serb frontier guardsmen had worn *lula* (tulips) on their uniforms—had created, with the Germans, the farmer-merchant-artisan culture of the Banat. Expulsion and resettlement are locally known as the 8th offensive. All schoolchildren were taught about the seven offensives in which the partisans had liberated the country.

The Yugoslav years

Auntie Luca was the eldest of the Kerekis, born in 1919. Her parents lived 12 km from the town in a village founded around 1840 by Hungarian tobacco farmers from the Great Plain. To this day only Hungarians have lived there, their number being now two or three thousand. All the old and most of the young live on the land, tilling the soil, raising livestock.

The Kerekis enjoy telling tales about the squire of the village. His name had a Slav ring to it, they did not know what nationality he was, but he certainly spoke Hungarian like a native. Legend had it that he owned 99 homesteads, 99 because a hundred would have implied an obligation to maintain a regiment. Before the Great War, the squire shared out some of his land amongst the smallholders. Auntie Luca's father got a few acres which war veterans from Greater Serbia took away from him after Trianon. Unskilled in farming, they soon gave up and sold the land back to the original owners for good money. After the Second World War, the partisans took all the land and later sold it back once again to the smallholders. The price was not high but only members of the ploughmen's union could buy. Those who did not join were considered German-lovers and enemies of the people. The post-war expropriators sold back these kitchen gardens to the old owners for good money.

The bit of land they got hold of was not enough of a living for Auntie Luca and her husband. In the autumn, her husband took a seasonal job in the tobacco factory in town. He had to walk the twelve kilometres, and it sometimes happened that he lost his way in the early morning mist, ending up at his own mulberry tree.

Things were changed by their only son Miklós born in 1942, and when he started fifth class of the elementary school, *"his teachers one after the other came to the house to say that he should not be kept at home but be allowed to continue his education"*. He went on to the Hungarian school in town, living not in a student's hostel but with two of his aunts in town. One week he lived with one, the next with the other. They were jealous of each other, and very demand-

ing. "Poppy seeds, flour, bacon and lard had to be brought to them both, it was like running three kitchens." It cost too much, so the parents sold their two horses, their cottage and bit of land and moved into Nagybecskerek. In its years of prosperity Nagybecskerek had more than forty factories. Nationalization, consolidation, and later partial privatization all reduced their number. Still, there were plenty of jobs in the fifties, and Miklós's father got a job in the malt-house. Even today, a single holding company, 51 per cent German owned, controls food processing in the town: pharmaceuticals, a sugar refinery, meat processing, abattoirs, brewery, distillery, dairy products, vinegar, fodder, the lot. Other important industries make railway carriages, radiators, furniture, hosiery, underwear, rugs, perfume, hats and tools. And there was the power station and the oil refinery. In happier days, craft built here made their way down the Bega, the Tisza and the Danube, to the Black Sea.

There was a university in town, a teacher's college and technical college, and five secondary schools. A workers' university arranged courses for adults, meeting the needs of local industry. Auntie Luca started there, as a cleaner, in 1960. Five years later her husband joined her. He cleaned, stoked the furnaces, and ran messages. They both retired in the 1980s, and her husband died that same decade. By 1992 inflation had reduced Aunt Luca's pension to five German marks. Just about enough now to pay for the cost of transferring the money to Hungary plus a tip for the postman.

Their son, Miklós Kereki, completed the eight years of the only Hungarian school in Nagybecskerek and then had three years in a trade-school, where he was trained as an electrician. In 1962 Miklós started work in the railway carriage works. Yugoslavia was an open market by then, and he worked on French and American locomotives. That year he was conscripted, spending his time servicing American made jets in Montenegro.

The Yugoslav economy was already tottering in 1965, when he was demobilized and got his old job back. Miklós, being young, was among the first to be laid off, and he and his young wife Zsuzsa, like one million others of the twenty-four million Yugoslavs, went to work abroad. They were welcomed by relatives in West Germany. Miklós was soon a foreman in a light bulb works, and Zsuzsa worked there at the same bench as a girl from back home. Their German was good. Zsuzsa had spoken German as a child. They stayed with their relatives for a week or two and then found a home of their own to rent in a nearby village. After five months they returned home. The young woman, expecting, was homesick. ("Not even the water tasted good.")

Zsuzsa

Zsuzsa was born in Nagybecskerek in 1947. Her maternal grandmother was a German from the Banat, her grandfather a gendarme from Hungary, transferred south. After Trianon he got a job as a guard on one of the fishponds that

lined the banks of the Bega and Tisza. Zsuzsa's mother spent her childhood in a village 60 kms from Nagybecskerek whose mixed population included Germans, Slovaks, Serbs, Romanians, Bulgarians and Gypsies.

Zsuzsa was brought up in the home of her paternal grandparents. On the grandmother's side of the family were Hungarians, on the grandfather's Slovaks and Hungarians. This grandfather was a tax clerk. Zsuzsa's father was born in 1922. The friends he had in their street were Germans, and he served in the German armed forces in the Second World War. As a punishment after the War, he spent six months in an interment camp in Újvidék (Novi Sad—Neusatz) and then had to serve three years in the army, in Macedonia.

Zsuzsa's father was a cabinet maker who worked for artisans and in furniture factories. Before the Second World War, there were three furniture factories in Nagybecskerek, owned by Jews and Germans, all amalgamated into one when nationalized; there were still a fair number of workshops left in private hands. Zsuzsa's father followed the jobs, going where more money was offered. After the Skopje earthquake in the sixties, he went to work there in the reconstruction. Just before retiring, he was working in the state furniture works. He was widowed in 1988 and lives on his own in Nagybecskerek. He last saw Zsuzsa in 1992. He can only get a passport in Belgrade and would have to pay sixty Deutschmarks every time he crosses the frontier. (His pension is worth a hundred Deutschmarks.)

After leaving school, Zsuzsa was apprenticed as a hairdresser and later learnt shorthand and typing and got a job as a secretary with a building maintenance firm. After four or five months the firm went bankrupt and she worked in the office of the local community for another six months, till she was made redundant. She did a sewing course after returning from Germany with her husband, but did not take on any permanent job. She would have liked to work as a hairdresser out of her own home but could not get a licence since they were still living in an adobe house at the time. She then travelled out to her husband's native village to do hairdressing. She aimed to open a shop there but was not eligible for a licence once again since the planned location was a new building and the plaster work had not been done yet. *"That's when I said to myself, to hell with it, I'll work anyhow. Come feasts and holidays, or weddings, and I'm off to the village. At home there are the neighbours, my mother-in-law's sisters, and their neighbours."*

Zsuzsa had joined a patriarchal family. Her son Peter was born in 1966 and his sister Anikó in 1970. They shared a house, in fact a household, with Miklós's parents. Zsuzsa could not take a job, running the household was her business. Aunt Luca was at the workers' university, clocking up the years for her pension. And then, isn't a woman's place in the home, and the man's job to bring home the bacon? All that is needed to bring happiness is for Zsuzsa to do as she is told, do it cheerfully, and keep doing it. For twenty years that role served them well.

Miklós

Miklós had a real career. His widening range of skills meant good money. At first the going was tough. Back from Germany, he got a job with a general servicing firm managed by a friend of his father's. He repaired oil stoves and all kinds of domestic appliances. This was a time when labour saving devices from abroad were flooding the market and fly by night firms mushroomed to service them. This meant that Miklós did not stay in a job for long but it also meant that, within a short period, he gained a great deal of all round experience. In 1968 he started on a two year course of further training and once that was finished, he was invited to teach in the trade school he had obtained his own qualifications in, in the early sixties. He remained as a member of the apprentices examination board even after he quit his job as a teacher.

In 1972 a mechanic who worked in Novi Sad enticed him away from the school. His new employers were a Slovenian firm that manufactured domestic appliances. After two months training in Slovenia, he was in charge of servicing all their products across the whole Banat. The money was good, he earned three times as much as he had teaching, as much as the managing director of a large factory. But he had to do quality work and there was no let up. He left home in the morning and often did not get back until dawn. If the job demanded, he stayed overnight in motels. After a year, he engaged a former fellow teacher as his assistant. He didn't mind the work, since they paid well.

The Slovenian firm employed between 1,000 and 1,500 service engineers all over Yugoslavia. Miklós twice received the Best Service award.

"I worked until the Slovenes told me to start packing up bit by bit. We're parting. That was in 1987, they knew already that they would secede. I left the firm, and was my own boss after that, of course still repairing their appliances."

Australian holiday

Good pay meant a good life for the whole family. They had rebuilt the old adobe house in 1970, changed the roofs and windows, covered the open corridor, fitted Venetian blinds. To keep the extended family together, they sold this reconstructed house and moved in with one of Aunt Luca's sisters. There too they had to build, extend, modernize. Finally, to provide proper comfort for three generations, they tore this building down and replaced it with an eight-room two-storey house. It was ready in 1984. *"You should have seen our house,"* Auntie Luca said. *"Everyone who came into the street just stood and stared."*

Miklós's son Péter trained as a toolmaker and also qualified as a refrigeration engineer. In the early eighties, father and son worked together, but as commissions from the Slovenian firm grew scarce, Miklós began to lose faith in the future.

In the summer of 1987 Péter got married and Miklós's Australian cousin came over for the wedding. An invitation to an extended Australian holiday was the result. Zsuzsa and Miklós landed in Sydney in the autumn of 1987, with a visa valid for a six-month-stay. After one month, they had enough of doing nothing. Zsuzsa kept house for wealthy Hungarians who lived in a luxurious villa, Miklós was given work by tradesmen servicing household appliances. Neither spoke any English but they worked hard and well, and were accepted. No one asked for papers or certificates. They would not have minded settling but there was not much of a chance to do so legally. Immigration depended on points for age, education, knowledge of English and skills. The way they worked it out they could have gathered seventy, if treated generously, but you needed eighty at least. Miklós was 45 at the time. They wanted none of the insecurity of the situation, and went home after six months.

"In January 1988, my Australian cousin asked: what's going on at home, who is this Milosević? I hadn't even heard his name. That's when things started to go bad in Yugoslvaia. There was trouble in Kossovo in 1983, but that had nothing to do with us. I knew that Greater Yugoslavia was falling apart but I had no idea that general hatred would follow. In the Vojvodina the 'yoghourt revolution' was the first to show that a storm was blowing up. Milosević gathered up the scum of Belgrade and Serbia and took them to Novi Sad to demonstrate against Vojvodina autonomy. Yoghourt and bread rolls were handed out to the mob, that's why we call it the yoghourt revolution. Milosević knew that the time of Greater Yugoslavia was up, and that Serbia needed the Vojvodina. That's where they got their bread from. If the Vojvodina is autonomous then it goes where it pleases when the state breaks up. It might have joined Croatia, or Slovenia.

The locals just stared at the yoghourt revolution, radio and TV did as Milosević told them. Hey presto, and without a voice in opposition, autonomy was gone. Milosević's men, his gang, flooded the region and took all the jobs, all the key positions. My taxes told me that we were not equal. I obtained a trading licence of the same type as my old colleagues. I asked a Serb friend, a tradesman, how much tax he paid. Two million less than me, that's what. This friend was a Lula, his ancestors had lived here even before the Great War. He did not try to conceal his tax papers from me. Then I asked other Serb tradesmen and discovered that every one of them paid less for a trading licence like mine. Well, I thought, my profit may be smaller but I've still got plenty of work. Soon enough, I found that the insurers did not cover my clients' repair bills, but they covered those for work done by my Serb colleagues. Given that, a client would be a fool if he chose me."

In 1990 Miklós Kereki and his wife once again tried Germany for a few months. They failed, and quietly accepted that a German ancestor in their family tree was not enough to get themselves accepted in Germany.

When the South Slav war spread, all their anxieties concentrated on their son Péter. It was common knowledge that 90 per cent of call up papers in the Vojvodina were addressed to young Hungarians.

Péter Kereki, the youngest boy in the street, was everybody's favourite. In family snapshots he always appears in a wide brimmed hat, with a string tie, toting his toy six-shooter in the yard. In his teens he tried everything from football to boxing, but he was best at karate, obtaining yellow, orange, blue and brown belts in the national tests. He wasn't even twenty when he bought his first car, a Yugoslav Topolino. Snapshots from the eighties show that Péter lived the life of a well-to-do spoilt brat. There were always at least a dozen boys in his company, girls a-plenty to go with them, in discos, or at barbecues on the banks of the Bega. They loved the neighbouring villages: the river bank was more pleasant there, and the inns more friendly.

Péter first asked Nóra Miller to dance at Christmas in 1984, at the Youth Centre in Nagybecskerek. This is where the most famous inn and restaurant in the Yugoslav Banat had been before 1945. Péter had known her by sight before, she had been one of a company, not Péter's, cooking a cauldron of mutton goulash down by the Bega. She lived in a village a quarter of an hour from Becskerek. Her people's garden extended right down to the river.

After two years at college, Nóra obtained a production engineer's diploma in chemical engineering. She had been employed by the Pharmaceutical Works since leaving school. She learnt English and passed an exam in 1989 which entitled her to give private lessons.

There was plenty of fun in Nóra Miller's girlhood. Skiing in winter and the seaside in summer. Nóra and Péter's first years together were cloudless and happy. The number of their friends doubled. In keeping with local custom, they lived with the husband's parents. Zsuzsa and Miklós were off to Australia soon after the wedding so the young couple had the run of the house. Péter used his father's trading licence and they were able to afford everything they desired. Nóra used her own bank account to dress fashionably. Spending two hundred Deutschmarks on scent was no problem.

They loved their town, with its theatre company performing in Serb and Hungarian. Up to 1989 the building bore an inscription in Hungarian only, and afterwards in Serb only. In the eighties there was a choice of five cinemas and two drive-ins, just one cinema survived into the nineties. It was only natural that there should be a stereo unit in Nóra and Péter's Nagybecskerek home, not to mention a video and a good motor car. They had been to Tunisia and Greece, had spent holidays on the Dalmatian coast and in Slovenia. They would have liked to go to Egypt in 1991 but the war had made a clean sweep of what travel agencies had on offer, the banks had restricted the use of hard currency accounts, and the value of the dinar was plummeting by the day.

Jeopardy, flight

The year 1991 was one of fear. That's when they started to tell Hungarians to go back where they came from. They tried to harrass Nóra at work. She was responsible for raw materials in the pharmaceutical works. More and more often, material ordered was not supplied to her requirements; the slightest inattention on her part could have turned medicines into poisons.

Friends received their call-up papers, others went into hiding or fled the country. Fear surrounded them, but though this or that neighbour might be dragged off to the wars, Nóra and Péter could not believe that their lives were threatened. Tragedy was for others.

The Nagybecskerek *dolce vita* had gone with the wind. There was hardly anyone left to meet. Only a few friends remained within reach. Fortunately, one of them was a policeman. One Saturday, in the spring of 1992, he brought the news that Péter's call-up papers were in the mails. They used what hard currency they had left to buy papers showing that Péter was exempt from call-up. On Sunday afternoon they were packing their bags. A few clothes in two overnight bags, towels, toothbrushes, the false papers exempting him from call-up, and their passports. An old friend took them across the frontier in his car. Out of the 800 forints left over from an earlier holiday in Hungary they paid their bus fare to Békéscsaba. On arrival there, in the refugee camp, they still had 300 forints, the whole of their fortune.

In the camp

In Békéscsaba Nóra and Péter had their status as political refugees recognized. They were issued with a blue identity card in which this fact was noted, as well as UN conventional passports, valid for two years, and subjected to visa requirements. Possessors of blue identity cards could apply for naturalization after three years in Hungary; if they could produce evidence that they, or their forebears, had been Hungarian citizens, and in case they declared themselves ethnic Hungarians, they could do so after one year. Aliens of refugee status were allowed to seek employment without applying for work permits.

