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Miklós Szinai

The Roots of Democratic Change

It was in Hungary and Poland that the radical political changes of the recent past in East Central Europe were initiated. In addition to the influence the Hungarian example had on the whole of East Central Europe, the immediate political assistance rendered by Hungary to East Germany and Rumania (the latter posing the most serious problems within what was once the socialist community) has made Hungary the prime motor of democratic transformation in the entire region. Was the role of Hungary merely the result of improvisations or of a contingent series of actions, or can Hungary's behaviour be attributed to deeper historical causes? Is there an historical explanation for Hungary's pioneering role in triggering off this East Central European metamorphosis which has amazed the whole world?

Twenty years ago the Hungarian historian Jenő Szűcs discussed and defined, beginning with the Middle Ages, the position of East Central Europe between the Russian and the German languange areas, the zone of the present changes. I shall first deal with Hungary's history of the past four hundred years in this geographic context.

Around 1500 major changes established differences with Western Europe. In 1433 the Turks took Constantinpole; the last great ruler of Hungary, Matthias Corvinus, died in 1490; in 1492 Columbus discovered America; in 1526 the Osmanli forces decisively defeated the Hungarian armies at Mohács. In Italy the Renaissance continued and Western Europe became the scene of accelerated economic, social and cultural development. East Central Europe however, stagnated. The region became the sphere of influence of three Powers: the Ottoman, Habsburg and Czarist Empires. The Kingdom of Hungary became a Habsburg crownland, and the heart of the country and the southern marches became Turkish pashaliks. In time the Turks were pushed back, but up to 1918 East Central Europe as a political notion had ceased to exist. The differences that had arisen between Western and East Central Europe up to the 15th century, differences discussed by Jenő Szűcs, grew in the course of subsequent centuries into structural inequalities. What then made Hungary stand out in this context?

In the early 16th century all of Christian Europe, including those Habsburg lands that were under direct threat, left Hungary entirely on her own against the Turks.

When judging Hungary's struggle against the Turks, the following factors should be taken into account:

(1) By the beginning of the 16th century the Renaissance had taken root in Hungary.

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The many arcaded courtyards are evidence of a Renaissance influence that went well beyond the royal court.

(2) The Hungarian nobility as a whole stood for *Christiana Libertas*, but the Hungarians had to wage war in two directions, against the Turks and against the Habsburgs.

(3) This fact split Hungary. The division was intensified by the rapid spread of the Reformation. Political conflicts grew into religious conflicts and, conversely, religious differences developed into political disputes.

The struggle between the two camps also found expression on the battlefield. After Mohács, starting with the 1540s, the Principality of Transylvania emerged as a new bastion of Hungarian national resistance and an island allowing the coexistence of faiths in a Europe torn by wars of religion, becoming the easternmost outpost of the Renaissance.

Starting with the early 17th century, there were frequent Hungarian insurrections against the Habsburgs: István Bocskai in 1604, George I Rákóczi in 1644, Francis I Rákóczi in 1670, Imre Thököly in 1678, and Francis II Rákóczi between 1703 and 1711. All these attempts failed.

The pro-Habsburg party in Hungary also profited from these anti-Habsburg insurrections and Transylvania's rise to independence. Péter Pázmány, Archbishop of Esztergom and leader of the Counter-Reformation in Hungary, a wholehearted supporter of the Habsburgs, wrote: "... at present, young man, we enjoy a certain standing and the confidence of our gracious Christian emperor, but this only holds good with the German nation as long as there is talk of a flourishing Hungarian principality in Transylvania: afterwards, as we quickly lose our standing, the German will spit under our collar."

Hungarian political ingenuity was able to exploit the battles and even defeat in battle to obtain political compromises. This is why the struggle inside the Hungarian Diet and for the rights of the Diet went far beyond a fight waged merely for feudal privileges: it secured the unbroken continuity of the most important attributes of Hungarian statehood, the Diet itself and the county system (the body of the low and middle level self-governing organizations of the nobility); thus it preserved, in a way unique in East Central Europe, the continuity of Hungary's statehood until the 19th century.

At a time when the ruling classes of the other countries of the region were annihilated after their centuries of struggle against foreign oppression, the continuity of important institutions of Hungarian statehood also guaranteed the preservation of the estates of the Hungarian lower and higher nobility and, with that—likewise in an almost unique manner in Eastern Central Europe—the vigorous survival of all the nobility, of the Hungarian national élite, until the mid-19th century.

The reaction of Francis I and Metternich followed the reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II in Austria, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. In the first half of the 19th century the Hungarian feudal opposition changed its nature in the struggle against a new oppression. The reform era preceding the March 1848 events in Hungary was a period linking the national cause to liberalism (and thereby the 19th-century aspirations for national independence) with the Hungarian nobility's three centuries of struggle. The serfs in Hungary, in contrast with Austria or Russia, obtained freedom and land not from the king but from the Hungarian nobility. This gave a national dimension to the fight against foreign oppression, against the foreign dynasty, and tied Hungarian liberalism closely to the national cause. Liberalism in Austria collapsed in 1879 but it survived in Hungary until 1918. Only the Hungarian counter-revolution of 1919 isolated

nationalism from liberalism. In 1921 the historian Gyula Szekfű defined this break in his famous *Három nemzedék* (Three Generations). Liberalism in Hungary was strong. In Austria, at the time of the First Republic (1918-1934), no party married to a liberal ideology was formed, whereas in Hungary there were several parties with liberal programmes throughout the Horthy period (1919-1944), until the German occupation in 1944.

The dominant role of legalism was also a particular feature of Hungarian public life. This legal sensitivity had evolved in the centuries of struggle of the Hungarian nobility against central power, then against foreign domination, against the Habsburgs. The Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 was a prominent achievement of Hungarian legal skills. How deep the roots of this legalism were is shown by the fact that, after the Hungarian counter-revolutionary regime in 1920 reintroduced flogging, not a single Hungarian judge ever applied this penalty. The Hungarian legal system, the *Corpus Juris,* enjoyed such authority that it prevented the Horthy regime from carrying out many anti-democratic measures.

Another peculiar feature of modern historical development is the position of Jews in Hungary. The middle class was far weaker than in neighbouring Austria, and Jews therefore had a specific role to play. Because of obstacles to their upward mobility, and since they were prohibited from purchasing landed estates, the Jews re-invested their money in the economy and thereby contributed to the internal accumulation of capital, to industrialization, first of all in the food processing industries, then in Hungarian industry as a whole. It was on this economic base that the political sphere, including two of its important elements, liberalism and Hungarian nationalism, later promoted the assimilation of Hungarian Jews. In a country where the ruling nation was almost outnumbered by ethnic minorities, the increasing assimilation of Jews—besides the assimilation of the minorities—was in the national interest. The ruling classes also favoured Jewish assimilation because in 1848/1849, when the national minorities had turned against the Hungarians, the Hungarian Jews had taken part in the revolution. The remarkable patriotism of Hungarian Jews offered Austrian absolutism (1849-1867) the excuse to levy particularly high taxes on all of Hungarian Jewry. Yet the Jews of Hungary and the poorly developed bourgeoisie had no essential part in political life during the liberal period either, following the Compromise. (In 1867 the Hungarian ruling classes made an agreement with the Habsburg rulers. The period between 1867 and 1918 is called the era of Dualism.) Just as in the early 18th century, Hungarian magnates had allowed Jews expelled from other countries to settle on their estates, so late in the 19th century and early in the 20th, Jewish capitalists invited members of the Hungarian aristocracy to join the boards of industrial enterprises and banks. An aristocracy with an interest in capitalist development became—in a manner of speaking—a representative of bourgeois interests in opposition to the gentry.

The Hungarian gentry developed in ways different from the Hungarian aristocracy. This gentry class, which during the reform era and in 1848 had still been the standard-bearer of liberalism and progress, turned conservative and anti-semitic by the end of the century; in 1919 it took a leading role in the Counter-Revolution, and in the late 1930s it provided the staunchest political support for the pro-Nazi extreme right in the civil service and in the army.

Before and during the Second World War it was again the Hungarian aristocratic political élite which, as opposed to the Hungarian gentry seeking power with German assistance, represented, together with the democratic opposition, Hungary's anti-Ger-

man and anti-Nazi national resistance and maintained until 1945 the continuity of the centuries of struggle for national independence.

The other geographic context of my analysis is the broad expanse extending from the west towards the east, perpendicular to the north-south axis so far taken into consideration. Metternich once said: Asia begins at the *Landstrasse* (a district in the SE of Vienna). East of the Leitha and the Elbe, a vast ocean extending to Vladivostok on the Pacific coast really begins: the immense sea of rural small-commodity production. The break runs along the Leitha-Elbe line. Is it all the same water east of it? Does Hungary, the Hungarian peasantry, belong there?

There are common features. The centuries of what is called the second serfdom took the Hungarian peasant closer to the East European than to the West European peasant. As I already mentioned in a different context, however, the Hungarian peasantry was delivered from serfdom not by a king but by the Hungarian nobility. This meant that the Hungarian aristocracy was able to continue to control its large estates (up to 1945), but also that the Hungarian peasant was given greater freedom and more land than the peasantry of the countries lying north or east. First of all because the emancipation of serfs in Hungary was much fuller than in the liquidation of Russian, Polish or Rumanian serfdom. In the second place, it must be taken into account that Hungary's struggles for independence, beginning with the 16th century, salvaged not only a considerable measure of Hungarian statehood but also the Protestant faith of many Hungarians, including that of Hungarian peasants. In the rebellions of the magnates, Hungarian peasants fought for their own faith. In 1848/1849, during the anti-Habsburg Hungarian revolution, these ties only became stronger. The former serfs received most from the revolution and sacrificed most for it. The Protestant peasantry of the Great Hungarian Plain provided the strongest support for the national cause in the era of Absolutism and Dualism. Under the open-ballot anti-democratic electoral system, however, only one or two peasants could be elected to Parliament. This electoral system was directed not against the national minorities, against the fringe of the country inhabited by other nations as was imagined abroad, but primarily against the centre, the militant Hungarian peasants of the Great Plain. But when voting in Hungary was by secret ballot—and prior to 1990 this happened only twice (in 1920 and 1945) during the past hundred years—the majority voted on both occasions for the Smallholders' Party. In addition to the political élite, it was the peasantry and, within it, the Protestant Hungarian peasantry of the Great Plain, which forms that other element to be taken into consideration in respect of the political structure of Hungary. As Calvinist elders, the aristocrats sat side by side with peasants. Here the preponderance of peasant votes could make itself felt. What with the imperfections of Hungarian parliamentarism, Protestant, Calvinist democracy was an important and revitalizing element in Hungarian democracy, comparable to the paramount role it played in the West (in the Netherlands, in Scandinavia, in Great Britain and in North America). Hungarian Protestantism played a part not only in the fight for national independence but also in the struggle for democracy.

Hungarian Social Democrats are nowhere near as numerous as Austrian or German Social Democrats, yet they were strong once, and their importance in the past hundred years cannot be denied. In the first decade of the 20th century they were able to mobilise hundreds of thousands for the extension of the franchise, for universal suffrage and the secret ballot. One cannot identify the Hungarian people with the conservative, authoritarian Horthy regime that had come to power in 1919 and survived for 25 years. Even during the White Terror the Smallholders' Party obtained more votes than the parties of

the right at two consecutive elections in 1920. The Social Democratic Party—because of the terror—did not take part in those elections, but when it ran in the 1922 general elections and in the 1925 municipal elections in Budapest, in alliance with the Budapest liberal parties, an absolute majority was won in Budapest on both occasions. Red Budapest was nowhere as strong as Red Vienna, but three factors taken together—the Social Democrats and the liberal middle class as well as the Hungarian democratic press—turned out to be a force which was able, for more than two decades, to prevent the Hungarian counter-revolutionary regime from keeping down Budapest. But, even outside the capital, there was no town in Hungary where the Social Democratic Party and the trade-union movement were not active. These maintained their organizations, in the face of all persecutions by the regime, for 25 years—even during the Second World War—up to the country's occupation by the Germans in 1944.

It was not out of nothing that Hungarian democracy was restored after the Second World War in 1945. Without a knowledge of the past of Hungarian liberalism and of the centuries of struggle of the Hungarian peasantry and Social Democrats, it is impossible to understand the impressive political progress which, following the Horthy era and the years of war, galvanised the country into activity between 1945 and 1948. It is these three years that link the past with 1956, with 1988 and 1989. That flourishing democracy was destroyed by the Rákosi dictatorship. Yet the latter was internally weak in face of the resistance of the Hungarian people, as can be seen from the fact that barely five years later, as early as 1953, it was already shaken, and that in 1956 the uprising of the Hungarian people overthrew it within a few hours. Orthodox Stalinism dominated in Hungary for the shortest time of all the East European countries.

The Kádár regime cannot be exonerated from responsibility for the post-1956 retaliation and repression, and for the execution in 1958 of Imre Nagy and his associates. It is difficult—without a knowledge of the character of Hungarians—to understand the subsequent thirty years, that is the dominance of the Kádár regime, and its peaceful overthrow, the specific features of Hungarian democratic change.

Hungary is the only country beyond the Leitha where the Renaissance, the Reformation, and liberalism existed.

In East Central Europe, Hungary is the only country which could, for four hundred years, starting with the 16th century, preserve important attributes of its statehood in unbroken continuity and, at the same time—also in a unique way in the region—maintain its ruling classes, the national elite, up to the 19th century.

Hungary is the easternmost extension in Europe where Protestants and assimilated Jews, together, made up almost forty per cent of the population before 1945.

The pluralism that evolved historically in the structure of Hungarian society could—to a certain extent—eclipse the weaknesses of Hungarian political democracy; at the same time it became the basis of Hungarian political ways composed mostly of the aforesaid elements. Only thus can it be understood that—just as the Rákóczi Rebellion was followed by the peace of Szatmár (1711) and the 1848/1849 Revolution by the Compromise of 1867—the national uprising of 1956, in spite of being crushed by the numerical superiority of an alien power, was able again to achieve a sort of compromise—never put in writing—between the people and the regime.

From the early 1960s onwards there has come about in Hungary a kind of political consolidation, the like of which did not come about after the Soviet intervention of 1968 in Czechoslovakia. In Hungary there never were such large-scale investments in heavy industry, to the detriment of living standards, as in Poland or Rumania. Of all the socialist countries, it was Hungary alone where agrarian reforms were introduced while safe-

guarding—though in a limited manner—peasant interests and enlarging the scope of the market economy. Hungary is the only East European country that has escaped food supply problems.

All these circumstances contributed to easing the political tension at the start of the crisis in Hungary in 1988; on the other hand, they heightened intellectual freedom as compared to the other socialist countries. Characteristic of Hungarian democratic change is that—other than e.g., in Poland—it has been directed exclusively by intellectuals. Of all the features of the Hungarian intellectual élite, I should like to stress, hic et nunc, the importance of the national aspect.

The greatest trauma suffered by the Hungarian nation, not only in the 20th century, but in its entire history after Mohács, was the Peace Treaty of Trianon. The Trianon treaty, signed on 4 June 1920, took nearly two-thirds of Hungary's population and territory. After the Second World War the victorious Allies confirmed Trianon in the Paris peace treaty. Three million Hungarians were set under the rule of neighbouring countries. New injustices replaced the old. A new factor emerged after the Secord World War. At Yalta, the Western Powers turned all of East Central Europe over to Stalin and the Soviet Union. This fact also altered the interplay of important factors in East Central Europe.

The new Hungarian democratic national forces after 1945 renounced all claims to territorial revision, which had been compromised by the alliance with the National Socialists and by its linkage with reactionary Hungarian domestic policy. Even after 1945, however, official circles in the countries neighbouring Hungary went on scaring their peoples with the spectre of non-existent Hungarian revisionism. But after Yalta, when the Western Powers had withdrawn, this policy could be pursued only in conjunction with the Soviet Union. The "new Little Entente" differed from the old only in that this same Hungary, against which it had originally been directed, was now part of it within the Soviet alliance. After 1948 this fact basically determined Hungary's position in the Eastern bloc. While Austria, which after 1945 orientated itself towards the West, had been described as "the first victim of German aggression", Hungary in the eastern Soviet system was labelled, during the years of Rákosi's dictatorship, as "the last satellite of Germany".

October 1956, the Hungarian revolution only strengthened these tendencies in the Eastern bloc. In the countries of the former Little Entente, fear of Hungarian revisionism was intensified in order to counteract the alarming example of the rising. An attempt was made to stengthen the ties between the Stalinist system and the intelligentsia of various countries by alleging thet only the Soviet alliance was able to save these countries from the contagion of the Hungarian "counter-revolution".

Before 1945 there was a connection between revisionism and a reactionary domestic policy in Hungary. After 1956, in the neighbouring countries, an alliance came into being between an artificially induced antirevisionism and the reactionary Stalinist domestic policy. The reactionary character of this alliance was only boosted by the oppression of the Hungarian minorities.

In consequence of these manipulations—in particular after 1956—the relations which the Hungarian intellectuals and the intellectuals of the neighbour countries entertained with the regime and the Soviet Union, changed considerably. Whereas public opinion, represented by the intellectuals of the countries between the German language area and the Soviet Union, could for a long time be blackmailed by the spectre of Hungarian threats (in addition to the German menace), Hungarian public opinion could not, of

course, be influenced by such methods. The occupation of Hungary by the Soviets since 1945, the larger intellectual independence of Hungarian national public opinion from the Soviet Union, the growing oppression of Hungarian minorities in the countries of the Warsaw Pact, the singular subordinate role of Hungary inside the Soviet alliance—all this, together with the memories of 1956, may well explain the fact that the Hungarian intelligentsia was emancipated from Soviet influence and from the Stalinist system earlier than the intellectuals of the neighbouring countries.

Nevertheless it is perhaps primarily, even if obviously not exclusively, three factors—the traditions of militant Hungarian national resistance, Hungarian political ways and the wider and earlier established independence of the Hungarian intelligentsia—as well as the joint influence of these factors, which we have to turn to for the causes determining Hungary's pioneering role in the current radical changes in this region.

In 1918, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Czarist Russia and the Habsburg Empire, the West was confronted by the problem of Eastern Central Europe. Since it had no experience regarding this part of Europe, it fashioned the political system of the entire zone exclusively in accordance with its temporary interests. The watchword was: *Détruisez l'Autriche-Hongrie!* And this was done. The result was not able to save this vast area between Germany and Russia from the aggression of the Third Reich before the Second World War, from oppression by Stalinist Russia, nor repeated aggressions after it. Both solutions, the post-Great War solution and the post-Second World War expedient, were realised in practice at the expense of Hungary alone. In spite of all this, I am firmly convinced, Hungary is not motivated by any sort of revisionism even today. The country hopes that this new opportunity in East Central Europe—the third one in seventy years—should not again be at the expense of Hungary, the country which has played a pioneering role in creating this opportunity.

György Spiró

Danilo Kis

1935-1989

I met his legend first.

In the mid-60s I lived in Yugoslavia for a time and was then told stories about a young Serbian writer, a genuine talent and really avant-garde. It was said that he knew some Hungarian and translated Hungarian poets into Serbo-Croatian, remarkably well, too. He was, according to the stories, half Hungarian and half Jewish. I wondered which half then was Serbian: perhaps, I thought, the third, the writer's.

Then I read his works in succession, beginning with *Mansard*, a poetic novella, to which he owed his first success. It is a lyrical, surrealist confession of a young man who wants to become an author and escapes into life from the obsession of writing, but his experience really educates him to be a writer. Such self-mocking, self-mythologizing novellas were common in the sixties, however, there was something unique, something fresh about Danilo Kis's work, which set it apart from the rest.

A series of more ambitious works followed. The novel *Psalm 44* is an attempt to depict the world of extermination camps; *Clepsydra* does the same for Eastern Europe in the war, and the cycle of short-stories *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1978; Penguin, 1980) for Stalinism in its entirety. *Garden, Ashes* (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1975; Faber & Faber, 1985) is a memoir of his father, and because he thought in terms of cycles at the time, his father is presumably also the protagonist of *Clepsydra*. Nazism, the Second World War, Stalinism: no serious writer of Danilo Kis's generation could afford to evade these issues. But for Danilo Kis the problem was less one of the theme than of form. Kis put it quite clearly in his essays: form is the alpha and omega of all art, and aesthetic problems at the same time have moral implications.

Kis, I felt, was born to be a poet. He had experienced war in childhood, and it was relatively easy to give it formal expression. He, however, wanted more, although he had only indirect experience of Hitler's world, nor did he personally experience Stalinism, at least not in its labour camp depths. He thus suffered an insurmountable handicap in comparison with the Pole Tadeusz Borowski, the Hungarian Imre Kertész or the Russian Solzhenitsyn or Salamov, to mention only a few of the major writers who were able to formulate, on the basis of personal experience, a number of philosophically and aesthetically valid truths about the scandals of the century, the universe of death camps and gulags. Danilo Kis's ambitions were just as great as theirs. But at the same time he was perfectly aware that the depth of his most personal experience fell short of the experience of those who had descended to hell, and that he had to be very careful not to reach artistically false conclusions on the basis of his more limited experience. Like all true artists, he too was tormented by the insoluble paradox of personal and objective truth.

György Spiró'*s latest novel,* A jövevény *(The Newcomer) appeared in 1990.*

The task he set himself was to write up the major themes of the age using the techniques of what he took to be the best western literary schools. He employed montage, made ample use of irony, spoke the language of Kafka's *Angst* as a native, at times imposed the discipline of Camus on himself, often within a single work, to achieve fullness by mingling disparate technical elements. He deliberately incorporated documents in his work, facts and knowledge recorded and suffered by others, which, so he thought, would guarantee the truth of the work.

Kis thus trusted the absolute value of real events and the exploitability of the avant-garde theories of the literature of the 60s and 70s. He chose the most important themes and wrote them up using the most fashionable technique. It was perhaps this that contributed to his being championed and excessively praised by the more advanced Yugoslav and, later, by other European and North American critics.

The conservatives, on the other hand, after some initial hesitation, began to attack him. An unsavoury controversy, concerning a charge of plagiarism in connection with *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich*, occured in the Yugoslav press, and I suspect that it was from this hostile environment that Kis escaped to France, where he spent his last years in a kind of voluntary exile, although he was never banned from his native land, and in fact he did visit it from time to time.

Excessive praise and a charge of plagiarism—either in itself would be enough to crack a less strong character. Being fashionable is particularly dangerous. It has happened to countless writers in East and West alike that they started turning out cheap best-sellers, became bankrupt.

Kis opted for silence instead. He taught Yugoslav literature in France, and in the 80s he did no more than sum up his critical conviction in *Homo Poeticus*, perhaps for those who will once follow him on his self-destructive road striving for the highest.

I met him on three occasions.

I glimpsed him first when working for the Kaposvár Theatre. I accompanied the company to a banquet in the Skadarlija that followed the second highly successful performance of *Marat/Sade* in Belgrade. We were very pleased because the tremendous international success we had had averted the danger of our being banned. Sitting there in the garden-restaurant and waiting for us was a slightly inebriated, tall, thin, dark-haired, bespectacled, ageless man: Kis Dani, we were told. It slowly dawned on me that Danilo Kis's name had been translated into Hungarian. He spoke good Hungarian, joking and telling stories; he didn't say much that was memorable that night and didn't do anything particular, he just drank and chatted away, yet he stayed at the centre all through, though it wasn't his success that we had gathered to celebrate. Perhaps this was so because he radiated a naive, child-like benevolence.

In early summer 1989 I met him for the second time, in Paris, where two evenings were devoted to Hungarian letters in the Pompidou Centre. On this second occasion he sat on the platform among the Hungarian guest writers. I had heard that he'd recently undergone surgery for lung cancer, and I was glad to find him in good health, and my throat only tightened when I heard his rasping voice. As an invited speaker he spoke about Hungarian literature, showing a good command of French. He did not make a secret of his bias favouring Krúdy, Szomory and, particularly, Kosztolányi, whose *Édes Anna* (Anna Édes, 1926), published in a French translation, but without attracting much notice, he discussed with understanding for an audience consisting, naturally, mostly of Hungarians. He knew as well as anyone else that he was not going to soften the hearts of French publishers or critics, but he went on saying what he thought of the novel all the same.

Then we went to a nearby restaurant, where he ate and drank with gusto and was only sorry that he could not smoke: life wasn't worth much without tobacco, he said, while he washed smoked salmon down with red wine.

Then, last year, I saw him for the third time, during an oversized writers' get-together aboard a ship anchored off the Chain Bridge in Budapest. The company was made up of millionaires and Nobel laureate celebrities, politicians earlier thought of as dissidents of every hue of the spectrum, editors, ladies and gentlemen who controlled international literary exchange, who were to nominate candidates for the Nobel Prize, and not without success. The ship set sail, for an hour or two, and there was no chance to get off. I registered with great relief that Danilo was of the company and I managed to sit at his table. The chatter was conducted in a variety of languages, and so was the undisguised exhibitionism of the writers. The western guests took part in this with wise restraint, keeping a condescending silence most of the time, and letting the editors and journalists come before them; the easterners offered themselves for sale with breathless excitement, as if all they were doing was declare their views and sacred convictions. What happened was what invariably happens on such occasions; Danilo ate and drank, joking about girls with the macho writers who had less success with women than he had. Then he just sat in silence and later tried to convince some of the millionaires what a great writer Kosztolányi was and how much it would be worth their while to support the publication of his novels in the West. I could tell from the glitter of his spectacles that he knew how hopeless the attempt was, still he would not let go of the opportunity.

All he said about modern literature, and within it about his own work,was that it was a mere stylistic game and hardly worth the candle. No one these days wrote as they used to, that was the real thing. No, he'd stopped writing a long time before: whatever for? That was all over. In France, where he lived, nobody took the least interest in literature; in his native country, for different reasons, the situation was the same. America was hopeless: but what a great writer Dezső Kosztolányi had been!

Danilo Kis did not hurt anyone except perhaps himself; yet the modern authors and the literary and financial potentates at the table were shocked as they listened to him. Even those with the thickest skins must have been aware that the contemptuous glitter of his spectacles was directed at them. But because he was a charmer (which is rarer in the case of writers), they had to forgive him his murderous honesty.

It was then that I had this spine-chilling realisation that Danilo Kis was perhaps already speaking to us from the other shore.

Two or three weeks later news of his death arrived from Paris.

I mourn him not as the Serbian translator of Hungarian letters, nor even as a major modern Serbian writer. I mourn a sincere, wise man who was never taken in, not even by his own success, but he simply loved women, wine, cigarettes, good company and real, honest, simple writing speaking with a human voice.

Danilo Kis

On Hungarian Poetry

Commitment—in thisies the bondage an the greatness of Hungarian poetry. To those who follow Sartre this may sound paradoxical, since Sartre connects the concept of commitment to prose only: "prose consists of the realm of signals", and ranks poetry with painting and music—arts which by definition cannot be committed, at least not in Sartre's existentialist sense. However much one might resist this (as has been done recently by R. Champigny), Sartre's position is basically valid—particularly if one considers that he is getting out from a literature in which poetry long ago lost its syncretic character and ritual meaning and has been approaching metaphysics and oneirism. A comparative sociological study of literature would clearly place the issue in a new light; sociographical analysis may reveal the underlying reasons as well as resolve the many contradictions involved. A sociological examination of this nature could establish that Hungarian poetry provides a counter-example to Sartre's argument, for poetry has always been a leading art form in Hungary and has remained so to the present day. Indeed the prevailing circumstances have compelled Hungarian poetry to carry commitment and the transmission of ideological messages, functions which in French and Russian literature have devolved on the novel, the drama, the essay, philosophy or political thinking. Hungarian poetry, from Petőfi onwards, has not only perceived the necessity for intertwining poetry and morality, but has also perceived, to use the words of György Lukács, that "this new relationship, on a broader level, between public life and literature has been the outcome of Hungarian development as a whole." Looked at from this aspect, the question of the essence of poetry is considerably wider, even though its aesthetic and poetic character, its versification as such, do not lose significance. Quite the contrary!

Of course, Hungarian poetry is not the only one unable to choose between the transcendental and the literal, the European and the local, the oneiric and the syncretic. This is a problem for modern poetry as a whole, which for long has wavered between "a demand for the totality of the intellect and man's existence confined within limits" (Raymond). If these limits are not only transcendental but social as well (that is socio-political), as is the case with many small nations, including the Hungarians, then it is self-evident that this contradiction is magnified and poetry becomes not only a question of ethics but of politics as well. Through such existential limitations and such an expansion of the influence of poetry, it will undoubtedly lose in metaphysical character and will lose its ancient, fundamental role of helping "man to arrive at his essence". If poetry is incessantly hamstrung by the difficulties of daily life, and if it becomes committed in the political and social struggle, it takes on a local character, shouldering the premises of literary and non-literary forms, which will necessarily degrade it. Thus poetry falls within the competence of other fields of the mind, above all of prose, and by sacrificing itself,

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Danilo Kis *(1935—1989) was an internationally known and published Serbian novelist, Hungarian on one side of his family. This is his Introduction to* Novija madarska lirika, *(New Hungarian Lyrical Poetry) edited by Ivan Ivanji and Danilo Kis; Nolit, Belgrade, 1970. Poems translated by Ivan Ivanji, Danilo Kis and Ivan V. Lalic.*

becomes concrete and committed. "Every word is used for its clear and social meaning as well as its mysterious resonance," Sartre says, "I might even say, for its own physiognomy". Under extremely unfavourable social circumstances, the poet necessarily neglects this second prerequisite and discards the mysterious resonance of the words, since that would only disturb the transmission of the message, and he is mostly the loser by it.

But the temptation is very strong. The poet wants to fight with his own weapons on all fronts: in love and in poetry equally, just as he would mostly like to earn his living through his poetry. Even the most stubborn give in to this temptation. Petőfi produced a radical solution to the question through an early and tragical decision, while Endre Ady went on wrestling with it throughout his life.

Rimbaud's way to exchange lives proved to be ambivalent in Ady's case, since for him this also had metaphysical and social contexts. He never wanted to submit to his Hungarian fate, as he was aware of the fact that the romantic revolt of Verlaine and Baudelaire offered a surer poetic course than a bloody and ephemeral political and social struggle might ensure for him. Ady, in a romantic manner, equated metaphysical revolt and social revolt; had dreadful Hungarian reality not existed, he would not have stopped half-way but definitely turned towards the potentials within his own self and the extasy of his personal horror, as did Baudelaire and Rimbaud before him—who themselves chose to recoil before their decision. Ady did stop. He admired Verlaine, but looked upon him through the eyes of a Hungarian, claiming that he (Verlaine) "is crying on behalf of all those who have been crippled by a base, mendacious and butchering society". In the Hungary of the Emperor Francis Joseph, Ady could not disavow himself, he could not become a Verlaine, and so he became a Hugo. He was tossed about between Pest and Paris, between political slogans and symbolist syncretism, between metaphysical disillusionment and the Hungarian fate—this is what makes Ady's an accursed and great poetry. According to the logic of poetry influences, and following from his personal receptivity, Ady, after years of idyllic journeys to Paris, had to return as a decadent, as a French student, principally because this decadence perferctly suited his excessive sensibility and neurotically Bohemian personality. Verlainesque tones and the gloomy music of the fin de siècle do in fact resound in many of Ady's poems, with all the requisites of symbolist disenchantment, the tints of the eternal themes of love and death—Baudelairesque spleen and Verlainesque despair. But in Ady's poetry these lyrical and decadent motifs emerge parallel with his most militant publications and political articles. His poetry smoulders between two poles, burning in two contrasting fires: "between a Petőfi's Jacobin sweep, whose banners he carried with an unswerving faith in ultimate victory, and an imaginary revolution and the hopelessness of Vörösmarty's old Gypsy" (Krleza). His is a Baudelairean personality, a kinsman of the *poètes maudits* both in his personality and vocation, a poet who is glowing with the desire to achieve contemplation and with the stimulus of the strong potions of sin, desiring to be not an "illusionist" but "everything", in constant struggle with his own contradictions; out of this self–tormenting emerges the greatest and most tragic figure in modern Hungarian literature. Within him the vitalism of Bergson and Nietzsche clashes with Verlaine's conscience-stricken frenzy: *Je suis l'empire à la fin de la décadence*. But alongside these neurotic and fatally projected mental regions, Ady also portrays for Hungarian poetry the landscape of the desolate Hungarian *puszta,* that very *puszta* which Petőfi once portrayed with such affection. The Hungarian language resounds in a previously unheard rhythm in his poetry. His lexical severity sounds a new tone in Hungarian poetry, permanently set in a major key, which up to the 18th century had been considered the only pure scale. Here

he resembles Bartók, inasmuch as he succeeded in uniting the cosmopolitan and the autochton personality within himself, the European and the Hungarian; thus he becomes a paradoxical yet unique personality, the poet of the apocalyptic themes of the Great War, and a lyrical dreamer, who is also a bard and a champion of the 1919 Hungarian revolution.