Péter and Nóra did not want to settle in Hungary, or to apply for Hungarian citizenship. They wanted go to to Australia. The camp was visited by a representative of the Federation of Hungarians in Australia, who offered his help. The Federation was prepared to advance travel costs, and promised to find jobs quickly. The only condition was that a family be found in Australia ready to offer temporary accomodation. Péter's parents wrote to their relatives in Australia, and telephoned them, asking for such a declaration, but they refused.

Nóra and Péter simply wanted to move on. Seen from the camp, Hungary did not promise either an honest living or a decent home. After filling in reams of papers for emigration to Canada, they received a curt invitation to present themselves for interview. They had to pay for everything themselves, the train, staying

overnight in Budapest, the visa—they took their baby too, who was born in the camp—only to be told they were rejected, but they could appeal. There was hope still. The vain journey had cost them several thousand forints.

Budapest attempts

Zsuzsa and Miklós Kereki left Yugoslavia in the summer of 1992. *"We started to pack because—as they say at home—the film broke. One thing and another, we could see that all this hatred would never end. They looked for this one, then for the other, news of deaths from all directions. Even a man of fifty like me could be shoed off to the war anytime. When Péter left he said he'd never come back, even if there is peace. A neighbour, a civil engineer, was the technical manager of his firm. With twenty years' experience behind him they moved him into a smaller room, as an adviser. That was the beginning of Serbification in a big way. When Voevod Seselj appeared, hatred burst into flames. Until then everything had just glowed, like embers covered in ashes."*

Zsuzsa and Miklós did not have much they could turn into ready money. They sold their tools and the car. They took clothes with them, and papers, and went to stay with a good friend. They planned to return to Yugoslavia from time to time, to sell the furniture and, eventually, the house, but a variety of obstacles prevented them.

Friends advised them to call on the Refugee Affairs Office. There they were told that to be entitled to the Refugee Pass needed for permanent and legal residence in Hungary you had to apply for political asylum within 72 hours of crossing the border. If you kept on going back you lost your refugee status, and sooner or later you'd be in deep trouble with either the Hungarian or the Yugoslav authorities. If you were not a refugee, you could only work in Hungary if the Yugoslav authorities granted you a working visa for a given period. But Zsuzsa and Miklós had made up their minds not to ask the Yugoslavs for anything. They decided to settle in Hungary for good and went home to fetch Auntie Luca. When they returned, they reported at the Refugee Affairs Office and were issued with refugee passes valid for three months. This entitled them to a temporary *permit de séjour,* also valid for three months, which the police gave them.

Hungarian legislation is not unambiguous about who may be given a refugee pass, nor are there precise regulations regarding what rights or entitlements go with asylum. The regulation uses the conjunctive. It carefully states that refugees are not entitled to medical care, but health services may be used if the competent official sees fit. All a refugee can count on is that, in case of need, he will be treated at a surgery. The regulation states that a refugee may be given financial assistance. Zsuzsa and Miklós told them in the office that they were not asking for money, they wished to work. They were told that they could do so. Let them look for a prospective employer, who is prepared to give them a job, and meet all the conditions prescribed by the law. A work permit would then be granted on his application.

Zsuzsa and Miklós had a few thousand Deutschmarks so they did not immediately look for a job. An import-export business was what they were after, and it took some time before they realized that it would need more money than what they had. Besides, their daughter Anikó, who was supposed to look after the Yugoslav end of the business, had also left the country. Zsuzsa and Miklós had found lodgings in Budapest when Anikó phoned that her husband Stefan, an ethnic Romanian but a Yugoslav citizen, had also been called up. For some days he had been in hiding, now at one grandmother's place, now at the other's. Finally they got into a car and crossed into Hungary. Of course they too stayed with Zsuzsa and Miklós, and then there were five in the household.

The Kereki family still had illusions about going into business using their Deutschmarks, but every attempt ended in failure. Meanwhile, the money was running out. Bills had to be paid. Anikó gave birth to a baby girl in January 1993, so now there were six of them living on the dwindling capital.

In the spring of 1993 they started to look for work. Miklós, the master of all trades, met with refusal after refusal. He was past fifty, he had no car, vital for a repairman who had to go whenever his services were needed. His international driving licence had expired, and without an identity card, he could not renew it.

Zsuzsa heads the family

The only one in the family who worked in Budapest was Zsuzsa. Cleaning, making jam, ironing: her skills covered the whole range of domestic work. When needed, she could even coiff the hair of the woman of the house. Zsuzsa answered an advertisement my friend Márta had run. A relative, a 90 year old lady, who occupied the downstairs flat, had just died, and the reconstruction of the house was under way. Zsuzsa had timed her entry well. Hearing the Kereki story, everyone was ready to help. A friend worked for a domestic appliances firm, and he helped Miklós get a job there, as repairman. He was already working when Zsuzsa, one afternoon, stoning cherries, mentioned that they were three months in arrears with their rent. Now that Miklós was in work that was no problem, but their landlord wanted to sell the flat. To get new lodgings, you had to pay a deposit. Zsuzsa wondered if, while the building was going on, and it was summer, they could perhaps stay in the garage.

Zsuzsa would do the cleaning, and could help with the whitewashing, Miklós would look after the wiring, and Auntie Luca could bake wonderful cakes. Márta nevertheless, for various reasons, decided against the offer.

She took the two children on holiday, to get away from the anxieties of building work. One week-end, when her husband came down to see them, he told them that Zsuzsa, Miklós and Aunti Luca had moved into the drawing room and the nursery. Auntie Luca cooked his dinner, Zsuzsa coped with the tradesmen.

When the holidays were over, Márta, her husband, the two children, a friend, Zsuzsa, Miklós and Auntie Luca shared the three rooms, kitchen and bathroom

upstairs, with the tradesmen busy downstairs. At the end of summer, the Kereki family moved into a room downstairs that was ready, paying rent in kind. Later the Kerekis rented the whole downstairs flat, paying half the rent, the other half in kind, Zsuzsa's cleaning.

Zsuzsa was meanwhile much in demand as a cleaning woman. She kept a detailed appointments book which she alone understood. Miklós too got a raise, they were satisfied with his work. In the autumn the same firm also gave Péter a job, who moved in with his mother, visiting his wife and son at weekends in the camp.

The news from Yugoslavia was bad. Strangers had been billeted into the Kereki home. Anikó was not able to feed her daughter properly. At night, they froze in the dark because of the power cuts. Auntie Luca wept for the beautiful house in Nagybecskerek, but Zsuzsa went about her business.

The whole family spent New Year's Eve 1993 together. A salmonella epidemic in the camp prompted Nóra to bring up the boy to Budapest, to stay with her in-laws, in the hope of a Budapest job and flat later. Anikó and her daughter had also managed a New Year's visit to Budapest.

There was a works' party at Miklós and Péter's job one Saturday night in February, anticipating Mardi Gras. Nóra met her husband's and father-in-law's bosses: a week later, she too was working for the multinational firm. They could make good use of her knowledge of Serbo-Croat, Slovenian and English. The boy was taken to a crèche, and Auntie Luca could once again spend her days pottering about in the kitchen.

Condominium

In March 1994 Zsuzsa found a janitor's job in a condominium. A flat went with it, where her husband and mother-in-law could also be legally accomodated. She was very busy after that, even attending a course for stokers so she could look after the boilers in winter.

Anikó in Nagybecskerek was having a dreadful time trying to get the necessary papers needed by her parents. Schools had moved, files and records were deteriorating in damp basements. Finally, for fifty Deutschmarks, she managed to get a copy of a certificate showing that her mother had successfully completed a typing and shorthand course.

In the spring of 1994 the Kerekis' application for immigrant status was rejected for several reasons. There was insufficient evidence that the Kerekis were native Hungarian speakers. Nor did the declaration, certified by a notary public, given by Márta's husband as the owner of a house, suffice as a guarantee of accomodation. The authorities were not convinced that sufficient resources were available to maintain them. Duty stamps, translation charges, etc. had set the Kerekis back 30,000 forints, and that actually threatened their livelihood. A declaration by Miklós's employers that his wages would be raised since the quality of his work warranted it was attached to the appeal, so were references from the

condominium showing that the Kerekis had a flat which went with the job. Auntie Luca's 1919 birth certificate was also found, but in September their appeal was rejected.

They added all the papers necessary for naturalization when they submitted another application in May 1995. Various charges had gone up and they had to pay out more than 90,000 forints. Meanwhile, Zsuzsa also had to see to the repeated extension of their three months *permits de séjour.*

Their second application was rejected too. A take-home income of 42,000 forints a month was deemed insufficient to maintain a couple under prevailing conditions in Hungary, 31 sq. metres were insufficient for three persons, or two families. To place that into context one would have to describe current income and housing conditions in Hungary. Suffice it to say that the great majority of working class families bring up their children on much less, and that many an elderly couple make do on half that amount.

With bitterness in her heart but great care, Zsuzsa drafted another appeal. Fortunately, she was able to provide evidence of a take-home income of over 50,000 forints, and to attach a declaration by the condominium that they would provide an extra bedroom for the "other family"—Auntie Luca. Sealing the envelope, she looked at the calendar. Friday, October 13th. She delayed posting it to avoid bad luck.

All's well that ends well

But it was a lucky day for Nóra and Péter. Their second son was born that night. In November Nóra and Péter and their two boys moved into a new flat. The firm had found it for them, and was prepared to foot the major part of the rent. It was a "godfather's" Christening present, a recognition of the conscientious work of the three Kerekis from Nagybecskerek. It must be said that the firm valued Nóra's performance the highest. The two highly skilled workers between them did not earn as much as Nóra did on her own.

The youngest Kereki was fast asleep. Nóra showed me her girlhood photo albums. I could see what the Bega crowd looked like, the Nagybecskerek house, the large crowd at the wedding. At parties she looked like a disco queen. At the wedding Nóra wore a "new wave" hat, shocking Auntie Luca. There were photographs in which I could not recognize Nóra. Not that she has grown old but she has changed. She turns twenty-eight in 1996, is well-groomed and good looking. She knows herself that she has changed and is glad this happened. She has no house or car of her own. But she loves her husband, and has two fine babies. There is enough food and drink to go round. They are accumulating possessions: all their own work, nothing owed to anyone. She feels sure that she will be mistress of her own fate in future.

In December 1995, Zsuzsa and Miklós Kereki's trials and tribulations came to an end. They were finally granted refugee status. ❧

György Györffy–Bálint Zólyomi

The Carpathian Basin and Atelkuzu a Thousand Years Ago

The Hungarian Conquest was a crucial moment in the migrations of the peoples of the steppe. In the past these migrations have been studied by a great number of noted geographers, botanists, archeologists, linguists and historians. In recent decades natural scientists have taken an ever more active part. Long-term, even permanent, droughts in Central Asia, to which attention was drawn by Hungarian scholars like Sir Aurel Stein, Lajos Lóczy and Count Pál Teleki as possible causes of the migrations, have, in the light of recent climatological studies, been accorded a more crucial role than economic and political events, albeit the latter no doubt also contributed to the migrations.

Methods have been developed by many of the natural sciences which palinological archeologists have been able to employ in the study of history. What we present below is the conclusions we have reached about the state of this region at the time of the Conquest, drawing on recent publications in historical geography and in the context of an interdisciplinary survey covering the natural and the social sciences. We have come to the conclusion that the rapid progress in the natural sciences provides new surprises almost every year.

We presume that the country in which the Hungarians settled, immediately before and shortly after that settlement, generally looked much as it did before the demographic explosion and the encroachment on nature of the past two hundred years, in other words, much as it is shown in detailed 18th century maps. Geology and geography, climatology, plant and zoogeography, as well as archeology and documentary sources can give a precise description only of the changes in recent centuries. For earlier centuries only long-term major changes can be defined. Written sources only mention extraordinary events and great catastrophes.

The principal areas of study are the following: 1) The surface of the earth, the appearance of dry land and areas permanently or temporarily covered by water compared to the present situation. 2) Changes in temperature and precipitation going back to the 7th to 10th cen-

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turies. 3) The location of, and changes in phytocenoses, swamps and moors. Different disciplines study these indivisible and interdependent fields.

Native fauna are part of the natural environment. One discipline studies fossils and other skeletal remains. Changes in earlier millennia were chiefly caused by hunting but, with the possible exception of Pannonia, this did not cause changes of a significance that may have caused the regression of native species and breeds.

Man himself did not produce quantifiable changes on the surface of the earth. Ancient mounds and ancient buildings and earthworks altered the image but only reshaped small areas. The migrating tribes left these untouched, or rather, they exploited what they found. What matters more is that we must reckon on a clearing of forests wherever the population grew. Early forest clearing, however, was less likely to be clear felling and more likely to be ring-barking. This thinned rather than destroyed forests with an unbroken foliage cover. Forest pasturing, including that of pigs, further checked the undergrowth. Fire was also used to clear forests.

The contours of hills in this area have not changed essentially since the ninth and tenth centuries. Wind and water erosion have, of course, their effects, wearing down heights and filling up valleys.

Loess, sand and dust carried by the wind and rotting vegetation means a rise in the level of plains that is barely noticeable, which is however discernible in flood areas, backwaters and marshes. Streams carrying little water silt up. Erosion is most noticeable on steep slopes, the cuts produced by fast-flowing streams and rivers, and the wearing down of their high banks. This is part of the continuous nature of change in riverbeds, both that of the main current and backwaters, including the downriver shifting of islands and the bank-raising effect of whirlpools. There are few places where such hydrographic changes over time are large enough to be described.

The *limes* earthworks and watch-towers indicate the course of the navigable main branch of the Danube in Roman times. Thus, it can be established that in the Szigetköz (Kleine Schütt Insel) it was along what is now the Little Danube. One can make out from medieval accounts of beating the bounds that the main current turned south into the bed of the Little Danube at Kimle, below Kiliti which belonged to County Pozsony. Its eastern part was known as Hédervár Island. Illustrations from the Turkish wars period show the flow of the principal current below the city of Győr.

There are places in the Great Plain where deeds allow us to establish changes in the waters since the Árpád dynasty, but there are few places indeed where written sources permit the charting of early hydrographic conditions.

The earliest Hungarian hydrotoponyms in the plains and hilly regions of the Carpathian Basin suggest that arriving Magyars found muddy waters rather than clear lakes and rivers. The Tihany and the Szekszárd—of much the same time (mid-11th century)—foundation deeds indicate this, and so do early Árpád-age hydrotoponyms. True, Lake Balaton is generally called *lacus,* and Lake Kolon in the Danube–Tisza interfluve *aqua,* but the three lakes on the limits of the sandy ridge were called fertő, that is stagnant, muddy waters, and Fertő has been the name of the lake near Sopron (Neusiedlersee) since the 11th century, as well as of Lake Velence, which indicates that the incoming Magyars came across these lakes in a half-dried up, muddy state. An important current, such as the ancient branch of the Danube which started at the Csepel Island Little Danube and, after flowing south through the sands of the Danube–Tisza in-

terfluve, returned to the Big Danube at Kalocsa, was called Nagysár, or Big Mud. It may be presumed that in the Early Avar age, before the great drought of the Late Avar period, the Nagysár was still a more important watercourse than the Csepel Little Danube. That is why this archipelago like area, chosen as a centre by the Avar Kaghans, could be called Rhing. Both the present Nagy Sárrét (Great Mud Meadow) and the Ecsed Moor were called Nagysár at the end of the Árpád age (1301). What is even more noteworthy is that the lower reaches of the Leitha, before it flowed into the Moson branch of the Danube, were called Sár (Mud) in Hungarian, so were numerous western tributaries of the Garam, as well as the Radosnya, which has its mouth at Nyitra. The chapel of Saint Maurice, the favourite saint of the Ottonian emperors, was built at its head, literally named Sárfő (Mudhead).