At the beginning of the century, which was heralded everywhere in Europe with a "grey dawn", poetry was quickly consolidated in Hungary. In 1908, two years after the appearance of Ady's volume of *Új versek* (New Poems), there appeared the first number of *Nyugat* (West), the periodical that played a revolutionary role in Hungarian culture, particularly poetry. The history of modern Hungarian poetry, with the giant figure of Ady at its vanguard, is closely linked with the history of *Nyugat,* whose title itself expresses a programme.*

On an aesthetic level, Mihály Babits displayed most consistently a synthesis of Hungarian with European culture, the faith in humanist ideals, and in poetry, as a possibility for the purification of the universal spirit, a stubborn Europeanism and occidentalism. A poet of enormous erudition, with a command of several languages, Babits, like Valéry and T.S. Eliot, and above all like Valéry Briusov, was a *fabricator* in the noblest and purest meaning of the word. He succeeded in what Ady was unable to accomplish: he demonstrated how much can be accomplished in the life of the mind and in culture by a poetic and consistent intellectual asceticism. He portrayed all of the inward life, sought out the innermost and latent meaning behind things, their divine identity, not remaining content with what is visible on the surface. When he plays with words and their meaning, he does so not only for poetic delight but with the conviction that there is a hidden meaning below the layers of the words and their rhythm, some new substances of the thought of the demiurge. Unlike Ady, who always thrust his own personality into prominence, Babits concealed the physical presence which lay hidden behind his conceptual absorption, the personality which loomed in the background of the most diverse poetic forms possible—oriental, antique and strictly prosodic forms, because, like Valéry, he "consciously refuses to be anything whatever". His style—which is rigid even when used in a playful mood, and serious even when striking a singing tone—is a poetic synthesis of what in European art, primarily in architecture, is called *Sezession* or art nouveau. In Babits's poetry this Sezession, (which at the beginning of the century had one of its citadels in the Pest of the *nouveau riche,* and which is apt to seem sad and drab in its over-adornment, as if distastefully imitating antique models), has preserved something of its antique nobility, yet even so seems sometimes to be pseudo-classicist. Babits often used arabesques to arrive at the essence, and vice versa: he arrived at an arabesque complexity from the essence: all these quests turned him into a congenial alchemist of the Hungarian poetic idiom. (Dante's *terza rima* remain in his translation so Italianately close to the original that one does really begin to suspect alchemy.) He was bed-ridden for several years, and this Christian moralist, the translator of St Augustine, created on his "mattras grave" his prophetic, hugely significant poems, of which special mention

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*At the time of the launching of *Nyugat,* similar processes took place in other Europen literatures as well. In Spain, this intellectual revival unfolded in 1898, under the wings of the periodical *Revista de Occidente,* in Russia the occidentalists congregated around *Vesy* and *Apolon,* while in France, Mitoir issued the first number of *Occident* in December, a periodical intended to counter the "naturalistic and sentimental excesses of romanticism", advocating a programme which was essentially in conformity with that of *Nyugat.*

must be made of the ascetic lament, *Jónás könyve* (The Book of Jonah). This morbid explorer of poetic forms and a devotee of the craft of poetry restored Hungarian poetry's inclination to experimentation and the desire for an alchemistic submersion in the "proximate chaos" of human existence. After Babits, Hungarian poetry could not easily return to the rhythms of the leaping dance and *csárdás*.

Babits's intellectual adventure and the *Nyugat* cult of poetic perfection was followed by Dezső Kosztolányi.** A less rigid poet than Babits, Kosztolányi is lyrical rather than mystical, even though for lyrical vibrations he too turns to the scarcely conceivable and extricable radiation of the objects and phenomena that are thrust into the vortex of existence. Kosztolányi has enriched Hungarian poetry with Rilke's world of childhood, with Impressionist pastels, which have become somewhat faded, like old photographs, from which he drew inspiration more than once. He, too, is obsessed with the themes that occupied Babits—death and stupefaction over the transience of human life. In his expressionist periods he rid himself of this nightmare, and his poetry became exteriorised and objective. He uses the same melancholy tone in recounting his childhood memories and in describing the Pest proletariat and the depressing nights of a large city.

The intimate tradition of *Nyugat* was carried on by Gyula Juhász and Árpád Tóth, poets related to one another by their solitary and tragic fates. Juhász portrayed the Hungarian landscape with a bitter affection, in a *plein air* style and in dark colours; he wrote about solitary and wasted human life. The cycle of love poems written to the "eternal Anna" is imbued with Proustian notions of time regained. Árpád Tóth is an elegist, like Musset, whose poems he also translated, but these elegiac themes are filled with a Verlainean sensuality and eroticism, that lend a wryness to his poems. Like the other poets of the *Nyugat* circle, he carefully polished the poems on his solitude, which display an almost Keatsian verve, and devoted minute care to his choice of words—weighty and wry, solemn and scintillating. Nor was he to escape the "Hungarian curse" either, he did not confine himself to blending alliteration with onomatopoeia: his *April Capriccio,* woven out of Impressionist shimmering, turns into a Don Quixotic "April outrage" that degrades the lyrical experience.

Frigyes Karinthy, the "café Socrates" of Hungarian poetry, a rationalist-cum-sceptic, turned the aestheticism and post-romantic *Weltschmerz* of the *Nyugat* poets on its head. Men of logic and rationalism often possess a parodist's spirit (suffice to recall Vinaver and Queneau), and this made it easy for Karinthy to discover the key to, and the mechanism of, a stylistic transposition of sentimentalism. Towards himself as well he was ironic and sceptical, and he abandoned his newly found form of lyrical expression; his explorations in prosody and metrics have enriched the modern poetic sensibility, for his poems are not lacking in verve or *trouvaille*. His most momentous work still remains his witty and ingenious *Így írtok ti* (This is how you write), a collection of literary caricatures.

Lajos Kassák also tried his poetic wings under the aegis of *Nyugat*. He has a high reputation in Hungary, not least for luxuriant poetry in which are perambulated all the modern "isms" that were present in European poetry during the first decades of the century. This passionate explorer of form who, despite plunging into every trend, was able to preserve his individuality, created an authentic poetry, which he himself later described as constructivist. The path he followed was interesting and prolific, leading

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**This Preface only mentions poets whose works have been included in the anthology.

him from expressionism and *unanimisme,* through an acquaintanceship with Whitman, Cendrars and Apollinaire, from a profuse, rhetorical *vers libre* to a denuded and rational poetry that concentrates on nothing but the quintessence—denomination.

Milán Füst produced a volume of poetry that is far from bulky yet all the more significant; he is a poet whose greatness, unlike Kassák's, lies in his consistency. Füst remained possessed with the thematic stock of time and eternity and proceeded along the path of Babits's mythologizing, abounding in bold associations, without, however, abandoning the gloomy keynote of his classicist and biblical lyrical poems.

Lőrinc Szabó, the last representative of the great *Nyugat* generation, wrote *Tücsökzene* (Cricket Music) in the prime of his life. The volume, one of his most valuable works, is a synthesis created out of his life and poetry, a poetic autobiography, whose artistic qualities are enhanced by its outstanding value as a document, something unprecedented in Modern European poetry.

Naturally, the aestheticism of the *Nyugat* circle and the poetry which originated under the infamous "black sun", sparked off the resistance of the school of populist writers, who have set the ideal of committed poetry against the Academicism of the *Nyugat* school, and championed the return to Petőfi's inheritance and folk poetry. Regarding form, they aimed at a primitive imagism, a poetry without any artificial ornaments. By the 1930s this created the separation of two schools in Hungarian literature; this division can be felt to the present day with the *urbanists* (or occidentals) on one side, and the *populists* on the other. To be sure, the differences are hardly discernible, even to Hungarians, in the works of many of the poets, and it is often only a question of personal decision which side they would join. In any event, the populists have also used their political activity to exert their influence, while in form, a certain consistency is apparent in their reaching back to the traditions of folk poetry and to the presentation of the village. In the 1930s, the populists did valuable sociological research and wrote documentary works on the misery of Hungarian agricultural labourers. The most prestigious representative of this school was Gyula Illyés, who proceeded along a consistent poetic path, leading from surrealismt to the populist school. Interestingly, Babits entrusted the editing of *Nyugat* to Illyés, and there was also a moment in the career of this populist poet when he was faced with the choice between writing in Hungarian or in French. Illyés finally decided to follow in the wake of Petőfi and Ady, remaining a Hungarian writer and Hungarian poet *par excellence*. His is an extreme example of the Hungarian poet's obligation to make a choice, of a poetic vacillation which finally tilted towards concrete speech. He wrote on the most ancient and primordial emotions, the general questions of the human soul—love and death, but the greatest wonder in his poetry still springs from the scent and bitter idyll of the earth of the Hungarian village. Naturally, a commitment undertaken also calls for sacrifices; his carefully formed lyrics include quite a lot of shavings and silt, the prosaic sediment of his striving for plain talk, while his deliberate attempt to achieve distinctiveness causes unnecessary complications, leading to a narrative that is now obsolete in poetry.

Attila József's poetry makes up a separate chapter in Hungarian poetry: it is an affluent fountain, a whole movement by itself, with its significance rooted in its multiple and expansive effect. He was the proletarian *Wunderkind* of Hungarian poetry in the 1920s, the personification of humanism at a time of rapidly spreading civil strife, a genius in the writing of programme poems, and a great lyricist. He radically broke with the aestheticism of the urbanists to become, above all, a poet of the working class; yet his

prolific poetry also remained faithful to the linguistic and prosodic traditions of *Nyugat*. As in Éluard and Aragon, his works assign a major role to surrealistic symbols, while the roots of his poetry reach back to Hungarian shepherds' dances and folksongs.

This crystal clear, sparkling surrealist poetry, which also expresses social disillusionment, began with the liveliness of a Villon, a facetious, youthful optimism, and came to a tragic conclusion, with a dreadful human cry for love and humanity. When he was repudiated by everybody, and even ostracised by the Party for having tried to reconcile Marx and Freud, he made an end of an extraordinary poetic opus that radiated Hölderlin's lucidity.

Miklós Radnóti resembled Attila József in writing on humanism in jeopardy, under the shadow of fascism. His neo-classic lines give off a repressed dread, the eternal fear of the Jew which Tuwim also gave voice to. His youthful elegiac poems bear the marks of a presentiment of disaster; in his last eclogues his tone becomes prophetically tragic, his poetry a jeremiad. *Razglednicas,* which were discovered in a mass grave, were written in our country; they too reveal that Radnóti's fate and poetry have many similarities with those of Ivan Goran Kovacic, the author of *Mass Grave*.

Sándor Weöres is a member of the third *Nyugat* generation, a perpetuator of Babits's poetic cosmopolitanism. He is interested in everything, from the folk poetry of primitive peoples to oriental legends and to Momcilo Nastasijevic. The findings of these explorations he discharges into his variegated poetry, a poetry in which a synthesis might only be achieved in a Heraclitean fire. The title of his latest volume—*Tűzkút* (Fire Well)—is therefore not merely a metaphor but a philosophy, the "psychoanalysis of fire", as Bachelard would put it. Poetic automatism has set him off towards the realm of oneiric and metaphysical poetry, in which apparently the discipline of the soul prevails, but behind this semblance there rage superstition and suppressed primeval emotions, the dark divinations of a fatal enunciation.

Post-war poetry has been marked by the resignation of eye witnesses and the swerve of those who, with youthful faith, wished to gain mastery over this resignation. Official theories and the Cold War have further sharpened the virulent divergence between the populist and urbanist writers. Representatives of one side withdrew even further into their ivory tower, while the spokesmen of the other, feeling themselves backed by the masses and themselves resolved in the mass, continued to sing folksong and render a "constructive" poetry of suspicious optimism and rhetoric pathos.

The populist trend includes István Simon, a follower of Illyés's. A poet of the village, Simon adds fresher samples to the nostalgic pictures of the plains; these, however, are not lacking in sincere lyricism or freshness. László Nagy, under the wing of the populists, has gone through many metamorphoses, his poetry becoming ever richer under the influence of folk poetry and Lorca's imagism. He is justly compared to Ferenc Juhász, undoubtedly the most gifted poet of the post-war generation. Juhász is fond of harsh words and powerful epithets, of a world without God, and of rebellion. He creates his own private myth out of explosive images and metaphors, the reconciliation of contrasting pictures and ideas, and an unbridled eloquence. His is a metaphysics which is "felt by the heart but shaped in poetic images", as Brunetière once defined poetry. His cosmic verbalism has no human barriers: the coupling of images, metaphors, nouns and adjectives, the concepts of the organic and the inorganic world, the lexigraphy of flora and fauna, the "idiom of plants", the realm of minerals and planets, the traces of history, the fossils in Pannonia, the chronicles of the graveyards—all these are not sufficient for him to express the essence of the Promethean (Asian) fire in which he burns. "My Master, my Brother,

my forebear, my Father", he addresses Attila József, whose surrealist poetry was his point of departure and, in the wake of Bartók and Ady, he aims at conciliating the individual with the legend, the ancient Hungarian with the European.

A few years Juhász's senior, János Pilinszky emerged from the war with stigmata that would not vanish, tight-lipped like the inmates of the camps. He condenses the bitter, meditative silence of the prisoners into stone-hard poems shot through with ascetic and religious mysticism. His biblical oratorios, written for choir and male voice, reveal the voice of apocalyptic visions. The name of Ágnes Nemes Nagy is most often mentioned together with Pilinszky. She is the most eminent urbanist, her lyrical poems showing distinguished restraint and contemplation, something noble and genteel, as in the poems of the Comptesse de Noailles. Her sensitive poetry sounds in the major key throughout, with a constant vibration between the emotional and the intellectual, yet never paddling in the tepid waters of "feminine romanticism". Gábor Garai intends, for the most part successfully, to maintain an equilibrium between current content and poetic intellectualism; thus by liberating the topical from the emptiness of the report and the undertone of the feuilleton, he raises it to a place among the eternal issues. Contemporary men and the contemporary world in his poems take on mythical dimensions, surrounded by a mythical aura, in statu nascendi; his parallels with ancient motifs and myths deepen the conscience even more substantially, lending it a more profound meaning.

Sándor Csoóri is considered by the populists as one of their own. He grounds the realm of his poetry on Ferenc Juhász's pantheism, but he sets discipline against Juhász's verbal fury; more precisely, he throws away Juhász's telescope and microscope and, relying on his own unaided vision, is content with the images and sensations perceivable through the organs of sense. His poetry slowly abandons naive imagism and, under the influence of Lorca and Éluard, begins to gravitate, revolving radiantly and splendidly round his two basic themes: love and solitude. Two themes which can hold the whole universe.

The history of modern Hungarian poetry shows that, under the pressure of their poetic duty and literary traditions, poets have often deprived themselves of the possibility of using attractive orchestration in their poems, that they could not always go in for the precious aesthetics of pure poetry, but instead had to take up daily duties. But it also reveals that Hungarian poetry, too, entertains ambitions aimed at oneirism, and these poets are less thoroughly aware than others of the dizzying ambiguity of the poetic idiom and the poetic essence. (They are encouraged in this by the very character of the Hungarian language). On the contrary: they often make use of the hidden meanings of the word—and this is an effort which bears out that they face up to every challenge.

Sándor Kányádi

As Long as the Lamp Still Flickers

At a time when in our towns, our *shtetl,* and even in the villages around Máramaros and Dés there were still Jews, the Rabbi, laying aside the Law and the Talmud, took a walk through the village. Day was breaking but as he passed he saw a light shining in the cobbler's house. He went to scold him.

"Hey, Moishe, why do you keep your lamp burning, can't you see day is breaking?"

The cobbler looked up from his bench and all he said in answer was:

"Rebe, while the lamp flickers things can still be mended."

I heard the story from my father and have not forgotten it all these years; I have made use of the cobbler's wise and poetic saying in speech and perhaps even in writing. I believe in it unconditionally. But often I do not know how to interpret it.

Too many things that cannot be mended have happened in the past—one need not go back further than our own century. The sins of Cain are inexpiable. The substitution of compensation for expiation is abhorrent. It reminds one of pardons and indulgences sold in the Middle Ages.

The still waters of conscience, roughened and ruffled barely half a century ago, are turning smooth and still once again.

It is possible to write, after Auschwitz, though not to write better; and it is possible to live. Live better than ever before. We are beginning to realize—to get used to the fact—that concentration camps and costly, energy-intensive crematoria are not necessarily needed for the annihilation of an ethnic group, a linguistic community. It can be done just as easily at the school desk—humanely, one might say—by reprogramming children into machines that speak the desired language. Indeed the sterile conditions of the laying in ward offer the first—and gratuitous—opportunity of preventing the ethnical-linguistic chaos that might otherwise ensue. Parents must be obliged to stick to the recommended list of names and the official spelling rules when naming their offspring.

The time is out of joint, we may say, with Hamlet. The time is out of joint again. Perhaps it never kept to its proper tracks?

"The world is sinful, son", sighed the last Rabbi of Kolozsvár at dusk on a beautiful summer evening, on the way to the synagogue, a good number of years ago. "Sinful, sinful", he sighed as a farewell after checking whether a *minyan*—ten—, the required number of adult males, had assembled there for evening prayers. That evening, they had. (Today, there is not even a rabbi at the city of Kolozsvár.) So my services were not required.

Sándor Kányádi *is a Hungarian poet and translator living in Kolozsvár (Cluj), Transylvania, Rumania. This essay is his introduction to a selection of Yiddish folk poetry in Transylvania, translated by him, and published by Európa, Budapest, 1990.*

Minyan was the first Jewish word I learned. I learned it from my father, who often helped out to make up the *minyan,* either as a fraternal or as an occasional member, when the rabbi called in our village. Not one but two Jews lived in our village. That is to say, two Jewish families. One kept a store and liquor licence up-street from the co-operative, the other did the same down-street on the opposite side. Or rather, the store and the liquor licence kept them. Kept the up-street family, the Kohns, in comfort (true, they had but one child), and kept the other, Mr Nándor Schőnfeld and his numerous offspring, after a fashion. The bell above the door would tinkle to announce the arrival of a customer and the smell of spices would waft out as the door opened to let them in. The oftener the bell tinkled, the more affable was Mr Nándor's bow and the sunnier Uncle Elek Kohn's smile. Though a customer did not necessarily mean money. The account-book was often produced, and the lead pencil from behind the store-keeper's ear. But lack of money was never the cause of an unconcluded deal in either store. The furrows would grow deeper and closer now on the store-keeper's, now on the customer's brow, in sorrowful reckoning. And the voices would soften into a bashful whisper. But you could always pay the account with a couple of eggs, a hen or two, or a goose. Things were always straightened out somehow in the end. My father and Uncle Elek Kohn were on first name terms, they had been in the army together, boon companions; my father served as coachman to the community on festive occasions. We would plait the horses' tails and put armchairs in the cart or the sleigh whenever they had to visit the nearby town for an important feast or celebration, or when a rabbi had to be fetched. Those were usually the times when my father was needed to make up the *minyan.* It was my father who took Mr Nándor to the village, as a bridegroom, on the sleigh, in the dead of winter, wrapped in a blanket from head to foot, because Mr Nándor did not own a warm overcoat. The retelling of that story always caused much merriment in the family whenever a new baby was born. "It is all Miklós' fault", he would plead to softspoken Aunt Szeréna, "if he hadn't wrapped me up in a blanket that time I wouldn't be here now to do mischief". But he was always happy to have "done mischief". He loved children, and not only his own. No barefooted little customer ever left without at least a sweet "for the road", even if they had shopped on credit. It was I who taught Uncle Elek's one and only son Endre, tempered against the wind, my age exactly, to sit on a horse. Once we took a big cockerel to the *shakter,* riding one horse. It was then that he taught me the word *kaporeth.* It's *kaporeth* for this one, he said, coming out of the *shakters' s* with the killed cockerel under his arm, and climbed up on the horse behind me. With Mr Nándor's son Ernő, who was also my age, we would devour books, trashy novels, penny-dreadfuls. We used to choke together on the shared cigarette filched from the store, and to bathe together, the three of us, in the sweet smelling waters of the Küküllő. Bathed naked, of course, but usually towards evening—out of modesty, because of that little "difference", which they did not have to hide from me. It was only later, when I was grown up, and had learned all that had happened, that I understood that it must have been the instinctive fear of humiliation already at work there on the banks of the Küküllő—even though it was summer then, wonderful summer, but the ominous clouds had begun to gather.

Then the times turned out of joint.

And the humiliation became perceptible—conspicuous.

The deportations began; Ernő and one of his sisters were the only ones to return of the two Jewish families. And even they stayed only long enough to bid farewell to the village and our childhood together.

It took my father two years to come back from the wars. He returned with one leg crippled for life. He was glad to see me grown and to learn that I had succeeded in

guarding our horses—and all the horses of the village—hiding them from the soldiers, in the woods.

A few days after his return, when he had learned all there was to learn, he said to me, softly, as we passed before one of the stores, that it was a pity I had not managed to keep Mr Nándor's and Elek Kohn's family hidden in the woods, or at least the children. Horses could be bought, if one had need of them. He did not mention either family after that for many years; but every time he limped past one of the stores, he always raised his hat, shyly, when no one was looking.

Then, a good ten years or so ago, it happened that we went to the village with friends from abroad. The weather was terrible, night had fallen, and the rain would not stop. I was translating a selection of Transylvanian Saxon folk-poetry at the time, and recited some of the poems to help while away the time. The guests were getting anxious and the children listless. My father sounded curfew but our guests, knowing that we were not allowed to put up foreigners, did not want to expose us to later inconvenience. They insisted on pitching their tent on no-man's-land between two villages, at the appointed place, despite the pouring rain. They agreed somehow to let the children spend the night in the house. My father stared out into the rain after them with a crushed look on his face. I could sense that he, like me, felt that rain like barbed wire around us.

"That I had to live to see this. At least you had enough guts not to chase the children out into the rain. He turned his wise, beautiful head towards me sadly.

"We never kept the dog on a chain. Sándor, Sándor, the Jewish cobbler's lamp is but a feeble little flame in you", he said reproachfully. And he went out into the pouring rain, splashing up to the old house so as not to violate the law by sleeping at his children's.

The next day the weather cleared, and our spirits with it. We walked up to the garden. When we found ourselves in a corner, alone, I could see he had something to say.

"I am very glad, son, that you are translating the Saxons, I respect them myself. But couldn't you spare the time and use your knowledge to translate Jewish poetry as well? They had their songs too. I knew a couple of them myself, Elek Kohn taught me when we were in the army together." He thought a little, searching his memory, then began to recite, in his own special way, as he always could, and quoted from any language he had had the chance to dip into:

amol is geven a yidele
a yidele, a yidele.

And immediately translated for me saying, that *yidele* meant Jew, in the diminutive, and that if he remembered right, that would make the first line "once there was a Jew."

"There's the title for you."

"Shake on it!"—he was holding out his hardened, fine-boned hand.

And with that hand-shake I pledged that this book would be done. He did not live to see it published; my only consolation is that he heard some of the ballads and songs while I was working on them.

It must have been providence that sent Professor Mihály Eisikovits to me soon after I had made my promise to my father. He brought me two faded exercise-books that contained his collection of Yiddish folk poetry, the fruits of a 1938 tour of Máramaros, which he now offered to me for translation. His recollections of that tour, at once documentary and lyrical, published at Kolozsvár in the 1948 Jewish Calendar under the title "Among singing Hasidim", find their reflection in this volume. The authenticity of the ear and eyewitness accounts of the life of the Jewish community of Máramaros—a

life that seems exotic to us today—facilitates my task in that I need add only such information as will assist the reader in the better understanding of a collection that aims to popularise and does not claim to be scholarly. These recollections encouraged me to add my own childhood memories to the information to follow (instead of hiding them under a bushel—which would perhaps have been more seemly), as well as the incentives and promptings of family and friends to which the book owes its birth, and the anxieties that spring from our present situation, which so much resembles that of the Jews in the past.

Yiddish was the language of the ghetto. It came into being sometime around the year 1000, spoken by Jews whom the anti-semitism, kindled by the Crusades and the subsequent pogroms, chased from German soil eastwards where they sought and took refuge, withdrawing into the seclusion of certain streets or urban districts. Yiddish was thus created out of a demotic Middle-High German dialect. With the addition of Hebrew, Aramean and Slav words, it became the vernacular of Eastern European Jewry, serving the everyday life of the Jewish community together with Hebrew, the language of worship, literature and poetry, which survived despite all adversities in the synagogues. Little by little Yiddish too developed into and independent literary language, indeed today, when Yiddish is on the wane, writers in Yiddish have been awarded of the Nobel prize. But Yiddish is primarily popular, not literary, and has produced its own folk literature. Tales, legends, ballads, bantering and matchmaking songs. It was undoubtedly public necessity and the environment—the products of German, Slav, Rumanian and perhaps even Hungarian folk literature—that inspired the talented story-tellers and singers of the Jewish communities, especially in villages, to create their own popular literature. I shall leave the processing of the similarities, concordances, and influences to others more competent and qualified. Their task will not be difficult, for the Jewish people are lettered by virtue of their faith, and in most of the anthologies the composers of both text and tune are listed in the case of many songs that have since become popular or folk literature. The majority of those anthologies have an international circulation. In our collection, we have endeavoured to give a sample of those who have remained nameless. A good third of this book contains pieces which—to judge by the Eastern European anthologies that were available to me—have never been published, not even in Yiddish. This was one of the reasons why this became a bilingual volume. Mihály Eisikovits' battered exercise-books formed the basis. The songs were recorded in writing; knowing no Yiddish, Professor Eisikovits had to enlist helpers, and the *bokhers* in the villages around Máramaros at the time, were not too familiar with the Latin script. Their notes had to be decyphered and rewritten, and in the process misreadings and misinterpretations may have occurred. As a musician, Professor Eisikovits was primarily interested in the tunes, but given the opportunity, he recorded the words as well—acting upon a divine impulse, as he used to say, for not long after, there was no one to collect and no one to collect from any longer. It is sad enough that only the lyrics have survived. The original melodies exist only in the professor's adaptation, and only one or two of those have survived—the rest are lost. But somewhere in the world there are perhaps people who used to dwell in Máramaros who can still hum the tune. Originally, the subtitle of the books was to be Yiddish Folk Poetry from Máramaros, despite the fact that two-thirds were selected from anthologies in common use. But those who helped me—and to whom I herewith give thanks, blessed be their memory: Dr Sándor Scheiber and Samu Schreiber: we once lived on the same street in Kolozsvár—all assured me that the majority of these poems were undoubtedly known to those living around Máramaros. This was confirmed by my friend László Grunea, to whom I owe almost as many thanks as to Mr Samu Schreiber for their assistance in the decyphering, translation and breaking

into verses of the songs. Harry Majorovics, a composer from Kolozsvár, and László Jólesz, who, besides editing the Yiddish text and annotating the book expertly, did his utmost to ensure publication, are also of the same opinion. But given that the book cannot be published here in Rumania as we originally planned, Máramaros was changed to Eastern European, to avoid the suspicion of interference. But thanks are due to Géza Domokos, who kept my spirits up, and did his best to have the book published by Kriterion of Bucharest. It was no fault of his that he proved unsuccessful. Owing to the good offices of the late János Domonkos, our joint efforts were in the end published by Európa in Budapest. István Almási, who edited the musical material, corrected my mistakes with assiduous work, he was indeed a fellow author. I beg the reader's pardon for writing of the makers of this book at such length: but they were part of its making and must take part in the rewards.

I hope that the reader, and perhaps the music-lover, will find pleasure in the poems and songs contained in the book, which, with the exception of two or three pieces, such as Sholem Aleichem's lullaby and Mordechai Geirtig's ghetto song "It burns, brothers, it burns", which cannot be left out of any anthology, are all the poetry of nameless poor Eastern European Hasidim. Let the reader be the judge of the collection and the quality of the translation. I agree with Ármin Kecskeméti, the great historian, that contrary to prejudice, there is no such thing as Jewish facial features. An Ukrainian Jew resembles an Ukrainian more than he does a Spanish Jew, say, and the reverse is also true. There are no pure races left anywhere in the world, and especially not in our corner of it. But there is something that differentiates the Jewish face from all other faces, and that is the Jewish look—the veiled eyes that mirror the fear and dread of many centuries, a fear that is handed down by hereditary transmission even to those who are interbred. Yiddish folk poetry exhibits many similarities with the folk poetry of the country where its poets dwelled perhaps for centuries, but its look is always special, different; ranging from the tragically painful to the quizzical to the emotional, even to the sentimental, it contains something that is at once common and individual—something Jewish, if you like. This is what makes it especially valuable, in my eyes at least, and valuable to all. It is part of history, of the cultural history of this land. It is customary nowadays to investigate the historical continuity of a people, or of an ethnic group, and there is nothing in that to take exception to. Let every one of us learn their past, the data and the duration of their presence, but also its meaning. But let self-knowledge and the understanding of others guide them, not looking over their shoulders to the powers that be. It may sound strange, but it is the Jewish people who can prove their presence here, in our land, without the least shadow of doubt, as far back in time as the destruction of their synagogues. A job for scholars, that. All I wished to do was to meet my father's wish. To recall, having accepted the responsibility of a humble scribe, the Psalmist's warnings about forgetting.

The cemetery of Házsongárd in Kolozsvár is bounded in the east by the old Jewish cemetery, the Orthodox Jews being a little higher up. To the south, set apart by streets and rows of houses, isolated, as though exemplifying the great moral breach of the century, lies the new Jewish cemetery. But to the south, the Reform Jew's cementery is part of Házsongárd, isolated merely by a fence that is falling apart. It is so in most of the villages and towns of Eastern Europe, in all the places where large Jewish communities once existed, where Jews, reduced in numbers, still live.

To bring joy to the living, and appeasement to the dead, I hold out to you this book, a precious, humble, flickering flame shielded in the hollow of my hand. Peace be with us. Shalom.

Translated by Eszter Molnár

Mátyás Domokos

"My undeserved joy is my Doctor"

Unpublished letters by Pasternak

Gyula Illyés's papers include two letters and a postcard from and in the hand of Boris Pasternak. All three are written in French; the two letters are dated August 7 and October 15, 1956, and the postcard June 24, 1958. The connection between the two poets went back more than twenty years earlier, in 1934, when Illyés, along with the novelist Lajos Nagy, received an invitation to the first Congress of Soviet writers in the Soviet Union. His account of the few weeks he spent there caused quite a stir at the time *(Oroszország*—Russia, 1934); in it, in a chapter headed "Art", he described his first encounter with Pasternak.

"Both the initiated, the Western-type readers of poetry, and most writers, hold Pasternak in the highest esteem; he is a poet like Ady—without Ady's revolutionary quality. I twice had the privilege of meeting, in the company of Ehrenburg, this eminent poet, who is said to have never written down the word 'Soviet'. His works are published by the state, the latest one appearing in an edition of twenty-five thousand.

"I was able to obtain a single copy of his works as a present. Your can hardly get hold of works of literature in Moscow.

" 'Yes,' Pasternak told me, 'everything is snapped up on the first day. There is an enormous number of libraries, and of readers too.'

"Between 1929 and 1933 Gorky's works were published in 19,963,000 copies. They all were bought up at once.

"Readers criticise as well as read. A book newly out is discussed in the factories in the same way that government measures are.

"Sholokhov's latest work, *Virgin Soil Upturned,* was discussed at a special meeting by delegates to the Soviet Congress.

" 'And what do they say about your books?' I asked Pasternak. 'No workers' meeting so far has dealt with them?'

"Pasternak is a modest man. He answers haltingly.

" 'Last year the Cultural Committee of Samarkand applied for twenty thousand mouth-organs and my complete works...' "

To better understand Pasternak's reply, which may even be taken as humorous, it should be said that the poet who, in the 1920s, together with Isaac Babel and Boris Pilniak, had founded a journal whose masthead bore a Bukharin quotation ("Literature cannot be captured by a cavalry charge like Perekob"), was at the time at the apogee of his official recognition. Due to a speech Bukharin made at the First Writers' Congress, everybody

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thought that he would become the representative poet of the Soviet period. Stalin, however, presumably with the intention of destroying Bukharin, his political adversary in this as in other areas, said that Mayakovsky was and remained the greatest and most gifted poet of the period, even though, as Illyés noted in his description of the literary scene of the time, "Lenin—not without good reason—had a poor opinion" of Mayakovsky. Pasternak, however, for the rest of his life remained under a cloud and, more than once, a storm threatened.

Twenty-one years later, in November 1955, Illyés went to Moscow again and once again met Liubov Alexandrovna Vorontzova, "Liuba". In 1934 she had been his guide and interpreter on his first trip to Russia. Their acquaintanceship began with the girl presenting him a genuine Siberian hunter's fur-cap "whose ear-flaps reached down on both sides to the waist" (*Russia*); Illyés wrote two poems that enshrined her in all her kindness and warmth ("Nizhi", 1934, and "Ode to Europe", both of them published in 1937 in the periodical *Nyugat*.) It was presumably Liuba who in 1934 gave him that copy of Pasternak's 1917 book *Poverh Barierov* (Above the Barriers). On their second meeting in 1955, Illyés would have liked to get new Pasternak poems from Liuba but he did not manage to do so.

The following year a volume of Illyés's selected poems was published in Paris (Gyula Illyés: *Poèmes. Autour du Monde,* Pierre Seghers, Paris, 1956). In July of that year, he sent two copies, through the embassy, to Vorontzova in Moscow, one of them for Pasternak, bearing the dedication: "To the man who has done so much for Hungarian poetry—from the Hungarian translator of his poems". (Illyés had published his translations of Pasternak in the literary periodical *Nagyvilág* 1956/1). From then on, Liuba Vorontzova did much to help renew the relationship between Pasternak and Illyés. First, she wrote to Pasternak (whom she did not know personally) and asked how she should pass on to him the Illyés volume. On July 19, 1956, Pasternak answered her in a fairly reserved tone, but Liuba replied in an "energetic tone" reminding him of Illyés's significance (their personal meeting of 1934 had obviously slipped Pasternak's memory). A few days later, on July 25, he wrote down his impressions on Illyés's volume in a long letter to her, and on August 8, 1956, in his first letter addressed directly to Illyés, he thanked the Hungarian poet for the book.

Meanwhile, however, something else, too, had happened. Illyés, though living at a distance of 2,000 kilometres from Moscow, was perfectly aware of the fact that Pasternak, to put it mildly, was not one of the blue-eyed boys of the authorities. He sent a parcel to Pasternak through the daughter of Usiyevich Yelena Genrihovna, who was staying in Hungary: an art album, a fountain-pen and a suit-length of cloth. Pasternak did not want to accept the gift. " 'Can you imagine how I feel?" he asked Liuba Vorontzova, who made notes of their telephone conversation on the morning of September 19, 1956, "in a tenor voice but with the high and fanciful intonation of an offended child. 'I don't know what to do. This is very awkward for me. I'd like to ask your advice what to do.'" Liuba Vorontzova asked Pasternak not to offend Illyés, since, "the only thing he is to blame for is his affection for you."

After this intermezzo, Pasternak thanked Illyés for the gifts in a letter of October 15, 1956. The Wessely mentioned in the letter is László Wessely (1904–1978), a youthful friend of Illyés's, with whom he took part in the revolutionary movement in the autumn of 1918 and who was his companion in exile in Paris; from 1932 to 1948, Wessely was on the staff of *Za Rubezhom;* during the Stalinist terror he spent several years in labour camps. At the time of Pasternak's letter, he was an editor with the New Hungarian Publishing House, the legal predecessor of Európa publishers in Budapest—who wanted

to publish a short volume by Pasternak using Illyés' translations. The volume Pasternak refers to in the letter as about to come out in Moscow has remained a publisher's promise and has never appeared.

Pasternak sent his most emotive message to Illyés, the one which deserves the greatest interest, on a postcard. This might have been partly for "conspiratorial considerations" (a supposition backed by the fact that Pasternak did not sign the card), since he wrote it just a few days after news of the execution of Imre Nagy and his companions on June 16, 1958 had come through. The opening lines, though Aesopean in language, clearly refer to this, and they express Pasternak's complete loss of hope that the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party and Khrushchev's "secret address" had brought change in the course and quality of life under socialism. This pessimism also explains something to which he returned to in all his letters: why he considered the portrayal of the Russian way of life in *Zhivago* the great achievement and the very essence of his work. (But the way in which he writes about the reception of his novel abroad clearly reflects the angelic naivety with which a poet "conspires".)

Five years after the death of Boris Pasternak, in January 1965, Liuba Vorontzova asked Rita Arvale, who spoke excellent Hungarian, to take to Illyés copies of the two Pasternak letters of nine years earlier in which so much is said about the Hungarian poet. The letter she enclosed was the last message that came from this admirer of true literature. On reading the letters, Illyés said: "I didn't even know that Liuba brought us so close together, made us friends..."

This story spans twenty-five years of acquaintanceship between the two poets, so well described by the opening of Pasternak's "Hamlet", which Illyés translated into Hungarian: "The noise died down, I entered the Scene, / Leaning my shoulder against the doorpost / I hearkened what was happening in the bustling distance / during my life."

Like the Babushka dolls, it still has another layer inside and this one is linked to Vladimir Ognyev, the Russian critic. What happened was that Vladimir Ognyev published in *Literturnaia Gazeta* an article on Illyés which had such an effect on Liubov Alexandrovna Vorontzova, by then incurably ill, that she presented her documents and notes relating to the relationship between Illyés and Pasternak to him. Ognyev summed up the Russian side of the story in the Hungarian daily *Népszabadság,* in "Pasternak and Illyés" (December 18, 1982). However, he had written fully to Illyés much earlier, in a letter dated May 24, 1971. The present paper has made use of the main facts and figures in Ognyev's article. Finally, I must express my gratitude to Mrs Gyula Illyés and Mária Illyés for allowing me to publish the letters themselves.

The two letters Boris Pasternak wrote to Liubov Alexandrovna Vorontzova and the letter Liubov Alexandrovna Vorontzova wrote to Gyula Illyés are in Russian; their Hungarian translations were found among Illyés's papers without any translator's name ascribed.

TWO LETTERS FROM BORIS PASTERNAK TO LIUBOV ALEXANDROVNA VORONTZOVA

Moscow, July 19, 1956

It is a pity that you have not revealed the initials of your Christian name and patronymic at least at the bottom of the envelope with your address; since I do not know them, I cannot call you by your Christian name and patronymic.

Thank you for your letter and the trouble you have taken. I think the local post can deliver the parcel if addressed to me, or else I shall send someone to you at nine in the morning on Tuesday, the 24th July, for the book.

I would be much obliged if you would first forward my sincere thanks to Illyés. Naturally, I shall also write to him, but not right now.

I have many things to do urgently, I am working on various things, in a permanent tension.

Thank you very much once again,

Yours,
B. Pasternak

Moscow, July 25, 1956

Dear Liubov Andreievna,*

Thank you very much for the book. Even if not at one sitting, I have started reading Illyés. I shall of course write to him, he is just the man you have described and I like him very much. Please do not let him know what I am going to tell you, which will surprise you too. Just imagine, even if I have heard his name—and I could have heard it, couldn't I, possibly I have even seen it, as through my Petőfi translations I took part in the work for the Hungarian anthology—in short, even if I have heard his name, I either did not take note of it or have forgotten it; our translating projects include so much spurious flotsam, brought into existence only because of the ill-considered demands from a misconceived, superficial friendship with foreign lands, and there have been, and still are, so many individuals clutching only at political standpoints, that most of them offhand seemed unimportant. Thus I have harmed my own position, having made things worse myself, not just here at home, but also in the West by a fatal distribution of my rare sympathies and countless antipathies in disaccord with the requirements of the day.

Illyés is bright and it is charming of him to have taken the initiative himself and to have chosen such a sound way to acquaintanceship, through the *Autour du Monde* volume. I knew nothing of Nezval, the Bohemian poet, either, until he took a similar course (volume 17 of the same series).

I shall of course write to Illyés and sincerely hope that my letter will be of interest to him and will please him. But for certain reasons, I shall renew my correspondence with the West which I broke off long ago only late in the autumn—and the acknowledgment to Illyés will open it.

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*Pasternak was mistaken in Vorontzova's patronymic

Just a few more words, to which you do not have to reply. I finished my first, really noteworthy work, my novel, *Doctor Zhivago,* only a year ago, and for the time being no-one has read it. I have always been filled with shame and confusion for being surrounded by some faint reflection of fame, for second-rate, contradictory reasons which have no connection at all with the true value of the heart and the ideal. The novel is the first attempt to earn the confidence placed in me with something which all through is pertinent, true to life, worth the trouble, pithy, with every sentence in it well-considered, precise and new. But there is little hope that it will appear here soon.

But then what is it that may attract Illyés and other like-minded people to me? That real, creative and authentic social content which exists in him and is embodied in his person, in non-existent in me, or it has more or less withered away when this tone has become the expression of dreadful ambiguity so easy to be parroted.

And, as far as form is concerned, Illyés is the representative of the kind of avant-garde art which is developing in the same direction which was general here with us, too, in the 'twenties and from which I have turned sharply away to the right, led for my own reasons and not forced to by the fight against formalism, starting out from general Russian rather than the revolutionary premises, from the precedents of Tolstoy, rather than those of Gorky.

Please do not write to me, do not make me answer! But let me know somehow or other, possibly by a postcard, your phone number, if you do have a telephone. If necessary, I will give you a ring in due time.

Really, I really do thank you for everything, with all that heartfelt warmth that gratitude can hold.

Yours,
B. Pasternak

THREE LETTERS BY BORIS PASTERNAK TO GYULA ILLYÉS

Moscow, August 7, 1956

My Dear Illyés,

I reply to you in the language of your dedication, although I have forgotten even the little I once knew. Thank you for the good idea of sending me your poems in French. I have known Nezval for a long time personally. But I only came to know him as a poet when he sent me his poems in a similar series.

Your book is close to me and says a great deal to me in its entirety. But I like the poems at the beginning and those at the end the best: "Below Ground", "The Sad Farm-hand", "Like the Dew", "Elegy", "Poverty", several passages from "The Wonder Castle", "The Newborn", "Flock" (of incomparable power), "Horror", "In Plovdiv", some very striking parts of "To the Builders" and "Two Hands", "Wild-geese" and two other sections from the cycle *From Tihany in the Autumn,* and "Visitors".**

**Pasternak uses the titles in the Seghers edition; here English translations of the original Hungarian titles are supplied.

All are wonderful, unquestionably true and powerful. What fascinates me most—and which perhaps is something typical only of you—is the depth and precision of your thoughts, completely new regions in which rhetoric—whether red or white, leftist or rightist—is, particularly in poetry, so utterly justified and fitting. What adds to the richness of moral concepts and the treatment of formulae you yourself have discovered in such a natural, unsophisticated manner, is its being coupled by a completely different, if not contrary, quality: the immense graphic power which uses practically disconnected images, yet always hits the mark with the sweep of the images, and unerringly proceeds from victory to victory.

Let me congratulate you with all my heart. And not only for you being what you are, but also for having found such a good editor and translator. This book is a veritable feast. You are to be congratulated for it. My sincerest thanks for the fine present.

Yours,
B. Pasternak

P. S. The last line of your touching dedication ("From his Hungarian translator") has greatly touched me. What have you found in me worth translating? It is a long story, but I so utterly detest the imposed insufficiency of all that we have lived through, of our illusory activities, of our non-existent literature. What a complexity of things that we are told are this or that, and which are in fact just the opposite!

The only and the first work in which I have left nothing unsaid, in which I have said everything I think all through, in which I have included my whole philosophy, my sense of existence and my power to express its essence in my own fashion, is my novel *Doctor Zhivago,* which I finished last winter. It is my judgement on our life, the fate of our generation, on that singular experiment which wants to create human happiness in an inhuman way, with the help of a supercilious and blind machinery, removing the integrating part of individuality. Will we ever live to see it printed? I doubt it.

As above

Moscow, October 15, 1956

My Dear Illyés,

Oh, what a swine I am for not having thanked you yet for the fine presents, for not having answered! What a lovely, kind letter! Under the pressure of the things that I am concerned with now, I am sorry that I cannot write you a real letter, a better and longer one than this one is to be.

As far as Wessely and the volume of poetry are concerned: let him be so kind as to await publication until the winter, when Goslitizdat is to issue my selected poems with my long biographical introduction and a supplement of my new poems. This will provide him with much useful material.

The manuscript of the novel has been read by many people, it passed from hand to hand, and somehow or other it reached the publisher G. Feltrinelli at Via Fatebenefratelli 15, in Milan. But the example of Gorky and the Artamanovs

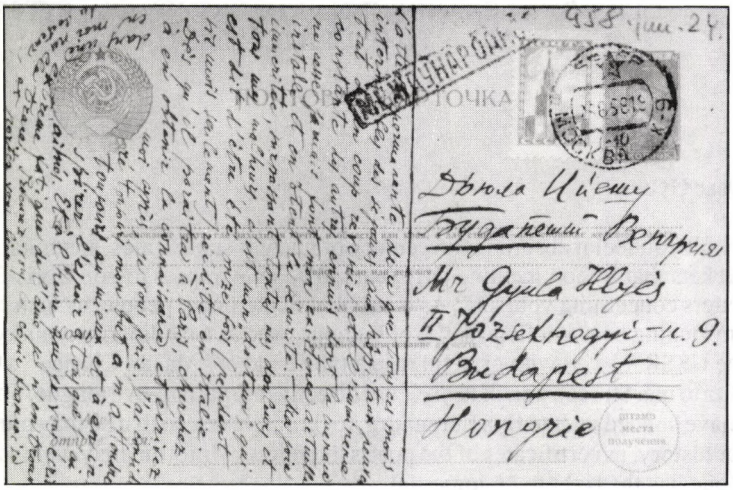
doesn't apply here and I expect to be denounced for this involuntary fault of mine.

But, honestly, I have nothing to complain about, I have always been treated, and still am, with exceptional generosity.

I warned you that the letter would be empty and brief.

With warm, fraternal affection,

Your
B. Pasternak



PASTERNAK'S UNSIGNED POSTCARD TO ILLYÉS

June 24, 1958

My Dear Friend, forgive me for my heedlessness in writing to you in these mournful times. I know what great inconvenience it may cause you to receive a letter from me. But it is stronger than myself. Whom else could I tell how profoundly I am overwhelmed and dismayed by the renewal of the beastly cruelties which appeared to have been finally abolished for ever. Oh, how inexhaustible the sources of calumny, falsehood and cowardly servitude are! Oh, all the herds of base sycophants who will always do anything they are ordered to do! Will they ever disappear? How this omnipotence of evil, unlimited by good, humiliates me and weighs on my heart!

I have been ill twice during the long interval in which I did not write, and I made do with the comforting news about your health. I have a chronic ailment in my right leg, partly neuralgic but extremely intense when there is a fresh attack; it is due to old lesions (from childhood fractures, dislocation of the knee, etc.); it has been painless all my life, but a year and a half ago I suddenly began to feel it. I always reckon with the sudden return of these endless months in hospital, and I also have constantly hanging over me other difficulties, which are always threatening,

making my present life uncertain and insecure.—My undeserved joy, surmounting all my pains and all my troubles, is my 'doctor', which is said to have gone through eleven editions in Italy (in altogether six months). As soon as he appears in Paris, do try to make his acquaintance, and then write to me, I beg you. I have always considered it my goal to expect the best and to inspire hope for it in those I love. And now, as I am writing to you, with great tiredness of spirit, I find no trace of it in myself. Obtain a French copy of the doctor, and be in good health.

LIUBOV ALEXANDROVNA VORONTZOVA'S LETTER TO GYULA ILLYÉS

Moscow, January 1965

Dear Gyula,

Don't you feel it absurd in the century of nuclear submarines, sputniks and cosmic rockets that it took me nine (!!!) years to be able to pass to you Boris Pasternak's letters concerning yourself? As is usual with mediocre people, in such cases I, too, am lacking in a beneficial sense of humour. And as a mediocrity branded "Made in the USSR", I kiss with grateful respect the hand of "Master Chance" who has sent Rita to me. She can translate my letter directly into your native tongue. The originals I have handed over to Ilya Ehrenburg, for his archives, so that he may preserve them for history, as certificates of the poet's intentions. Unfortunately, venerable history alone has the right to be impartial.

It is most lamentable that a wild witches' Sabbath has cut short the life of this wonderful man, as nature creates such people only in a state of extra inspiration and beneficial spirit. And what a friendship could have united you two—outwardly so different, and so extraordinary. On receiving your parcel, he telephoned me. He said in his awkward child's voice: "But why? But what can I send him that would make him see that I have taken a liking to him and he has moved into my heart as the kindest man? Such a wonderful poet, of course we shall meet. I shall write to him and I shall write good things to him. How fortunate to find such a man in life..."

You see, dear Gyula, even people like this stand in need of a stellar system of fixed light, of my polar star. Its light helps the exhausted wayfarer along the wearisome, dark roads of life, lest he should fall and lose his way. "How wonderful of you to exist," Ilya Selvinsky wrote. And I humbly thank my fate for the light of the distant star which I have been seeing for thirty years. My soul, unprotected by an armour, would long have melted away in darkness, had this light not existed. I want you to exist for ever. May all the nymphs and water goblins of Balaton guard you. I am afraid that without my polar star my soul would die of hopelessness and despair. Only great talents are strong enough to stand on their own feet when everything gets confused. Those simply gifted are only granted the talent of perspicacity, which is killing them. Shine, you distant star of the mourners, Gyula.

Liuba

Two Poets in Exile

László Baránszky

In Place of a Photo

So many decades, after all, the presence
of so many decades, and it does not blurr
this image of yours, o you are ugly (we are ugly)
at this age anyway, I cannot explain it
why, may be these very long legs which
we somehow describe as a letter o, bow-
legged, I think, is the proper expression,
blue eyes a little bit bulgy, upturned
nose (big, of course) and a strong chunky
body. The hands, naturally, we should speak
of the hands when discussing portraiture,
but I cannot say anything about hands
with any certainty, so they come blurred,
just as right now you are, or as objects
bodies—I correct myself: which appear
blurred under water even though that would be
clear. However, the water or waters in question
here are those of the river Danube.

Attack

So much we could see that the final attack had started out and went on smooth and according to book. Actually it developed from the north-north-west, originating from the upper part of the Konigses' garden, (see map i.-square 4 of local geography), and it rapidly enveloped the better portion of the playground, the soccer field. Lacking self-propelled artillery and assault guns, civilians were pressed into service, they (the neighbours) were pushing the long barrelled Russian cannons which were firing with

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László Baránszky *is a Budapest-born poet and art historian living in New York since 1956. He has published two volumes of poems in Hungarian.*

methodical accuracy at the corresponding windows, whose lower sections, together with their supporting walls, were demolished as a rule. The machine gun position, right across the street, in the Green House, soon fell silent, but not before obliterating the civilians (the neighbours) in one solid burst and they predictably piled up in a couple of concise heaps just around the penalty kick territory (*sure, you can't miss*), where finally the attack has—temporarily, only for the time being—stalled. For a while it was quite difficult to see what was going on, because a cocoa coloured dust was swirling around the group, thick dust, only the black throat of a gun remaining visible, vortex of the storm. Then visibility improved and it became quite clear to me that the neighbours—most of them, anyway,—wore their regular overcoats on the job, as they would when going to put a day in at the office.

The Burial of the Horse

It flew over the sky, the big horse head, for a second it darkened the sun, dripping no longer blood but some kind of ooze, as it went leisurely on its way in its prescribed arc and left us just standing there, laughing wide and wet. It started innocent enough: we moved up to the location to dispose off and be done with the horse who died in the well, a shallow well collecting ground waters. It must have been mid-January that she collapsed in the hole, broke a leg, took days to die, and her frozen carcass, by now, had been beckoning to us for weeks. Of course, no one was willing to trek up to her, since she died in a rather well established line of fire. But now that the good weather came she swelled up and filled the well, she was an eyesore and became a health hazard as well. Having buried the neighbours in their garden proper (see map i, squares 2, 3, 5, and 6 respectively) and the Germans around the perimeter of our playground (see map i, square 4, follow the dotted line) and, finally, we came to her. She was a black horse with unusually thick hair that turned irrevocably moist in the sudden glare of the February sun we loved so much. We got the ropes and tied them to the appropriate places and heaved.

The Street

The street suddenly became a chasm, too deep, too narrow to hold the sudden flow of POWs that started to unwind in front of our has-been window as I was packing the library or whatever was left of it in the wicker basket. My father's books were in a sorry shape, especially the soft cover series of the MODERN LIBRARY suffered badly, they were shot up and the horses loved them. The splinters of the window-frame slashed my view, still the line flowed, although irregular, frayed at the edges, but continuous nevertheless. Some uneven pulsating movement created little swirls soon to be smoothed out by the efficient horsemen who had a lifelong practice in herding. They rode up and down on the sidewalk, their small Mongolian ponies

charging the line almost on their own. Some authors fared better than others. Goethe, for example, managed to go unscathed, Dostoyevski's Crime and Punishment had it, I decided to leave it behind. Beyond rescue, to put it middly, was the large travel-book of Swen Hedin, it was about Tibet and Outer Mongolia, the Gobi. Basket half-full, I decided to look through the window or whatever was left of it, to see it for myself: the street in the afternoon metallic winter light.

Sin

The dead were dead and I was alive and
that was that, there was nothing
to be done about it, I knew somehow there
was no need for elaborate explanations, the thing
has presented itself so simply, so matter
of fact that most of the teachings of religion
class seemed to be superfluous and need-
lessly elaborate besides these
tangible (wrong word, they were too far gone
to be touched) bodies of evidence. Nothing
mitigates the fact, of course, that I prayed like
mad (in the real meaning of the word) that He
should deliver me from the lion's den-death, just
this time o Sweet Jesus, whose heart I have hurt
so much and I'm sure that this son of god, the Village
Rabbi, tried to do as much as he could and some
more under the circumstances for some reason.
Naturally, the minute the danger had passed I was
sinning again; I yearned not
for food, only for silence, a little
silence and for warm, blazing hot
female flesh in which I could im-
molate myself without further ado,
guilt or whatever, you call it shame, which would
make my sure escape of the radiating cold of
these unclaimed bodies that spread all over the
well played-in gardens.

Translated by the poet

George Gömöri

Aerial View of a Developing Country

Something that wars (in these parts
everyday events) could not achieve
is now realized: huge craters mined-out,
half-demolished hills,
constantly smouldering rubbish-tips,
scrapheaps of ancient factories,
the most modern machines rusting in silent rain,
air polluted with special care
(for each square inch each labourer
can claim as much as a pound of dust!)
and the mild water of the lake which, at best,
gives you dysentery.
This is where we stand and I haven't yet mentioned
the clouds of lead billowing from exhausts,
the theoretical sewage-works and the much-guaranteed
nuclear plants (as to their safety you may swear to it
provided the court won't object to perjury).
Let's not wait till the next earthquake:
if nature won't do it, man's sure
to do his utmost to create a country
where life is no longer worth living.

Young Writer in Eastern Europe

Can one look toward distant things,
slip free of the iron ring that is mere chance?
Everywhere are the same old booby-traps,
the same barbed-wire entanglements,
the same elusive enemy,
mine-throwers disguised by protective colouring,

George Gömöri *is a Budapest born poet, translator, critic and scholar living in Britain since 1956 and teaching Polish and Hungarian literature at the University of Cambridge. He has published several volumes of his poems in Hungarian as well as Hungarian translations of Polish poetry and English translations of Hungarian poems.*

and even on each horizon the same hillocks,
their colours indefinable,
with flowers that may or may not possess
a vague odour.

To live differently. One could, perhaps... but how?
Instead of indeterminate boundaries
the mind needs a magnetic field,
instead of the odd chance, certainty
—weather conditions notwithstanding.
There is nothing to pour out with the bath water,
and how do you lie on a bed made by another?
Not much remains: black anecdotes, maxims—
occasional pieces done for the media. Taped music
wafting faintly through rooms with drawn curtains
and love made to nameless girls.

Christmas 1956

At this stage we suspect and yet should know
there's no way back. The papers paint a bleak
deserted city where sporadic rifles
rattle against a snow swaddled night.
Here Regent Street is one vast jewellers
and 'Silent Night' spills tinsel on bright pavements.
We are invited, Andris and I, to Epping,
to an English family. We're greeted with
a crackling fire, roast turkey, and an ancient
pudding like a shrunken head (preserved
in brandy, edible). We dance in the vague darkness
embrace the shapely daughters of the house
(but sleep with rubber bottles, not with them.)
Back home there are no mass arrests as yet,
the writers' union functions, but omens are bad,
not knowing (though suspecting) what may follow:
in our case Oxford, for friends who stayed behind
the well known prisons, semi-skilled employment;
a dark low Christmas this, the last we spend
(or even partly spend) in Hungary.

Translated by the poet and Clive Wilmer;
Christmas 1956 *by George Szirtes*

Zsuzsa Forgács

Tango

(Short story)

If I lose a couple more pounds, you might fall in love with me, and then I might get scared, and then you might get pushy, and I might get annoyed by that, and you might get angry at that, and you might try to do something drastic.

At that point I would try to calm you, which would slightly inconvenience you, and that will definitely ruffle my feathers.

This will arouse your mild curiosity, which might irritate me, and I might try to get physical, upon which you might commit selfdefence.

Now this would make me unabashfully restless, which would make you terribly impatient too, which in return would make me furious, which would really make you feel on top of the situation.

Inevitably, this will elicit my mortifying sarcasm, which might turn you into a blood-thirsty animal, which could soothe my nerves and bring about my murderous laughter, and this in exchange, no doubt, will bring about your murderous laughter, which might make me feel a little embarrassad, so you could feel enthusiastic.

That, in return, would make me try to smash a few objects in your apartment, which in turn would make you try to make pulp out of my slender body. This would make me feel appreciated, which in return would make you feel humiliated, so I could feel motherly toward you, so you couldn't help feeling fatherly toward me, which would make me feel sexual toward you, which would reinforce your urge to get rid of me.

Now that, in exchange, of course, will make me feel like a fool, so then you would feel happy, which would make me see that I should seriously try to look for another man.

This subtle initiative of mine would make you feel pathetic, which would make me feel relieved. So you, no doubt, will feel a strong urge to scratch my eyes out and that would put me back on the right track.

Upon that, you couldn't help feeling insecure, so I would feel sorry for you, so you would want to retaliate immediately, and that will prove to me that I was right from the beginning to be afraid that you might take to liking me.

This would make you understand that there is nobody else but me, which in return would scare me to death, so you would laugh again, so I would shudder and shudder.

This would make you take pity on me, which would make me feel like an imbecile, so you would turn away from me and that would make me feel relieved.

If there was one thing that could make you feel lonely, this would definitely be it. I, of course, would understand that, however, you would not be able to tolerate this.

Which would make me see that I should give you up for good, which would make you see that you should get me back right away.

Zsuzsa Forgács *was born in Budapest. Her short stories have been appearing in the newer Hungarian periodicals since the early eighties.*

This would make me eat a lot, and that would make me fat, which would make you resign for good, which would make me lose a lot of weight, but that would make no difference to you.

Which will make me understand that the game is over, so you will loosen up a little towards me, and that will force me to take to liking you again, which would make you revise your old views of me, which would make me revise my old views of you, and that would lead us to exchange views, which would make us see that we didn't change a bit, either for the better, or for the good.

This would make me tired. Very very tired. And that would make you stroke my head, which I would like a lot. And this would make you stroke it again. And that would make me start to appreciate you. And this would wake you up and make you say that you have to go home. And that would make me enlighten you that you were actually home.

This fact would scare you a great deal. Which would make me want to caress you. This would make you say that I have to leave right away, becuase your dogs need a little solitude, and I was crowding them.

Now that would make me use my fist on the door-frame, which would infuriate you, which would force me to enlighten you that you were actually in my apartment, and that I would prefer you outside, because there was more space for your dogs.

So you would say that you'd had enough of me, which I would find natural.

Upon that, you would feel obligated to spring toward my door, like a sleek deer which would make me fling myself after you, and that would practically smear you on the knob.

This way you would be inadvertently smothered with my gleaming, white flesh, which would draw us so close that you would even notice fluff on my shoulder and could not resist blowing it off. This unfolding power-cut will give you the opportunity to submerge in my divine feminine smell, and that would force me to locate with my nostrils that warm, soft dimple you prefer to carry around right behind your left earlobe, while you would make an attempt to disentangle my taut, elastic, crosshearted brassiere, and I would very discreetly go for your shirt buttons, which would call forth your tact to nestle your enormous nose in my thirsty, hot armpit. This would, of course, agreeably surprise me, so I would try to locate the exact corner of your mouth with my greedy, somewhat unpolished tongue. Which would practically lead you to press your other ear on my feverishly heaving bosom, like an overwhelmed heart specialist. By which my loins would be tenderly stirred and would send tingling, undulating currents towards the universe. Accordingly, you would sort of slide down toward my navel, while I would try to hold you back and gently abandon my lips to your moist eyelids. Which you would let me do, but right after that, you would return to your own trail, and continue toward my luscious thighs, so I would clasp them around your wonderful steady head. At that point I would breathe heavily, and while intending to whisper some sultry, sweet nothing, I would accidentally let slip my ex-lover's name. And that would sort of make you go numb. Very very numb.

Upon which I would let go a shrill and desperate scream. So you wold push by with bleak countenance, and plough away in a rage of steel. Which would make me leave a lot of messages on your tape, which would make you threaten me that I should get off your tape or else.