All this indicates that the Hungarians on arrival in the interior of the Carpathian Basin did not find the lush pastures described by their first chronicler two hundred years later. *Pannoniorum et Avarum solitudo* of the contemporary Regino and the westenne, betux, desert, used by King Alfred the Great for the plains seems more appropriate.

The permanence of the flood-free level in the Trans-Tisza region is clearly indicated by the map in István Györffy's *Kunhalmok és telephelyek a karcagi határban* (Cumanian Mounds and Settlements within the Karcag Bounds) which covers much of Greater Cumania (the region of the town of Szolnok). It clearly shows that ancient mounds and medieval villages were where 18th century maps place the boundary between the ploughed fields and pastures on higher ground, and the wet meadows. It is quite clear that, on the Middle Tisza, there was no essential change in the extension of the dry ridge from ancient times to the 18th century, but that of the wetlands depended on the precipitation of the time.

Warm and dry periods mean a sinking of the water level of lakes and rivers, a ceasing of the flow of streams, and a shrinking of lakes and wetlands. There is better documentary evidence for the wetter period which started in the 12th century, and its rising waterlevels. The confirmations from the times of the Emperor Sigismund (1361–1437) of deeds of the Árpád age allow one to conclude that then there were more wetlands on the Great Plain than a century or two earlier. Frequently, old boundary marks could not be approached because of the water. The many 13th century watermills along streams whose flow would not drive one now also suggest a wetter climate.

Geographical, geological and paleobotanical (chiefly pollen-analytical) methods have been used to study the earlier extension of Lake Balaton.

Pollenanalysis is based on the stratification of pollen deposits that survive for millennia, a paleobotanical account that can be read like a book. Millenary changes are clear, but smaller swings less so, or only rarely. One of the most detailed pollen analyses covers the strata of mud of Lake Balaton going back to the last Ice Age. Conclusions can be drawn from the differing relative frequency of tree, grass and cultivated grain pollen. These suggest that the tree-cover was already reduced with the advance of agriculture at the time of the Neolithic Revolution, then in the Bronze Age and at the time of Roman viticulture. Earlier research only showed the marks of extensive agriculture and large-scale forest clearing in the early Middle Ages, more precisely up to the late Avar and Carolingian Age. More recently Ferenc Gyulai researched at Fonyód-Bélatelep, including the use of paleobotany, with particular attention to crop and seed remains.

Radiocarbon C14 data date the settlement as 9th century. He established that, in the Nagyberek bay, the waterlevel of Lake Balaton around the year 900 was approximately 1,5 meters below the present. This confirms Károly Sági's archeological and László Bendeffy's hydrographic research showing that in the 9th and 10th centuries the level of the Little Balaton around Zalavár was approximately 2 meters below the present. This is clear evidence that, before the year 1000, a drier climatic period started in this region.

A detailed account of recent and current research which helps one to reconstruct the environment in which the Hungarian Conquest and Landtaking took place and tells us much else besides, is certainly not out of place.

In 1964–65, we did some research, drilling below the waterlevel of the lake. The modern vibroprobe—which avoided rotation—made it possible to take samples every 2–3 cms. This made it possible to prepare closed pollen diagrammes. Twenty years work and the analysis, definition, and quantification of more than a million pollen samples back these diagrammes. The carbonates in the Lake Balaton mud are not suitable for direct radio-carbon dating. We have, therefore, repeatedly urged that this be separately carried out.

The definition and evaluation of new parallel drilling points has been made possible by the processing of a crossection of the Tapolca Basin—Lake Balaton—Nagyberek area taken in 1952.

In 1995 the Phytotèque of the National History Museum succeeded in obtaining support at what, in view of draining and peat-cutting was, so to speak, the eleventh hour. As a result new drilling took place in 1995, at the same places as before, in the turf and peat of moor-meadows linked to Lake Balaton. We published the results on the basis of the Phytotèque report and our own synthesis.

The parallel repetition in a manner suitable for radio-carbon dating as well as a new parallel palinological processing of our No 7 1952 probing section at Nagyberek in the vicinity of the Mosaburg–Zalavár and the Fonyód peat facilities was carried out. The Debrecen Nuclear Physics Institute of the Academy processed the samples.

As chance would have it, the radiocarbon reading of the topmost sample was the year 1001 A.D., when Saint Stephen the King founded the Kingdom of Hungary. The next shows 147 A.D., Roman Pannonia. The distance between the two is a mere 10 cms, 30 cms reckoning from the centre of the sample, but 854 years in time.

This compels the assumption of a stratum-gap, into which the age of the Conquest falls. In a dry age there is no new peat, and disintegration occurs. The significant growth in pine *(Pinus)* pollen values in the diagram bears this out. The marked decline in absolute pollen quantities is an additional indication. Györffy has provided historical evidence for a drought in the Age of Migration, directly preceding the Conquest. These are the first pollen analysis data to back him.

Peat moors do not really favour the fossilisation of pollen; the mud in the lake, however, with its outstanding capacity to preserve, makes it possible to evaluate mathematically and statistically even rare cereal pollen.

Unambiguously, the significant quantitative leap of the pollen of non-arboreal plants (NAP) starts around the year 1000. Cereals *(cereale)* and associated turf and weeds *(artamisia, chenopodiaceae),* evidence of agriculture, are present in sufficient quantities for mathematical and statistical evaluation.

Cereal pollen is highly significant in correlation with archeological periods, the

coefficient of probability is almost 1 for the Copper and Bronze Ages but outstandingly high around the year 1000.

It can be concluded that pollen stratigraphics and radiocarbon dating combined open up wide perspectives indeed for a virtual reconstruction of a historical environment.

One may well assume that it will prove possible to determine the proportions of forest and steppe, ploughland and pasture in the Age of the Conquest.

Reasoning from changing temperatures and precipitation in the southern parts of our zone is made more difficult by the articulation of continents and seas and the resulting irregular cyclonic reaction. Hemispheric warming and cooling, however, was similarly effective in the Carpathian Basin and the limitrophe steppes. In our zone it affected primarily the area between 43° and 48° Latitude, south from the line of the Northern Carpathians and the Altai hills to the line of the Balkans and the Caucasus, leaving out the core of the empire of the Franks to the north, and the tribes of the Volga–Kama region and southern Siberia, but also the Caliphate of Cordoba, Rome, Byzantium, Armenia, Bokhara and Tibet, where literacy and order were the rule. It is likely that the warming was due to a shift northward of the subtropical zone.

Two Russian historians, Monin and Shishkov, have written a history of the climate of Eurasia which takes account of what ordinarily passes as historiography. Their starting point was what Dansgaard and the Copenhagen school had discovered from an examination of 1818 isotopes kept in ice. They established that the Atlantic area was warmer in the Viking age between the 8th and the 12th century, and that this prompted the Norsemen to travel, raid and conquer. The warm and dry period was followed by cooler and wetter times in the 12th century. After shorter swings these peaked in what many called the Little Ice Age of the 17th century.

More recent American research has somewhat amended these views. Müller-Wille (University of Kiel), Sabloff et al. (University of New Mexico), Hoddel et al. (University of Pennsylvania) have put forward arguments which led us to reconsider what we ourselves published eighteen months ago.

At the International *Landnahme* Conference in Constance, which was attended by a number of Hungarian scholars, Müller-Wille pointed out how the Vikings and Norsemen, sailing from Norway and Denmark after 800, first settled north of Scotland in the Faroes, then in the 870s in Iceland, worthily celebrating their landfall, and in the 880s in Greenland. The chronology of the warming was established by deep drilling in Greenland ice, comparative Norse archeology, aerial photographs of formerly cultivated land and diagrammes showing changes in vegetation.

A Greenland isotope curve published earlier, which corresponds to a 1.5° C rise in the average temperature in Iceland and Great Britain, reflects the fact that, in the Viking Age, the first and ever stronger wave of the extraordinary drought lasted roughly from 720 to 820, then, leaving out of account slightly wetter decades after 880 and the Hungarian Conquest and minor deviations, things began to improve around the year 1000. Then, after dry decades in the first half of the 12th century, ever wetter and cooler periods alternated with shorter droughts right to the beginning of this century.

In recent years close attention has been paid to the Pre-Columban cultures of Mexico, their rise and mysterious fall. Articles published in *Nature* last year argued that the collapse of the most devel-

oped Maya culture and the depopulation of Teotihuacán, their capital of a million inhabitants near Mexico City, was not due to internecine struggles amongst the priestly caste or the misery and rebelliousness of the people, but to a fierce drought that lasted from around 750 to cca 900. A study of the pollen of Lake Chichancanab in Southern Mexico shows a warming by 3° C.

The waters of this zone, far to the south of our own, were surely taken by the Gulf Stream past the Bahamas and NW, to the British Isles, the Faroes, and the Arctic Sea.

This synchronous century and a half between 750 and 900 makes it clear that the warming of the Arctic Sea is a secondary phenomenon produced by the Gulf Stream. (It still keeps Murmansk harbour free of ice all the year round.)

The warming of our zone did not touch the North American littoral between Newfoundland and New York. (There the Labrador current carries cold water to the shores of New York and may well have been responsible for last winter's heavy snows on the North Eastern seaboard of the USA.)

The eastward deviation of the Gulf Stream produced, in the 9th century, a warming of the South Coast of England which permitted viticulture there. Further north, the warming of the waters in the fjords extended the sailing season of the Norsemen, and gave an impetus to their conquests. The eastern branch of the Gulf Stream rounded the Azores and, uniting with the warm African current, turned back NW, towards Southern Mexico and the West Indies, to start off its warm north-eastern flow.

In Europe, the long lasting reduction in summer rains equally influenced all the zones of vegetation which succeeded each other northwards in Atelkuzu on the shores of the Black Sea, in what is now the Ukraine. Within the Carpathian Basin the appropriate zones of precipitation with somewhat similar zones of vegetation, surround the Great Plain, of wooded steppe character, right up to the pine forests of the Carpathians.

Of burial grounds of a Hungarian character excavated east of the Carpathians, four are in the wooded steppe zone of mixed Tartar maples *(acer tataricus)* and oak groves, two in the East in the zone of dense forests. All the saddlebag plates in Hungarian graves, with just a single exception, were found in the lowlands wooded steppe zone.

Willow and poplar groves made up the vegetation on the lowest flood level, on the riverbanks, rising to a mixed forest of elm, ash and oak, followed by varied reed covered swamps, saltbush, oak, pastures where the forest was cleared, and peat moors. On the flood-free loess ridges a type of maple *(acer tataricus)* appropriate to the climatic zone was found, but mixed with a Mediterranean tormentose oak, often interrupted by extensive steppes. Sand ridges are covered by oak *(quercus robur),* heather and lily of the valley, further in there is poplar and juniper scrub, and the landscape is broken by sandy dunes and salt lakes.

There are places where historical data allow us to draw conclusions regarding early vegetation. Typically sandy soil juniper scrub, which tolerates a dry climate, is found today in the same places where medieval documents speak of them as *fenyves,* that is pinewoods, thus in Izsák, in the Little Cumania National Park and near Örkény.

A dry period started in the 8th century and lasted over three hundred years. In Inner Asia, chiefly in the Tarim basin and in ancient Khorezm in the Lake Aral area, the running waters, irrigation channels and lakes ebbed and the wells dried up, towns and cities were depopulated and much human habitation was covered by

sand. This was accompanied by a shift in vegetation zones, the growth of the desert, and a high mortality amongst domestic animals. It was a catastrophe for a population that fed on both. Lacking food and water, the settled population suffered famine. Those who could afford it, moved on. When their empire collapsed around 750, the Uighurs moved to more grassy areas, onto the lands of other nomads. This may well have been one of the causes that triggered off the late period of migrations, as many students of Central Asia argue. One aspect may well have been the tribal mobility apparent on the West Siberian steppes in mid 8th century, which possibly prompted the Magyars to move west of the river Don, but it certainly induced a not insignificant number of the Muslim Khwarezmiens, whom the Hungarians called *kaliz,* to leave their homes in depopulated towns near Lake Aral and move to Etil, the capital of the Khazars, at the mouth of the Volga.

Fluctuations in the level of the Caspian Sea give us some idea of climatic conditions in the lower Volga steppes. On two occasions in the Age of Migrations, the level sank in a manner that indicated a drought. Around 300 A.D. it sank steeply, and, following a temporary improvement around 450, it only rose to its old high level between 600 and 650. The second dry period started between 750 and 800 and although the level rose considerably in the 10th century, the old high level was only approached some time in the 13th century. The rise in the level of the Caspian, however, depends primarily on precipitation in the huge catchment area of the Volga, and not on the steppe zone.

Count Pál Teleki's 1936 compilations referring to the Southern Hemisphere show the effects on pastures and hay meadows of a significant (as high as 50 per cent) drop in summer rainfall. A 35 per cent reduction ensures pastures for only 15 per cent of livestock, and a 55 per cent reduction for only 1.3 per cent (!). It should be noted that five sheep graze on as much land as one head of cattle or horse.

The semi-nomad and half-settled Avars, Bulgarians, Gepides and Slavs of the Carpathian Basin relied on animal husbandry, and on cultivation based on it. The traditional Avar diet consisted of mutton, beef and horsemeat, dairy products and roughly ground grain. Drought stricken pastures and ploughlands meant that for decades they suffered famine. Perished livestock and drought meant an end to cultivation. Here and there on the treeless plain, the banks of the larger rivers still provided pasture and backwaters provided fish. Under such conditions in the Carpathian Basin, viticulture was still possible (chiefly in Syrmium and in Pannonia).

This post mid-8th-century catastrophic drought contributed to the fall of the Avars much as it had to that of the Maya. As the Slav proverb has it: "they disappeared like the Avars, without heirs or remains." The "true Avars" were worst affected, the semi-nomad warrior caste, and the Gepides, Slavs and Old Bulgars who shared the plains within the Carpathians with them. The perishing of their stock condemned them all to famine. Thus the Franks met with little resistance on their three campaigns, (except for the first, in 791) in the area of Austria and Slovenia. The Avar leaders fought each other between 792 and 795, but the kaghan and the yugrush, his fellow ruler, were killed by their own men, who blamed them for the natural catastrophe, as explained by a 10th century note on kaghanicide: "If the Khazar lands are stricken by drought or some other catastrophe" the kaghan is killed, but so is a viceroy who loses a battle.

The seat of the kaghan and his warlords east of the Danube, known as the Rhing, already showed no sign of human habitation when the Frankish host reached it in 796, but 90 per cent of Charlemagne's horses that advanced as far as Győr in 791 also perished.

Stock perished, famine ensued, and the hungry fled to the wooded hills well before the Frankish wars, starting in mid-8th century, when the steppe zone of Central Asia dried out, at a time when the Avar administration and ruling caste were still in place. A letter from the learned monk of Auxerre, Remigius, to Bishop Dado of Verdun (880–923) on the origins of the hitherto unknown *Hungri* refers to this. Folk etymology derived their name from "hunger," so he added traditional lore concerning the famine motivated emigration of the inhabitants of what had been the lands of the Avars: "I have heard from old men that there was a time when the whole of Pannonia, Istria, Illyria and peoples dwelling nearby suffered a dreadful famine." This precisely covers the former Avar Empire, thus the tradition may well refer to the condition of the Avars in the 8th century.) "When commoners were already dying in droves, the lords of the regions decreed that every house be counted, and that only as many men be retained who could be saved from starving to death, all the others, without number, of all ages and both sexes were expelled into empty regions and the unknown vastness. All those who wished to return were put to death by their leaders. The exiles, travelling through vast deserts *(per vasta solitudines)* arrived at the Maeotis swamps, where the stronger and more skilful of the much-travailed multitude, thriving in a region rich in fish and game, multiplied.