This would make me see that there is no God, or at least the existing one does not support this relationship. Which would make me finally retire. This would make us drift away from each other, which would make us meet accidentally on the street. That will tear my heart and make you emotional. So I would want to kiss you a little, which you wouldn't be sure you would want to suffer.

That might make me feel infinitely weak, which will make you despise me and you would leave me in the middle of the street.

Upon that I would make tears well up, and that would eventually make you turn back and make you lend me your handkerchief so I could blow my nose.

Which I would do and then run away.

Which would not do anything special to you, except you would pocket your fist in boredom. Thus I will be forced to yell at you from a graceful distance that you were an unfeeling pig. So you could not help saying that I had better zip it up.

I would snort at that and you would yelp at this. That will prompt me to state that you were a barking dog. Now this very well might shoot the blood into your eyes which, naturally, would make me see that I shouldn't have met you in the first place.

This you would regard as the final stroke, and you would say that you were terribly hungry. That would make me cynical, which would spur you into spilling a lot of ketchup on your damn hamburger, and that would set off the irrepressible urge to speak my piece of mind.

All the above would prompt you to say that you haven't got the vaguest idea what made me think that you had any plans on me ever.

So it would not come to you as a surprise that I would want to sink my kitten teeth into your big rough neck.

Actually, it would make you feel victorious.

And what would that do to me?

That would make me feel a slight tremor at my lips and a prickle at my nape, because I would look straight into your bottomless blue eyes, which would prove to be fresh brook water that sublimely gurgles toward the Milky Way at the dawn of eternity, and into which I could not resist to plunge myself, with relentless innocence, up to the hilt.

Translated by the author

György Bolgár & Erzsébet Fazekas

Taking off Again

Milos Forman in Interview

Your new film Valmont *didn't get very good reviews in New York. However, critical reception and box-office receipts of your films have almost always been good.*

You can't please everybody all the time, I guess. I don't want to analyse, because of course I would tend to analyse in my favour, and that's not objective. But some people, whom I listen to, say they were surprised by the criticisms. An American explained to me that this film doesn't fit into a kind of American hypocritical puritanism, where everything has to be black and white, the bad must be indentified, labelled and punished. The other interpretation, Stephen Frear's film, based on Chistopher Hampton's adaptation of *Les liaisons dangereuses,* did exactly that, and that was it. Now I'm suddenly asking the people who saw the other film, and liked hating those characters, to love them.

I didn't find the figures in your film very attractive. They may not be hateful perhaps, but not the kind of people you want to like. How do you see them?

The basic question is philosophical: whether human passion is the product of evil or the evil can be the product of human passion. And I believe in the latter. I believe that nobody is born evil, and if you make an effort to understand, you can often explain certain very dark aspects of human behaviour. To understand is to forgive. In my film the people are doing awful things to each other, but I somehow can understand them, and I also understand that they can't help it. The dark side of human nature sometimes starts to dominate us.

I tend to agree with you, but the strongest criticism, in seveval reviews, was that the characters in the film are like puppets without a human face. So if you wanted to portray real, flesh-and-blood figures in Valmont, *how could the reviewers miss them altogether?*

I wouldn't like to answer that. I don't think I have to defend the film. I loved making this film, I love it even now, that's it. You see, Choderlos de Laclos is the father of the film. But I'm the mother, and here we have the child, the film. Some critics judge a film like that on the merit of how much the child resembles the father. But a child very often resembles the mother. Now are these children so much worse? I don't think so. And the most important thing is that the child has its own life.

The problem might have been that they compared it with a brother, Dangerous Liaisons. *Don't you think that this hampered the understanding and the reception of your film?*

I didn't see the other film, but I saw the stage adaptation, which is a very very faithful interpretation of the novel. It resembles the father very much.

Did you avoid seeing the other film so as not to be influenced by it in any way?

I don't, and I didn't want to get lured into some kind of a competition. It's not fair for me to compare the two films, it's not fair for Stephen Frears to compare the films. It is fair for anybody else, but not for us.

By the way, do you often go to the cinema? Do you often see other directors' films?

György Bolgár *is Hungarian Radio's correspondent in New York, Erzsébet Fazekas is his wife. The text of the conversation, broadcast on Hungarian Radio, was edited and slightly abbreviated.*

When I'm not working, yes. Now I'm beginning to see movies again. But when I'm in work, I don't go.

What kind of films do you like? We more or less know what sort of films you like to make.

There's not one genre or a certain style of films that I like. You can't eat lamb every night, even if you like lamb very much. It depends on the mood you are in. One day you enjoy *Indiana Jones* and *Star Wars,* the next day you enjoy *Rain Man* or *Sex, Lies and Videotape,* the third day *Lawrence of Arabia* or *Roger and Me.*

One had the impression in the eighties that there were no new and imaginative film-makers anywhere in the wold. Then last year I saw some films which were really outstanding, like the one you mentioned, Sex, Lies and Videotape, *by Stephen Soderbergh, or* Mystery Train, *by Jim Jarmusch, or* Women on the Verge of Nervous Breakdown, *by Pedro Almodovar. Do you think that there may be a new "new wave" emerging?*

It is an illusion that the cinema is in a deep crisis. Several hundred films are released each year, and though ninety per cent of them are mediocre, plain stupid, or just commercial entertainment, there are always ten or fifteen films that are meaningful, wonderful and powerful. And that's a lot.

Do you ever go and see the films of the Czech new wave of the sixties?

Until now it was very difficult to find them here in America, but now I am going to see them for sentimental and nostalgic reasons.

Do you get the tapes here in New York?

No, from Prague.

Have you been in Prague since the vast changes there?

I was there last October, before anything was happening, and then I was there again in December, just in the middle of things. I was enormously impressed by the intelligence and elegance of the people who created these changes.

Who were the most elegant?

The students and the actors. The whole development of course was amazing. The students went out into the streets to demonstrate against police brutality, and the same evening, when people were in the theatres, they suddenly found the actors standing on the stage, telling the audience we are not going to play for you tonight, you can get your money back, if you want to, but we are going to talk, we are going to discuss the events, we have some guests here, some students, who were on Wenceslas Square, we have some representatives of Civic Forum here. So there were discussions instead of shows. And the next day two hundred thousand people were on Wenceslas Square, the following day three hundred thousand, and when, a few days later, I went to Wenceslas Square, I didn't believe my eyes, because not the tiniest branch of a tree was broken. It was not a crowd, it was three hundred thousand citizens. I was very happy to meet my friend from boarding school. When I was fifteen he was eleven, Vaclav Havel, I mean. We were in the same school, and we have been friends since. I tell you, Vaclav Havel is emerging as a major personality in international politics. He has such enormous intelligence, and the eloquence to formulate people's desires and emotions, and he has such great moral authority. He is not saying what he is saying because he is running for political office, but because those are his convictions. People can take him for granted, and that gives him enormous power.

Why have writers taken over the role of politicians in Central and Eastern Europe?

Look at the history of Europe in this century. Very often, when a society got into crisis, people bypassed politicians, and reached somewhere beyond politics for a moral authority. This happened at the end of the Great War, when Tomas Masaryk became the first president of Czechoslovakia.

How was your meeting with your old friend and schoolmate? What did you have to say to each other?

Oh, we were just talking about trivial things. At that moment it was much more interesting for

me to find out how all this had happened, than the overall ideas and thoughts behind it.

Didn't you feel sorry for not being part of those events?

You know, you always win something and always lose something. I was very much excited about what was going on in Czechoslovakia, but, at the same time, I was surprised that I was watching it as an observer, not as a participant.

Did your friends try to entice you back to the country?

I was asked a few questions about that, but my answer was tentative because it would still be early for me to say how my own soul and heart would develop. Right now, however, I feel that twenty years is a long time. I have grown roots here and I don't want to go through that pain again of being uprooted and replanted once more. But who knows what the future brings?

The example or, rather, the very different path of life, of you and Jirzi Menzel or of Milan Kundera, who emigrated to Paris, or Vaclav Havel, who stayed, clearly shows what was open to an honest artist in Czechlovakia. Either to leave and work, or to stay and more or less give up one's profession.

It was an individual decision, and everybody acted according to his or her own convictions. When I left Czechoslovakia, I was aware that I didn't want to interrupt my career, my work, because I twice saw in my country how excellent filmmakers, who started right after the war and made some remarkable films, like Alfred Radok, or Jiri Krejcik and others, were suddenly forbidden to make films after the communist takeover. And when a career is interrupted like this, something is broken. It was evident some years later, when they were allowed to work again, that something was missing. The same thing I noticed later, when the generation of Helge and Jasny started with wonderful films, and then, after the Hungarian events in 1956, the hardliners won, and a lot of people were not able to work for several years. The same thing happened to them when they were allowed to work again, something was broken. So I wanted to avoid this kind of artifical interruption in my work. That was the reason I left.

Several other outstanding filmmakers left Czeshoslovakia after the invasion in 1968. Prominent directors from Prague were dispersed all over the world. Some of them came here to the US, others went to Western Europe. What happens now, when new possibilities are opening up in Czechoslovakia? Do you expect a new "new wave" in Czech cinema, now that those abroad can go home and those at home can work freely?

I'm expecting a new wave, but from new people. I'm afraid that the same fate which those people after the war or after 1956 met, will haunt those who were silenced after 1968, the Soviet invasion. In fact when these people began to work some years ago, their films showed that they had not been able to work continuously. So I'm expecting the new crop to come more or less from the newcomers and I know this is happening just now in Hungary. I haven't seen the new Hungarian films, but I was told that the new generation is doing some remarkable work.

Where is the legendary generation of the sixties now? As far as I know, Ivan Passer is here.

Yes, Nemec was here, too, for several years, but he didn't succeed in making any feature films, so he made some documentaries, and I think he is now back in Prague. I don't know what happened to Masa or others, but Hynek Bocan or Jaromil Jires are still in Czechoslovakia, and they will surely be given the chance to make films. I wish them success with all my heart, but it will be tough for them.

Looking back to the sixties, what was the significance of the Czechoslovak new wave—apart from making good films? My impression, and perhaps not only mine, is that it was the films that created 1968, the Prague spring.

We all started in 1962-1963, about 10-15 of us, new directors, and could work for a short period until 1968. Our inspiration was not so much world cinema, the great examples, the inspiration came from the stupid, idiotic films which had been made before us, when we were still at the film school. Those films were all lies in the worst sense. So all of us tried to put some truth

on the screen about people and about life in Czechoslovakia.

Your inspiration was then more political than artistic, wasn't it?

You could say that, yes.

Did your and your friends' films create a feeling among young people and intellectuals that they were living among lies, and if so, were the films the only means carrying this message?

People reacted very positively to our films, and a lot of films were banned in 1968, or even before they were relesead. Their effect was so long-lasting, by the way, that now, twenty years later—and twenty years for a film is a long time, because films age very quickly—they are being re-released in Czechoslovakia, and they are attracting as large an audience as for new films. It's very encouraging to see that films may have their own life even after twenty years.

Were you not inspired to put a mirror in front of the Americans? Just as you did with the Czechs. After twenty years, you probably know a lot about Americans and their lives. Haven't you thought of making films about them?

You don't really speculate very much on such theoretical questions. You go after stories and characters. But I tried to make my first film in the United States, *Taking Off,* the same way I made films in Czechoslovakia. Whether I succeeded or not, it's up to you to say. Anyway, I developed the screenplay with some of my friends, and I followed the practice I was used to in Czechoslovakia. But in doing that, I realized that to function one hundred per cent as an original author of a film in a language and in a culture that I didn't digest as a child and a teenager, is simply impossible. You can function, of course, sixty per cent, seventy per cent, whatever, but never one hundred, and that's just not enough for me. So I decided consciously to turn to literary works, either novels or plays by English-speaking authors—to adapt them for films. That limits my choices. Also, talking about these slice-of-life type films on average Americans, to do this you have to have the most intimate knowledge of these people and their lives, mainly from your childhood and teenage years. I lack this experience in this country, so I wouldn't dare to do that.

The fact is that not even American filmmakers are inclined to do that.

There are a few people who are doing this. Woody Allen is one of them. Or the recent documentary, *Roger and Me,* and some others would satisfy your desire for this kind of film.

But of course America cannot be identified with New York Jewish intellectuals, especially not with those brooding types obsessed by failure. And the more American films you see, the more uncertain you are whether this is America or not.

It's a little confusing to talk about American life or about the American film. It is a huge continent. It's one country, but a huge continent. What is the European film? It doesn't exist either. There is French film, Hungarian film, Italian film, Czech film but there isn't European film as such. That's the same here in the United States. There is not one America, there are thousands of Americas. But, for example, in the films of Martin Scorsese or Francis Ford Coppola, you have the smell of real life in the American-Italian community.

Hollywood, however, is generally stronger than even forceful personalities like Scorsese or Coppola. The Hollywood story, the Hollywood script, the Hollywood mechanism of filmmaking, too often breaks them or, at least, makes them compromise.

I wouldn't call it a compromise. They only try to reach as many people as they can, because success in the US in not determined by success in New York or Los Angeles, but by the reaction of the audience in Kansas or Utah and elsewhere. And the reaction can be so different, because the audience is so diverse, so many different races, religions, ethnic backgrounds. The film is always under pressure. I admit I prefer commercial pressure to ideological pressure. Commercial pressure is after all the taste of millions of people, while ideological pressure is very often the perverted opinion of one Dinosaur sitting in the Central Committee of the Party.

The best films made during the Communist era could ward off ideological pressure. The more they were able to, the better they were. Is there something similar happening here? Can it be judged aesthetically how freely someone intends to make his film? How much can one avoid commercial pressure here in America?

I don't think you can, unless the state finances your film. But that would be even worse than commercial pressure, believe me. The moment somebody gives you money, he will impose on you his or her philosophy. The philosophy of a studio, however, is only to make money. But if the state provides money for your film, it expects you to return this favour by representing or expressing the philosophy or ideology of the government. Why should they give you money if you want to criticize them? Nobody likes that.

When you came here to the United States you began making films about present-day America. Taking Off *was certainly a film of this type, but even* One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest *can be considered contemporary. Later, however, you turned to the past with* Ragtime, Amadeus, *and now, with* Valmont. *Why? You seem to know so well the people who you are living with, why do you go back centuries to show us heroes or anti-heroes?*

I want to believe that it happened by accident. You choose your project because of a human story and because of the characters in it. Wherever the story takes you, you go. I just fell in love with the story of Mozart and Salieri, as Peter Shaeffer wrote it in *Amadeus,* and then I fell in love with Choderlos de Laclos.

Is it always a question of falling in love with a story?

Yes, I have to be in love with a story, because otherwise I couldn't do it. Making a film takes two, sometimes three years of your life, so if you are not in love with that story, it's torture.

I always wondered why you didn't choose one of Milan Kundera's stories. Some years ago I saw quite a good film made from his novel, The Unbearable Lightness of Being. *But I felt it could have been much better if Milos Forman had made it. Evidently, the American director wasn't very familiar with Czechoslovakia and its people, so some scenes looked a bit naive.*

It's a psychological problem for me. I love Kundera, I think he is one of the greatest living writers, and I would have loved to make this film. But I would rather make a Hungarian story which takes place in Afghanistan, than a Czech story which I have to shoot outside Czechoslovakia. I just can't do that.

Now, after Valmont, *are there any particular stories you are in love with?*

I have just started to read different scripts and books, I've begun to go to theatres. You know, different companies are asking me to consider a play as the basis for a film, but I haven't found one yet.

Who gives you advice and who do you take advice from?

The people who usually send projects are producers from major studios. But the only person I consult with, is my representative, Mr Lantz. I have known him for about twenty five years and he is a friend of mine. That's all, because you have to read the stories yourself, and you have to fall in love with the project—not somebody else.

Can you afford to read scripts for a year or more, and not decide on anything?

That's about it, I think, at least this is the attitude I'm trying to have. Usually, I take as much time as needed.

Does it matter in any way in choosing a new script how your previous work has been accepted by the public and the reviewers?

This matters very much when you are a beginner. Success opens the doors for you and makes producers pay attention to you. But if you are lucky enough to make one or two critically or commercially successful films, it lasts for a while. You can afford to make three unsuccessful ones.

What would happen if you were given the opportunity to go back to Czechoslovakia to shoot

a promising story? Could you work there after a twenty-odd year absence? Could you make a film that is unmistakeably Czech? Wouldn't you feel yourself constrained financially?

If I fell in love with a story which would take me back to Czechoslovakia, I could try, why not? Whether I could be successful after twenty years living elsewhere, remains to be seen. As for the second part of the question, when we were starting—and now I speak for everybody—when we made our first films, we didn't choose to make low-budget films because we wanted to make low-budget films. We just made them because nobody gave us more money. But if I want to tell a story, it doesn't really matter to me how much money I have. If you give me one thousand dollars only, I'll make a film on 8 mm, with no sound and with my friends. If you give me one million, it's a little better, I'll make it with sound on 16 mm, still mostly with my friends. If you give me ten million, I'll do it on 35 mm, with professional, though unknown, actors, and if you give me twenty million dollars, I'll have a star in the film, and so on. Whatever money you give me, I'll spend.

You have talked about falling in love with a story. Can a story become an obsession, just like a woman can be for a man?

I think you can say that. It is a very reasonable parallel. Falling in love with a project is like falling in love with a person.

And then you throw away everything else, you forget everything, and begin to focus only on this one?

It becomes your obsession. You don't think about anything else.

How long after finishing a film can you get rid of it, and can you start something new?

It's again something like when the person you are in love with leaves you. For a while you feel that you are even more in love, you get desperate and sad, but as in real life, time heals all wounds, and after a while you are ready to fall in love again. Filmmaking is a cruel business. You devote yourself fully to what contributes to your work. But when it ends, when the film is ready, and you stop contributing to it, you suddenly turn cool. The end is the end, that's it.

Péter Nádas

Thomas Mann and his Public Persona

The considerable, in many respects quite extraordinary, interest Thomas Mann's life and works have inspired among Hungarian readers from the 1920s on never focused exclusively or even primarily on the purely literary achievements of this formidable figure—their interest had at least as much to do with the public role played by Thomas Mann, a created role that nevertheless sprang from basic attributes of his human and artistic character. Here was that rare specimen, the utterly accomplished, cultured and affluent burgher, modestly proud of his maturity, moderately tempted by his demons, quick to understand and condone, reassuringly familiar with things good and evil—a man who toiled daily in a most assiduous, exemplary manner, and then, with his work done, mingled easily, cheerfully in glittering company. Let's face it: such a man is admirable indeed, unless of course he is merely enacting a role. During the course of a long and arduous life, Mann was able to play this role with taste and conviction, was able to carry off the act just about flawlessly (he did draw on elements of his own character, after all), proving himself to be not only a wonderful impersonator but the very incarnation of a self-imposed persona.

Perhaps I am not too wide off the mark in maintaining that it was the accessible, highly visible surface of this not very enviable, though in any case subtly refined, role that made for the relatively smooth, problem-free reception of Mann's *oeuvre* in Hungary. In less special cases the literary works themselves have to be sampled and assimilated first, and only afterwards can unheralded and previously unmissed works assume their proper place in a culture. And all this could happen even before anything is learned about the personality concealed behind the work.

Thomas Mann's writings did not have to undergo this tedious process: the author did not have to vie for the Hungarian readers' attention, as did some of his contemporaries, writers like Gide, Hesse, Kafka, Joyce, Musil, all of them more important artists in some respects, who to this day are less well known, less accepted in Hungary. Perhaps if the Hungarian publication of Proust's work had not ground to a halt after the first few volumes, or if only the Hungarian version of these first volumes had not turned out to be so mannered and precious, then he, too, might occupy a similarly important and respectable niche in our literary consciousness. But the real reason why the battle, in the case of Proust, has never really been won is that the literary life of that great modernist, along with that of the other authors mentioned, lacked this one peculiar trait: not one of them was inclined to develop the public persona so characteristic of Mann. But an Eastern

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Péter Nádas'*s latest novel,* Évkönyv *(Yearbook) was published in 1989. The book under discussion is* Thomas Mann: *Naplók* (Diaries) I. 1918–1921: 1933–1939. Selected by Antal Mádl. Európa, 1988, 706 pp.

European literary consciousness, still moved by ideals of national independence rather than those of personal, individual freedom, and seeking to champion even the latter in terms of the former, necessarily reacts more sensitively—and positively—to literary works in which the author's figure seems to be conform to a recognizable, historically or sociologically validated image of the artist.

In his personal life Mann projected the very qualities he represented continuously in his fiction—in contrast with writers who actually remained more faithful to the traditions of the middle-class novel, trying hard to put across a picture of the artist that made no claim to being representative in any way. Proust's approach was the very opposite of Mann's: he dipped into the traditions of a hierarchically ordered, aristocratic culture, and passed off an exclusive, highly discriminating lifestyle as his own, without ever wishing to make this created self stand for anything. Proust treated his own perceptions as the only forms of tangible reality, and thus became the last great writer in the intellectual tradition of the enlightenment.

In a fictional world where no phenomenon has a single cause, where each randomly selected partial cause can imply, through a chain of myriad additional causes, yet a further series of causes and explanations: in a world where minute details are not causally related but are concealed, waiting to be uncovered and examined in turn—in such a world hierarchic structures are out of place. One thing may not represent another: one isolated element can not hope to represent the whole. Proust fashioned himself into an aristocrat so he could define the essence of his character without bourgeois constraints. Mann, on the other hand, still setting great store by a hierarchically structured world, parlayed his own habits of mind, his own way of life, into something grandly representative. He rekindled nostalgic yearnings for rational, utilitarian ideals to which Proust had already bid a painless farewell.

Let us not consider it a mere inadvertance, then, that Hungarian publishers, motivated by vaulting, if ill-conceived, ambition, have seen it fit to acquaint us with just about every facet of Mann's *oeuvre*, while they have not been nearly as anxious to do the same for such modern masters as Gide, Hesse, Kafka, Joyce, Musil—or Proust. By saying this I do not mean to imply that the number of Hungarian Thomas Mann publications is excessive. I am even less inclined to make such a claim now, as the book before me is a barbarously chopped-up Hungarian version of Thomas Mann's diaries.

The extant portions of the novelist's journals began to appear in Germany ten years ago under the editorship of Peter de Mendelssohn, with the entire project undertaken by S. Fischer Verlag, the successor of Mann's own publisher. These earlier volumes give a fairly clear picture of the total personality from which his lifelong public role was carved out, and enacted, it must be said, with great dignity. "My fears now center primarily, almost exclusively, on this criminal attempt on the best-kept secrets of my life, secrets both weighty and profound", Mann wrote in April of that fateful year 1933. He was terrified that his private journals, which the family managed to retrieve from the Manns' Munich home just as it was seized by the Nazis, may have been lost or stolen in a Swiss railroad station: "Dreadful things, murderous things could happen".

In the end the notebooks, containing diary entries for the years up to 1933, were returned intact to their rightful owner. Still, it may have been the panic of those few days that prompted Mann, on May 24, 1945, to act on a decision, obviously years in the making, to burn almost all of his early notebooks in the garden of his California home. It was not the first time he resorted to such sacrificial incineration. At the age of twenty-one, he set flame to the diaries he had kept up to that point; it was the notebooks

he had filled after that date that perished in the garden incinerator. He did spare, however, notes jotted down between 1918 and 1921, probably because he was just then writing *Doctor Faustus*, and could utilize these notes in his work—which in itself says a great deal about the nature of the journals. At any rate, after the expiration of the grace period stipulated in Mann's will, only the early fragment, saved from destruction, and the diaries begun after 1933 and kept continuously almost to the end of his life in 1955, could finally be published.

Anyone familiar with the original German edition of these later diaries can only respond to the author's terrified contemplation of his exposed secrets with an assenting nod: he did well to burn portions of the diary, and acted even more wisely when he chose to deal differently with the segments he did spare from fire. For while the earlier notebooks give us a taste of secrets that had to be expunged, the much more cautiously kept later diaries suggest the truer dimensions of the character from which the public role was fashioned. In this way the diary provides at least the contours of the picture the author did not see fit to preserve in full.

Committing those notebooks to flames was without doubt the greatest act of Thomas Mann's life. He singlehandedly obliterated every last trace of an intensely personal, indispensible process without which he would not have been able to achieve his work. What remained were the end products themselves, which dovetailed neatly with his carefully shaped public persona. Only brief hints, subtle allusions to the formative stages of this public role were allowed to survive. Yet the horror felt by the reader at this act of self-mutilation must not be moral revulsion. True, unless I am Perseus, I will freeze in horror upon seeing the Gorgon's head, yet I have no right to pass judgement.

The most surprising thing about the text of the diaries is that it does not rely on—indeed, it deliberately eschews—the carefully crafted, leisurely, often exasperatingly detailed sentences: the abundantly complex, modifier-studded, fussily, self-indulgently elaborate constructions that are so characteristic of Mann's literary style. His notes here are terse, to the point, and his reflections only slightly more detailed. He doesn't try to relate recorded facts to the appropriate introspections—he assumes no doubt that these connections are self-evident. There is also no need to arrange his notes in any kind of stylistic order. He writes hurriedly, often using unsightly abbreviations. Incomplete sentences are common, and he allows himself the kind of colloquial or tritely idiomatic expressions he otherwise would not dream of using. Which is not to say that these notes therefore have an informal or improvised character, or that they are not controlled by the stylistic principles so rigorously applied in his "real" works. The diary's style, markedly different from that of his other writings, could best be described by pointing out its gaps and holes, its deliberate scantiness.

It is possible of course that all we are dealing with are the consequences of a rather obvious technical difficulty. The author is exhausted by the time he turns to his diary: and it is in such a state that he must note down everything he considers important, indeed crucial, yet unrelated or only indirectly related to his work or his social obligations. After a workday filled with public duties, the man penning these graceless, scantily clad sentences is the same man who speaks at all other times in carefully dressed, even overdressed sentences, or assumes a role in public entirely consistent with his highflown diction. Yet in these looser, more makeshift texts, the diarist's self-referential habits had to become even more pronounced—he had to forego those psychological and stylistic manoeuvres that transform the crude facts of daily life into something more elegant and distant. What is entirely missing in these texts is a staple of all his public utterances: his humour; and what is absent also is the famous Mannian irony. The conspicuous lack of

stylistic refinements and embellishments makes it seem as though there were no qualitative difference between the various phenomena described—no difference at all between multifarious facts and events. In this relentless seriousness every event and occurrence seems to carry the same weight, and the only reason they are not uniformly insignificant is that the author considers his own person exceptionally significant. And, as a consequence, treats the minutiae of his own psychic and physical being as though they were so many insect specimens being pinned on a sheet of paper.

Regardless of what happens and how, I must maintain the proper distance—this is the single albeit endlessly multiplied psychic gesture that lies behind the diarist's approach to his material. The distance created between the subject and the events related does vary of course: the attempt at total detachment either succeeds or fails. Still, the emotional range is rather narrow. The text is monotonous, nobly dull, one might say. The author is forever going over the same ground, but because of the lack of stylistic differentiation, repetition itself does not make his themes more emphatic. When someone describes a host of dissimilar things in a stylistically uninflected manner, his field of vision necessarily narrows. It is as though we discovered how flat and dull such a gigantic life can be. For what we get to see through the screen of his repetitions are not the true colours of the author's personality—the narrowing of his horizon enables him to screen out that personality. All the same, the endless repetitions, the unrelieved monotony of personal information, do make it easy to identify and tabulate his perennial subjects.

To begin with, he tells us about the state of his health: about indispositions, real and imagined illness, sleeping patterns, appetite, digestion; we learn about the texture of his stool, the manner of ingesting medications, about stimulants and sedatives. He reports regularly on his physical and mental condition, on good and bad workdays, but also on the length of his walks, their location and duration. Notes abound on the particulars of eating, drinking, smoking, as well as on the nature and character of his sexual manipulations. Always treated separately are his erotic fantasies involving boys and men: daydreams triggered by the sight of various *epheboi*, be they acquaintances or strangers. Also listed separately are domestic events, details about acquisitions, shopping needs, prices, as well as notes on his wife, children, finances, servants. Among other recurrent items of interest are weather reports, the political scene, and details of his social activity. We might have an entry, say, on sunshine and revolution, rainy weather and war. And then there are innumerable accounts of dinners, teas, luncheons, afternoon socials, visits, concerts, evenings in the theatre, formal conferences, friendly chats. And with similar regularity, he gives accounts of his travels, his reading and his correspondence. By arranging his perennial themes into these neat categories, we can discover the organizing principle behind his various foci of interest. Mechanical repetitions of content and stylistic monotony reveal the compulsive behaviour of an individual who, following these compulsive patterns, is by no means adhering to the dictates of his personality—rather, he is trying to make these patterns conform to the conventions of an impeccably respectable, bourgeois life. The notion that there may be other modes and perimeters doesn't even seem to occur to him, not even when he can no longer equate his own way of life with what can generally be considered good or meaningful. On the rare occasions he does confront moments of truth, he displays quiet resignation, and yields even more completely to the force of his rigorously prescribed life conditions: "A life of luxury amidst pain."

Ultimately, though, the writing style of the diarist Mann is no less self-consciously formal than that of the novelist Mann. He acts, he serves, he does his part, always

cognizant of those self-imposed and pre-defined conditions. He may be the most upright child of his age, but the price he must pay for this distinction is the tragic obliteration of his personality. And to be able to pay this price, he must keep his immense tragedy from penetrating his consciousness. On his solitary walks he is often shaken by sobs: he is tormented by insomnia, nervous tension, depression. The glimpses we get in the diaries of the deepest layer of consciousness reveal a dark tangle of evasions and agonies. But the public role, cut out of the whole cloth of his personality, and implying never-ending duties and tasks, must be enacted with such conviction and eloquence that he must not entertain even the thought of rebellion. Never, not even once. And what better way to prevent himself from defying his synthetic persona than by indulging in his compulsions? Even as we read his diary we may get the feeling that after all is said and done, his life is the best of all possible lives. He suffers and, by way of escape, assumes the role of the uncommonly successful man. Now success can give meaning to suffering, but it doesn't necessarily alleviate it—if anything, it can make the suffering more intense. That delicate equilibrium: the constant see-saw between success and suffering also has its price, and a heavy one at that: he must not give way to passions, to any intense emotion whatever. What is more, for wrathful words describing the gaps and failings in his life, he must find the vaguest, softest equivalents in his vocabulary. In employing super-refined techniques of sublimation, Mann is truly unique among his contemporaries—a hero of an appealingly liberal intellectual and behavioural posture. But of course he could never have hoped to become a hero without first refining and sublimating his own martyrdom—he must suffer for the sake of that very heroism.

(In order for us to dispel simplified impressions created by this kind of role-playing, we need not immediately refer to far more accessible and forthcoming literary self-appraisals, products of different currents within the same cultural tradition—Gide's diaries, for example, or Kafka's letters. Yet we know that the utter failure of the liberal mindset, a tragedy of mythic proportions, is amply documented in many other works as well, in which the nature of omissions and abbreviations, the abrupt cuts and jumps, the sketchy and allusive mode of composition, do hark back to the style of Mann's diaries.)

In an important sense, then, these diaries are but a means of reduction and sublimation. They are not meant for us, they are written reminders of necessary psychic work about to be done, or already completed, before the writing process itself could begin. Mann's diaries are inlets, unstirring bodies of water locked between the promontories of his works and life. In them he reminds himself which of his raw experiences could and should be used in his works. His thought processes, his entire mode of life, are vaults between the pillars of his all-important work and public personality.

One could not imagine a single life function or sign, however trivial, that is not viewed from the vantage point of these massive supporting pillars. They are indeed the be-all and end-all: things gain or lose their value as they are weighed against the momentous work, the august personality. It's quite true that in such a world every phenomenon of life, no matter how odd or curious, must be duly acknowledged: but everything that might disturb the carefully maintained balance must be eliminated. What must necessarily be absent from such a world are passions that are important in and of themselves: love, for instance, or compassion are not really usable emotions. And the fact is that we find trace of such sentiments in Mann's diaries. (Perhaps the reason he must read so much Tolstoy is to make sure that things so conspicuously missing in his world should not be left out altogether.) Mann's emotions are present not by virtue of their actual existence—their place in a preconceived scheme depends entirely on the degree of their usability or inutility. He harbours no feelings which he could not calmly acknowledge, and for that

reason alone his artistic integrity can never be doubted. At the same time, he exhibits no feeling which he did not already embellish according to the needs of his all-important persona. Thus, the fact that he dons a dinner jacket one evening is not any more or less significant than the fact that he has a hard time stifling physical loathing every time he looks at his youngest child. The particular relevance of such feelings is invariably determined by their relative position in a hierarchy of perceptions leading to an affirmation of his own significance.

In a world where his own overriding importance endows everything with equal value, the intellect must also reject all extremes. Thus, while Mann's abhorrence of fascism caused his political views to shift noticeably to the left during the years he kept a diary, his sensitivity to social issues at the same time remained non-existent. He has erotic urges, powerful attractions, but he feels devotion toward no one. We understand perfectly the essential and unique place Katia Pringsheim has in his life, but one would be hard put to see this as anything remotely resembling affection. Love is not something he cares to deal with, he rarely uses the word. The only vaguely similar and long-gone sentiment he does dredge up he describes with feeble equivalents. His paternal feelings for his children may be seen as unique, if false, displays. He seems to be at his insincere worst not when he ignores one of his many children, or indeed all of them, but on those occasions when towards one or the other he feels obligated to entertain feelings he could possibly experience but doesn't because he happens to be otherwise engaged.

But a rational and liberal mind will not yield to negative passions, to hatreds, either. Such a mind must make good use of its lexicon of palliatives. There is, to be sure, abundant evidence of rejection, contempt, disdain, disparagement, and above all disgust in the diaries. These carefully noted, eagerly sampled emotional responses constitute a negative hierarchy, at the summit of which stands the antiseptic ideal of the author's commanding personality or, more precisely, his success-inflated ego.

A metaphysical world view that might afford him the opportunity to think and speak in a way that is free of highminded stylization—such a view is completely missing in Mann, and the void is filled with a kind of humanistic spirit world. It is a miserably ranting Nietzsche that carries this humanistic spirit world on his back like a turtle. The world is populated with gods, demiurges and mortal heroes, in keeping with Richard Wagner's overblown stylistic norms: and enthroned as the highest deity is a serene Goethe. I don't intend to draw a caricature here. Not that Mann doesn't have it coming to him, but such a treatment would be justified only if he had not been aware himself—more aware than I could ever be—of the tragic ramifications of his wholly unreal, idol-worshipping mental construct.

Naturally, he is also aware of the terrible dangers inherent in a world view that is at the mercy of mere human intelligence—which is the other side of the coin, one that reflects his honesty as an artist. One of the most devastating notes to be found in the diaries, one that deals a death blow to his intellectual pretenses, is dated October 19, 1937. In a review of one of Karl Jaspers's books, he stumbles on the following comment on the Germans made by his favourite Nietzsche: "A people willing to submit to the intelligence of a Luther!" And then, after a momentary pause marked by a dash, an exclamation: "No, Hitler is not an accident, not a freakish mishap. He sheds retrospective 'light' on Luther, and this must be fully recognized. He's a genuine German phenomenon". Yet there isn't a single realization here, no matter how embarrassing or painful, that could block his obsessive urge to see himself, symbolically, in Goethe's company. Of course this also means that he has to transform Goethe into the supreme arbiter of the human spirit on

earth, an image more in keeping with Wagnerian turgidity than with the far more organic and reasonable character of Goethe, a clear-voiced poet who could enter worlds above and below him with the greatest of ease. Mann knows so very much, he knows everything, but in the highly stratified intellectual system he so painstakingly creates and obsessively insists in representing, he leaves no room for the critical spirit, the voice of protest, which ought to be the hallmark, the always rechargeable driving force of any system of thought. In Mann's works the fallen idols and banned saints, in the guise of real people dead and alive, return to their place on carefully whitewashed walls.

From the vantage point of the diaries it's easy to see how Mann fills the vacuum created by the absence of a coherent metaphysical world view with mere stylistic virtuosity: how unseemly, negative psychic phenomena are turned, with the aid of humour and irony, into positive attributes. He tames his despair but lets traces of it show. The diary is, in a way, a record of this hard mental labour. In it he deals with the deepest secrets of his life, but does so invariably from the standpoint of his work. Thus, he has no personal secrets which in some form do not appear in his works; but he also has no secrets which are preserved in their original and true form in the diaries.

In his works Mann appears in the role of the kindly, understanding, sweet-smelling father figure, unfailingly gentle, mature in his enlightenment, always conciliatory. Those boasting similar virtues could identify him as a kindred soul, but even those deprived of their personal freedom and seeking a fatherly guide could celebrate him. In the famous words of the poet Attila József, all of us Hungarians implored him to come to our bedside and tell us a story. But the diaries make it abundantly clear that the man who came was not eloquent Hermes but Kronos, who, as we know, gained world dominance by castrating his own father, Uranus (meaning the heavens!), and devouring his children.

But just as we cannot reprove Kronos for his dreadful deed, we must refrain from passing moral judgement on the story-telling Thomas Mann. It isn't he who has deceived us, not in the least. He hasn't told us a single enchanting tale that doesn't contain his teasing warning signals. Watch out, I am not for real, I am working on you now, I'm dazzling you! In our immaturity, we were the gullible ones, and neglected to notice what we in fact did not wish to notice... Among themselves his children called Mann "the magician", which satisfied the powerful ambitions prevailing in that household, and it happened also to be true. There are people who know a very great deal, but—difficult though it may be to admit it—there are also those who know only what *can* be known. The diaries, documenting this kind of limited omniscience, shed new light on Mann's presumably very familiar works and personality. By shifting our perspective, we may not see a wholly different *oeuvre* or a changed author figure. What does emerge, however, is a man destined to harbour the darkest, most carefully guarded secret of the liberal imagination—a quietly suffering man, in other words. This image proved to be eminently appropriate for generations of readers who rejected the Mannian style but who, ironically enough, adopted his intellectual stance and banished the very notion of suffering from their critical vocabulary.

I must emphasize again that the diaries, as edited by Peter de Mendelssohn, are not unexpurgated, though the editor claims in his foreword that he did not cut or abbreviate Mann's journal entries. In the interest of complete editorial fairness, he adds, however, that out of respect for the most intimate of sensitivities, in "just a very few places", he deleted "a few sentences or several words", and indicated these omissions with bracketed ellipses. In the notes written in 1920, for example, we come upon two entries, portions of which (and we can't tell just how extensive a portion) fell victim to the editorial

squeamishness of the otherwise quite admirable and excellent Peter de Mendelssohn.

At this point the diarist is forty-five years old. At the end of an entry dated July 5, we read the following brief and surprising announcement: "In love with Klaus these days. Germ of a father-son novella.—Intellectual ferment".* The boy Klaus, nicknamed Eissi by members of the family, was not yet fourteen at this time. The censored sentence, appearing in an entry made nine days later, cuts short a reference to a most intimate aspect of his relationship with his then thirty-seven year-old wife: we are privy only to the reflection on the excised note. Here Mann writes that he doesn't know quite what to make of his condition, it could hardly be impotence, more likely the usual confusion, the unreliability of his "sex life". He puts quotes around the phrase as if to suggest that he doesn't seriously believe that the thing can exist as an isolated function apart from the overall personality, although what the quotation marks really convey is that he is distancing himself, his own person, from the event in question. There is no doubt in his mind, he continues in the next sentence, that it's his irritable weakness that is taking him closer to desire "directed the other way."* What would happen, he asks (again putting quotes around plainly suggestive and equivocal words), if a boy lay there, "at his disposal"? He need not spell out the answer to the rhetorical question. In that case, he could function, he would not be impotent. He concludes, though, that it wouldn't make sense to allow this failure, whose cause is not exactly new to him, to depress him. "Far better to treat the matter lightly, with humour, detachment, and self-confidence, since these are the best "medicines" ". And in the next few days, during which his work goes "very badly", he does try to follow his own advice. Yet subsequent notes leave little doubt as to who that boy may be, and what sort of inversion of interest may have caused his impotence. He is "enraptured" with Klaus, who looks "terribly handsome in his swimming trunks".

It would take superhuman strength to resolve such a crisis: and if he had lacked such strength, he'd have to be crushed by the tragedy. There are no other alternatives. If he submits to cultural dictates and does isolate his sexual functions from his personality, and winds up considering sexual potency as the sole yardstick of success, then he must reckon with the possibility of failure—and the destruction of his carefully cultivated image of himself. If, on the other hand, he considers his attraction to his own son as an integral part of his psychic makeup, then he must reject the entire culture. He can't choose the latter solution: his spirit of negation, kept always at bay, would simply overwhelm him.

"Find it quite natural that I should fall in love with my son".* This sentence is an artistically valid rationalization of his attraction. If it's natural it can't be that extreme, and if it's not extreme, one need not dread it. It's the artistically successful evasion of the cultural taboo that will enable Mann to write his story. And surely enough, a few lines later we learn that he has taken the train to Munich, no longer perturbed but quite acquiescent. He carries on a brief conversation with an attractive young man in white trousers sitting next to him in the third class carriage. "Very pleasurable. It seems I am once and for all done with women?"* This question, intended more as a statement, echoes Goethe's ideal of the eternal feminine, but in that very frivolous, whimsical style Mann bade himself to cultivate just before. His stylistic playfulness must end, however—he's back in the house. "Greeted everyone after riding home by cab, for which I paid 20 marks.

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*Passages marked with an * are quoted from the English translation of Mann's *Tagebücher* (Diaries 1918–1939, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1982). All other translations from the *Tagebücher* are my own. (Translator)

Eissi was lying tanned and shirtless on his bed, reading: I was disconcerted. Yesterday was Katia's birthday. Gifts in the morning, including her new bicycle. Took Eissi along on a brief midday walk and talked with him about the essay question. Katia's parents here for chocolate. In the evening a garden party at Dr. Mannheimer's... [where I] spoke to a number of people, all of them men incidentally, including a creature who at the end "got to know" me. Came home on foot. To bed very late and tired." The words, some of them placed in quotes in the original text, are not easy to interpret. But the context and the mode of expression lead one to believe that they refer to an erotic adventure about to be, or already, concluded.

The diarist calms down somewhat after this: he has managed to deflect his dangerous sentiments, thereby meeting the challenge he presented to himself. He bore witness to his own successes, and now the original attraction can be transferred to a different, more natural, sphere, and what's more, the transfer can be accomplished without moral injury. All the same, two days later we read this: "Yesterday evening read a story of Eissi's steeped in *Weltschmerz,* sat by his bed and commented on it, accompanying my criticisms with tenderness that I believe he took pleasure in." In view of what we know took place beforehand, it's not hard to imagine how far the diarist's passion may have strayed, what critical limits it may have reached, during that display of tenderness. Perhaps it was the fatherly criticism based on artistic authority that saved the boy from whatever it was he had to be saved from. Appearances were preserved, but just barely.

From an entry made three months later, we find out how the forbidden passion was ultimately sorted out in the diarist's mind: "I heard some noises in the boys' room and came upon Eissi totally nude and up to some nonsense by Golo's bed. Deeply struck by his radiant adolescent body: overwhelming". At this point he looks down from the heights of paternal authority, though that may not cool his ardour. We are again forced to conjecture, for here, too, the German editor interrupts the text. But from the closing sentences of this same entry we learn that, upon returning to the conjugal bed, the diarist can, as usual, count on his ability to suppress certain impulses, and he can also count on his wife's understanding, but in his intimate relationship with her the wished-for readjustment does not take place.

The aforementioned notes, heavily censored in the Hungarian edition and subjected here only to cursory analysis, can be used to illustrate Thomas Mann's profound knowledge of certain relationships about which Western literature and psychology has been profoundly silent up to now, and about which it will not likely remain silent in the future as well. The demonstrable fact that sons can be physically attracted to their fathers may be seen as a desirable, even necessary phenomenon in a culture that is based on the prowess of male gods. But the obverse side of this same love: the fathers' attraction to sons must remain shrouded in silence, if only to protect the fathers' authority and prestige. It is at this point that our culture is subverted. The sons' love for the fathers guarantees authority and inspires accomplishments, which are then mercilessly crushed by the fathers' secret love for their sons. Mendelssohn's red pencil begins its work just at the point when we are given detailed and dispassionate information about a stunning culture phenomenon that nevertheless has a direct bearing on all our lives.

The first volume of the Hungarian version of the diaries goes much further in butchering the text—by observing not only cultural taboos but much simpler expediences as well. More than individual sentences are missing from the daily entries: entire days, weeks are omitted. According to my own rough calculations, about two thirds of the original material is missing, and there is a similarly huge gap in the accompanying

annotations, which makes it that much more difficult for the reader to find his bearing in the text. Indeed, one wonders if the use of the original title is justifiable at all. For what the unsuspecting Hungarian reader gets here is not the first volume of Thomas Mann's diaries but a heavily edited selection made on the bases of criteria never really made clear.

I am certainly not the right person to give advice to literary scholars on how to prepare a carefully edited and faithful translation of such an important work. But I have given a great deal of thought to what may lie behind the baffling, totally unjustified truncation of the original. All the Hungarian editor, Antal Mádl, will tell us is that the selection "attempts, within the limits imposed by the overall length of the original material, to give a cross-section in digest form of the diaries' major preoccupations". His version does indeed offer a representative selection of the major themes—to readers already familiar with the original. It achieves a sense of proportion, but only because it adheres to the familiar, carefully-tended, inoffensive image of Thomas Mann: and because it selects its themes most tendentiously, basing them on traditionally accepted and acceptable criteria. It justifies its lack of faithfulness by remaining faithful to the author's very public image. By so doing it deprives the Hungarian reader precisely of those revealing new insights which might enable him to reassess his distorted mental picture not only of the author but of the psychological and artistic strategies of an entire age. If I wished to be a little more censorious myself, I could say that whoever reads the Hungarian edition of Thomas Mann's diaries has less right to claim to be familiar with them than one who has not read a line of either the original or the Hungarian version.

Translated by Ivan Sanders

György Bence

Political Justice in Post-Communist Societies: The Case of Hungary

Vaclav Havel's essay, "The Power of the Powerless", written in the late seventies, included a parable about the butcher who had to place a sign in the shopwindow, between the sausages and the meat: "Long Live the Great October Socialist Revolution!" The story illustrates how the average citizen, who only wanted to make a living, became involved in the Great Lie.

But there was always an alternative, according to Havel. It was completely within our power to renounce the game. If we decided not to lie anymore, we could attain the state of "living in the truth".

I must admit that, back in the seventies, I felt that Havel was demanding too much of the poor butcher. Was it not enough if he played the game strictly according to the rules of his Communist bosses? If he did no more than he was absolutely required to do?

My former scepticism with regard to Havel's position has evaporated in the first months of his presidency. He did not draw vindictive consequences from his exalted demand of "living in the truth", a demand to which only exceptional people, like Havel himself, could live up. This lofty ideal has been, in fact, a source of tolerance and forgiveness on the part of Havel and his friends.[1]

Communism pressed the citizen into active complicity with the system, unless he was prepared to drop out of normal social life. It is, therefore, wrong to condemn him simply because he tried to survive. The former dissidents should be the first to understand this, and Havel in fact has.

Havel's position implies either a blanket amnesty for representatives of the previous regime, or strict adherence to due process and rule of law, even in cases involving Communist bosses. Former leaders shall not be indicted simply because they filled high posts in the party or government. Charges should be based on specific acts, substantiated by evidence, not on membership or rank.

There is another story we should keep in mind when speaking of political justice in post-Communist societies. A real one we saw with our own eyes. In the great days of the Rumanian uprising in December 1989 the enraged crowd clamoured for the blood of the oppressors. Death to the tyrant! Death to the tyrant! Death to the Securitate men! and

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summary justice was done, and would be seen to be done, on television. These are the two extremes staking out the limits of political justice in post-Communist Eastern Europe. What is going to emerge as a more regular pattern will most likely fall between them. In Czecho-Slovakia, the fate of former Communist leaders will not depend solely on the high morality of Havel. As also in Rumania, it is to be hoped, it will not be the crowd that has the last say in these matters.

As could be expected, Hungary took the middle course in political justice. No blanket amnesty will be given, it would appear. But extreme sanctions will also be avoided.

Here, Communists or former Communists have undergone a sudden but understandable metamorphosis lately. They have become very fastidious in matters involving finer legal points and moral standards of political behaviour.

Some of the Hungarian press is full of laments about the illegitimate pressure exercised by the new parties, about the dangers of political discrimination in the professions and in the civil service, about the likelihood of a wholesale proscription of innocent people identified with the old regime, and many other alleged abuses.[2]

This indignation of the Communists is, obviously, hypocritical. Who exercised party dictatorship in the first place? Could a more thoroughgoing system of political discrimination be ever introduced than the infamous nomenclatura? Were the handpicked civil servants, in a Communist country, so civil really?

There is, nevertheless, an element of justice in the Communists' allegations. No, as of now there have not been actual cases of political discrimination, but yes, there is a flood of wild statements of intention coming from some new parties. They say a clean sweep has to be made, presumably by the new government. A campaign poster of the Hungarian Democratic Forum, the party that won the general elections, depicted an overflowing garbage container with a big broom, and the caption read "The spring cleaning is coming." Other large parties, however, and even the Democratic Forum itself on other occasions, went out of their way to reassure the officials of the old regime.

All in all, the public mood does not seem to be excessively ugly in Hungary. True, the idea of a big purge has been mentioned repeatedly but public reaction was far from unanimous in support. Furthermore, major political leaders took care to still these voices, to allay the fears of those who may become the subjects of victimisation. There is, consequently, a fair chance that the transition process will be completed without excessive injustice and without excessively wasting human resources so much needed for rebuilding the country.

To minimise injustice, however, is not the same as to avoid it. There is a growing consensus among the more thoughtful political leaders in Hungary about the way to proceed. If one wanted to reduce injustice to an acceptable minimum—they say—the best way would be to apply political justice in a regulated form. Extraordinary measures are needed. This way some injustice would inevitably be done but, at least, not spontaneously and outside the bounds of rational control. Political justice would be dispensed by some kind of organized tribunal—with judicial powers, although outside the framework of ordinary courts— but not by the mob.

This is where the issue stands for today's political leaders in Hungary. Therefore, to raise the question of political justice from a Civil Rights point of view is not necessarily a symptom of nostalgia for the bad old days of dissident purity. Back then, all injustice emanated from the powers that be, and their opponents could at least indulge in the moral comfort of innocence.

Political justice is already being applied in Hungary, although on a small scale and in

a restricted way. A certain category of former political leaders are obliged to undergo parliamentary investigation, they have to reveal their assets and account for the way they obtained them. This is clearly a case of exceptional justice, it oversteps the boundaries of regular legal procedure, and there is a danger of serious Civil Rights abuses.

Moreover, the popular demand for political justice is gaining momentum. It is to be expected that more political justice will come. The danger of abuse is growing.

Last but not least, by raising the question of political justice we are also re-formulating the ultimate question about the current transition: Is a peaceful transition at all possible? Is there going to be a second revolution?

Let me, to start with, make some further comments on the distinction between ordinary justice and political justice.[3] This distinction might ring rather old-fashioned to the refined ears of a Western audience. It is under fierce attack by the advanced legal minds of the Critical Legal Studies movement.[4]

Hungarian lawyers tend to stick, however, to the old style of thinking. For them, there is a clear distinction between proper legal reasoning on the one hand, and political rhetoric on the other. Once the basic legal principles were established, they maintain, there is a secure, although complicated, way to give authoritative answers to legal problems. The principles must be laid down by an act of constitution-making, or by a long tradition, or—preferably—by both. Legal reasoning, except in the most trivial cases, is more than classification and deduction, but it is still distinguished by a more determinate rationality from political argument.

Looked at from such a conservative perspective, political justice is almost a contradiction in terms. It means, at its most extreme, that several legal principles are thrown overboard in a quasi-legal procedure. Judgments are then made by a direct appeal to general and indeterminate political considerations. In less extreme cases of political justice, only a few principles are given up, usually with some reluctance, as a concession to the exceptional character of a political situation.

Three basic types of political justice must be distinguished: restitutive political justice, punitive political justice, and the limiting case of political amnesty.

Restitutive political justice is a burning political issue in the Eastern Europe of our days. It is being dispensed wholesale in Hungary too. Powerful lobbies have been organised by the former defendants in show trials, other political prisoners, camp inmates, their friends and relatives. They are represented by the best legal minds of the country. The aim is individual retrials, quashing the sentences of whole categories of people, e.g., participants in the uprising of 1956, and some financial compensation. These efforts have been largely successful.

Calls for revenge, tooth for tooth, are rarely heard. But these people, understandably, do not wish to see their tormentors—bestial interrogators, partisan judges, brutal jailers—remain unscathed to enjoy in safety the fruits of their labours. This feeling is, moreover, shared by a large section of the public, extending well beyond the victims themselves.

The young who, fortunately, did not share the experience of the last wave of Communist terror, are even more under the spell of the revelations. In this case, memoirs and historical accounts, published since the lifting of censorship, shattered many illusions.[5] They had believed in the possibility of an honest and relatively peaceful existence, while older people had never really managed to forget the skeletons in the cupboards.

Given these facts, it is no surprise that a demand for a political amnesty, covering the old regime, was not made by any important political force.

The leaders of the reformist wing of the Communist Party, now members of the Hungarian Socialist Party, were so blinded by the glory of a successfully managed first stage of transition, that they felt themselves immune to future prosecution. They could not care less about the fate of their former comrades, now organized in the fundamentalist Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. Whether they committed a fatal mistake remains to be seen.

The new opposition parties, on the other hand, having no members or supporters actually in jail, were not interested in the question of amnesty, if the other side did not insist on it.

The Hungarian Communists might have had their reasons for not trying to insure themselves against legal proceedings which could be initiated against them by their victorious opponents, but my subject is political justice as such as applied against Communists, and not just the situation in Hungary.

Drawing on the available literature, I have outlined three types of punitive political justice, examining whether the East European cases fit any of the age old patterns. Numbers and names have been given to these types, to facilitate future reference, but I do not claim that either the order in which they are presented or their names have any particular importance.

Type 1: Prosecution for ordinary crimes with a political end in view.—This is the least questionable version of political justice. If an ordinary crime was, in fact, committed, there is no need to stretch the law. It is enough to see a political opponent exposed as a thief, embezzler, or petty tyrant using his power for selfish and criminal purposes.

Type 2: Political trials based on state protection provisions of the Criminal Code.—Even the most liberal legal systems contain provisions explicitly aimed at protecting the state against subversion, treason, sedition, etc. Formally speaking there is nothing wrong in using these provisions against a political opponent. But in extreme situations, especially when the targeted opponent has some chance of starting violent action to prevent prosecution, there is a high chance that justice will be expedited by questionable means.[6]

Type 3: Revolutionary justice.—All the previous types of political justice involve a special risk that the bounds of legality, defined by acts of parliament, estalished legal principles and institutionalised legal tradition, may be overstepped. Here, this is openly accepted as a matter of practical necessity.[7]

Revolutionary justice, at its most extreme, is dispensed by lay tribunals, convoked *ad hoc* especially for that purpose, and is based directly on the will of the people, not limited by law, the spirit of the revolution or similar ideological constructs. Usually, however, some pretence of legality is kept up, there is some attempt to assimilate proceedings and the principles invoked to the normal course of justice.

This classification may help to classify acts of political justice in East European countries undergoing transition.

Type 1 proceedings already took place in several countries and, undoubtedly, we will see more of them. The differences between the individual East European countries will depend only on the degree of shamelessness of former Communist leaders in abusing their power for personal gain and advantage. The moral indignation of the public is justified, the legal means are there. The only danger is that the courts, having been compromised by their less than independent action under the old regime, might display undue haste and severity in creating show cases for public consumption.

The examples are, of course, tedious. Graft, corruption, nepotism everywhere. In this

country, local bosses have been singled out first, probably because they were much more in the eye of their neighbours. One prominent figure was eliminated on a similar basis, the former Minister of Defence, General Czinege. His speciality was brutality toward subordinates, using them for private purposes, collecting prize pieces of real estate bought at a nominal price from local councils.

A typical Type 2 case was started in East Germany where treason charges were brought agains the former Communist leader, Erich Honecker. According to the latest reports from Czecho-Slovakia, treason proceeding have been initiated against Vasil Bilak and other high officials who called in the Warsaw Pact troops in 1968.

This latter seems to be an open and shut case, even according to the socialist legality of those days. Nonetheless, we must be aware of the potential dangers. Such precedents, if they were going to be followed, could lead to revolutionary—or, rather, counter-revolutionary—justice pure and simple, with all the dire consequences.

Such Type 2 cases will very likely come up in larger numbers in other East European countries too. They all raise the painful question of legal continuity in the process of transition.

In Rumania then, we saw a Type 3 case of revolutionary justice. What I have in mind is, of course, the so-called trial of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu. Since then, according to the scant information available, a series of other strange cases of political justice have taken place in Rumania.

I had the opportunity to watch on Rumanian television, with the help of an interpreter, the first day of the Securitate Gang of Four Trial. The standard of the proceedings was not much above that of a classic show trial, with the minor difference, of course, that Bobu and his co-defendants were guilty as hell. In Hungary, political justice took a different course from that in Czecho-Slovakia, the GDR or Rumania.

Type 1 proceedings are not general, although a few of the former leaders have been charged with personal crimes, as we saw. The issue of treasonable activity by former leaders—either under the previous regime, or during the process of transition—was barely raised. Type 2 proceedings do not seem to be on the agenda of any important political group or party. As to Type 3 cases, revolutionary justice proper, I am certain that all the new political forces would vehemently deny that they have anything of that sort in mind.

There is, nevertheless, a public outcry asking for political justice aimed against prominent beneficiaries of the old regime. This outcry is only partly spontaneous, it is also instigated by demagogues. But the sentiment is truly shared by a large part of the public.

The country is on the verge of bankruptcy. The living standards of large sections of the population, especially of elderly, retired people, are already at an intolerably low level. More hardships are to be expected. In contrast, the former Communist leaders are living in considerable comfort, sometimes even opulently, on their exceptional pensions. They enjoy the fruits of their labours in the form of valuable real estate. And as they are those with financial resources, they are using the new economic freedom to turn themselves into capitalists.

This is what the less privileged part of the public thinks. And demagogues are ready to stir up more vindictiveness and to manipulate the innocent.

The legal consequences are obvious. Those who are responsible for the economic disaster should be pilloried. Their financial advantages should be curtailed by some extraordinary procedure. But if we want to understand the legal complexities involved

in this special kind of political justice, it is better to delve, at some depth, into the discussion leading up to the present state of the matter.

I cannot, of course, present full details. Many facts are not yet available. The discussion of political justice has had both a popular and a more scholarly academic side: my account will be tilted to the latter. Confiscation of property, as a form of political justice, was first mentioned in the autumn of 1989.[8] Interestingly, the more liberal of the two Communist successor parties, the Hungarian Socialist Party, officially joined the demand for a property test of former leaders.[9] It nevertheless took a long time to transform the demand into an act of parliament.

Three points were quite hotly debated. The former Communists sided, of course, with the milder proposal on all three counts. First, how wide a circle of former leaders should be examined. Second, how far the investigation should extend into the past. Third, should the investigation cover matters of political responsibility, or should it be restricted to the financial transactions of former leaders.

The provisions of the bill, eventually adopted as Law iii of 1990,[10] turned out to be quite narrow. Instead of 1968, proposed by the Hungarian Democratic Forum, the investigation went back only to 1980. The circle of persons to be investigated was restricted to high party, state and local officials, like politburo members, ministers, county bosses. Matters of political responsibility were excluded from the scope of the investigation. The law moreover left open what should happen after the parliamentary commission entrusted with the investigation has reached its conclusions.[11]

It was, most probably, a consequence of this relative mildness of the law that, after one full working session, without dramatic results, the Commission eventually faded away. Summons were not served, the members did not turn up.[12]

These meagre results notwithstanding, a critical threshold had been crossed. Political justice was no longer merely a political slogan, it had become legislative reality.

This was perceived as a challenge by some students of law and human rights. At extremely short notice, a conference was convened for January 14, 1990, at the Department of Social and Moral Philosphy of Budapest University. Historians, political scientists, philosophers, jurisprudents and practicing lawyers were invited to discuss "Political Justice by Fiat in Successor Regimes".

The lawyers and philosophers, the groups best represented there, took different sides, although there were some notable exceptions.[13] The first tended to warn against uncritical support for political justice.

Some philosophers insisted, under the impact of recent events in Rumania, on the difference between revolutionary and proper justice.[14] Some other philosophers stressed the necessity for curbing moral indignation, even if justified, otherwise the rule of law cannot be maintained, let alone established, and it was the latter which had to be done in this country.[15]

Most lawyers, on the other hand, were convinced that the only practical question is how to dispense political justice, not whether it is appropriate to do so.

They started with the assumption that an extraordinary judicial procedure would be instituted with the aim of establishing political responsibility for the economic mess. But they wanted to mitigate the disturbing aspects of such an initiative, and therefore they stressed that priority should be given to establishing the truth, sanctions would be of a milder, non-criminal character.[16]

It was here that the idea of a moral or political pillory came up first in Hungary. Suppose that defendants were found guilty by a special tribunal trying them on ad hoc

charges, not provided for by legislation, like gross negligence or irresponsibility in government. In such a case no criminal charges would be brought against them. They will only have to suffer the consequences of publicity given to their offences. They would be confronted with the results of the investigation on television, in the papers, and posted on the walls.[17]

The problems connected with ex post facto legislation or, in the language of the US Constitution, with a bill of attainder were, of course, also discussed by several participants of the conference. So too were the checks a statute of limitations imposed on political justice.[18]

The next contribution to the public debate on political justice so far, both on the political and more scholarly side, was the proposal of the Independent Lawyers' Forum, the professional group which initiated the Opposition Round Table (EKA) talks last year.[19] The Independent Lawyers presented a draft bill with appropriate explanations which will, undoubtedly, constitute an important stepping stone in the work of the new Parliament and Ministry of Justice.

The Independent Lawyers took over the principle of collective indictment from Law iii of 1990, discussed above. But they insisted on the analogy of objective responsibility in the Hungarian law of torts. The driver of a car is expected to drive carefully, and not to cause harm to anybody, similarly the managers of the national economy should have taken care to avoid the present mess.

Such an approach would undermine the autonomy of the executive branch of government. Any policies which were considered disastrous could give rise to special proceedings against the ministers responsible.

The sanctions envisaged by the proposal include measures which are, clearly, of a confiscatory character.

At this point, therefore, the analogy with the law of torts breaks down. The economy would not be compensated by the confiscation of property accumulated by former ministers. This would clearly be a punitive measure.

The Independent Lawyers wanted to extend the time limits of the investigation as far back as the first Communist constitution of 1949. The statute of limitations, as they argued, should not be operative for that period of time, since the courts were not independent and, therefore, there was no real likelihood of prosecution.