Those who survived the famine were called *Hungri* and it was under that name that they emerged from the Maeotis."

Perhaps Hunger—Hungri is mere folk-etymology and not a real explanation of one of the names of the Magyars who migrated from Maeotis to Pannonia, but the description of the famine that ravaged the Avar lands in the Danube valley is based on authentic tradition.

In fact those who fled death by starvation got as far as the Dniester valley. According to the Russian chronicles which recorded an oral tradition 250 years later, the cruel Avars, when they reached the Dniester-riparian Duleb Slavs, harnessed neither horses nor bullocks but 3–4–5 women to pull their carts.

Avars, noted for the cattle and horses they bred, must have been in dire straits indeed to harness the women of the Slavs of the forest.

Those fleeing southwards made for Slavonia and Croatia, which extended to the Adriatic. Constantine Phorphirogenitus wrote about the fate of these Avars who were attacked by the coastal Croats.

More fled to western "Avaria" (Lower Austria and South-Western Pannonia.) There in the area of the Keszthely culture near Lake Balaton, which enjoyed more precipitation even in times of drought, things went on as usual in the 9th century, but around 900 Bavarian–Carinthian Pannonia was also largely depopulated, an event to which Magyar and Moravian incursions contributed. Major parts of the Lesser and the Great Hungarian Plain, however, already appear as *Pannoniorum et Avarum Solitudines* in the year 900. Contemporary Anglo–Saxon and Persian sources also describe this region as empty and uninhabited.

Avar chieftains and warriors entered Frankish and Bulgarian service, others fled to the wooded hills. The valleys of the Carpathians could only provide a refuge of sorts to those members of the ruling class whose summer pastures they had

been, but it is on the cards that some of the remnants who found their way into Transylvania were amongst the ancestors of the Székely. *Várkony,* which is old Hungarian for Avar, only occurs in a few Great Plains riparian toponyms. Of the Avar, Bulgarian and Gepide cattle-raisers and cultivators of the plains, those who could, took refuge amongst the surrounding Slavs. This explains why *teut,* a name for the Gepides of the Carpathian Basin, was transferred to some of the Slavs as *tót,* a familiar name in modern Hungarian for the Slovaks

Slavs who were able to make do with less were in a better position to survive the drought. This may well explain why early Slav toponyms in the Carpathian Basin are confined to wooded and well-watered regions that conform to such a life-style.

The Magyars lived east of the Dnieper and only crossed that river around 837, occupying the steppe as far as the Danube by the year 860. Atelkuzu, as this area was known (largely consisting of the Ukraine, Moldavia and Eastern Wallachia) favoured survival at the time of the warming. As the drought spread, it was possible to move the flocks up-river to cooler, wooded regions, where fishing provided an extra source of food for semi-nomads. Thus the Magyar tribes, and chiefly the ruling caste, moved up river as far as Charkov, Kiev and Halich. But it also follows that those who dwelt in Southern Moldavia and Wallachia may well have moved up river with their herds and flocks to summer pastures, reaching the Csik basin between the Carpathians and the Hargita and the Barca and Feketeügy basins further south, even before the Magyar Conquest proper.

A climatic feature which may well have influenced the Conquest indirectly was the catastrophically cold winter of 892–893 which interrupted a milder period. Even the major rivers froze up. Eastern Frankish chronicles noted that the winter lasted well into April, with much snow. Sheep and bees perished. There was such a famine in the whole of Bavaria after eighteen months that many died of starvation. At the time the Bavarian marches extended to much of Pannonia. No doubt such a severe winter was felt in Eastern Europe as well. One result may have been the freezing of the Volga and the Don above the bend. This made it possible for the Pechenegs whom the Uzes had attacked, to flee across the frozen rivers into Atelkuzu, although some of them were stuck east of the Ural river. The Pechenegs no doubt stopped at the Dnieper at the time of the first attack, since the last winter camp in Atelkuzu (known under the name of Levedia) of the first chieftain in 894 was somewhere near the mouth of the river Bug. It was only after the 895 invasion of the Carpathian Basin by Árpád's host that the Pechenegs, in alliance with the Bulgarians, forced the Magyar tribes by their second attack, to move into Transylvania and the Upper Tisza region, thus bringing the second stage of the Conquest or, rather, land-taking to a close.

The improved precipitation around 900 helped the transhumant Hungarians coming from the dry steppes north of the Pontus, to find pastures in the Carpathian Basin; that is natural conditions which favoured their life-style. The Magyars about to settle and their associated tribes were able to take into possession animals native to the wooded hilly country, but those who brought stock with them that was used to drier steppes avoided the wetter pastures of the Carpathian fringe. A contributing factor was the higher mortality on wet pastures of their lambs which were used to drier grazing. Very likely, because of the Pecheneg attacks, the land-takers only drove flocks to their new homeland from the neighbouring areas of

Moldavia and Wallachia, but they were well aware what kind of pasture they—especially sheep—needed, mutton being a staple of all dwellers in the steppe. That may well have been one reason why raiding warriors, who owned more stock, chose to strike camp in the driest areas of the Hungarian Plains, where, however, they were able to water their sheep and cattle at rivers and in wetlands.

The climatic and vegetative zones of this area assured a living, even in times of drought, to the tribes of the conquering landtakers and the Iranian Alan and Slav associates who had fled with them from similar regions in Atelkuzu. ❧

NOTES

■ György Györffy–Bálint Zólyomi: "A Kárpát-medence és Etelköz képe egy évezred előtt. (The Appearance of the Carpathian Basin and Atelkuzu a Thousand Years Ago. In: *Honfoglalás és régészet* (The Conquest and Archeology) Edited by L. Kovács, Balassi, Budapest, 1994, pp. 34–37.

■ Müller-Wille M.: "Landnahmen von Skandinavien im nordatlantischen Bereich aus archaeologischer Sicht", in: *Ausgewählte Probleme europäischer Landnahmen des Früh- und Hochmittelalters.* Teil II. (Vorträge und Forschungen, Bd. XLI.) Thorbecke, Sigmaringen 1994, pp. 129–196.

■ Jeremy A. Sabloff: "New Perspectives on the History of Ancient Maya Civilisation." *Nature* 1987 (326), pp. 242–243; Jeremy A. Sabloff: "Drought and Decline." *Nature* 375 (1995) 357; D. A. Hoddel, Jason H. Curtis & Mark Brenner: "Possible Role of Climate in the Collapse of Classic Maya Civilisation." *Nature* 375 (1995), pp. 391–394.

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"Free Hungarian Radio," where it all started.

Nicholas T. Parsons

The Sweet Bonds of Property and Liberty

András Gerő: *Modern Hungarian Society in the Making: The Unfinished Experience*. Translated by James Patterson and Enikő Koncz. Budapest, London, New York, Central European University Press, 1995, 276 pp, with 11 pages of black and white photographs.

The western reader, writes András Gerő in the Preface to this book, " ... must strive to understand that *the past lives on* in Central and Eastern Europe, posing as much, if not more, of a problem to the present-day societies of the region as to the historian." This remark is both a cliché regarding Central Europe—one thinks of all those books and articles with titles like "Vienna: The Past in the Present"—and a manifestation of the ever-present omphalopsychic tendency among local analysts and commentators: after all, any political culture is shaped by its previous history, a fact of which the British (for example) are made painfully aware on an almost daily basis. Nevertheless, the author of the book under review has exploited this cliché in a fresh and highly stimulating way, concentrating primarily on the parallel developments of the Hungarian bourgeoisie and civil society, but placing these developments squarely in the context of 19th-century reform politics and the problem of Hungarian identity.

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The lineaments of that complicated identity are explored in terms of political arguments about economic and other reforms, as well as in terms of their official manifestation in public monuments and approved anniversaries. His book (a collection of essays originally published separately in Hungarian) is divided into three sections. Part One sets the scene with a discussion of the Reform Age (1820–48), that deals with the aspirations of the reformers, conflicts of modernization, industrial development and the question of the non-Magyar nations in the Hungarian polity. While Part One is subsumed under the title Towards a Civil Society, Part Two is labelled The Emergence of Civil Society at the Crossroads of Liberalism and Conservatism. This concentrates primarily on political history and includes an interesting chapter on the Jews as catalysts of modernization, together with the problems of assimilation and anti-semitism that were significant features of 19th century metropolitan culture in Hungary. The schizophrenic element in Hungarian public life, a reflection of conflicting loyalties on the political level, which in turn mirrored the clash of idealism and realism in the Hungarian soul, is well explored in Part Three: National Consciousness and the Making of Cults.

The potentially disparate themes of these essays are oriented towards a com-

mon underlying preoccupation, namely the development of civil society, Hungarian-style. Even the manipulation of patriotic symbols is here treated as an index of political liberties, a manifestation of the tensions between officially inspired patriotism on the one hand, and the spontaneous feelings of the people on the other. "Civil society" in the Central European context is thus a complex idea, involving a number of interlocking factors. It implies the emergence and expansion of an informed and professional class, one that is capable of articulating its will in terms of liberties that it defines for itself, rather than acknowledging them as privileges granted from above. The achievement of a civil society perhaps has almost as much to do with cultural assumptions, as it has to do with the social and political order; at any rate, it is difficult otherwise to explain why commentators in Britain, a country with a long entrenched and enormously wide middle class, seldom invoke the phrase, even when they probably should. As we learn from Ernst Gellner, an interrupted or blocked development of civil society is the principal cause of the concept having achieved the status of "slogan" in certain regions. Nineteenth century Liberals in Central Europe were obviously aware of a fundamental difference between the relations of the state and citizens as they obtained in Western Europe and in their own countries, even if they sometimes failed fully to understand the nature of that difference, or fully to address its implications. The distinctive patterns of east and west have been summed up by László Péter in a recent article in *Hungarian Studies*[1]: "In Western Europe, where the law was silent, the citizen was said to be free. In the legal systems beyond the Rhine, the opposite prevailed: where the law was silent, the individual and the social group were not expressly protected by laws, it was the state authorities who were 'free' ".

András Gerő's book offers us an account of Hungary's interrupted and conflict-ridden progress towards civil society, a progress which always seemed to have a built-in ambivalence. The main reason for this ambivalence was that national identity had in the past been vested in the feudal order, and therefore in the latter's twin (though opposed) pillars of conservatism, the nobility and the peasantry. There was always a danger that civil society, whose protagonists were typically metropolitan, liberal and often Jewish, could be stigmatised as "un-Hungarian" by a conservative, Christian right, that considered itself (like such groupings everywhere) to have a monopoly on patriotism. Under Communism, the slogans were different, but the effect was the same: civil society was the focus of "unreliable elements" keen on alternative culture, or at least not in the official one, who refused to have the prescribed version of Hungarian identity imposed on them.

A leitmotif of Gerő's essays is the continuous presence of incompatibles in the process of modernization. Thus we are reminded of themes that do not seem to have lost their relevance today—in particular the phenomenon of wealth creation that flourishes without a concomitant development of civil liberties; (typical contemporary examples are the so-called "tiger economies" of South East Asia). Hungarian liberals (in the spirit of Edmund Burke) saw individual liberty and property rights as the twin pillars of a progressive society; yet the modern history of the country shows the ship of liberalism continually being "blown off course" in its development towards the ideal of a broadly-based property-owning democracy. There were, of course, intellectuals and politicians who saw the latter as a consummation devoutly to be wished; but it remained (some would argue, still remains) a state of grace that beckoned in the future, a mi-

rage, a *délibáb*, made all the more frustratingly seductive by its partial realization. The Horthy era demonstrated that rights of private property could co-exist with only selective liberties; Stalinism demonstrated (if it needed demonstrating) that there could be no freedom without property rights, while Kádárism again showed that wealth creation (albeit on a limited scale) was possible without genuine individual freedom.

Why was the road to modernization so often a calvary for the Hungarians? Once a significant and influential section of the feudal nobility had accepted that their privileges, and the economic system that depended on them, were anachronistic, what obstacles stood in the way of progress towards a modern civil society? To these questions Gerő offers some subtle answers that combine consideration of Hungary' s geopolitical straitjacket with an analysis of more familiar Central European leitmotifs—the tendency for change to come about only by "reform from above", the feudal legacy of legalism that so often produced a kind of tunnel vision concentrating on constitutional abstractions, the persistence of privilege and sinecurism; last but not least, there was the problem of the growing power of the non-Magyar nations that made democracy such a potential threat to the Hungarian state-forming caste.

Many of the powerful contradictory forces that bore down on those involved in public life are evident in the views of Count Széchenyi, whose public persona is rather brutally contrasted by Gerő with the private thoughts he recorded in his diary. The public man, inspired by English utilitarianism, wanted "the Hungarian nobleman to be replaced by the noble Hungarian". He seemed to share the liberal vision articulated by Kossuth and Deák, whereby personal, social and national freedom were all intrinsically linked. (As Deák put it in 1830: "Property and liberty are the sweet bonds that tie the citizen to the fate of his nation most strongly"). The other Széchenyi, the diary writer, believed that modernization was only viable in combination with absolutism, a point that seemed to be demonstrated by the ability of Széchenyi's arch-enemy, Alexander Bach (against whom he anonymously wrote an incredibly bitter pamphlet), not only to introduce modernization, but even to arrange a more equitable system of taxation. One might add that the English way of doing things that Széchenyi so admired was marked out from the Hungarian more by pragmatism and demographic forces than by sublime views about the rights of demos. As Michael Bentley reminds us in *Politics without Democracy 1815–1914:* "Without democracy, politicians assumed that policy should be agricultural before it was industrial, and aristocratic before it was either."[2] The English governing class, however, could develop strategies that were (just) sufficiently emollient to maintain social cohesion, because it was master in its own house: even after the Compromise, that could not truthfully be said of its Hungarian counterpart.

Some of the tensions and contradictions that combined to drive Széchenyi to mental collapse, resurface in different guise in the discussions on economic policy that preoccupied opposition Liberals in the Reform Age. Gerő points out that Kossuth advocated free trade up to 1842, but protective tariffs thereafter, under the influence of Friedrich List and his "nationally oriented economics". This again is an argument with a modern ring about it—List was in principle a follower of Adam Smith, yet he believed that fledgling industries would always need protection. The official advocacy of free trade (vital for stimulating international economic activity), combined with (usually covert) protectionism in spe-

cific sectors, constitutes the actual practice of most industrial nations today; the complication in Hungary was that economic policy was anyway conducted in the interests of the Vienna court. Nevertheless, even had the 1848 revolution been successful, Kossuth realized that economic autarky would not have been a viable option, however much nationalist political rhetoric (then as now) tended in that direction.

The influence of Vienna after the Compromise of 1867 is examined by Gerő in some of the most fascinating chapters of Part Two, especially in his discussion of "Mamelukes and Zoltans". The far from complimentary nomenclature of "Mamelukes" was given to the typically supine backbenchers on the Liberal (government) side, who owed their allegiance (and perks) to "General" Tisza, and whose instructions were that they should "stick to voting and refrain from thinking." The "Zoltans" were members of the Conservative opposition, whose interests went no further than the promotion of their own careers, and many of whom were also indirectly beneficiaries of patronage. This was a period (the 1870's) of electoral fraud and massive corruption, against which only a few honest souls like Deák made a stand. (He apparently sat demonstratively outside the chamber in the corridor while pork barrel bills, most of them railway concessions, were voted through.)

Although capitalist economic development forged ahead in the second half of the 19th century, and a substantial bourgeois layer of society emerged, we find again that the political culture lags behind the spirit of the age. Gerő's explanation is that no political activity of profound significance was possible, since "differences (between the parties and members) went no further than the individual' s degree of consistency and method of maintaining the existing regime" (page 132). Franz Joseph was, after all, C-in-C of the Hungarian army and under no particular obligation even to ask the party that had just won an election to form a government. (When the opposition actually was elected in 1905, on a platform that implied greater respect for Hungarian interests, but was still pro-Compromise, the Emperor ignored the result and appointed the Commander of the Royal Guard to head the government. Contingency plans for an invasion of Hungary were also put in hand.) Franz Joseph also had the right of pre-sanctioning laws that were subsequently put to Parliament and almost invariably passed. The standing Hungarian delegation that went to Vienna, supposedly to represent the country's interests, was little more than an exercise in social snobbery and personal vanity. In 1908, it was led by Béla Barabás who, as Gerő points out, was the leader of a party whose main policy was to oppose the very existence of the joint administration!

Given this background, it seems hardly surprising that Hungary showed a pattern that has been evident elsewhere in Central Europe, whereby charismatic personalities engage in political role-playing against a background of weak institutions and massive constraints on their freedom of action. Although such figures could certainly introduce some valuable mesaures, particularly of a technical kind, they nevertheless served to demonstrate (in Gerő's words) that a "market economy can live in perfect harmony with, and what is more, can be used to finance, market-free politics" (Page 128). Most politicians are to a greater or lesser extent the prisoners of circumstance: the danger in systems where democratic forms are not matched by democratic substance, is that they also become prisoners of their own rhetoric. The knock-on effect for the economy of such a political culture is well described by George Schöpflin, when he writes of the

political traditions of Eastern Europe that: "politics... offered a vista of glittering prizes at a lower personal cost than independent economic activity and, what is more, these were available without any serious checks on how power was acquired and whether or not it was used for personal gain." Further, he remarks that: "Political parties frequently tended to be personal côteries united by loyalty to an individual rather than a political programme or ideology. This meant that clientilism was a key feature of the political order, regulated by a system of rewards and sanctions within the elite and from the elite downwards. It also meant that the make-up of parties could be labile, the compositon of their personnel could change and individuals could readily transfer their ostensible political loyalties—ostensible because in reality personal links proved to be more significant than 'ideolological' ones. The consequence of this was that political commitments could be relatively weak and politicians appeared to be opportunistic and unscrupulous. Again, the system was devised as much for the personal benefit and security of its participants as for the polity as a whole, to put it charitably."[3]

Gerő's phrase "market-free politics" is one of his most thought-provoking sallies. It conjures a picture of parliaments reduced to echo-chambers, where "the differences between the governing party and the opposition were audible rather than visual" (page 128). As the relevance and legitimacy of parliament declined, the self-importance and touchiness of its members increased; (Gerő points to the large number of duels fought by MPs, between whom there was usually as little to choose, in terms of probity, as there was between Dr Johnson' s famous examples of a louse and a flea). As corruption and the emoluments of MPs swelled, so did their indifference to their constituents. Here again, it is worth viewing these abuses in an English perspective, lest the impression be given that this sort of thing was unique to Central Europe. Bentley, in the work referred to above, quotes a contemporary observer and participant of British politics in the 1850's as saying that "not one tenth of the entire House was legally elected", while even among the honest, canvassing for votes was regarded with a disgust vividly evoked by one aristocratic participant: "... the mock geniality, the hearty shake of the filthy hand, the chuckling reply that must be made to the coarse joke, the loathsome, choking compliment that must be paid to the grimy wife and the sluttish daughter, the indispensable flattery of the vilest religious prejudices." Gerő comments on the large involvement of the aristocracy in the Hungarian Lower House throughout the reform period, even though they had the hereditary Upper House as their more or less exclusive preserve. The "landocracy" in Britain proved just as enduring: in the 1870's the member for Wareham sent the following message to his constituents: "Electors of Wareham! I understand that some evil-disposed person has been circulating a report that I wish my tenants and other persons dependent on me, to vote according to their conscience. This is a dastardly lie, calculated to injure me. I have no wish of the sort. I wish, and I intend, that these persons shall vote for me."

One of the causes of this gentleman's panic, however, was the introduction of the secret ballot in 1872. In Hungary, secret ballots were not made law until 1887. Their absence undoubtedly supplied strong motivation for the opposition to accept such spoils as came its way during the thirty, long years of Liberal rule, since it knew that the government could virtually remain in power as long as it chose. But

this alone would not explain the sterility of party politics at that time, which increasingly revolved around proceduralism and trivia; once again, this was because the central issue, the position of Hungary *vis-à-vis* the dynasty, was one that all concerned ultimately wished to leave well alone, however much it afforded opportunities for posturing and speech-making. Insofar as radically alternative policies could both be advocated and put into practice, and insofar as the great issues of the day, from the corn laws and tariffs to home rule for Ireland, determined the fates of the two great parties, Britain had moved closer to government that reflected real concerns, but this ability for popular pressure to make itself felt (not infrequently through rioting) must, of course, be seen in the context of resistance to democratization by the landed interest, rampant corruption and other signs of a democratic deficit that were shared with Hungary.

Election-rigging had the additional complication that areas with a largely Magyar population were given a lower electoral weighting (by means of a higher property qualification) under the Liberal dispensation, on the unarguable grounds that such areas tended to vote for the opposition parties; constituencies with a majority of national minorities voted, or were made to vote, for the government (p. 175). Furthermore amendments made to electoral rights in 1874, meant that the number of people entitled to vote in Hungary actually fell towards the end of the century from around 14 per cent to only 6 per cent. By 1906, Hungary's electorate was 6.2 per cent, that of Austria 27 per cent, of France 28 per cent, of Germany 22 per cent, of Great Britain only 16 per cent and of Italy 8 per cent. The laws passed in 1848 had put Hungary in the vanguard of Europe, as far as the franchise was concerned, but by the early 20th century it was bringing up the rear.

The deeply unattractive scenario of Liberal politics in the Hungary of the 1870's and 1880's has certain parallels to contemporary crises of legitimacy, not least because economic development continued throughout the period, as it still does today (for example) in Japan and Italy, despite the degeneracy of the local political culture. Nevertheless—to return to the questions referred to earlier—it is doubtful whether dichotomies between democratic accountability and economic prosperity can continue beyond a certain point, even if one accepts the general principle that economics dictates politics. Hungary's internal tensions were resolved (or suspended) by the cataclysm of war, but they have resurfaced since and are not entirely absent now, even after two free elections on a general suffrage. In the same way, bogus constitutionalism and the corruption of public life engendered by seventeen years of neo-Liberalism in Britain has bred an unhealthy cynicism about the democratic process, as it has even more dramatically in Italy. Governments that forfeit (or never possessed) broadly-based democratic support are compelled to invent their own legitimacy by identifying the national interest with their own. Hence the importance of cults and symbols, three of which Gerő discusses: The Millennium Monument, The Cult of Queen Elisabeth and The March 15th Celebration.

Hungary followed an ancient rule in reaching the apogee of self-confidence at the very moment that the earth was beginning to move beneath her feet. Jubilees, world exhibitions and the like generally combine over-optimism with an element of *Realitätsverlust*; but Hungary's Millennial celebration in 1896 was peculiar in that it attempted to combine a necessary loyalty to the Habsburg ruler with an assertion of Magyar (inherently anti-Habsburg) identity. This was naturally reflected

in the choice of statuary for the great Millennium Monument, where "approved" Habsburgs (Maria Theresa, her father, and Leopold II), who had respected Hungarian legality, shared the honours with carefully selected Hungarian heroes; conspicuous by their absence among the latter were figures like Ferenc Rákóczi II, whose heroic credentials exceeded many of those chosen in his place, but unfortunately rested on his great struggle against Habsburg hegemony. It was indeed a strange kind of triumphalism, that had to present its commemorative pageant as Hamlet without the Prince, or, to choose a closer parallel, Waterloo without Wellington. (Elsewhere, Gerő reminds us of the requirement that arose from the Compromise for the Hungarian army to pay homage on ceremonial occasions to those who had died for the sovereign, which naturally included the enemies of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848.)

Gerő's painstaking analysis of the changes in the millenary statuary and their political implications, (changes that continue right up to the 1950s), illustrates the assiduousness with which successive regimes tried to impose political correctness on the nation. By the same token, anniversaries such as St Stephen's Day or March 15th, which were integral to popular symbolic culture, were officially approved, or merged with other anniversaries in an attempt to water them down, or suppressed altogether, according to the political message emanating from the establishment at any given moment. "The people" found a spontaneous outlet for their frustrations and patriotism either by myth-making, as in the glorification of Queen Elisabeth, (of whom Gerő drily observes that she was "unable to break her alliance with her husband any more than the Hungarian nation could"); or by turning the 15th of March into a symbol of protest against present-day oppression— in 1942 against Nazism, in 1956 against Stalinism.

It is hardly possible to do justice to the richness of Gerő's material, or the subtlety of his handling of it, in the space of a short review. Perhaps his greatest achievement lies in his ability to examine the exigencies and realities of politics and economics against the broader background of idealism, freedom, ethical consistency and national identity. In a way, his book is a morality tale, in which the Hungarian leaders of the Liberal era aspire to honour, but settle for social prestige and riches; neo-absolutism is the truth that dare not speak its name, while windy rhetoric obscures an obsession with personal gain, the absence of a democratic mandate, and the festering problem of the ethnic minorities. A Latin proverb often quoted at the time sums up the resultant disillusion: "the Senators are good, but the Senate is a beast". Nor was the creation of wealth, and thus of an emergent middle class that undoubtedly possessed many positive features, an adequate palliative for political decay and endemic corruption. This, at least, is a lesson worth pondering in the light of the political currents of the 1980's and 1990's, a century on from the cynical machinations of "General Tisza" and his cronies: as the Zala County delegate to the 1830 Diet so presciently put it: "A successful country is not measured by the number of rich people in it, but by the number of poor". ❧

NOTES

1 ■ László Péter: "Church–State Relations and Civil Society in Hungary: A Historical Perspective". *Hungarian Studies*, 1995/1, pp. 3–33.

2 ■ Michael Bentley: *Politics without Democracy: 1815–1914. Perception and Preoccupation in British Government.* Fontana Press, 1996.

3 ■ George Schöpflin: *Politics in Eastern Europe: 1945–1992*. Blackwell, 1993, p.15 and pp. 21–22.

W. L. Webb

Winning the Millennium Match

George Konrád: *The Melancholy of Rebirth: Essays from Post-Communist Central Europe, 1989–1994.* Translated by Michael Henry Heim. New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1995, 196 pp.

Henry Kissinger recently recalled as a young man hearing Harold Macmillan begin a lecture in his Edwardian drawl, with, "As they left the Garden of Eden, Adam turned to Eve and said, 'We live in an age of transition.'" Even that cool old political dandy wouldn't be able to get away with such a joke today, as we spin erratically into the dark through the winds that blow from the end of our millennium.

In "Thoughts on the Border," the earliest of these "post-communist" essays, György Konrád talks with understandable pride about winning "this end-of-the-millennium match," but already the short span of years that separates the writing of those words in August 1989 from the present seems like a journey from another age. Eric Hobsbawm is surely right when he talks about "the short twentieth century", lasting from 1914 to 1989, the latter year looking more and more like an end than a beginning. Why it seems so remote is that we are already experiencing the strangeness of a new age, the first exhalations of the new millennium, bringing intimations of change hardly to be understood in the old language of economics and power relations. Triumphalism over the defeat of communism and the victory of economic liberalism at the end of history has dissolved in a profound uneasiness. Yes, communist utopianism has run into the sands, but the market utopianism which in East Central Europe in the early years of the Great Alteration seemed still so exciting an ideological alternative, is beginning to look terminal in the rich world now, while the radical individualism which was its social dimension has become so dangerously dysfunctional in America that the quest for something to fix it with is a major preoccupation of social and political scientists.

Much of this has been emerging with some clarity only in the last year or so, and it is a mark of Konrád's steadiness and political intelligence that while he was writing too soon to address our *fin-de-siècle* loss of confidence directly, these essays carry ample warning of the dangers of simply switching one's ideological investments out of one set of global solutions and allegiances into another. Watching the turncoats of the former communist elite energetically pulling the strings of their old

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connections to "parachute" into positions of economic power in the new order, he sees that already in 1989 for them, "The prime criterion for anything is currently: "How does it work in America." Give "the satellite mentality a great power," he adds, "—any great power—and it will swear loyalty to it."

His sturdy brand of political liberalism, however, is tempered with pragmatism, and he follows that with the thought that a sensible satellite mentality will try to work out what the costs as well as the possible gains of such a loyalty may be. Thus while, in the title essay, he accepts that "capitalism is the price we have to pay for democracy", and welcomes the return of the bourgeoisie and the growth of the middle class "in legal leaps and illegal bounds", he doesn't omit to record also that "As far as the poor are concerned, nothing has changed: they are still ignored."

In Budapest I once heard György Konrád described, in a rather equivocal way, as a national institution. To an outsider he seems a cherishable one, covetable even to someone from a political culture where for a decade or more the best have lacked all conviction. Part of what's tonic about his writing is his serious optimism, a trait he endearingly proclaims himself: "All my arguments can be torn to pieces, I know, but I have a very personal disease: I am an optimist." But this is part of a hard-earned self-confidence that reminds me of something Ted Hughes once said about a generation of poets a little older than him—the Central European generation of Vasko Popa, Zbigniew Herbert and Miroslav Holub, whose growing years had carried the whole burden of Hitlerism and Stalinism but who had survived to a rare maturity in art and civil courage. Hughes, after reading Popa during one of the sillier moments of the Sixties in Britain, wrote: "These are not the spoilt brats of Western civilization, disappointed of impossible expectations and deprived of the revelation of necessity." In Konrád's case, this "grown up" optimism may be partly the tough equanimity of the good social worker that he once was, humane but not illusioned. Whatever its root, one sees him in these essays being brave in ways as difficult and appropriate to the time as ever he was in the days when Kádár's commissars prevented him from being published, except in samizdat, and even, for sixteen years, from being employed at all.

Not the least of this bravery was to write, in the teeth of a newly liberated anticommunist nationalism, ardent with nostalgia for the Horthy era, which as a Jewish boy he had only just survived, "Communism, unlike fascism, never tried to murder me; it merely tried to make me its loyal subject. I never forget the difference". Two years later, in an uncharacteristically vulnerable piece, he describes being mobbed in Freedom Square by antisemitic super-patriots who call him a traitor, and ask him "why you hate us Hungarians." "Long live György Konrád, the greatest Hungarian writer," bellows another—"but not too long!"

From London, at least, it looks as if the surge of nationalist feeling has slackened with the change of government in Budapest, but most of this book was written at a time when half Hungary was trying to go back to some imagined native version of the Thirties—or even trying simultaneously to go backward culturally and politically, and forward into some sort of idealized notion of the late twentieth-century market economy. Uncomfortable and irrational as this sounds, it was not really surprising; you could observe the same phenomenon at about the same time and for the same reason in Polish politics. After all, Vaclav Havel's applauded metaphor about histo-

ry's clock having been stopped at Yalta might be thought by less creative political minds to carry the implication that to go forward was in some sense to go back, literally to resume history's interrupted course. But for a liberal Jewish democrat, such regression had serious implications, and Konrád keeps an eye on them: "professional hate-mongers on the lookout for an international mafia are beginning to give their devil Jewish features, a revival that reeks of unfinished pre-war business," he was writing in 1991. "How insane it would be if even now, as we rejoice over communism's deaththroes, they gave birth to a strapping anti-communist fascism."