This argument did not take into account the rationale behind statutes of limitations and related provisions. This is an enormous subject, but two aspects stand out. One is the difficulty of proof after a long time, the other is connected with the inherent conservatism of law, and as such is particualrly relevant to the present subject.

In the course of time all kinds of consequences, good or bad, accrue to an original action starting the whole process, however evil it might have been in the first place. The law is, therefore, always reluctant to overturn long-established conditions of the private lives of people.[20]

All this is a matter of degree, of course, depending on how obnoxious the original act was. There is, obviously, a difference in this respect between criminal acts, like murder and torture, and the kind of irrationality which the Communists displayed in their management of national resources.

The discussion of political justice in Hungary has a weakness, and that is excessive reliance on legal procedure and state action in general.

If the main purpose, as was claimed by many lawyers arguing for political justice, is to reveal the truth, to establish responsibility, to give moral satisfaction to the nation, and not to punish those who are responsible, why could not this be done without judicial

powers? Are historians and economic analysts, with adequate access to the relevant data and documents, less effective than prosecutors, judges and parliamentary commissions, when it comes to establising responsibility? If one prefers tribunals, all kinds of private commissions could be formed, consisting of distinguished experts and moral authorities.

There are, of course, advantages and disadvantages on both sides. The court can summon witnesses, can force them to tell the truth under the threat of contempt and perjury proceedings, but it is bound by the rules of evidence. A social tribunal on the other hand has no hold over its living sources, but is not restricted in its quest for truth by technicalities.

Looking at it from the aspect of the rule of law, however, there is an overwhelming advantage on the side of a private investigation. There is no need, then, to tinker with the statute of limitations, or to invent ex post facto provisions or to make use of other dubious devices of political justice.

It is hard to escape the suspicion that the temptation to use legal procedures to cope with the legacy of the past, is part of the problem rather than its solution.

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NOTES

[1] See Lally Weymouth's report in the *Washington Post* as quoted in *Guardian Weekly* of February 25, 1990.

[2] The disguised variety of the Communist press is no less busy in spreading this phony moral indignation. The weekly *Reform* is a typical tabloid. There is, at least, one national symbol and one nude on the cover of each issue. The "Independent Democratic Magazine", as the sub-title runs, appears to be radically anti-Communist to the naive reader. But, when it matters, the Communist message is unmistakeably there. There were, e.g., two lead stories in the issue of April 6, 1990. One on the heroes of the 1956 uprising, the freedom fighters. Its main point is that candidates belonging to that category failed at the elections. The other lead story is about the purge to be expected after a new government takes over. It

starts with the photograph of a former Olympic gold medalist, the boxer Gedő, who lost his job and had to set up a shoe shining stand on Heroes' Square; then continues with a quotation from Gyula Horn, (former) Minister of Foreign Affairs, the most popular Communist leader, warning against the coming purge, then come many other reports about distinguished government officials who are planning to retire, to start business ventures, etc.

[3] I will rely on the only full-length monograph on the subject known to me: Kircheimer, 1961.

[4] Unger, 1986, pp. 5-6, 89-90, etc.

[5] In Hungary, the revision of political sentences is being done in two different ways, as I intimated in the text. Either the sentences are quashed by the Supreme Court (not to be confused with the new Constitutional Court) on technical grounds, or there is a retrial.

In the latter case the public has the opportunity to relive the whole ghastly experience. The surviving judges and attorneys, the stage managers of the show, have to give an accunt of their sinister operations.

This happened during the retrial of the Standard Case. The Standard Co. was a subsidiary of I.T.T., and all the senior staff were imprisoned or executed for industrial espionage and sabotage in 1950.

A fascinating television documentary was made of the whole story by Anna Merei, a film director and Vera Pécsi, a historian.

[6] In constructing the first two types, I leaned heavily on Kircheimer, 1961, ch. 3 and Schmitt, 1928, para 12, i, 5.

[7] Cf. Schmitt, 1928, para 9.

[8] It is not clear yet who will claim the dubious distinction of being the first to introduce confiscation into parliamentary debate.

[9] See an interview with Csaba Hámori, under the title "Property test—according to European standards", in *Népszabadság* of February 28, 1990. Note the adjective "European"!

[10] *Magyar Közlöny*, February 12, 1990

[11] "It shall make proposals to be acted upon" says the Parliamentary Decision no. 12. February 14, 1990 as published in *Magyar Közlöny, ibid. Proposals to whom? What kind of action is envisaged?*

[12] "A commission disappears", *Népszabadság*, April 6, 1990.

[13] The most notable was Andras Sajó, the distinguished legal scholar who, in his mild and sophisticated way, called attention to the dangers of political justice. Bence et al., eds., 1990.

[14] Maria Ludassy and Mihály Vajda, ibid.

[15] János Kelemen and György Bence, ibid.

[16] Alajos Dornbach and István Nehéz-Possony, ibid.

[17] This was the position of the legal scholar Csaba Varga (not to be confused with the National People's Party leader), ibid. It is instructive to compare this conclusion with the ideas about the "truth phase" and "justice phase" of such an investigation, developed by Mendez (1987) and Neier (1990). The Hungarian lawyers, most probably, did not know the first and could not yet know the second publication.

[18] The whole conference was amply covered by the media. Thus, the results had a considerable influence on the subsequent discussion in Hungary. I don't want to enter into the details of the press debate which has been dominated by demands for more political justice. But a few cautionary voices were also heard, as Hankiss, 1990 and Bence, 1990.

[19] Independent Lawyers' Forum, 1990. I want to express my thanks to Dr Pál Bártfay, who kindly sent me the text of the proposal.

[20] Cf. Burke, 1790, p. 378.

László Csaba

Gearing Up for the Economic Future

In Eastern Central and Southeastern Europe the state socialist system has failed in one country after another. Neo-Stalinist regimes have collapsed and gradually given way to pluralist democracy. The countries of the region have put behind their planned economies and aim to create genuine market economies. Autarchic economic policies followed for decades are being replaced by adjustment to the world economy. Efforts are made to join once more the technological, social and intellectual mainstream. With the continuing thaw in relations between the two superpowers, with the pull-back from military confrontation, with the accelerated withdrawal of troops stationed abroad, the creation of European unity has again become a real possibility. Under the impact of the new Soviet foreign policy, and with the effective help of the West, the divided continent of postwar years has radically changed. Today it is already possible, and even necessary, to establish new relations going beyond alliances. This is what Hungary also aims at by consistently implementing agreements with the European Community, by preparing for association with the Community, as well as by giving notice of her intention to join in the foreseeable future, formally and with full rights, the European integration.

If only because of the nature and initial costs of the errors of a pluralist democracy in the making, it is impossible in Hungary today or tomorrow to take all those drastic measures which the self-contained logic of a one-sidedly monetarist-inspired policy of adjustment would theoretically impose.

President François Mitterand's notion of a European confederation intended to create a unified economic area is worthy of attention and Hungarian support. The Hungarian people, a third of whom live outside the state frontiers, are particularly interested to see that European economic and political unity is created as soon as possible on the basis of Western values, i.e., recognition of individual and collective rights, and that frontiers in the central and eastern parts of the continent should become spiritualised.

Even when speaking of European integration one cannot forget that what had been the countries of state socialism were of many kinds—in historical, economic, political, ideological and cultural terms—during the period of their artificial unity and coordinated foreign policy. With the disintegration of state socialism, these differences tend to grow and will not diminish. That is why an approach, manifest in the press and in financial circles, which considers these countries, of differing origins and developing in various directions, as a uniform—though reformed—Eastern bloc has its dangers.

Reality and development courses differ widely. A common feature is that we have to cope through our own strength in the first place, although it is desirable that we should not be left to our own devices. Another common feature, at least from the Western point of view, is that it is in the direct interest, not only of the particular countries but also of the larger European community, that none of the countries that have shaken off dictatorships should go the way of the Weimar Republic, none should find itself in an impasse.

The conditions are essentially different from those encountered earlier by the Mediterranean countries of the European Community or, re-

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cently, by South Korea. In those states authoritarian political regimes pursued enlightened economic policies: they furthered economic progress and modernisation, including an opening to the world economy. Political democracy there can rely on an essentially pluralist market economy, which in turn called for an appropriate political superstructure. The collapse of socialism, on the other hand, was due to its bankruptcy. The economic and political problems, the business-cycle and structural crises, the break-up of the economic system and the system of planned international economic relations that had earlier been taken for granted, coincided.

The democratic changes of 1989-90 were therefore generated by the economic impracticability of the previous systems. Political change will at long last make it possible to put the relevant questions. It is up to the new governments to answer them, coordinating the requirements of differently motivated and not even congruent measures to avert the crisis. This democratic state, however, has inherited an economic and social structure and efficiency standards which will hardly produce, through organic self-improvement, the results that adjustment to the world economy requires. It is therefore necessary that governments play a more active part than the US-inspired theory of mainstream economic theory postulates, not only within the particular ex-socialist countries but in international relations as well. In Eastern Central Europe the challenge is precisely that the pluralist systems established in the 1990s should create their own stable economic foundations and at the same time make up for the mistakes of the past. The countries of the region are hardly in a position to do this on their own.

Some have therefore wondered whether it would not be possible to set Eastern Europe on its feet in the manner that West Europe was after 1948, analogous to the Marshall Plan and the European Payments Union. Reconstruction needs capital injection; the net outflow of resources characteristic of recent years has to be stopped. A less expensive way of creating convertibility, both for the societies of the countries concerned and for their foreign creditors, would involve the concerted strategy of the whole region and not of each country acting separately. (17)

This is difficult to dispute in broad outline; when it comes to details, however, matters stand differently. To start with, the problems of Eastern Central Europe differ from those of Southeastern Europe, and the problems of both from those of the Soviet Union, but those of individual countries and their concrete conditions do so to such an extent that there is no justification for tackling them in the same manner—nor can this be done. It is this that is decisive for economic policy on both the national and the international plane.

The rescheduling of debts at the start and the suspension of a part of the payments of interest worked in the consolidation programme of Poland which some economists thought worthy of imitation. In the past decade, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Rumania also resorted to rescheduling. Hungary, in spite of many difficulties, has always met its international commitments. Demands for debt relief were expressed during the election campaign in the spring of 1990, but the present Hungarian government and the coalition parties did not act in those terms. Last year, the country's debt service burden exceeded 40 per cent of export earnings and it will be no less in the coming years either. Nevertheless, this level of servicing can be met, though not easily; indeed, under adverse conditions in other years, (thus in 1982 and 1986) it was even higher (more than 60 per cent) than last year, and still Hungary did not reschedule. There is no economic emergency, no financing crisis, especially since, with the passing of pre-election uncertainty, the larger part of the deposits withdrawn in the first three months have again been placed in the National Bank. The debts of Poland are due mostly to foreign governments or to government encouraged big banks, which have already written off most of the credits they had issued in the 1970s as regards their own books (though not for Poland); but Hungary is indebted to private bankers and raises a good part of its loan on the cheap and modern bond market. Thus, as regards immediate foreign capital investment, Hungary and Poland are not in the same category, nor will they be in the foreseeable future.

In Czecho-Slovakia, the dismantling of the system of central plan directives, the monetarisation of the economy, and the privatisation have only started this year. In Hungary, on the other hand, reforms in progress for two decades now—however half-hearted they may have been—have created the foundation of financial management and marketing for thousands of

business executives and the state administration. The most important institutions of a market economy have also come into being: their sphere of operation must be enlarged, that's all. In the course of 1990, the Hungarian government will transfer entire sectors to private ownership. A stock exchange is functioning, and the Hungarian currency, the forint, is convertible for the foreign investor, since he is free to transfer 100 per cent of his profits. He may establish a company of 100 per cent foreign ownership, and can freely acquire any factor of production or property within the country, except—for the time being—land. About 80 per cent of Hungarian prices fall under the category of free prices. Western imports are 80 per cent liberalised. The policy of liberalising imports has been going on for two years now and has not upset the balance of trade (the 1989 disequlibrium of the current account can be explained by mistakes committed in the tourist trade and in the short-term regulation of trade in roubles, mistakes which have been succesfully eliminated in 1990). While some members of the government of Czecho-Slovakia made monetarist-inspired statements, (12) that same government responds to the economic difficulties with typical measures of bureaucratic control: thus the introduction of petrol coupons at differentiated prices for foreigners, with bans on purchases and exports and similar provisions. In Hungary, on the other hand, the government has so far refrained from coping with difficulties by administrative action which is not in conformity with the market. In a number of other countries, only the dissolution of the socialist system of large-scale organisation is on the agenda but in Hungary recent decades have seen the emergence of tens of thousands of entrepreneurs, involving about 20 to 25 per cent of the undertakings. This is no longer mere simulation of competition but its reality. The privatisation of large state firms, spontaneous and also state-guided, has started. Despite some difficulties[1] a result has been the transfer of impersonal state property to concrete owners interested in increasing their assets. Foreign capital has played a (16) positive role in this process. True, the establishment of one or another company has led to public protest in cases when the action, by taking advantage of conspicuous gaps in previous Hungarian regulations, (7) became so to speak excessively profitable. Such gaps must be closed off for the very reason that the country reckons with the participation of foreign capital as a strategic factor of economic development in the long run. And this can be well established only if it is in accordance with European norms of fair trading, and not if tax evasion and dishonestly acquired property are the rule. Thus, the manoeuvres of the Axel Springer Group, which bought only furnishings of offices but simply "forgot" to pay for the newspaper itself—the title, established circulation, etc. i.e., its true capital value—obviously do not create confidence in the capital-recipient country, and no one can interpret the prevention of such deals as populist-nationalist rabble rousing.

Accelerated privatisation, based on the intensive and organic participation of foreign capital, is at the focus of a three-year economic programme to be drawn up by the new government. This programme avoids the shock therapy employed in Poland and Yugoslavia. The objective is to create a socially controlled market economy (*Soziale Marktwirtschaft*). This programme is designed not for an economy in utter chaos, where most people have become passive and indifferent, but for an economy already in process of transformation, in which a great many people have a stake and hence something to lose. In Hungary neither the economic nor the social situation requires government-generated shocks. (8)

An essential feature of the present situation is that the nature of gradualism has radically changed. Arrangements called progressive changes in 1990 go far beyond even the most radical objectives of the preceding decade, and political change makes this a matter of course. The economic situation no longer permits half-hearted measures. The shock situation—for business-cycle policy—is already present: industrial production has drastically declined, to an extent expressed by a two-digit percentage figure in 1990. The number of unemployed may already in 1990 reach 100,000 which, by Western standards, is not really high as yet (only 2 to 3 per cent), but nevertheless a ten to twelve-fold growth in a year compared to 1989.

Singular developments of particular importance among the factors inducing the recession are the effects produced by the dwindling of the Comecon market and by the collapse of the long-standing organisation of integration. A favourable development from the point of view of system dynamics is that the state-controlled

trade system, institutionalised in Comecon, has collapsed. In recent years all attempts at reform—or progressive transformation—ended in failure. Declarations could not induce any change in commercial practice. This international extension of planning by directives, which had for years been an obstacle to experiments with the market in Hungary, is no more. At the same time the abruptness of change—for the most part the result of government decisions being deferred in previous years—is now a heavy burden on the country. In respect of business-cycle policy, the reason is that the decline by a quarter in Hungarian external trade with Comecon countries is difficult to handle as regards production and employment policy as well as income policy. This is true if Hungary will be able to meet the current account targets agreed with the IMF at the beginning of the year. As to the cost of evacuating the Soviet Army: Hungary does not accept liability for this but may well have to bear a proportion of the total in the end.

This is probably going to amount to a billion dollars. In respect of structural and employment policy, Hungary has got into a difficult position. The range of firms operating on a single market—i.e., capable of selling only within Comecon—largely overlaps that of non-competitive enterprises in the crisis sectors which are grappling with liquidity problems. These unstable companies have to be surveyed, reorganised and transformed into private and joint undertakings. To do so, it is necessary to map out a programme of consolidation in which the government would only assure blanket conditions, while know-how and some working capital would be provided by foreign entrepreneurs. A World Bank structural adjustment loan is available for this purpose.

The Comecon crisis, however, gives rise to difficulties not only in the business sector. From the economic point of view it is welcome that trade based on obligatory quotas will be replaced by settlement in free-currency, based on the firms assuming the necessary risks. Feathers will fly as feather-bedding is eliminated. The difficulties encountered by the makers of non-competitive products, or industrial products not wanted by Soviet central planning agencies, and firms selling in the West—after minimal processing—raw materials purchased from Comecon are in the long run to be considered manifestations of desired structural adaptation. In the short term, however, such difficulties add up to a considerable deterioration in terms of trade and to a gap in the balance of payments with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the position of Hungarian agriculture, which had earlier pursued a lop-sided technocratic development course and is still specialised in mass produce, was not improved by the introduction of true world-market prices. Without exaggerating difficulties, it is therefore easy to see that in the course of 1991-1993 changes favourable in the long run will entail a switch-over loss of $600 to $800 million for Hungary (more pessimistic economists provide even higher estimates). In that period Hungary will have to confront major liquidity problems, that being the time when the loans which financed the delaying policy of the second half of the 1980s will mature—credits which originally could hardly have been expected to be remunerative. The country has a close interest in exploiting possibilities inherent in international banking practice. The abolition of state trade is a declared objective of the International Monetary Fund. It is usually ready to grant bridging credits to member countries for this purpose. These indispensable credits granted by the Fund are necessary but not adequate conditions for satisfying the real financing demand of the switch-over.

With regard to the demand for financing, or in respect of assistance to Eastern Central Europe, we have to keep our feet on the ground. There is a certain anxiety, for example, that support for this region could be at the expense of aid to developing countries. Such anxieties appear to be unfounded in view of the effective amount of capital flowing into the countries of Eastern Central Europe. There appears to be an inverse relationship between the amount of writing devoted to the subject and the amount of capital—especially foreign direct investment in the region. Thus, according to a table published on page 221 of the latest report (for 1989/90) of the UN Economic Commission for Europe, Hungary has already received $2.7 billion in aid from the West. By examining the figure more closely, however, one can see that this aggregate figure includes the credits granted in 1989 by Bavaria and Baden-Württenberg, totalling DM 500 million (increased by a further DM 100 million during József Antall's visit to Germany), of which about DM 12 million could thus far be utilised.[2] Half or three-quarters of

the credits of hundreds of millions of dollars offered by governments and international organisations are often left unused. This is why Hungary will be in sore need—in addition to the revolving financial credits it needs for its debt service—of three kinds of external resources: a) Non-recurrent long-term credits for the purpose of bridging the switch-over losses of the abolition of state trade through 1991-93; b) Credits for restructuring and infrastructural development where the money-market considerations of profitability cannot always be employed. (It is of paramount importance that in May 1990 the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development was established with a nominal capital of 10 billion ECU, and that the highly important Soviet credit and aid programme is treated separately.) c) In comparison to the export credit lines, and even government credits in general—as appears also from the above examples, it is evidently more important to speed up the earlier insignificant influx of working capital. This is where business risk and financing are most closely connected. On the basis of this year's developments, it seems conceivable that the foreign direct investment flowing into Hungary will increase, from the earlier years' ridiculously low $200-$300 million to a magnitude of $600 to $800 million, climb to double that in the course of 1992-9, and come close to the amount typical of South European recipient countries about the size of Hungary. A condition is that the government should consistently put into practice the suggestions of economists translating pro-market slogans into unpopular but necessary package deals. Since the Hungarian government does not wish to undertake basically business-type decisions, one cannot expect West European governments to do so. It would therefore be important and useful, in contrast to the intergovernmental transactions of the 1970s, for the governments of Common Market countries to provide, in a greater measure than during previous years, investment and credit guarantees with a view to backing private investors who still hold the political risk to be excessive, or who are scared off by the temporary recession which is inevitable in the Hungarian economy.

The European Community is not merely an inspiration for Hungary but also the country's most important trading partner. The programmes aimed at opening to the world economy and modernising the national economy make it particularly important for Hungary to have access to the single market of the post-1992 Community. The generous actions which the Community and its member countries have lately undertaken are highly valuable, including the one-year suspension of quantitative restrictions, the extension to Hungary of the general system of preferences (GSP), and an ending to discrimination to which countries which engage in state trade are subjected. Since the Hungarian economy is in a mess, and its adaptation can be successful only after a process lasting several years, it could be helped by the extension of these facilities over a number of years. In keeping with the nature of a market economy, Hungarian enterprises have not been condemned in any anti-dumping proceedings, for several decades now, which is indicative of their fair business practices. In agriculture as well, which rates as the most sensitive economic sector, the Hungarian share of 1.9 per cent, characteristic of the early 1970s among the suppliers of the Community, fell to 1 per cent by 1989, i.e., by half, and the current share is considerably lower in other sectors, including the sensitive ones. There is thus no cause to feel anxiety about West European jobs as a consquence of the removal of obstacles to Hungarian trade, or to be afraid of an invasion of the market, if only because of the scale of the operations involved.

Hungary wishes to adapt itself to the EEC system also in respect of trading infrastructure. As regards standardisation, legislation, accounting and statistical systems, the uniform Community norms will prevail. The whole of education and training, but particularly management skills, the exchange of specialists and students—an exchange unbalanced by its very nature—may become an essential building stone of the common house of a united Europe in the making. Within this scheme Hungary counts on the opportunities offered to it by the European community—the Tempus, Phare, Lingua and ACE programmes, possibly participation in the Erasmus programme that furthers in practice the integration of European universities. The internationalisation of knowledge and human capital, becoming possible right at the outset, can lay the foundation of European integration in the long run.

An important recent development has been the rendering of financial assistance by the 24 industrially developped countries, including the

Community of Twelve, to help Hungary's restructuring and reform policy, especially the granting of credit of one billion ECU. At the same time the Hungarian economy will be characterised by a transfer of resources negative in the aggregate in the period between 1990 and 1993, in as much as Hungary can satisfy IMF requirements regarding short-term adjustment. In Western economic literature, however, it is a commonplace—and the Brady Plan recognises this, with regard to the developing countries—that the requirements of short-term adjustment of the balance of payments and that of long-term adjustment of the economic structure are far from identical. In Hungary all this coincides with the radical but peaceful transformation of the political and economic system. Experience has shown that a period of a change of system is not really the most appropriate time for insisting on balance-of-payments surpluses; moreover, material sacrifices are usually also justified in the interest of the peaceful character of this transition. The point is therefore that, if only because of the nature and initial costs of the errors of a pluralist democracy in the making, it is impossible in Hungary today or tomorrow to take all those drastic measures which the self-contained logic of a one-sidedly monetarist-inspired policy of adjustment would theoretically impose. What has to be striven for is the politically feasible and socially sustainable; otherwise capitalist pluralist change cannot be maintained for long neither politically nor economically.

Finally, as regards the broadest correlations of contacts between Hungary and the Common Market, it is worth keeping in mind not only the North-South but also the East-West direction. The fate of the whole of Eastern Central Europe, and of Hungary in particular, a country that has excelled in implementing peaceful transition, will be of exemplary value not only for those taking an interest in the issues, but—in the foreseeable future—to all those countries which, in one form or another, have been, or are still, going through the experience of state socialism and of the confrontation of two military alliances. Opening to the outside world, renewal, the forces of Europeanism on the one hand, and the conservative isolationist, autochthonous line not averse to military solutions on the other, are characteristic parallel trends in the entire history of the most populous state of the continent, the Soviet Union. The conflict between these trends has become overt and direct. It is not a matter of indifference from the point of view of the smaller nations in the Soviet Union, nor from that of the Russian nation, what practical results will follow from the democratic experiment in Eastern Central Europe. As regards the immediate future, the question also arises whether there is any justification for permanently counting on an acquiescent external policy recognising the conditions of dependence and interdependence in the world, and on a general line of democracy at home, at a time when the countries of what used to be called "peace camp" receive, as part of their new liberty, only poverty and the chance of joining the far from short queue for credits and aid.

The democratic experiment in Eastern Central Europe is not bound to succeed. But if chaos replaces it, then it will not remain the domestic business of the small nations of the region, something which the welfare states of the West can simply ignore, relying on their armed forces and immigration controls. The game will not be over for a long time, the stakes are high. It is thus worth emphasising, besides the short-term conflicts, the longer-term but quite real community of strategic interests between European nations, East and West alike, who have again met in a common political and cultural choice.

NOTES

[1] In some cases a state-owned enterprise has been organised into a company by manoeuvres aimed at avoiding transfer to genuine private ownership (with a view to ensuring the survival of the executives in place); at such times the modern form has become the obstacle to subsequent—genuine—privatisation. (19)

[2] Source: *Világgazdaság*, 19 June 1990. According to the official (20) in charge of managing the Hungarian side of the credit line, it is possible in the most favourable case to disbourse an additional sum of DM 50-70 million (18); utilisation may be as high as 10 per cent. Veronika Pásztori drew my attention to this.

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Kálmán Mizsei

Shock or Therapy

Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary

In Eastern Central Europe, the disappearance of the Soviet type political system—and a consequent weakening of direct Soviet economic influence—has in principle largely increased the elbowroom of the national economic policies. A considerable part of the earlier constraints due to ideological and Soviet great power interests have been eliminated. This is at a time when crisis phenomena have become acute in the economic domain. After 1986 the external balance has deteriorated spectacularly in the countries of the region; as a result of this, as well as of the decomposition tendencies of the system, inflation has gathered momentum. The economies are, to put it mildly, stagnating. The opportunities for the economy to function according to the old routine have become narrow and the compulsion for change is becoming more urgent. In this process the dependence of the former socialist countries on the international financial world is growing and this limits their elbowroom in another direction.

Hungary needs an economic policy which relies on a slower but perhaps more tenacious fight against inflation, one which introduces convertibility more gradually. This must be based on more resolute privatisation than that in Poland or Yugoslavia.

It is under such political and economic conditions that the new non-communist regimes have been trying to run their crisis management, which is also intended to set into motion a systemic change. Before passing to this question, let me note that as the economic crisis grows, those countries which are most in debt and struggled against the largest inflation have drawn up successive stabilisation programmes with increasing frequency; owing to the earlier political barrriers these programmes have proved inadequate. The problems occurred most acutely first in countries which had earlier started on some sort of reform. Poland and Yugoslavia spent the whole 1980s struggling with external liquidity difficulties, and in both countries inflationary pressure, gathering strength over the decade, finally erupted in a hyper-inflation.

Although Hungary was more successful than the above two countries, her liquidity difficulties became acute, first in 1982 and, again, in recent months. At the beginning of 1990, the political hysteria surrounding price rises for a short time raised the spectre of an unbridled inflation. For the time being the hysteria has abated, but the causes have not ceased. Recently open inflation has grown in the countries which have kept to the established socialist economic system while shortages have continued; Bulgaria suspended the servicing of debts just in this year. The Soviet Union has similar liquidity difficulties.

In this article—referring to János Kornai—I wish to put under a magnifying glass a certain philosophy of the surgery for stabilisation and of the change of system. Such a change—relying on shock therapy—became official policy in Poland and Yugoslavia at the end of 1989. Since the beginning of 1990 they have been trying to implement a stabilisation programme of this type. A major contribution to such plans was made by Jeffrey Sachs, a young professor from Harvard University, who in the preceding years has achieved deserved international recognition through his active coopera-

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tion, leading to spectacular results in alleviating the hyperinflation and crisis-ridden economy of Bolivia.

The intellectual attraction of Sachs's philosophy is considerable. It may suffice to refer to the circumstance that the ideas of the young American economist influenced János Kornai's, and even the treatment of Eastern Europe by the IMF and the World Bank. They had not favoured Sachs earlier because of his views on debts. In the past year however, there have been definite signs of a change in doctrine, elements of which approach Sachs's therapy.

There is more to it than the influence of a persuasive economist. The belief is attractive that the operational logic of an economy can be suddenly switched by changing the rules. This is the substance of Sachs's philosophy. This premise became dominant in also the last stage of the work of the Blue Ribbon Committee, not least on account of the position taken up by foreign participants. (*Action programme for Hungary in transformation to freedom and prosperity*, April 1990).

There is nevertheless a fundamental difference between the two approaches. Sachs is clear in his mind that his proposals for a change of system are of such an order of magnitude that they have no chance without effective outside help. He wants not only to influence the economic policy of the country to be assisted, but also the international financial world's attitude to the given country. In other words, he wants to support the programme package of change by ensuring debt relief and new credits. In the case of some foreign participants of the Blue Ribbon Commission, less was involved. They did not try to open up a dialogue with the other side, the foreign creditors, but offered advice to a future Hungarian government on the basis of the old Central European adage: "the stakes are never too high for the one who watches the poker game".

The Polish and Yugoslav stabilisation therapy deserves special attention on the part of Hungarians, not least because in the first months of the tenure of the new Hungarian government the international financial community is likely to entertain expectations of similar radical surgery. Consequently, we must be completely clear about the probable consequences of such action.

In Poland the first government based on an end to the power monopoly of the Polish communists was formed in September 1989.

The pro-market economist Leszek Balcerowicz became Minister for Finance and Deputy Premier. He is held to be responsible for the stabilisation package plan on which Sachs had great influence. Yet, in the international press, the programme is almost exclusively identified with the Harvard professor, although Balcerowicz's Polish staff and such "foreign" economists as Jacek Rostowski, who moved home from London, also took part in its elaboration and managemenet. Balcerowicz first announced his ambitious stabilisation plan in the autumn of 1989 at the general meeting of the IMF. It was not modified in its basic features in the ensuing three months of detailed elaboration.

The programme focussed on the linking of the price rise tendency, which was already on the scale of hyperinflation, and a radical change of system. The government based its plan on radical market economy deregulation combined with monetarism. Prices have been almost completely liberalised, and according to what has been said, price hikes should have been limited by the strict regulation of the quantity of money in circulation.

Restrictions on foreign trade were also completely abolished in essence. The balance of payments governed foreign exchange policy. The Solidarnosc government gradually devalued the zloty after taking power, but on January 1, 1990 it carried out a devaluation so huge that it was designed to allow the new exchange rate to be left unchanged in the first few months of the stabilisation action. In the fast changing environment the exchange rate should have played the role of a nominal anchor. Regulation by the exchange rate was considered sufficient to permit the convertibility of the zloty for the domestic ecomic agents in Poland. In other words, the government decreed that the banking system was obliged to sell convertible currency against zlotys for imports at the official exchange rate. The starting exchange rate was 9,500 zloty = 1 US dollar.

On imports the government felt confidence in the power of monetary policy; in wages policy they were not so certain concerning the financial discipline of enterprises. Strict regulations of wages were issued. The administrative restriction on wages also has the function of rendering the limitation of demand much more

conspicuous on the consumer market in the first months of the shock therapy.

The regulation is relatively simple and declares the degree of inflation to which the enterprises can raise wages month by month, irrespective of performance. According to expectations, the corrective inflation should have been considerable in January. Then a 0.3 multiplier was applied to wage rises. The authors thought that, in the next three months, inflation would be moderated gradually and they set a more rigorous 0,2 multiplier for that period. The idea was that the tendency and expectation of rising prices would stop by May, and then a 0,6 multiplier would be sufficient to control inflation.

In the earlier inflationary period interest rates far from kept abreast with prices; thus real interest rates turned negative. One consequence of this was that the liquidity crisis which occurs everywhere in the reform-socialist economies, was transferred from the enterprise sector to the banking sector, and the relative value of the debts of the enterprises was reduced by inflation. The other consequence was the almost complete end to saving by the public and enterprises, as saving entailed real losses. The new government faced this situation and declared its intention to set incentive real interest rates.