Mostly, however, his constitutional optimism prevails, as it did in the Seventies and Eighties, when he was able to believe the Yalta settlement a temporary aberration at a time when, he noted, his contemporaries in Germany were oddly ill at ease with such an idea. (In Bonn, only four months before the Wall came down, talking to politicians who had been long and actively engaged in the Ostpolitik, I was still hearing the very phrase "for the foreseeable future," like a clause written long ago into some political insurance policy against unsettling kinds of change. The Wall would certainly be there for the foreseeable future, and so, in spite of Gorbachev and glasnost, would communism, the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, in however dessicated a form.)

For the present, like the Poles, Hungarian voters have swung away from nationalism, and a right which hasn't yet discovered a more up-to-date identity—not swung so far, though, considering the record of the Horn government to date, as to disconcert anyone other than the more sado-masochistically inclined among the international banker-policemen. Mostly, when one thinks how much has been achieved post-1989 at surprisingly low political cost, given the history of this part of Europe, Konrád's optimism seems justified, and perhaps even part of the process, as helping to sustain the will to succeed.

This touches on what he thinks of the role of the intellectual in the changed circumstances of such societies as his, and here he seems uncharacteristically unsure of himself. "Writing is a less serious profession than it was," he tells us; "it is more a hobby, a pastime, a sport... In a liberal democracy our fellow citizens do not need our spiritual advice. What they need are good books." This doesn't sit comfortably with an earlier thought that seems a good deal more in character: "I see the body of European literature with all its writers and thinkers as a body of law." But it goes even more oddly with an ambiguous, perhaps embarrassed, passage in a later piece on writers, "Hedonist of the Brain": "Now it's time to focus on the doers, the go-getters, time to make them acceptable." Surely it's economists who have embraced the role of engineers of the human soul in the post-communist world order? Or does he mean that in the Balzacian age he sees emerging in Budapest, the Hungarian novelist must buckle to and oblige the market with post-Balzacian novels about entrepreneur heroes? Whatever he intended, it's clear that writers, too, have been having problems with continuity in The Great Alteration.

In fact, Konrád, for all his polemical lightness of touch and quotableness, is a serious Jewish moralist, and his sense of the good writer's spiritual and social obligation emerges clearly enough in the best pages of his political writing. In the first piece in this book, a speech given near Sopron in August, 1989, to celebrate the partial opening of Hungary's border with Austria that six weeks after was to bring down the whole house of cards, he was

urging Central Europeans to prove themselves "worthy of the epithet 'European' by making ourselves allies in one another's freedom and by working towards a democratic Central European federation." Given the energetic jostling among the states of the Visegrád group to be first in the anxious queue outside the West's locked gates for NATO and EU goodies, that hardly looks now to be a likely political development; and indeed the whole concept of "Central Europe" as anything more than an idealizing category of *Kulturgeschichte* or a brute fact of geopolitics more plainly expressed in the German term *Zwischeneuropa* has not worn well in recent debate. Like Havel, however, Konrád has not given up his faith in a more benign collective Central European political destiny to redeem the region's grisly past. His reasoning is cogent as to present political needs and rooted in his deepest beliefs about what humankind should be up to. The point of integration would be "not so much to turn us all into winners as to help us support one another through hard times and preserve a modicum of sovereignty in the face of one or another powerful neighbour." Showing that these small nations with difficult pasts could work together might make them all more acceptable to the larger European and Western groupings (whose own acute internal difficulties with "working together" hadn't become quite so apparent at the time of his writing). And then what he argues for at the national and civic level in his manifestoes for the Democratic Charter—"the group tempers the follies of individuals"—applies equally to nation state politics, supranational connection and dialogue promoting a civil, democratic politics and dissolving the narrow politics of ethnicity or religious affiliation.

His paradigm for what lies at the heart of all this may just conceivably be evolved from something I once heard György Lukács say, among a handful of political apothegms he must have trotted out for many of the Western writers and journalists who beat a path to his door in the late Sixties. It went like this: "People used to think there was a body-soul dichotomy; now no intelligent person believes this. Soon they will come to see that there is no individual-society dichotomy." Konrád has two versions of this idea more shrewdly attuned to present needs. Helpful prompters in any decision-making process, he says, are "two basic values, autonomy and solidarity... They are like siblings who sometimes play together and sometimes fight; they coexist in all sorts of situations and in the choices we make every day. If we are in tune with what is going on inside us, we are less likely to consider one or the other entirely in the right." The other version, in a lecture given in the Paulkirche in Frankfurt, is more simple and memorable: "We are for ourselves and each other as animals are and the heavenly bodies." ❧

Daniel Hoffman

Poetry Not Lost in Translation

Ottó Orbán: *The Blood of the Walsungs: Selected Poems.* Edited by George Szirtes. Bloodaxe Books & Corvina, 1993, 94 pp. £6.95. • Zsuzsa Rakovszky: *New Life.* Translated by George Szirtes. Oxford University Press, 1994, 53 pp. £7.99.

To be appreciated beyond its own linguistic borders, the poetry of no European country is more in need of skilful translation than that of Hungary, for, as everyone knows, Hungarian is a language with no cousins. Its literature is rich and resonant, its twentieth-century poets giving eloquent and moving testimonies to personal, national, and cultural experience, yet unless their work be translated with fidelity, with skill, with an empathetic comprehension, their work is fated to be known only among speakers of their own tongue.

Robert Frost once wrote that the poetry is what gets lost in translation; that is all too often true, especially when linguists who are not themselves skilled poets undertake to give literal versions of poems. Such was the case, for instance, in this journal some thirty years or more ago, when contemporary poems were given versions derived from bilingual dictionaries. Then a new literary editor joined the staff, a skilled translator of drama himself, aware that it takes a poet to make, or to remake, a poem. He soon corralled a cadre of accomplished British, American, and Canadian poets to whom he and his staff sent literal versions of contemporary poems, along with sophisticated notes on the poetic conventions, word-plays, and formal and other elements in the poems, thus guiding their adaptations in English.

Although in the United States, and doubtless in Britain too, there is a recognizable style of translated verse, which levels all poets and poems to a flat sameness, it can indeed be said that translations in *The Hungarian Quarterly* and its old *New* issues on the whole successfully evoke the individuality of each translated poet. After all, poems in translation have to be valid in their second language as poems in their own right. Slavish fidelity merely to words produces doggerel; the translator must re-experience the imaginative processes of the poem to find equivalents to the original's form, rhythm, imagery, tone, reflexive language, and other literary conventions.

This process is put to the test in the *Blood of the Walsungs,* selected poems by Ottó Orbán. The poems have been translated by fifteen hands, among them the American poets William Jay Smith and Jascha Kessler, the British poets Edwin

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Morgan and Alan Dixon, and half a dozen Hungarian co-translators. The volume is edited by George Szirtes, Hungarian-born, long resident in England, a talented poet in English. Orbán's work, as Mr Szirtes's informative introduction makes clear, falls into three stages and reflects influences as varied as Kosztolányi, Rimbaud, Dylan Thomas, Garcia Lorca, and Attila József as well as Pilinszky and Ginsberg—all these in his early work; later influences include Robert Lowell and John Berryman. Here is the work of a cosmopolitan poet, widely read and receptive to modernist energies of both his own, European, and Anglo-American traditions. Yet, as Szirtes says, "The idiom he speaks is characteristic of Budapest."

Orbán is a prolific poet—sixteen books of verse between 1960 and 1992. Szirtes notes that, "Formally, he is extremely versatile, and has written with some virtuosity in a variety of styles"—thus posing challenges to his corps of translators. His career to date offers three stages: first, declamatory, long-lined unmetered poems; then a period of prose poems; and most recently, unrhymed sonnet-length verse modelled on Robert Lowell's stanzas in *History*. The lilt, energy, and inventiveness of the first of these styles may be inferred from the opening and closing lines of "Poets":

They stand in the gateway of the century the
haunters of the future
with their naive intelligentsia ideas about
beauty and society
carving original naturalness into fatal postures
their instincts undermining the postures in
a dying world...

.....

they are the witnesses that man was not
meant for death
his ashes consumed by grass
but his bones stick up from the earth like
swords.

(Translated by William Jay Smith and László T. András)

The prose poems of the second part of Orbán's book present a different challenge to both poet and translator. Lacking the organizing principles of meter and lineation, the prose poem is usually regarded as a marginal, experimental form. Yet when it succeeds—as in the work of its masters, from Rimbaud to Charles Simic—it justifies itself. The reader's expectations are raised by the prose form of a linear narrative; but this is subverted by the centripetal energies, associational movement and compression of metaphor, as in poetry. Orbán's prose poems characteristically pile images on one another, their accumulations spinning out of the center of each paragraphic poem, as in Edwin Morgan's version of "To Be Poor":

...To be poor is to wade barefoot through the splintered-glass sea of technology and hand-feed a lion equipped with every modern convenience. To learn an upside-down ethics to discover everything about the concealed dungeons of a sky-bound earthscraper; to crawl backwards along the narrowing corridors of the cavern of history into that primordial workshop where blood and wretchedness are pounded into Ariel-shapes of humaneness...

Poems in the final third of *The Blood of the Walsungs* are chiefly nonrhymed sonnets. Here again Orbán adapts to his own purposes a rebellious form, a sonnet that's not a sonnet: the stanza invites expectation of an orderly Petrarchan thesis/counter thesis, but the poems have other designs on their readers. George Szirtes's translation of "Before the Autumn Cull" is typical of Orbán's freedom within metrical structure and of the movement by imagistic association of these poems (I quote the sestet):

I'm of that parting generation whose baptism
of fire
Bequeathed them epilepsy and a sense of
solid values;

The moderns in their screaming nose-dive
showered us
with cream-puffs that exploded. I tasted them
and have been this way since, standing by the
cellar,
light, light, infinite light and a fluttering, the
wrecked yard.

Through these stylistic changes the sensibility of the poet remains constant, formed by his responses to war, to social upheaval, to the depersonalizing effects of modern technology and modern political strife. As Szirtes says in his foreword, "Orbán has become the leading commentator on the politics and social life of his times." His poetry, "capable of infinite extension," is offered "as a form of spiritual diary." These English versions by many hands reflect a stylistic consistency that must result from the strength of the original texts as well as from the translators' fidelity and skills. Mr Szirtes has chosen well; his edition makes available in English a poet whose achievement deserves an international audience.

The challenge in the Orbán volume, well met by the editor and his contributors, is to present translations in a recognizably individual style, or in this case, styles. In Zsuzsa Rakovszky's *New Life,* Mr Szirtes deals with a different challenge: here he himself is the only translator, and the charge is to transform her originality in Hungarian into an equivalently original idiom in English. Fortunately, Mr Szirtes, who does not need the intercession of literary linguists, has given us a *tour de force* of sympathetic re-creations. Ms Rakovszky, like Mr Orbán, is widely read in contemporary verse in English—Szirtes's introduction tells us that "Temperamentally she draws a little on the confessional tradition of Sylvia Plath (readers might recognize a few echoes of Plath and Emily Dickinson in some earlier poems), but her real affinity lies with Lowell, Jarrell and, for English readers, a poet like Carol Ann Duffy, though she is of a more intellectual cast of mind and presents a more fragile persona than the last." He observes, "The world of her poems is recognizably the world of her readers, a shifting urban landscape of noisy neighbours, malfunctioning television set, shadows on landings, snatched meetings, and dying ideologies [...] (Hers is a) realism [...] only one step from a kind of hallucination driven by desire; there is a process of disintegration evident in both object and setting. Essentially she is working in what remains of the tragic tradition [...] There is, in fact, a clear political element in her poems, but it is one in which politics is not so much a distant issue as the stuff of life, a moral climate that conditions the most personal expectations."

One of Rakovszky's dominant modes is a surrealistic itemization of the things of this world, a disorganized jumble, as in "Translucent Objects: Greenwich Flea Market":

Only the sewing machine is missing. Free
association according to the laws
of chance assembles umbrellas, golf clubs, ski-
boots, under the free sky where instead of
sauce
a thin grey mass of clouds creeps tremulouly...

and five successive stanzas summon up the vanished owners of such discarded objects;

Cut free of its own past each joins that mess
of organs sprawling on the surgical plate
of history. Our cold eyes weight the price
of strips of broken skin and sagging breasts,
too late
for the selective myopia of tenderness.

In "Summer Solstice" her insomnia is haunted, surreal—"Last year's dead sit on the

usual chair / just beyond my field of vision";

At night a white light glows behind my closed
lids; a comet appears on
the horizon, spinning and shaking,
a huge bird of light, brooding, calling me
"daughter".

Again, in "Couples,"

The curt fortnightly exchange, the dumb automatic
routine among boxes of Lapsang Souchong.
The terrible rage beneath the mask, the cinematic
gestures in slow motion like a film gone wrong.

. . . . . .

The old yet new world set to explode into light and leaves,
at the very beginning. The rose
the dawn, the dew, the gratitude, the blind force that deceives,
in trembling hope *or so the poem goes.*

This sense of the indeterminacy of sensient and emotional experience runs through and lends a tragic tinge to Rakovszky's lyricism. Another characteristic style in which this mood is evoked uses short run-on lines. Typical of this mode is "Snapshot":

August balcony evening six
it grows darker I am happy
and unhappy Horizontal lines
freeze in mid-flight Perspective
draws me downward I'm happy
and unhappy...
.....and don't let
anything happen It might break
the water inside me whose tense and
balanced surface no longer wishes
to mirror anything but unblemished
space I am happy and unhappy
am and am not happy and me and...

When she essays a sonnet, though her theme is as indeterminate as any of Orbán's, her use of the stanza remains true to its classic form, as in the sestet to "From the Dutch School" in which she comments on the homely details of a painting:

By isolating them, the picture frame
draws out the sheer assertiveness of things,
a simultaneity in which herrings
cabbages and lit torches proclaim
their are *and* were. *But beyond such ebb and flow*
lies time's third option: not-here-not-I. No-go.

George Szirtes uses rhymes and off-rhymes so skillfully that they appear without distorting syntax or sound. His translation of "They Were Burning Dead Leaves" well embodies the poet's poignant, lyrical evocation of love and grief. I cannot forebear to quote this brief poem in its entirety:

They were burning dead leaves. Must oozed with scent,
tar bubbled and blew.
The moonlight glow behind the thistle bent
like a torn rainbow.

The street was a forest, night slid into the heart
of deepest autumn.
A guilty music blew the house apart,
with its fife and drum.

To have this again, just this, just the once more
I would sink below
autumnal earth and place my hand in your
hand like a shadow.

"I would like her to sound in English as she sounds to me in Hungarian," he writes. These English versions give us a poet every page of whose book bears the press of her own thumbprint, a style and sensibility unmistakeably her own in poems that address her personal confusions, passions, and graspings at happiness. Zsuzsa Rakovszky is a poet of compelling interest. It is fitting that she now have an audience of readers of English. ❧

One Sentence: Illyés and Eluard

In the autumn 1995 number of *The Hungarian Quarterly* Mátyás Domokos maintained—with circumstantial evidence—that Gyula Illyés's most famous poem, "A Sentence on Tyranny" was written in the early 1950s and not (as the Kádár regime claimed) during, or immediately before, the 1956 Revolution.[1] Domokos enlists the poet's utterances regarding the matter, and refers to the life of the poem *extra Hungariam* between its first publication in the heady days of that red autumn, and the demise of censorship in Hungary in the late eighties.

There is nothing to take away from the arguments of the Hungarian critic—a trusted associate of Illyés himself—but there is, in fact, more evidence and a witness to support his case.