The anti-inflationary policy was also helped by an extraodinarily severe budgetary policy. Expenditure was heavily cut, subsidies for enterprises or prices were almost entirely eliminated, and taxes were not reduced. No tax preferences of any kind were accorded the private sector, although the government has been in favour of privatisation from the start.

Balcerowicz reckoned with rapid and radical privatisation at the beginning of his tenure of office. The expected effects fed the hopes of stabilisation. The process of privatisation was expected to help balance the budget and to change the behaviour of enterprises.

The otherwise similar programme of the Yugoslav government was different in this respect although in the course of realisation these differences diminished. The Poles, contrary to their expectations, were unable to initiate considerable privatisation. In Yugoslavia the political changes are different, or at least they were delayed; the stabilisation programme however was already started by a Yugoslav Communist Federation government. True, a relatively large autonomy on the part of the government was made possible by the fact that the Communist Party was weakened by internal struggles. Nevertheless, privatisation was not yet part of government policy when the programme was initiated. At this point they also came into conflict with Sachs, who otherwise had a much more direct influence on Yugoslav than on Polish economic policy.

I believe that it was primarily the Polish experience that induced the Yugoslavs to resort to a strict freezing of wages, although free wage bargaining had been long established there. The autonomy enjoyed by the republics made a central wages policy difficult. The programme which was proposed in mid-December 1989, and introduced in January 1990, prescribed the freezing of wages. This was circumvented by some republics right at the start, but nevertheless the freeze was not entirely ineffective. The Yugoslav government also undertook to balance the budget and almost fully liberalised prices. Therefore a great burden was placed on monetary policy there as well. Thus the government promised the International Monetary Fund that the quantity of money in circulation would be expanded only in keeping with the growth of foreign exchange reserves. In Yugoslavia, the enterprise liquidity crisis had also largely shifted to the banking sphere by the negative real interests of the earlier period of high inflation.

Domestic convertibility of the currency came to pass, and an undertaking was given that the exchange rate would be tied to the Deutsche Mark.

The external debt of the two countries shows many differences. Not only is the total and per capita debt of Yugoslavia lower than that of Poland, but its capacity to produce foreign exchange income is also substantially higher. In Poland total annual convertible currency income—including the non-registered sphere—is under ten billion dollars; in the case of Yugoslavia, tourism, transfers home, and other invisibles cause receipts to exceed 20 billion dollars. Yugoslavia rescheduled its debts in 1988 on excellent terms, and thus its debt servicing rate sank to considerably under 20 per cent. On this account, the point of the Sachs prescription concerning debt relief is hard to interpret. It is all the more important in the case of Poland. The Western governments proved generous in the rescheduling of Poland's debts and in granting

new credits, as well as in supporting the interests of Poland in international organisations.

The result of the concerted international action is that within a year or two, counted from 1990, Poland will undoubtedly be a net importer of capital as opposed to being a considerable net capital exporter owing to the need to service the debts of earlier years. This will happen irrespective of whether Poland will succeed in becoming a beneficiary of the Brady plan or will in some other way achieve the abolition of some of its debts.

As this article is being written, the data of the first three months of the programme are already known, and these make possible the drawing of some conclusions. In both countries, after the early weeks of the corrective inflation, price rises came up against the barrier of reduced demand. Owing to the severity of wages regulation, this happened primarily in the consumer goods manufacturing industries. In neither country did the rate of price rises exceed five per cent per month in the third month of the programme. This, in an annual projection (80 per cent), lags considerably behind the rate of inflation of earlier years. Since there were no significant shortages in Yugoslavia, the rate of the corrective inflation was lower. On the other hand, in Poland the intensity of shortages rapidly declined, i.e. supplies on the market improved to a dramatic extent in these three months.

It is a further success in both countries that the convertibility of the currency and the maintenance of a stable exchange rate did not cause any particular problems. In Poland the 9,500 zloty dollar rate proved to be so stable that the free exchange rate of the private market also adjusted to it, without major fluctuations or central intervention. The balance of trade has improved in both countries. It is true, of course, that the strong decline in domestic demand is largely responsible. In order to maintain their liquidity they are forced to export more vigorously against convertible currency. In the case of Poland, there is no great pressure on the exchange rate at present either, since some reserves were built into the initial devaluation. This does not apply to Yugoslavia, where on account of inflation, the dinar is extraordinarily overvalued at the present exchange rate (1 DM = 7 dinars). For this reason the government has already deviated at several points from the rules of the game. Thus incoming economic or shopping travel has been severely restricted, as has also the exchange of foreign currency by Yugoslav citizens. But the situation is better in the sense that much higher foreign exchange reserves were built up in the first period, and for a few months the exchange rate could be maintained without risking the balance of payments, with corresponding beneficial effects on the domestic price level.

In connection with the external economic effects of the stabilisation programme it is worth drawing attention to the fact that, in the early months, when domestic demand was drastically reduced and shortages ceased, the enterprises reduced their exaggerated input stocks which characterised the earlier stage of the shortage economy. They are induced to do so also by monetarist restrictions. However, thanks to the scarcity of money at home it proved possible to reduce stocks mainly through exporting them. But this effect is only transitory, lasting three to six months, until a normal level of stocks corresponding to the new situation is reached.

The export offensive of the first few months is in some contradiction with the request for external assistance, since in the awareness of the considerable improvement in the balance of current payments, external partners are likely to harden their negotiating positions. It can be imagined however that later, when the relative undervaluation of the national currency becomes less marked, or it becomes overvalued, as in the Yugoslav case, this contradiction will be resolved in a specific way.

Looking at wages regulation, we have to note that here the role of political constraints is large. In the case of Poland, making use of Solidarnosc's political capital, a tough wages policy could be maintained in essence, although political resistance is growing. The populist trade union Solidarnosc cannot really be reckoned as a reliable supporter for a liberal economic policy; consequently in the longer run the government is probably vulnerable. Paradoxically, its position appears to be stable as long as the economy is in a bad shape, there being no alternative to the Balcerowicz team when it comes to technocratic competence.

In Yugoslavia, the outlook is even less favourable in the area of wages policy. The Serbian leadership's interests concerning the stabilisation programme are ambiguous, since suc-

cess would strengthen the position of Prime Minister Markovic. The republics would most easily be able to scuttle Markovic's programme by rejecting wages discipline, and signs of this can already be seen. If wages spiral upwards, this would increase domestic demand—which would again heat up inflation.

But I see the greatest problem in that the stabilisation programmes expect that in both countries the state-owned (or in the Yugoslav case the self-governing) enterprises should adjust to the market to an extent which is entirely unrealistic, owing to the hierarchy of interest due to the nature of ownership, which differs altogether from market motivation. This is evident in the fall of production, which is much larger than had been surmised by the plan. This gives rise to anxiety, especially in Poland, where in the first quarter the drop in industrial production amounted to 27 per cent. Within this figure the drop was around 40 per cent for the consumer goods industries. In heavy industry, the bastion of socialist production, the drop was smaller, and thus these industries may find it relatively easier to survive.

The question is to what extent this extreme and unprecedented drop in production will be moderated in the coming months. If the ability of the state-owned companies to adjust remains limited, then great improvements cannot be expected; one is justified in asking whether the suppression of inflation is worth the price that has to be paid.

A further problem is that the liquidity of firms did not deteriorate overmuch despite such unused capacities, and thus they have not been induced to restructure. The reduction in manpower is also proceeding slowly, although in Poland unemployment has appeared for the first time in many decades. The extent has not yet exceeded the minimum considered as frictional unemployment by economists.

It can be expected that if a tough monetarist policy is maintained, in the way customary in the earlier periods, in both countries, the size of delayed payments to each other and to the banks will grow among the state-owned enterprises and their level of liquidity will drop. According to the logic of the programme, bankruptcy proceedings must be rigorously taken against insolvent enterprises. This however raises those political questions on which I have already touched in connection with wages regulation. Will the system be able to resist the political pressure generated by the rapid growth of unemployment caused by bankruptcies? In addition, the question also arises whether the system is technically able to cope with a large number of bankruptcy cases.

The Yugoslav government had not planned to make privatisation part of its programme but it was urged to do so by the World Bank in the course of subsequent negotiations. It has, however, been discovered in the case of both countries that the problem of timing, i.e. that the institutional and legal conditions of privatisation were not set up prior to the starting of the programme, delayed preparatory work to such an extent that the privatisation of the state-owned and the self-governing companies is no longer able to contribute to the success of the programme. New private enterprises are being founded at a steady rate, although in Poland taxation severely inhibits the starting up of enterprises. Here, in my opinion, one could easily make exceptions, and more incentives could be provided for private enterprises. Nevertheless, given the end of the interest coalitions characterising the earlier system, a dynamic wave of privatisation is under way, especially in retail trade.

The real problems occur around the privatisation of existing enterprises. For political reasons both countries have abstained from the kind of managerial (or spontaneous) privatisation which caused storms in Hungary in 1989. In Poland legislative work on the Privatisation Act has been extremely long lasting. The Sejm accepted the bill in July 13 after almost 10 months of preparation and 15 subsequent amendments. Even the recent bill does not promise rapid privatisation since it emphasises mainly "privatisation by the state" instead of some decentralised forms as well as because it cuts the potential demand for Polish capital goods by restricting the foreign engagement to 10 per cent of the privatised enterprises. In Yugoslavia, stubbornly surviving collectivistic notions, as well as the diverging interests of the republics, impede large-scale privatisation.

The extreme difficulties of privatisation of the countries abandoning socialism are well-known: either they speed up the process and that means ad hoc action of often doubtful legality at the expense of economic efficency, or they base privatisation on more solid prin-

ciples—but then things take an inordinately long time. No ideal solution appears in sight and it is not likely that there exists one in principle which promises favourable results in respect of the economic and moral substance and of the time scale as well.

But if this is so the longer term prospects of the above described stabilisation programmes can indeed be questioned. In my opinion the breach is just about inevitable within a few months as the above described tensions accumulate. One cannot assume a lasting major change in the attitude of state enterprises. Of course, I do not claim that radical steps were unnecessary in the Yugoslav and the Polish situation. The circumstances of hyperinflation justify dramatic intervention. But conditions must be created at the beginning of the surgery permitting privatisation over a wide range, and this should influence the attitude of the managers of state enterprises. It is thus likely that the cumulation of domestic tension will at one point lead to a new price hike.

In my opinion corvertibility before its time is not sound. I believe that with the growth of tension a declared or tacit U-turn becomes inevitable. This has a worse effect on economic agents than the more gradual but better-founded introduction of convertibility.

As I mentioned early on, I am afraid that the euphoria associated with the shock therapy will have as a consequence that some will insist on such a programme in Hungary as well. The situation in Hungary differs from that of the two other countries at two essential points: so far Hungary has not been forced to reschedule debts, and the rate of inflation is substantially below that in Poland or Yugoslavia before the stabilisation programme. Consequently, and also on account of the doubts expressed above, it would appear that Hungary needs an economic policy which relies on a slower but perhaps more tenacious fight against inflation, one which introduces convertibility more gradually. This must be based on more resolute privatisation than that in Poland or Yugoslavia.

My biggest problem concerns priorities. The general view is that the time horizons of stabilisation and of radical institutional reform differ, and consequently coordinating them is a vain hope. On the contrary, I am inclined to argue that stabilisation can only be temporarily successful in the established institutional environment. This, of course, does not mean that hyperinflation in Poland and Yugoslavia did not call for drastic measures. But it is wrong to call this a reform of the system while so little is being done regarding privatisation, the most important area of the reform.

The relative advantages of Hungary are precisely that radical institutional reform is already more advanced while inflation still runs at a mere 26 per cent. A radical and tough programme of inflation-management is needed, the success of which will however depend on how strong will be the accompanying privatisation process—including the tapping of foreign equity capital resources. The experience of many countries has shown that without some sort of decentralisation rapid privatisation is impossible. Czecho-Slovak economic policy makers have considered the distribution of property vouchers as a right of citizenship, or the delegation of entitlements concerning privatisation to future boards of management. Many options are on the cards and western methods relying on central action alone must be ruled out.

True enough, spontaneous privatisation means opening the gates wide to carpet baggers out to make a fast buck (this is inevitable), but the squaring of the circle must be attempted. The instruments of the law must be given some clout as soon as possible to persuade people to take the rules of the economic game seriously. It is questions such as these that will decide whether Hungary and the rest of the region will avoid sinking into a Third World bog before the century is out.

John Lukacs

Fifty Years Ago: The Eighty Day Duel

Exactly fifty years ago—to be precise, from 10 May to 31 July 1940—the destiny of the world (perhaps more than the outcome of the war) depended on a duel between two men: Adolf Hitler and Winston Churchill. Both the beginning and the end of their duel was marked by extraodinary coincidences. After fifty years, a lengthening perspective as well as all kinds of accumulated research material allow us to reconstruct some of the extraodinary conditions of their duel. Hitler, it would appear, had come closer to winning the war and Churchill's position—within England—was more fragile than we have been accustomed to think.

In 1940 the 10th of May was a Friday. Hitler had left the Neue Reichskanzlei the previous evening, in great secrecy. He and his staff boarded his special train (code-named "Amerika") at a station outside Berlin. He wanted to give the impression that he was going north, perpaps to Hamburg, on his way to Norway. A few minutes after midnight the train changed course, so efficiently and silently that hardly any of its occupants woke to notice that it began to move in a different direction, to the west. Four hours later it hissed to a stop. The passengers pulled up their shades and they glimpsed a station building without a sign. All place signs had been removed. What they could see all around were the yellow signboards of the Wehrmacht. Presently they learned that they were in Wuskirchen, between Bonn and Aachen. Then they were driven to barracks up the hill from the village of Rodert in the Muenstereifel, that would be their headquarters for the next twenty-three days. Its code-name was "Felsennest".

The "Chef" (this was how his staff referred to Hitler) was fresh, determined, nervous. His appearance at that hour was unusual for him. Customarily he would not rise and make his toilet until after eleven. He made a gesture to his staff, who quickly gathered around him, anxious to hear what the Fuehrer was about to say. "Gentlemen", he said, "the offensive against the Western Powers has begun." They could hear from the distance the dim thud of artillery.

The greatest adventure in Adolf Hitler's career had now started. It would unfold at a rate unimagined by everyone, including himself. In less than forty days he would be the master of Europe. His flag would fly from the North Cape to the Pyrenees. His armies would conquer Western Europe at a cost of men and equipment that was less than what the Imperial German army had spent over a comparable period of time for the sake of a few miles across the trenches in the Great War.

Late in the afternoon of 10 May, in London, Winston Churchill became the Prime Minister of Great Britain. That was the first coincidence. These two events had no

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connection with each other. For almost a week a parliamentary storm had been brewing in London. The House of Commons had grown restive, impatient, dissatisfied with Chamberlain's feeble conduct of the war, and with the failure of the British in Norway. It is an ironic paradox that Churchill, in his capacity as First Lord of the Admiralty, had been responsible for much of the failure in Norway. He did not deny that; during the increasingly dramatic debates he stood loyally by Chamberlain. But it was now the gathering belief, also among many of Chamberlain's supporters, that a government of national unity was needed. All of that crystallized in the days before that fatal Tenth of May. Chamberlain (and perhaps the King, too) wanted Halifax. As late as the morning of the 10th, Chamberlain thought he should not resign. Yet the decision was no longer his; the Labour leaders would not serve in a national government under him. The news of Churchill's appointment was broadcast to the people of England at nine that night.

When Churchill drove up to Downing Street next day, a small crowd cheered him. "Poor people", he said to his companion, General Ismay, "I can give them nothing but disaster for quite a long time". When the entered they building, his eyes were rimmed with tears. Two days later he made his famous speech: "I have nothing to offer but blood, tears, toil and sweat."

We do not know what Hitler thought of the news from London when he retired for the night on the tenth of May. He may not have been surprised. He had once before remarked that one day Chamberlain might be gone and the British then would give Churchill a try. A try: but not much more. He knew that Churchill was one of the bitterest of his enemies. For this, but also for other reasons, Hitler despised him.

He was wrong to do so. It is dangerous for a man to underestimate a determined opponent. It seems that he did not yet wholly comprehend how, beneath and beyond the great war of armies and navies and entire peoples that he had started in Western Europe, he would be involved in something like a duel with Churchill.

This is not a reconstruction of the dramatic summer of 1940. It is a summary of the reciprocal perceptions of Hitler and Churchill on which the entire outcome of the war then depended. The essence of the story is that Churchill "read" Hitler better than Hitler "read" Churchill. This had nothing to do with intelligence information, or with code-breaking or "Ultras" or "Enigmas" then. It had very much to do with the insight that the two participants had into each other's character.

At least since early 1938 Hitler knew that Churchill was a determined enemy of Chamberlain's appeasement policy. At the same time he knew that Churchill's influence and reputation in England were not firm. The year 1938 was the most successful in Hitler's political career, it was the least successful in Churchill's. Hitler knew that Churchill was almost censured by his own constituents for having attacked Chamberlain in the Commons after Munich. Beginning in October 1938, Hitler (and Goebbels) began to attack Churchill by name, in the German press and radio. By the summer of 1939 these personal attacks were intensified. Yet Hitler felt little more than contempt for Churchill. He knew that Churchill was a heavy drinker. He knew that, at least on one occasion, Churchill received money from a Jewish supporter for his personal finances. All of this contributed to Hitler's disdain for someone whom he often referred to as a "Dilettant". All of it crystallised within his larger, ideological view. He, Hitler, was a radical nationalist; Churchill was a reactionary of the most hopeless kind. Often Hitler referred to Churchill privately (and not only in his speeches) as someone who represented the 16th century, someone whose very ideas and personality were unsuited to leading a nation in the 20th.

To this we may add a personal hypothesis. Hitler's knowledge of men was very

peculiar though also very acute. The peculiarity resided in something like a sixth sense that he possessed: the instinctive ability to size up someone through his weaknesses, perhaps something akin to the instinct with which a dog smells human fears. In 1932 he had a chance to meet Churchill, which he missed. Motoring through Germany, working on the biography of his ancestor Marlborough, Churchill was in Munich for a few days that summer. Hitler's social secretary Hanfstaengl came to a party. Churchill said that he would like to meet Hitler. Hanfstaengl reported this to Hitler next morning. Hitler—who did not at all refrain from meeting English polticians at the time, and who had no reason to particularly dislike Churchill then—for some reason refused to do so. I have ofter thought that he may have missed a chance then. Had he met Churchill in person he would have understood him better.

At the same time Churchill's understanding of Hitler was phenomenal. He never underestimated him. As early as October 1930 (!), at a dinner at the German Embassy in London, he expressed his anxiety about what Hitler might achieve, that it might perhaps lead to a new war. Throughout the 1930s he warned the English people about Hitler. As late as 1937 he expressed his respect for Hitler's genius in leading his nation out of its humiliation, adding that he wished that England would find such a leader if she ever found herself in such abject circumstances. He understood something, too, that goes against the still largely accepted view: that Hitler's world view had crystallized in Munich in 1918-1919, and not earlier in Vienna. During their duel in 1940, there was an unusual reversion of their customary habits. Hitler, who read relatively little intelligence material (at that time presented to him by Walther Hewel, Ribbentrop's representative at Hitler's headquarters, and by the *Braune Blaetter*—brown because of the papers on which they were typed) read assiduously all kinds of fragmentary reports about what was going on in London. Churchill, who, unlike Hitler, was a writer rather than an orator (all of his famous 1940 speeches notwithstanding), had an intuitive comprehension of what Hitler might or might not do; he relied on his own judgment even more than whatever intelligence had reached him about Hitler's decisions or movements; and during those crucial eighty days of their duel he was almost always right.

In 1940 this was of great help to Churchill; but it was not decisive. To comprehend one's opponent's strategy in a duel is a great plus; but it will not necessarily decide the outcome. During those eighty days at least Hitler was much the stronger of the two. Hitler thought that Churchill's position was weak. In this he was largely right. It explains much (though not all) of his fatal decision, on the morning of May 24, to halt temporarily the advance of the German armoured column towards Dunkirk. This is not the place to examine the circumstances and the details of that often discussed decision. Military considerations, including Hitler's anxiety about the terrain in Flanders, undoubtedly played a part in it. But there was, too, the information that reached Hitler that morning, to the effect that the British were abandoning Calais (a wireless instruction from London that the German services had intercepted and which Churchill countermanded later). Hitler though that the English were leaving the continent. He was inclined to let them go. When two days later the German advance on Dunkirk resumed, Hitler had already agreed to Goering's plan that the hindering of the British evacuation from Dunkirk would be principally the task of the Luftwaffe.

What we know now—mostly from British documents—is something else that is important. Even before the Dunkirk evacuation, Churchill's position in London had become unsure. Within the secrecy of the War Cabinet, the usually cautious Lord Halifax had decided to oppose him. Halifax said that Hitler's conditions for a possible settlement ought at least to be ascertained. Churchill said no: that even the slightest attempt to make

such an inquiry would put Britain onto "a slippery slope". This confrontation between them, often couched in different terms, arose again and again over three days. Halifax was on the verge of resigning. That would have shown a dangerous break in British unity. In the end Churchill had his way. Yet we must understand that at that time—the last week of May in 1940—Churchill had been Prime Minister for hardly more than two weeks. The national relief over the successful evacuation from Dunkirk had not yet occurred. British public opinion was not yet galvanised by Churchill's famous speeches. More important, the reputation for impetuosity, for rhetorical grandiloquence and warmongering still clung to Churchill's image—especially within the dominant Conservative Party, most of whose members of parliament were Chamberlainites and not Churchillians. The warmonger had been given his chance; now one catastrophe followed another. In sum, there were influential people in London who thought that Churchill's leadership was questionable, to say the least. He had been put into the saddle on May 10 because people had understood that he had been right about Hitler in the past: but was that enough now, when England had to face the awful question of its own survival?

Churchill survived that challenge. His position was also fortified by the relative success of Dunkirk. But, as he himself knew and said, that success was relative: "Wars are not won by evacuations". Hitler did not understand that situation well enough. He was more and more convinced that the British would make peace—especially as he began to state that he did not wish to destroy the British Empire. He (and also Goebbels) often thought that the war was but a repetition, on a larger scale, of the struggle he had fought and won within Germany in 1930-1933. So far as Britain went, he saw British politics in much the same light in which he saw the German conservatives eight or ten years before. It was in their interest to reconcile themselves to the stronger power—as long as their own survival was not threatened by it, and as long as that power was anti-Communist. Two months had to pass until Hitler, reluctantly, realized that the peace party in England was not as strong as he thought. It was then that his earlier respect for the racial qualities of the British people began to vanish, and that he felt compelled to make another move, in a different direction, to which we will turn in a moment.

Meanwhile, he had conquered France. There was another flurry in London. On June 18, the day after the French request for an armistice, R. A. Butler, a junior Foreign Office minister, who disliked Churchill, told the Swedish ambassador in London that "no opportunity would be neglected for concluding a compromise peace if the chance were offered on reasonable conditions. The so-called die-hards (meaning Churchill) would not be allowed to stand in the way of negotiations". That piece of information was exaggerated and misinterpreted by the Italian Minister in Stockholm (and a week later Butler recanted, through Halifax, to Churchill); however it reached Hitler and Mussolini when they met in Munich that day. Mussolini and his Foreign Minister, Ciano, were impressed by Hitler's moderation that day. Hitler now wanted peace with the English, Ciano saw. That was largely correct. Throughout the month of June Hitler kept telling his generals that the war might end soon, because the English would have to make peace. But there was now a subtle change in his mind. Until that time he took the eventual British inclination to give up the war almost as granted. Now he began to speculate, often openly, why they did not do so. He recognized, albeit unwillingly, that Churchill's leadership was not as temporary, nor as vulnerable, as he had thought. He now began to pay even more attention to fragments of information from London, including fragments from Spanish agents working for the Abwehr who, among other trivialities, attempted to ascertain the extent of Churchill's alcoholic consumption (in one instance trying to look through the garbage of 10 Downing Street, it is said.)

Hitler knew of Churchill's American connections. For more than a year he saw that situation clearly—according to his lights, that is. Behind Churchill stood Roosevelt; and behind Roosevelt, the Jews. (He made this clear in a speech on 30 January 1939, in retrospect his first ominous suggestion of the extermination of Jews in Europe, if they and their American coreligionists were to bring about a world war.) It is a mistake to believe that Hitler was ignorant about the United States. His interest in America was of long standing. In June 1940 he paid much attention to American politics, reading with especial interest the reports of General Boetticher, the German military attaché in Washington. ("He is able to see what happens backstage...") Roosevelt was up for an unprecedented third term. Hitler was very well aware of the importance of American isolationists (whom he, correctly, called American "radical nationalists"). Two days before Paris fell, he gave an extraordinary two-hour interview to Karl von Wiegand, the American correspondent of a New York isolationist paper of the Hearst chain. He had him invited to his then headquarters, the "Wolfsschanze" where he usually saw no journalists at all, German or foreign. He refrained from saying a bad word about Roosevelt. He said that he admired and respected the Monroe Doctrine. He added that he did not want to destroy the British Empire. He went to the unusual trouble of going through the interview word by word next day. The interview had a considerable influence among American opponents of Roosevelt; but its public resonance was impaired by the news of the fall of Paris on the day of its publication.

It must not be thought that Churchill's relationship to Roosevelt was especially close during his duel with Hitler. They had initiated a confidential correspondence in September 1939. But Roosevelt could not, or would not, commit the United States to the British side. At least through June, the general opinion of the American military was the Britain might not hold out. More important was one essential difference between Roosevelt and Churchill. Churchill knew where the sympathies of the American President lay, but Roosevelt insisted that American help to Britain must be subordinated to a British commitment that in the case of a British defeat the British Fleet would would come over to America. Churchill—who foresaw the terms Hitler would offer to the French in June—also foresaw the possibility that he might be replaced by another British government, whose sole asset in a settlement with a victorious Hitler would be the British Fleet. He wrote Roosevelt that *he* would never surrender; but that he could not commit his country in such a future eventuality. His last strenuous attempt to request that Roosevelt undertake a decisive move departing from American neutrality, transferring obsolete American destroyers to Britain, was made on June 15. For the next six weeks no important messages passed between the two of them.

In the meantime, Hitler hesitated. An entire month passed from the French request for capitulation and his great speech on July 19. During that month he waited for a signal from London. Churchill ordered every possible preparation for the threat of a coming German invasion; but, as some of his private statements since revealed, he was doubtful whether Hitler would attempt an invasion at all. He also knew that, for once, it was now he, not Hitler, who was pressed for time to rearm. There is some evidence that Churchill tacitly allowed a few British representatives in neutral capitals to engage in conversation—or, rather, listenings—with German agents, especially Prinz Max von Hohenlohe in Switzerland, for the sake of gaining time. While Hitler was hesitant and waiting, he also took—unusually for him—a few sidetrip vacations: to Paris, to the Great War battlefields in Alsace, to Linz and Wels. On 6 July he returned from his last military headquarters in the West ("Tannenberg", near Kniebis) to Berlin. There was a military parade, and much jubilation. For once, the avidity of the German people ran ahead of Hitler's. As was noted

by Goebbels, by the SD-Bericht and other testimonies, people asked: "When will things start against England?" On 7 July the Deutsche Rundfunk for the first time played "Wir fahren gegen Engelland" (what later a few Berliners dared to call the "Niegelungenlied"). Hitler first planned to make his great speech on the 8th, then postponed it to the 13th, and then finally to the 19th of July. For the first time in months he went off the Berghof, where he preferred to ponder his great decisions. There, with his military commanders, he issued his *Weisung No. 16,* "Operation Sealion", for the eventual landing in England. Meanwhile, he worked over his coming speech, weighing every word. He discussed it with a number of people whom he habitually had not consulted on his speeches in the past.

That speech, on July 19, lasted 2 hours and 17 minutes. His voice was less shrill than usual. He devoted a large part of it to an account of the recent German victories in the field. He said not a single word about the United States. He repeatedly expressed his satisfaction with Russia. The German-Russian relationship has been finally arranged. The climax came in the last five minutes. He offered peace to "a worldwide empire I never had the intention of destroying or even damaging". It was only when he began to mention the name of Churchill that his voice rose to a shriek. It was evident that he now saw the fate of the entire world and of the war hinge on his duel with Churchill. In this he may have made a mistake. Had he said most of the above without mentioning Churchill, his offer to Britain might have evoked a different echo. In speaking as he did, Hitler achieved nothing of his main aim, which was to separate Churchill from the English people. To this we may add his intemperate language. That was perhaps somewhat less frequent in this speech than in many of his other orations: but there it was, in his habitual phrases of "das internationale juedische Voelkergift" (the international Jewish poison of the peoples), in his reference to Poland: "ein aufgeblasener Popanz" (an inflated scarecrow), "diese von Dummheit and Hochmut aufgeblaehte Blase" (this bladder inflated by stupidity and arrogance), and especially about Churchill: "Luegner" (liar), "Hetzer und Antreiber" (inciter and instigator), "blutiger Dilettant" (bleeding dilettante), etc. More than thirty years later a respectable German historian of German-British relations of that period wrote that in this speech Hitler "used a restrained vocabulary"—not to English ears, to be sure.

Churchill knew what was going on. The day before Hitler's speech, German diplomatists in Washington attempted to make contact with the British Ambassador there, through an American Quaker intermediary, alerting the British about the important matter of a coming peace proposal. Churchill refrained from answering Hitler's speech. (He said privately: "I am not on speaking terms with that man.") Behind that was his concern with British morale: not too much should be made of Hitler's peace offer. That was dismissed in a brief statement by Halifax, approved by Churchill. Hitler's—and especially Goebbels's—expectations were now dashed. On the eve of the speech Goebbels wrote: "Tonight the fate of England will be decided." On 24 July the headline of the *Voelkischer Beobachter* proclaimed: ENGLAND HAS CHOSEN WAR.

All of this happened before the Battle of Britain was to begin; even before Goering's air offensive against Britain would begin. Hitler was still undecided. He spoke to his generals on 21 July, convoking them for 31 July again. On the 23rd he went to Bayreuth, listening in deep, sombre silence to *Goetterdaemmerung* on a summer afternoon. Then to the Berghof again. And now we arrive at the second coincidence—indeed, to the turning-point of the duel between Hitler and Churchill, perhaps to *the* turning point of the entire war.

On the cool, cloudy Berghof on 31 July, Hitler declared his decision to invade Russia;

in the White House on a muggy summer day in Washington Roosevelt made his decision to tack and beat out of the harbour of American neutrality, skirting the barrier reefs of constitutional and Congressional opposition. Hitler's decision on Russia crystallized during the last ten days of July; so did Roosevelt's. (His acceptance speech of his third-term nomination was made in Washington on July 19, at the same hour as Hitler spoke in Berlin.)

On July 31, on the Berghof, Hitler spoke to Jodl, Halder and Brauchitsch. (Admiral Raeder, whom he saw earlier that day, discussing the potentialities of invading England, was excluded from that conference.) He had dropped remarks about the eventual necessity of a war against Russia before; he mentioned his irritation with Stalin to Jodl two days before. But now he said hardly anything about those anxieties. He spoke about England. He may have found a way to win the war without having to invade England. The air offensive against England was now beginning: but "if results of the air war are not satisfactory, (invasion) preparations will be halted." Then he went on:

> *England's hope is Russia and America. If hope in Russia is eliminated, America is also eliminated,* because an enormous increase in the influence of Japan in the Far East will result from the elimination of Russia.
>
> *Russia the factor on which England is mainly betting. Something has happened in London!* The English were already quite "down" (This word is in English in Halder's typescript), now they have got back on their feet again a bit. We have tapped their telephone conversations... *However, should Russia be smashed, then England's last hope is extinguished...*
>
> *Decision: In the course of this contest, Russia must be disposed of. Spring '41. The quicker we smash Russia the better. Operation only makes sense if we smash the state with one hard blow.* Winning a certain amount of territory does not suffice. A standstill during the winter hazardous. Therefore better to wait, but decision definite to dispose of Russia. ... Aim: Annihilation of Russia's Lebenskraft.