The poem is entitled, "Egy mondat a zsarnokságról", "A Sentence on Tyranny" or "A Single Sentence on Tyranny", which shows that the title itself allows for semantic variations. More of this, and of artistic merits later.

Total tyranny was the decisive and the most palpable cause of the 1956 Revolution, but it had been pervading life for something like eight years in Hungary and in its sham-socialist neighbourhood. For this reason the poem of six printed octavo pages acquired universal validity on publication, and was interpreted as the outcry of the oppressed when it made its rounds in the West. Apart from the English translation mentioned by Domokos, there were other English, French, Italian and Spanish translations in printed and manuscript circulation. The best of these was produced by Vernon Watkins, soon after 1956, with the help of Paul Tábori. He revised this translation with my help in 1967 before the Illyéses visited London.[2]

The volume entitled *A Tribute to Gyula Illyés,* commissioned by the Occidental Press in Washington, was already in the making, and soon afterwards some of the translations migrated—in slightly changed versions—to Illyés's *Selected Poems,* which was eventually published by Chatto and Windus. In October 1967 Illyés and his wife Flóra visited London, and stayed for a fortnight at 25 Ovington Square where I called on them S.W.3, twice.

Before these calls, I saw the Illyéses on another two occasions, once in a Knightsbridge patisserie shop and then in South

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Kensington in the Polish Hearth Club, where the poet had read his poems to a large audience of Hungarians.[3]

I was already in the shop when Illyés came in on the arm of Zoltán Szabó and followed by his wife, Flóra. Zoltán, and László Cs. Szabó were the leading lights among the Hungarian intellectuals in Britain and my chief advisors regarding the Illyés volume. Spotting me at a table and rising, Zoltán said to Illyés, pointing at me with his long and bony index finger, "He is the one doing your translations". I requested a longish talk with the poet, focussing on the contents of his book in English. "What to select?" Illyés gave me a steady gaze and said, "Whatever you put in the book you must not leave out "Tyranny". I assured him that the poem was to be the star of the show.

On the first of my two Ovington Square visits he recounted what Domokos has faithfully recalled: he wrote the poem in the early fifties, did it in the rough in Tihany, by the Balaton, kept it in his drawer until 1956, published it in *Irodalmi Újság,* and was unable to have it republished in Hungary up to (and as it turned out much after) that date. Then Flóra remarked that the authorities, for reasons of their own, wanted to postdate "Tyranny" to 1956. "It was ready years before that", she said, and smiled. Later that evening Gyula *bácsi* (he suggested the familiar mode of address) recommended two other poems for inclusion. Just before I left Flóra came out modestly and quietly with the choice of one title of her own. It was a love poem called "My Sensors". (Cs. Szabó said it was written for her.)

On my second visit I was able to show two translations of "Tyranny", one by Clara Lashley, the other by Watkins, to the Illyéses, which Flóra, with better English at her command, appreciated more than Gyula. During that visit—even when we changed the subject, and Flóra was serving tea and cakes, and while Gyula bácsi was talking of two types of emigration, ours, out of the country, and theirs, out of free expression—I remembered something which I was too shy to ask. In 1964 Tábori and I, the first two editors of *The Poetry of Hungary* (a mammoth undertaking that never appeared in full) met László Gara, the editor of an eminently successful *Anthologie de la poésie hongroise* and that of an Illyés volume in French, and a good friend of the poet. Talking of "Tyranny", he said, simply, "the artistic model of this poem is a love poem, by Eluard. He was, of course, a friend of Illyés, who was well aware of the affinities". Let us jump now to 1995 when Kathleen Shields began to read Illyés in English and in French, as well as reading Eluard, whose poetry she teaches at Maynooth College.

T.K.

The poem upon which Illyés modelled his "Tyranny" is in all probability one of Eluard's most famous pieces, the poem entitled *"Liberté"*. There is both circumstantial and textual evidence to support this claim. In addition, both "Tyranny" and *"Liberté"* are poems which took on a significant afterlife, being translated into many languages and being read as poems of resistance. The fact that Eluard's *"Liberté"* is the model for the Illyés poem also supports Domokos's dating of the composition of "Tyranny" at 1950, as we shall see further on.

Eluard's poem *"Liberté"* was originally composed as an address to his beloved Nusch, but was to develop into something much more than a love poem. According to his own account of the genesis of "Liberté", it was begun during the summer of 1941, during the height of the Nazi occupation of France. The ode to a woman became a hymn to liberty. In Eluard's own words:

Ainsi, la femme que j'aimais incarnait un désir plus grand qu'elle. Je la confondais avec mon aspiration la plus sublime. Et ce mot, liberté, n'était lui-même, dans tout mon poeme, que pour éterniser une très simple volonté [...] *celle de se libérer de l'occupant.* (Thus the woman that I loved was the incarntion of a desire that was greater than herself. I merged her with my highest aspiration. And this word, liberty, was itself there throughout my poem simply to immortalize an extremely simple urge [..] namely to be rid of the occupier.)[4]

This account of the genesis of *"Liberté"* makes it likely to be the poem which László Gara had in mind when he mentioned the artistic model for "Tyranny".

We can add to this circumstantial evidence significant textual evidence to support the idea that Illyés had *"Liberté"* in mind when composing "Tyranny". The original title of *"Liberté"* was *"Une seule pensée"* ("A Single Thought") and this is the title under which it was first published in *Fontaine* in Algiers in 1942, after being smuggled out of occupied France. It was again published under this title in *France libre* in the same year and in the *Revue du monde libre* in 1943, both of these journals being based in London. (The title was changed to "Liberté" in 1944). The similarity between the title "Une seule pensée" and Illyés's title, *"Egy mondat a zsarnokságról"*, is striking.

From the textual point of view, there are other formal features that link the two poems. Although Eluard's poem is half the length of the Illyés one, the stanza length is very similar. It might appear at first sight that the latter text is a negative version of "Liberté" since one poem is a condemnation of the ubiquity of tyranny, whereas the other is a dogged paean of praise to liberty and its refusal to die. But both texts work by the obsessive repetition of the key words, whether it be "tyranny" or the phrase "j'écris ton nom" ("I write your name").

Sur mes cahiers d'écolier
Sur mon pupitre et les arbres
Sur le sable sur la neige
J'écris ton nom

Sur toutes les pages lues
Sur toutes les pages blanches
Pierre sang papier ou cendre
J'écris ton nom

Sur les images dorées
Sur les armes des guerriers
Sur la couronne des rois
J'écris ton nom

(...)
Sur mes refuges détruits
Sur mes phares écroulés
Sur les murs de mon ennui
J'écris ton nom

Sur l'absence sans désir
Sur la solitude nue
Sur les marches de la mort
J'écris ton nom

Sur la santé revenue
Sur le risque disparu
Sur l'espoir sans souvenir
J'ecris ton nom

Et par le pouvoir d'un mot
Je recommence ma vie
Je suis né pour te connaitre
Pour te nommer

Liberté.

In addition to textual similarities between the two poems, there are strange parallels in the importance of their afterlife. Mátyás Domokos has written of how the whole issue of whether "Tyranny" was written in 1950 or 1956 was used by the Hungarian authorities to initiate a "show trial" against a poem.[5] It could not be published in its country of origin for many years, thereby acquiring fame abroad in translations. In the different context of the Occupation, thousands of copies of *"Une*

seule pensée" ("Liberté") were dropped all over France by the RAF. Parrot, one of the people responsible for sending it to Switzerland and Algeria, wrote after the war about how it came to symbolize the Resistance:

> *"... partout ce poème souleva l'enthousiasme et réveilla les énergies. C'était un message d'espoir qui nous venait de 1'autre zone, un message semblable a celui que les prisonniers parvenaient parfois a nous transmettre de leurs cellules."* (... this poem inspired enthusiasm and rekindled energies everywhere. It was a message of hope which came to us from the other zone, a message like those that prisoners sometimes manage to send to us from their cells.)[6]

In 1949 Eluard travelled to Hungary and attended in Budapest the celebrations for the hundredth anniversary of the death of Petőfi, along with László Gereblyés and Pablo Neruda.[7] Eluard and Illyés had been friends many years before when Illyés was a student in Paris in the early twenties, during the heady days of the transition from Dada to surrealism.[8] Did Eluard's presence in Hungary in 1949 inspire Illyés to compose, shortly afterwards, a poem along the lines of "Liberté"? It is interesting that Illyés bases his own title on that of the original clandestine versions of "Liberté" ("Une seule pensée"). Perhaps he knew that like Eluard's poem, his own would create waves.

K. S.

NOTES

1 ■ Mátyás Domokos, "A Few Words About a Single Sentence", *The Hungarian Quarterly,* 139, Autumn 1995, pp. 10–14.

2 ■ Thomas Kabdebo and Paul Tábori, editors, *Gyula Illyés: Selected Poems.* London: Chatto & Windus, 1971, p. 17. Vernon Watkins approached his task of translating "A Sentence on Tyranny" in the mode recommended by Pope and Donne. Choosing the most suitable metre and never deviating from the general sense, he adapted expressions with more freedom than the other translators. I received the revised text of "A Sentence" on 20 June 1967. Using my notes and literal translation, Vernon Watkins had previously produced eight Attila József translations in 1965 which were first published in my *Attila József: Poems* (London, 1966) and afterwards, piece by piece, in *The New Hungarian Quarterly.* At that time he was considered the premier Anglo-Welsh poet. He was very appreciative of both József and Illyés: "a most powerful pair", he wrote to me, "but perhaps Illyés lacks József's perfect rhythm and melody". The *Selected Poems* had C. Day Lewis as its publisher's editor but he did not change a word in Watkins' rendering of the "Tyranny" poem. For internal reasons publication was delayed until 1971, too late to influence the decision of the Nobel Committee which put Illyés at second place in 1968.

3 ■ 55 Princess Gate, South Kensington. The Illyéses stayed at 25 Ovington Square, S.W.3. Life is both richer and poorer than poetry. Their localised worry at the time was that Flora had lost the top of the tea kettle. "I scoured the shops of Knightsbridge, carrying the kettle, and things were either too big or too small", she said. "At home, in my workshop, I could have made a bigger top fit the spout", said Gyula. I took their topless kettle, thought of the "sick goldfish solution" and provided them with a brand new replica.

4 ■ Paul Eluard, "La Poésie de circonstance", in *Oeuvres complètes,* Paris: Gallimard, 1968, II, p. 941.

5 ■ Mátyás Domokos, p. 14.

6 ■ Quoted in Paul Eluard, *Oeuvres complètes,* Paris: Gallimard, 1968, I, p. 1608.

7 ■ See photographs of Eluard in Hungary in Roger-Jean Ségalat, ed., *Album Eluard,* Paris: Gallimard, 1968, pp. 273 and 292.

8 ■ László Cs. Szabó, on p. 28 of his introduction to his *Anthologie de la poésie hongroise,* states that Illyés, when he was starting out on his career, hesitated as to whether to write in French or in Hungarian. See also the poem "Voiliers", written in French by Illyés, with a dedication to Eluard, and dated 1924, p. 323.

Erzsébet Bori

Go West: East European Filmmakers in the World

Daniel J. Goulding (ed.): *Five Filmmakers.*
Indiana University Press, 1994, 289 pp.

Andrei Tarkovsky, Milos Forman, Roman Polanski, István Szabó, Dusan Makavejev: five familiar names, five highly regarded filmmakers from Eastern Europe. Tarkovsky: a Russian, a Soviet exile toward the end of his life, who died in 1986. Forman: first a Czech, an exile until *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest,* and an American moviemaker since. Polanski: a Polish-born international star director. Makavejev: a Serb from Yugoslavia, later a globetrotter and, for the past few years, stateless, who thinks of himself as a member of a non-existent nation, the Yugoslav. Szabó: a Hungarian film director born, bred and living in Hungary, who owes his success to international co-productions.

Five Filmmakers is a university publication. That East European filmmakers should be discussed in this way is a source of joy but a Hungarian reader inevitably reflects that a book of this kind has now absolutely no chance of getting into print here. Indeed, very few books on film have been published in Hungary in recent years.

David Paul, who wrote the study on István Szabó, must have been disappointed to find nothing in Hungary on the subject but press reviews and articles. This is plainly absurd, Szabó being the only Hungarian director to win an Oscar but also perfectly natural, since no other Hungarian director has been the subject of a book. David Paul has tried to make up for this lack through conducting interviews, three with Szabó, and others with people who worked with him. Although the first-hand information thus produced includes a considerable number of facts that even someone who has followed Szabó's work closely will be unaware of, Paul's essay is not a collection of confidential information or film world gossip. He focuses on the films and the evidence provided by those involved in their making.

In this, David Paul shows an impressive mastery of the director's films, not just the features, documentaries and shorts but even examination pieces made at the Academy while a student—as well as the literature on him. (So too do his fellow contributors—the chapter on Tarkovsky, for example, refers to a Swiss-French edition of a book on Tarkovsky by the Hungarian authors Ákos Szilágyi and András Bálint Kovács.)

Szabó is best known outside Hungary for his three films on Central European subjects, *Colonel Redl, Hanussen* and, of course, the Oscar-winning *Mephisto.* In Hungary, however, his early autobiographical trilogy (*The Age of Daydreaming,*

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Father, Love Film) are regarded as equally important. They portray the generation maturing in the 1960s. *Father* is the most personal (and, to many, the best) film Szabó has ever made. That trilogy of a contemporary setting was followed by films about the generation before and the history of its recent past: *25 Firemen Street, Budapest Tales*, and perhaps also *Confidence* which, unlike the previous two, was an intimate drama involving only a few characters, set during the German occupation of Hungary. Although the Central European films appear to break away from Hungary, in fact they simply step backward in time, to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in order to achieve a broader view of the region's past and its history leading to the tragedy of the Second World War. *Mephisto*'s box-office and critical success opened the road to the West for Szabó, too. The answer to the question why he, alone of the directors in this volume, stayed in his native country, is, interestingly enough, to be found in a much earlier work, *Love Film* (1980), which also tackles the problems of exile, the constant pain of being away from one's native soil.

Szabó's career seems to have suffered a break after the political changeover of 1989. It is greatly to the merit of David Paul that he is free of the clichés about "existing" socialism and correctly sees that repression was not all-encompassing or absolute. Film production was, in fact, one of the "success sectors" of the Kádár era, where artists—granted that they observed certain rules—enjoyed a relative freedom: each could test the tolerance of the system according to their own courage and temperament. Szabó was never directly political but consistently travelled his own road and built up a coherent oeuvre. That organic progress seems to have come to a halt since the changeover. The opportunities for filmmaking in Hungary having been drastically curtailed, Szabó for the first time accepted an offer to direct a film fully abroad (*Meeting Venus* is a big international production through and through), and he is being forced to do the same again now. He has had no opportunity to make a film in Hungary since *Sweet Emma, Dear Böbe*, which was released in 1993 and won a Silver Bear at the Berlin Festival and anything but enthusiastic reviews at home. Actually, that happens every time an artist takes it upon himself to talk about the most pressing problems of the present (here, the birth pangs of the brave new world, and the way 1989 has turned the life of ordinary people upside down) without keeping his distance or waiting for things to settle down. In Paul's astute observation, foremost in Szabó's set of values has been a sense of security. Who else, then, should have made a film about an entire country losing its security, if not him? Increasingly appreciated as time passes, *Sweet Emma, Dear Böbe* can now be seen as a film of moral indignation and deep empathy.

David Paul treats Szabó's career chronologically, dealing with every single film and its reception in Hungary and abroad both by critics and the public. Paradoxically, despite being based on personal conversation, the study never makes it clear why the author had chosen Szabó in the first place, what appeals to him in the director's work, or even which of the films he most highly values. It would be, of course, unjust to criticize a study of the Anglo-American type for lacking features alien to it, such as the personal approach of a French critic, or the polemical tone customary by a Hungarian reviewer. Although Szabó's most recent work, *Sweet Emma*, is absent (the book most probably went to press around the time of the film's first showing), this is probably the most thorough and complete review of Szabó's work to be published so far.

I found much more to dispute in Herbert Eagle's piece on Roman Polanski. The Polish director left for the West early in his life, with an academy examination film, *Two Men and a Wardrobe*, and a single feature film, *Knife in the Water,* behind him. It was clear from both that their maker was highly promising; they also showed how far removed he was from the contemporary trends of filmmaking in Eastern Europe. In Zhdanovian terminology, his work was clearly "turning its back on social issues", on "the daily reality of the building of socialism". Although *Knife in the Water* was re-cut several times to thicken its social thread, Polanski still came under heavy fire, and quite rightly so from the viewpoint of his critics. It is absolutely alien to him to view man as a member of a community; he is much more interested in the unknown, dark forces, in the nature and ways of guilt.

Polanski is an eminent director but I would scarcely call him *the* film artist of his times. A genuine cosmopolitan, he is equally at home in Europe and America. He is no *auteur;* he always works from scripts or material supplied by others. An *auteur*'s film, as I understand the term, is not simply shot from the director's own script and refuses to be confined to the genres developed and canonized by Hollywood. Polanski, however, produces first-class work within popular genres: the thriller, the horror film, the love story, etc. with a fine feeling for dramatic effect, visual imagination and power of portrayal.

Herbert Eagle's approach is different from that of the other contributors. Selecting from Polanski's work, in addition to the films made in Poland, he discusses *Repulsion, Rosemary's Baby, Macbeth* and *Chinatown.* His discussion of these is highly enjoyable, even for someone like myself who is not particularly attracted to popular genres. Of Polanski's films, I have a higher opinion of his fine adaptation of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and his hilarious parody, *Dance of the Vampires*, a take-off on Franz Murnau's *Nosferatu* and other silent classics. Eagle approaches Polanski's films basically from the angle of Freudian psychoanalysis and symbolic psychology. As far as the films he choses to discuss are concerned, that approach is quite correct, if one-sided. His psychoanalytical zeal leads him to some comically far-fetched conclusions, such as the observation that a germinating potato implies a sexual threat; that "the rabbit's naked (skinned) body on the plate indeed suggests a nude torso, at the same time that it suggests an enlarged male sexual organ", while the heroine's innocent remark made just beforehand ("Poor bunny!") is also "planting the suggestion that the slaughtered rabbit might somehow be identified with a sexually attractive woman"! The author's favourite Polanski film is *Chinatown* (based on Robert Towne's original script) which in genre may be located somewhere between a *film noir* and a thriller. Taking on a period piece in both senses (the American *film noir* flourished in the 1940s) must have been much to Polanski's liking, since his art lies in masterful re-creation. Though not a remake, *Chinatown* is certainly "retro". Towne's script is a Philip Marlowe story Chandler neglected to write. Jack Nicholson as a Philip Marlowe was an inspired choice, since the role is one that has eluded many actors over the years. (Not even Humphrey Bogart himself seems to be the real thing, although he is practically identified with the character.) Jack Nicholson almost is.

Dusan Makavejev comes from the multi-national, multi-faith Balkans. Yugoslavia used to be one of the last islands of multi-culturalism, so highly appreciat-

ed but hardly existing today, in this increasingly grey and uniform world, where nationalism and fundamentalism are hard at work to make the colours disappear. From the borderline between North and South, East and West, Makavejev watched the global bustle with a keen eye and made fun of it all, lashing out in every direction and making trouble for himself with the censors and big shots in both camps. The last film he made at home, *W. R.: Mysteries of the Organism,* back in 1971, was too much for the communists to swallow. His next film, *Sweet Movie*, was a French-Canadian-Swiss production. Within the space of hardly three years, these two films managed to close every door in the world to Makavejev. The free West turned out to have a soul almost as sensitive and a stomach almost as weak as the grim East. Even today, Makavejev's fame—or notoriety—derives from these two films. Yet he has made better ones. (For instance, early in his career, *Innocence Uprooted* or, in his peripatetic years, *Montenegro*.) *W. R.* is as formless as a marine cow; in *Sweet Movie* there is not a single real human being, only formulae walking on legs; both films are crammed with ideas and ideologies, with the debris of the socially and sexually rebellious, vulgar and aggressive Sixties. And there is nothing as ephemeral as yesterday's ideology. Exciting and even provocative as these films may be, yet they strain at their frames, and the screen collapses under the weight of all the ideas. Without Makavejev's brilliant, sarcastic mind and diabolical humour, these pieces would be unwatchable.

Part of the (relative) popularity of these films may be due to the fact that they easily lend themselves to analysis, whether philosophical, sociological, or psychological, yielding dozens of theories and symbols to the analyst. The author of the study on Makavejev, Daniel J. Goulding, (who also edited the volume), finds visible pleasure in dissecting and analysing the countless references of the works. He covers every detail; he even mentions that the heroine of *The Switchboard Operator* is a Hungarian girl from Novi Sad (even though only a single, passing reference is made to this in the film), the evidence for which is a bravura scene, typical of Makavejev, in which she bakes cherry strudel for her Muslim lover. Making that Hungarian speciality requires talent, experience and a great deal of skill. The scene is like a ballet, performed by Izabella to the music of the Triumphal March from *Aida*. No matter how fond Makavejev is of mockery, his films abound in sensual moments of this kind, which make a film more memorable than any number of profound thoughts.

Goulding knows every single piece ever made by Makavejev including the earliest, practically invisible amateur movies, and thoroughly analyses all his feature films from the 1965 *Man Is Not a Bird* to the 1988 *Manifesto* (*Gorilla's Bathing At Noon)* set in a reunited Berlin, was released after the book had gone to press). His descriptions and explanations are so graphic that they provide a good sense even of those films which are unfamiliar to the reader—granted, of course, that he has seen a couple of films by Makavejev already.

Andrei Tarkovsky is discussed by Vida T. Johnson and Graham Petrie, a happy combination of a Slav scholar and a Western film critic. Although they, too, go over all the films one by one, their approach is not simply descriptive but focuses on problems. They seek answers to a number of questions. Was Tarkovsky a victim or a beneficiary of communism? Is it true that after leaving the country he found himself in the same predicament again, with profit-hungry moneymen and produc-

ers to contend with instead of party bureaucrats? Was he influenced by external forces in the number and kind of films he ultimately made? In addition to discussing these questions, they also provide an analysis of the films, placing each of them in Tarkovsky's radical cinematic poetry.

Radical cinematic poetry? Tarkovsky's revolution breaks the bounds of film language by borrowing from lyrical poetry. (His father was a poet, and poetry is frequently recited in the films; in *Mirror*, for instance, the poems are, in fact, his father's). Tarkovsky's motifs, moving and developing from film to film, are not symbols and similies (in the manner in which Eisenstein's montage is based on simile and metonymy) but metaphors of many meanings. An even more crucial move is the way in which, in his real and oneiric representation, he discards the conventions developed since the German expressionists of the silent film era. From the cinema's beginnings, the viewer was guided by various techniques, from fade-outs to shifts from colour to black and white and vice versa, to conjure up past and future events, imagined or dreamed scenes onto the screen. Tarkovsky's *Mirror,* that fragile and complex work built of memories, not only steps over the boundaries between past and present, reality and fantasy, but uses the familiar, conventional techniques in such a way that they no longer provide orientation in space or time. This is Tarkovsky's radical poetic revolution in the art of the cinema.

Johnson and Petrie come to the conclusion that Tarkovsky was an artist held in high esteem in the Soviet Union, with supporters even in the highest circles, who managed to find a *modus vivendi* giving him a (relatively) high degree of freedom in filmmaking. Western film production, instead of ideological limitations, operates between financial and time limits; adapting to this did indeed cause Tarkovsky some difficulties, but the assumption that his foreign producers forced anything on him is far from the truth. Quite the contrary: he was dealing with generous producers and sponsors, who held his ideas and artistic autonomy in great respect. (If for no other reason, that they knew very well whom they were working with, and what they could expect.) Tarkovsky built his oeuvre consistently, without compromise, from *Ivan's Childhood* to *Andrei Rublev* to *Stalker* to *The Sacrifice*. For all his profound thoughts on his homeland, human nature or art, for all his exploration of the inner nature of memory, loyalty and love, in the end it is his images that have proved strongest. The faces, the horses, the trees, the pouring rain. Tarkovsky's road took him where only the truth and beauty of images count.

Of all the fine essays in the book, the finest is perhaps that on Milos Forman by the British scholar Peter Hames, the only European contributor to the volume. He shows himself to be not only thoroughly familiar with Forman's work but also an expert on the post-war Czech and Central European cinema in general. With this knowledge, he can place Forman's works made at home in the context of other films of the same region and the same period, covering also the important issue as to how they influenced the work of their contemporaries or the next generation.

Hames does not avoid delicate problems either, and Forman's career raises quite a few. The great watershed is how one evaluates his American work, his adjustment to the popular culture of the New World, which provided an audience of incredible dimensions, success and a sackful of Oscars to the director of *Taking Off, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Hair, Ragtime* and *Amadeus.* Some regard this as a step

forward, others as sheer conformism and the more extreme admirers of Forman even deny that the works concerned represent a different quality altogether, and read into his glossy American productions the same merits that characterized his low-budget, semi-amateur Czech films. Hames absolves Forman of the charge of "treason" —by which is meant not a repudiation of his country or his past, but a turning of his back on "independent" filmmaking. Indeed, he regards it as a logical move that, when addressing an American audience, he makes films based on American topics, values, genres and narrative methods. At the same time, however, Hames points out that even in Hollywood, there are directors who dare to experiment and break rules more bravely than Forman: thus, Ridley Sott, David Lynch or Robert Altman. Interestingly, the first candidate to direct *Ragtime* was Altman, but the script was taken away from him because the producer disliked *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* in which Altman picked quite a few holes in the myth of the West.

Some of Forman's finely produced, spectacular films are hardly more than illustrated picture books, and he has hardly even approached the limits of American public taste. Forman, of course, was a stranger in Hollywood long after the time —between the two world wars—when European directors had been received with open arms. His first American film, *Taking Off,* was a box-office flop and no Hollywood money is invested on the strength of critical acclaim. American viewers were not amused by looking at themselves in a distorting mirror, Czech style, and Forman paid the price by not being asked to direct a film for years. After that he played it safe, and it took him four world-wide successes to get up his courage and challenge the near-military discipline of the big studio system again. Directing *Valmont* out of sheer defiance seemed a kamikaze move from the very start. He had been offered the stage version of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and, although the project coincided with his own plans, he dug his heels in over the screenplay. While earlier he had been content with Peter Shaffer's thoroughly commercial play *Amadeus* with its comforting fake boldness and pseudo-non-conformism, this time he insisted on working over Choderlos de Laclos' original novel. Hollywood struck back at once. Forman was dropped, the film was given to Stephen Frears, who is equally at home in Europe and America, in television and the cinema, low-budget art films and big-budget productions. Frears lived up to his promise: he directed a splendid period adventure piece with real actors (not blown-up megastars) who had good box-office names and could also act very well indeed. Frears's lively postmodern film fully deserved its huge success. Hames is understandably partial to Forman who paid a heavy price for his revolt. *Valmont*, a costly Anglo-French production, did not even flop: it was simply ignored, released in a very narrow circle or not at all. It has not been seen in Hungary either. All this happened seven years ago, in 1989, and Milos Forman has not directed a single film since then.

One can only wonder what kind of a movie would he make in Barrandow, the Prague film studio which, unlike its Hungarian counterpart, has already recovered from the shock of the changeover, and is now looking forward to a new period of brilliance.

As editor, Daniel J. Goulding deserves credit for his introductory study and the rich scholarly apparatus of the volume, with a list of references after each study, a select bibliography arranged by director at the end of the volume, a complete filmography, short biographical notes on the contributors, and a combined index of names and titles. ❧

Hungary

at the

Göteborg Book Fair 1996

The Göteborg Book Fair has become one of the world's most interesting and exciting cultural events, a meeting-point for and melting pot of everything to do with books. This year the Fair will be held between October 24–27 and Hungary will be in focus. Both with a stand on the floor and with several Hungarian writers participating in the Conference programme. There will be a presentation of **The Hungarian Quarterly** magazine.

Hungarian Authors at the Göteborg Book Fair

Hungarian authors at the Göteborg Book Fair include Péter Esterházy, György Konrád and Imre Kertész. Other Hungarian writers will participate in a seminar put together by the Swedish literary magazine **90-tal**.

The Hungarian Quarterly at the Göteborg Book Fair

Many readers regard **The Hungarian Quarterly** as a model in presenting the literature of a small language area. **The Hungarian Quarterly** will be presented in a seminar in the Conference Programme.

"A Common Memory in the Roots of Language"

is a seminar at the Book Fair arranged by the Writers Union of Finland. Finnish, Hungarian and Estonian all belong to the Finno-Ugric family of languages. Can this relationship be seen in their language? Do they have a common memory, a common vision? Or are they united by fate that connected them to Russia? Participants: Béla Jávorsky, Hungarian translator, Jarkko Laine, Finnish writer, Mati Sirkel, Estonian translator. Moderator: Leena Laulajainen, Finnish writer.

Other Authors at the Göteborg Book Fair 1996

Bernando Atxaga, Spain, Frederic Buechner, USA, Claes Andersson, Finland, poet and Minister of Culture, Janerik Vold, Norway, Pat Conroy, USA. Peter O'Donnell, Great Britain, Milo Dor, Austria, Butchi Emechera, Nigeria and Great Britain, Hanif Kureishi, Great Britain, Nozipo J. Mraire, Zimbabwe, John Marsden, Australia, Robert Menasse, Austria, Lilian Faschinger, Austria, Hasna Mikdashi, Egypt, E. Annie Proulx, USA, Albie Sachs, South Africa, Steinum Sigurdadottír, Iceland, Wole Soyinka, Nigeria, M.G. Vassanji, Canada, Elie Wiesel, USA, Ib Michael, Denmark, John Kenneth Galbraith, USA.

After the decision had been taken to leave the Warsaw Pact, indeed after we had given verbal notice, and all that was needed was to put it in writing, we wanted to have a look at a copy of the Treaty itself, to discover what exactly we were repudiating. Of course we suspected that there might well be a clause which makes the entry of foreign troops into the country conditional on a request by the Hungarian government. If that was so, then the Russians had broken it, and there was need to refer to that. It was also possible that there was a secret clause of some sort. Well, then, let's read it. None of us, including Imre Nagy, had ever seen the Warsaw Pact. We had a search through the Foreign Ministry's Registry. No Warsaw Pact. The Prime Minister's Archives contained the Foreign Archives, a copy of all the more important foreign agreements was at hand there too—we had a look—nothing there. Where the hell could it be then? We sent a message to the Ministry of Defence. They searched high and low. No luck! The Ministry of Finance also had archives of their own. That was taken apart too. Nothing—they knew nothing of it. Feverish, headless rushing around all along the line. Where was the Warsaw Pact?

Jóska Szilágyi had an idea.

"Perhaps the ÁVÓ (State Security) have a copy."

He rang the ÁVÓ and there it was, the single copy of the agreement.

In next to no time an ÁVÓ messenger brought it.

From: *Interview with György Heltai, Deputy Foreign Minister in Imre Nagy's Government, pp. 42–56.*

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