There was more to Hitler's reasoning than megalomania or ideology. This was not a return to the main objective of his life that he had set forth in *Mein Kampf,* the winning of the European East for the German people and their Reich. That may have been his main objective once. But not in 1940. *Lebensraum* would be the secondary, perhaps the long-range, benefit, to be organised after the conquest of Russia. His primary aim now was to win the war against England: to eliminate Russia, in order to eliminate Churchill. There was more than geopolitical calculation in that. Churchill, as Hitler thought, had two hopes: America and Russia. Against America he could do little or nothing. But with Russian power destroyed, his power on the continent would be supreme. Then Churchill—and Roosevelt—could do nothing to defeat him. There would be people in Britain—and, as he thought, many in America—who would then take some comfort from the defeat of Communist Russia. The British and the American people would then realise the futility of Churchill's and Roosevelt's policy, of persisting with a protracted and unwinnable war.

On 1 August Goebbels wrote in his diary: "Ballons d'essai from here to England had no result. Even over Spain. London wants a catastrophe... The Fuehrer can now see no possibility other than war". But that was no longer a duel between Hitler and Churchill. In a few days the Battle of Britain began, involving dozens of duels each day between British and German pilots, over the conduct and the outcome of which neither Hitler nor Churchill had much direct control. It may be even said that the daring German pilots were

more inspired by Hitler's ideas of German greatness than were the brave pilots of the RAF by Churchill's rhetoric; but that did not matter much. What mattered was the willingness of the British people to trust Churchill's leadership; and by August 1940 there was more to that than the inspiration of his rhetoric. He was steadfast and he was bringing the Americans in.

It took a month until the Lend-Lease Agreement between Britain and the United States on transferring fifty old American destroyers in exchange for the British grant of bases to the United States in the Western Atlantic and the Caribbean was negotiated and signed. By that time the destroyers themselves hardly mattered. (Only nine of them reached Britain by the end of the year.) What mattered was that American neutrality was gone; the Anglo-American alliance against Hitler had begun to function. When the destroyer-bases agreement was signed in Washington in the evening of 2 September, it was already the 3rd in Europe. This was exactly a year after Britain and France had declared war on Germany. During that first year it was a European war. Now it had broadened into a world war. The decisions that led to this had been taken on the Obersalzberg and in Washington, on 31 July. Churchill did not know what Hitler said about Russia to his generals that day. Neither did Roosevelt or Stalin. But Churchill had suspected something like that for some time. As early as 27 June he wrote to Field Marshal Smuts: "If Hitler fails to beat us here he will probably recoil eastward. Indeed he may do this even without trying invasion..."

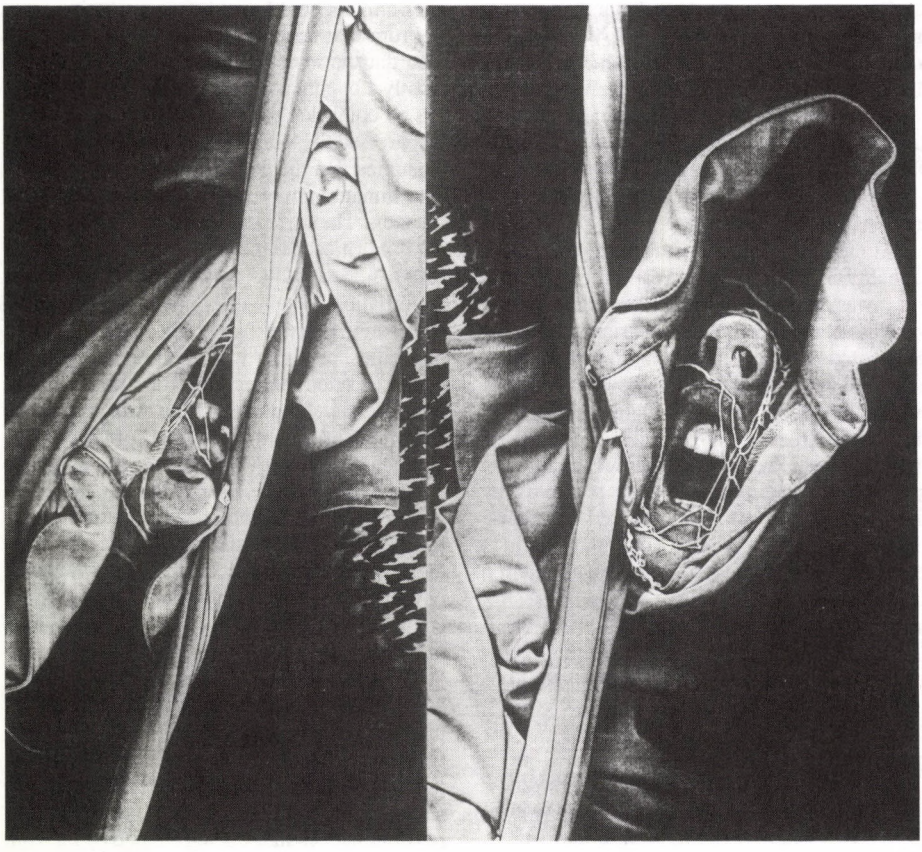
Hitler said later that he needed "great spiritual strength" for his decision to turn against Russia. Yet his decision to reveal it to the generals and to order preparations on 31 July gave him a sense of relief. He faced the difficult question whether the English would or would not give up the struggle against him in Europe. He faced the consequent question whether to risk an invasion of England or not. Now there was an answer to these questions, and a third option. Once he destroyed Russian power, Churchill would have to give up. Of course Hitler's decision of 31 July to prepare the invasion of Russia was not unalterable. He did not issue his definite Weisung No. 18: "Operation Barbarossa", until 18 December, the target date then being fixed for 15 May; it would be set ahead by another five weeks. But these delays were due to military and material contingencies, not—as when he had been confronting England—due to his hesitations. He did not allow himself to be influenced by Stalin's attempts at ingratiation, attempts that became more and more extraordinary as signs of a German attack increased.

After 31 July 1940 the struggle between Hitler and Churchill was not over. They would remain fierce opponents, principal figures of the Second World War. But it was no longer their duel. Yet the eighty days of their duel had been decisive—not only for the outcome of the Second World War, but for the next fifty years in the history of the world.

There remains a last question that perhaps has some significance to us fifty years later. The principal, and most detailed, history of the planning of the German invasion of Britain is by Karl Klee who wrote in the Introduction of his massive two volumes: "It is the tragedy of further events that British policy, with fighting the present opponent as its sole aim, was ready to accept every partner—including the Soviet Union—for this purpose. They did not anticipate that, as a result of such action, an all-powerful Russia would replace a strong Germany, and that the issues of world policy would merely be shifted and become more acute." This argument appeals to some people now, and not only in Germany. I am compelled to correct it here. It was not only without that "partner" the British could not expect to win. The "partner" was forced into an alliance with Britain by Hitler himself. It is also true that Churchill saw the choice clearly: either all of Europe dominated by Germany, or—at worst—the eastern portion of Europe domi-

nated by Russia; and half of Europe, especially Western Europe, was better than none.

In November 1944 Churchill agreed with de Gaulle, worried by the seeming American indifference to the Russians pouring all over Eastern Europe, that yes, Russia was like a hungry wolf among the sheep, devouring them one by one: "But after the meal comes the digestion period". The Russians would not be able to digest them permanently. This was common sense, and not the reaction of a war leader half-blinded by his hatred for Hitler. It was Hitler, whose vision was at times extraordinary, who was half-blinded because of his hatred for Churchill.



Tibor Fényi

Hungarians in Slovakia. I.

Ever since the conclusion of the peace treaties at the end of the Great War, almost all the countries of East Central Europe have tried to create ethnically homogeneous nation–states of their own. This desire has inspired governments of diverse ideologies, moderately liberal democratic systems as well as fascist or Communist regimes. The recent bloody events at Marosvásárhely, the growing popularity of the neo-fascist organization Vatra Romaneasca, the problem in Turks in Bulgaria, the Albanian question in Kosovo, and growing Slovak separatism give rise to pessimism regarding the effect of the fall of Communist dictatorships and the emergence of political pluralism on the situation of national minorities. In the course of democratisation, even ultra-nationalist groups have gathered strength and, by resorting to demagoguery, have won considerable support and wield no negligible political influence. Consequently, they are able to force their ideas on politicians who were originally far from nationalist or chauvinist.

At the time when the treaties of peace were concluded after the Great War, greed for territory was stronger than the desire for ethnic homogeneity. The new states rising from the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were not satisfied with ethnic frontiers. They produced a variety of reasons for laying claim to considerably larger areas, inhabited either by a mixed population or even by a homogeneous alien population. They supported their claims by historical myths or they clamoured for natural frontiers, i.e., for a river or a mountain chain to become the border regardless of the population so enclosed. The new states refused to recognise the local population's right to self-determination and, except for a single case concerning a town and its environs, no objection could be raised against the given decision either by plebiscite or in any other fashion.(The only exception was the case of Sopron (Ödenburg), in which a plebiscite was to decide between Austria and Hungary, two of the vanquished.) Thus the entire region saw the rise of states (Hungary excepted) with large national minorities.

The situation was complicated by the fact that most of the minorities had lived as the dominant ethnic group in the given territory for many, many centuries, possibly for a thousand years. The terms of the peace treaty unexpectedly brought them under the political rule of a different nation that, within the immediate environment could well be in a minority.

From that time on, the new states took the view that the compact mass of minorities, settled mostly along their borders on territory contiguous to countries the ethnic group dominated, jeopardised the integrity of the new state. They presumed that the demand for the right to self-determination involved the danger of territorial revision. They tried to avoid this by isolating the minorities. To this end they resorted to all sorts of means, including resettlement and forced assimilation. Then, after the Second World War, they put the blame precisely on these minorities, as Hitler had often mentioned that "those needed protection". (I think nobody believes any longer that this was a genuine sentiment, or even that members of the minorities could have prevented a war by adopting some other attitude.) Antiminority feelings, however, came in handy for the victors, allowing them to get rid of millions of those who were members of minorities. Indicative of the complexity of the problem is that, all the same, ethnic minorities numbered in millions remained in place.

The treaties of peace closing the Great War had provided legal guarantees and international protection for minorities, but no such provision was included after the Second World War. It is as if the peace-makers had closed their eyes to assimilation, as if they too consented to homogeneous nation-states being created by far from

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A multinational heritage

From the ninth century until 1918, the history of the Slovak part of the Czech and Slovak Republic was identical with the history of Northern Hungary. After the Battle of Bánhida (898), the Hungarians extended their influence over the territory between the Danube and the Carpathians, which from the early times onwards had been inhabited by a mixed population, in addition to the Slavs and the Hungarians, and later, as a result of the policies of the kings of the Houses of Árpád and Anjou, of large numbers of Germans. The Bavarians, Styrians, Tyrolians, Saxons, Alsatians, and Swabians mainly lived in Sáros, Gömör, Szepes and Liptó counties. The settlers' main occupation was mining and forestry and, later, manufacturing and commerce.

The ethnic mixture was rapidly enhanced by people moving north following the Tartar incursions after 1240, and later still, in the 150 years of Turkish occupation after the lost Battle of Mohács (1526). In the Middle Ages the towns in Northern Hungary, particularly those settled by Germans in Szepes County, were the cultural and economic centres of these regions with Slovak and Hungarian inhabitants. Indeed, their influence was felt over the whole of pre-Great-War Hungary. They played an important part in mining, printing, commerce, coinage and, through their burgher way of life, liberal ideas. These lent particular significance to the region at a time when much of the country was under Turkish occupation.

The more nationalist Slovak historians incline to project the political borders of 1918 back to the past and present them as ethnic and cultural borders as well. Since this is only possible through a cavalier treatment of historical facts, they do not talk of the fertile cultural and economic co-operation of many nations but prefer to speak of a thousand years of Hungarian oppression—an argument that owes more to the exigencies of politics than to historical evidence.

fair methods. Looking back to the past forty years, we have to accept that the Communist dictatorships did much to this end. Communist regimes are, from the start, intolerant of differences, but the main reason lies in their dubious legitimacy. In the economic, political, military and other fields, they primarily acted in the "internationalist" interests of Moscow and the "world Communist movement"; the assimilation of minorities, however, was the sphere of activity where they tried to demonstrate their own patriotism and thereby to establish their national legitimacy. Nationalism was the point of contact between Communist leaderships intolerant of minorities and nationalists who were both anti-minority and anti-Soviet. (In its purest form this appears in Rumania, in Iliescu's Front of National Salvation and Vatra Romaneasca. But similar conclusions can be drawn from consideration of the relationship between Husak-type orthodox Marxists and Slovak nationalists.)

It is barely conceivable that the Eastern bloc countries could by one great leap forward become part of Europe, if what is meant by Europe is the development of a market economy, the creation of a civil society and the attainment of political tolerance. The absence of democracy for decades, the considerable backwardness of too many of the Iron Curtain countries in comparison with Western Europe, and the ensuing provincialism, the hasty and forced reprivatisation as a belated primitive accumulation of capital, will not result in a rapid generation of tolerance. The present writer would be only too happy if history were suddenly and plainly to disprove his pessimism. But I think that, until this desired situation occurs, we must familiarise ourselves as closely as possible with the national conflicts of the region. This could well be the first step towards understanding the problem, towards settling differences.

Here I am writing on the situation of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia. My main reason for doing so is that there appears to be a serious chance that mutual tolerance will

secure success, perhaps not tomorrow, but at least within a foreseable future.

After the Great War the defeated Austro-Hungarian Empire was broken up. Of its two constituent states, it was Hungary that had to suffer the more serious consequences: she lost more than two-thirds of her territory and more than half of her population. At the same time, it is impossible to say, even with the best of intentions, that the parts taken from Hungary were merely ethnically different regions or exclusively territories inhabited by a majority of non-Hungarians. Thus one-third of the ten million ethnic Hungarians became subjects of foreign states. A million and a half lived in areas close to the Hungarian border, mostly in territories with a Hungarian majority.

Czechoslovak political leaders strove from the outset to induce the Peace Conference to make their country larger than warranted by ethnic conditions. Arguing on the basis of history, strategy and geography, they wished (and were able) to include territories with an overwhelmingly Hungarian population. Their plan included a corridor running through today's Westem Hungary down to Yugoslavia, but this was rejected by the Peace Conference. (We know that the decisive objection came not from Hungary but Yugoslavia.)

When Czechoslovakia was created, the territory to be called Slovakia was incomparably larger than the parts inhabited by Slovaks. Earlier the whole of that territory had been part of Hungary and, at the census taken in 1910, the population consisted of nearly two million Slovaks, one million Hungarians and smaller Ruthenian, German, Polish, Jewish, and Gypsy populations. Slovakia's ethnic heterogeneity was not unique inside the new state either. Czechoslovakia had a population of 13.5 million, of which the minorities numbered 4.5 million, mainly Germans.

Here I cannot dwell on the difference, obvious from the very beginning, between the two state-creating nations, the Czech and the Slovak. All I can here point out is that leading Czech politicians challenged even the existence of the Slovak nation as such, that many regarded Slovak as a Czech dialect, and considered the Slovak people as still unfit in effect to govern their part of the country. For this very reason Czech settlers and officials moved there right away: the police and customs officers were also Czech. All this offended the Hungarians as well as the Slovaks. The Czech newcomers were settled on lands taken from Hungarians, and it was because of them that, during the land reform in the 1920s, the Magyar day-labourers and poor peasants, in their effort to obtain land, suffered considerable discrimination which was censured also by world opinion. But the creation of the Czech, or Czechoslovak, official apparatus was detrimental to Hungarians in other respects as well. The local authorities did everything possible to sabotage legally sanctioned schools using national tongues as the language of instruction, they reorganized the administration so as to reduce the number of counties with a Magyar majority to a minimum, using amalgamations to create as many units as possible with a Hungarian population of less than 20 per cent (in which case Hungarian would not be an official language). Hungarian schools were altogether abolished in areas with a Slovak majority, but even in purely Hungarian regions their functioning was subjected to obstructions.

Since the former Hungarian officials and professional class could not find employment for many years, more and more people of Hungarian birth felt compelled to declare themselves Slovak or "Czechoslovak". Others were unable to do so and, since they had no private property to ensure their livelihood, they moved to Hungary. In two years from the autumn of 1918, more than a hundred thousand Hungarian public servants from Slovakia settled in Hungary. At the same time, a process of natural assimilation, the Slovakisation of persons of dual roots, also began on the fringe of the Magyar language area. Thus the 1921 census figures were: 3,000,870 Slovaks and 650,597 Hungarians (21.7 per cent). The downward trend continued so that the returns of the 1930 census showed 585,434 Hungarians (17.6 per cent) against 3,324,111 Slovaks.

Although the ruling classes, composed of Czechs in the first place, were intent on as fast and as spectacular a process of assimilation as possible, not even the Hungarians could be deprived of the democratic rights established by the political system of the first Czechoslovak Republic. Thus they were in a position to build up their own political organizations within a few years. The leaders of these associations proclaimed that the autochthonous inhabitants (Magyars, Slovaks, Ruthenes, Germans) should

join forces against the Czech interests that were oppressing the southern part of the country. They demanded autonomy for Slovakia and Ruthenia. The situation became acute during the world depression. As a result of Hungary's official revanchist policy on the one hand, and of the rather strained international relations, of the aggravated differences between Czechs and Slovaks as well as between Czechs and Germans, on the other, the Hungarians also expressed increasingly radical demands. The Czechoslovak government paid no heed to them. After a long delay, in the summer of 1938, it started to take Hungarian demands seriously and then offered the Magyars considerable autonomy. This was a few weeks before 29 September 1938, when, with the Munich Agreement, the West European Great Powers handed over to Germany the German-inhabited parts of Bohemia and Moravia and, as an added rider, proposed that Hungary and Poland should open bilateral negotiations with Czechoslovakia over disputed territories. Since these talks proved inconclusive, an international court of arbitration was convened (in accordance with the original Czechoslovak intentions). Great Britain and France declared disinterest in the case, so the Foreign Ministers of Germany and Italy, meeting in Vienna on 2 November, awarded Hungary 12,000 square kilometres of her former northern territories, where 80 per cent of the population declared themselves to be Hungarians.

Hitler's Germany made the minority question a pretext for the total annihilation of Czechoslovakia. On 14 March 1939, when the fascist leaders of Slovakia (following a previous agreement with the German Reich), seceded from the Republic, German troops occupied Prague within 24 hours. The Czechs had been abandoned by their allies and by some of their leaders.

Czechoslovak politicians in exile saw clearly that no small part was played in the dissolution of their state by the unsolved question of national minorities. In making plans for a postwar settlement, they intended to alter matters by devising a scheme that would rid the country of them. They thought it essential to keep the 1938 frontiers intact and, to this end, they wished to expel those—Germans and Hungarians—who might endanger the establishment of an ethnically homogeneous Slav state.

In 1941 the Allies recognized the government-in-exile in London of Eduard Benes, ex-President of the Republic, as the legitimate government of Czechoslovakia and also agreed to the restoration of the frontiers. In 1942 the British government also agreeed that after the war the Germans should be forcefully expelled from Czechoslavak territory; at that time, however, expulsion of Hungarians was not discussed. It was only during his visit to Moscow in 1943, that Benes managed to secure the agreement of Molotov and Stalin that, following an allied victory, the Soviet Union would obtain Ruthenia and Czechoslovakia would be allowed to expel the Hungarians. Details were left to the leader of the Czechoslovak Communists in Moscow, Klement Gottwald, who may have had Stalinist relocation in mind as a paradigm. In the meantime the Czechoslovak exiles were pressing Soviet troops during their advance in 1944 to attack Hungary from the north (i.e. from Slovakia). This would make it likely that the Red Army would subject the Hungarian civilian population to atrocities of the sort which had caused the Germans in the East to flee in terror and then the Hungarians there (in Slovakia) would make their escape southwards i.e., to Hungary. The Rumanian about-face of August 23, however, aborted the plan as the main Soviet thrust went in a westerly and northwesterly direction.

Up to the summer of 1944 the Czech and Slovak Communists at home had no inkling of the scheme to get rid of the Magyar population. Their attitude to the Hungarian role in war was still objective. Thus, in early summer, the Central Committee of the underground Communist Party of Slovakia sent, through Karol Smidke, the following situation report to Moscow: "One might well say that the Hungarians, unlike the Germans, behave properly in Slovakia, most of them are democrats, and many more are leftists." (It is characteristic of both the Communist and the nationalist view of history that this report could be first published in Czechoslovakia only a quarter of a century later, in 1969, since its contents did not tally with the prevailing official position, that the Hungarians were ruthless fascists.) In order to get rid of the Hungarian minority, a moral basis had to be found, and the most easily acceptable argument for this was, in war–torn Europe, the charge of fascism or collaboration. This charge was expressed against all Hungarians in Czechoslova-

kia, in a resolution signed by President Benes on September 4, 1944 (but only made public, at British request, after the war, as late as 2 August 1945). The logic of the resolution is easy to follow: the Hungarians are Hitler's allies and helpers, they are guilty of carving up Czechoslovakia, therefore they must be deprived of all their rights. Two days later one of the first decrees of the Slovak National Council (No.6/1944) ordered all Hungarian schools closed, the Hungarian associations dissolved, the use of the Hungarian language prohibited in all fields of life. Later decrees ordering the confiscation of all property owned by the Hungarian minority were added.

On 5 April 1945, the leaders of the new Czechoslovak state proclaimed what came to be called the Kosice (Kassa) programme, a plan for postwar social, economic and political rehabilitation. Chapter VIII of this document dealt with the national minorities. (It was drafted by the Communist Klement Gottwald.) It stated that, except for those who had taken an active part in the resistance movement, all Hungarians of Czechoslovakia must assume collective responsibility for war crimes and will therefore be deprived of their Czechoslovak citizenship. This chapter also mapped out a programme for the expulsion of the minorities; for tactical reasons the plan was not published at that time. The Western powers were still reluctant to agree to a general expulsion, only Molotov assured the Czechoslovak Communists that the Soviet Union would consider the "exchange of populations" as a condition for the armistice to be concluded with Hungary. At the Potsdam conference, the U.S.A. vetoed the plan for the expulsion of Hungarians, in spite of Soviet pressure to the contrary. The conference, however, obliged Hungary to expel from its territory the Germans living there. The Hungarian government did not ask for that, actually it tried to protest with reference to the absence of similar obligations in the case of other vanquished countries (Italy, Bulgaria and Rumania).

It was clear to contemporary observers that the reason why Czechoslovakia insisted on the expulsion of Germans from Hungary was that it wanted to expel Hungarians from Czechoslovakia. Since the Czechoslovak authorities at first failed in their efforts to liquidate the Hungarian minority, they changed tactics. They declared that the number of Slovaks was roughly the same as that of Hungarians in Slovakia, and thus peace could be established by a simple exchange of populations. They tried to mislead world opinion by the use of falsified statistics. Czechoslovak nationalists alleged that about 600,000 Slovaks lived in Hungary. On 21 February 1946, Hungary signed, under pressure from the Great Powers, a population exchange agreement which had been drawn up by Czechoslovakia. Hungary was bound to receive persons who were declared war criminals (because the Hungarian minority of Slovakia was collectively guilty) and this was sufficient legal ground for expulsion. Hungary also had to acquiesce in a specially appointed Czechoslovak government commission carrying out an unrestricted campaign to persuade the Slovaks of Hungary to resettle. The commission was free to hold meetings, publish newspapers, and make use of Hungarian Radio without special permission. In exchange for Slovaks volunteering to be transferred, Czechoslovakia was entitled to select a corresponding number of the Hungarians of Slovakia for compulsory resettlement in Hungary.

The agreement was thus a dictate which Hungary, as one of the vanquished, was forced to accept from one of the victors. The Czechoslovak Transfer Commission started its propaganda in Hungary on 4 March 1946. There is documentary evidence that it warned the Slovaks unwilling to be transferred from Hungary that the Hungarian authorities would confiscate all their property and prohibit them from using the Slovak language. At the same time these Slovaks who accepted relocation were promised houses and lands of higher value than those they would leave behind in Hungary, out of the property of the Hungarians to be expelled from Slovakia. The population exchange scheme, however, fell short of the Slovak nationalists' expectations: only 62,440 applied for resettlement. (The documents issued by the Slovak authorities contained more names, 92,390 in all, but 29,950 persons registered themselves several times, some people died during that period, and many others could not be identified.)

Faced with fiasco, the Slovak nationalists made another attempt to reduce, at least on paper, the number of Magyars living in their country. They wished to demonstrate that the people involved were so few in number that, for

their sake, it would not be worth stipulating the enforcement of minority rights in the treaty of peace to be concluded. On 17 June 1946, therefore, a decree on re-Slovakisation was promulgated. This allowed "the Magyarised masses of Southern Slovakia to return to their mother nation", which meant that if a Hungarian was willing to declare that he was a Magyarised Slovak, he would not be subjected to confiscation of property or to expulsion. For two years Hungarians had been persecuted and recruited for forced labour, while tens of thousands had been taken to the Soviet Union (as part of reparations), from where those people, civilians, were allowed to return home three and a half years later—if they survived.

Children of Hungarians could not attend school. Teaching in Hungarian was forbidden, and the majority of Hungarian children had never learnt Slovak, or they had forgotten their Slovak because from 1939 to 1945 the territory had again been part of Hungary; moreover, a considerable number of the people threatened with compulsory relocation did not think it was worth trying to learn the new official language. In that situation, out of 600,000 Hungarians as many as 327,000 asked to be registered as Slovaks, since they saw this as the only way out of a state of constant jeopardy. But even in such circumstances, when posters called on Slovaks to inform against hostile elements who spoke Hungarian, more than two hundred thousand people maintained on paper their affiliation with the Hungarian national minority.

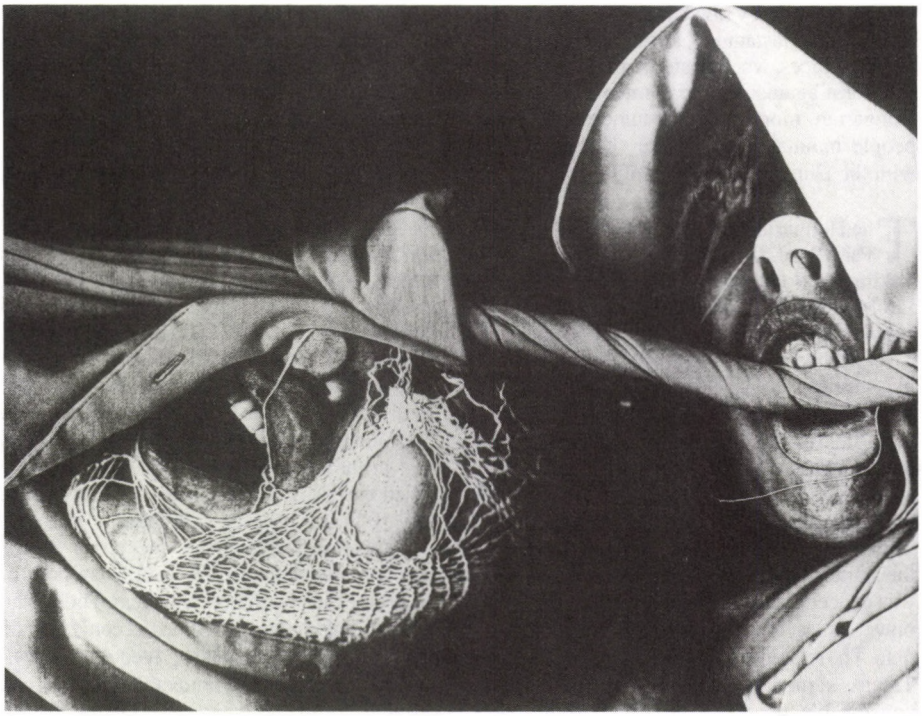
The Hungarian question was taken up at the Paris Peace Conference on 14 August 1946. Taking the floor on the 15 th, Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk of Czechoslovakia called for the expulsion of all Hungarians from his country. The Czechoslovak Communist Clementis spoke in a similar vein. His anti-Hungarian outbursts were repeated by A. Y. Vyshinsky on 20 October. The Soviet Union was of the opinion that the "Hungarian transfer", i.e., one–sided expulsion, had to be put into effect. This was thought inevitable despite the fact that the U.S. representative, on 20 September, and the delegate of the United Kingdom on the 23rd, said the action was unacceptable. Ultimately the two Western powers succeeded in thwarting the expulsion plan. The related clause was left out of the Peace Treaty, signed on 10 February 1947. (It is conceivable, however, that a compromise was made behind the scenes to the effect that, practically in exchange for that omission, guarantees for the protection of minorities would not be included either. From that time on, the question of minorities would be regarded as an internal matter of the states concerned. This provision affected Hungarians particularly painfully, since more than three million persons of Hungarian ethnicity ended up as citizens of the neighbouring states.)

The way Czechoslovakia interpreted sovereign treatmant of minorities could be seen, as early as 19 November 1946, from the pressure put on participants at the peace conference still in session. At that time, by virtue of Presidential Decree No. 88/1945, more than 60,000 Hungarians were deported on the pretext of manpower recruitment. Hungarian–inhabited villages were surrounded by military vehicles, usually at dawn, and Hungarians were called on to pick up their belongings and be ready to embark. (The movable and immovable property they abandoned was confiscated and taken into national trusteeship. To this day no-one has accounted for this property.) Afterwards the families were taken, in livestock cars, to places left empty by expelled Sudeten Germans. There they were forced to work for token wages under the supervision of Czech farmers. "The expellees were treated practically as war criminals", Juraj Zvara, a Slovak historian, stated twenty years later.

The implementation of the population exchange agreement began on 12 April 1947. It was celebrated as a great national victory by the Slovak political parties and by the press. Selection aimed at depriving the community of its leaders. Thus it was first the intelligentsia, teachers, priests and upper grade public servants, who were compelled to leave their homes. They were followed by the propertied middle class as well as the wealthier farmers, and finally artisans with workshops of their own. The situation was somewhat more regulated than in the case of the tens of thousands expelled earlier; they had been allowed to take only 50 kgs of luggage with them. Those who left Czechoslovakia under the terms of the population exchange agreement, were permitted to take their furniture with them. Those who moved from Hungary to Slovakia could also do this. But the Hungarians received no compensation for abandoned immovable property and had no right to claim damages. Owing to con-

siderable differences in their financial standing, the immovable property left by Slovaks in Hungary did not constitute full compensation. (As a rule relatively poorer Slovaks applied for transfer to Slovakia in the hope of getting possession of the houses and workshops left behind by wealthier Hungarians there.)

Under this scheme, all in all 68,407 Hungarians were forced to leave Czechoslovakia. Together with those expelled earlier, and with those who had fled at the end of war, or at the time of the first wave of persecution of Hungarians, the number of persons who moved into Hungary can be estimated at approximately 200,000. As a consequence of ousting the Magyars and settling them in remote places, at least 150 towns and villages, formerly inhabited almost exclusively by Hungarians, turned into places with a mixed population. Nearly the entire Hungarian minority was left without intellectuals, and hundreds of thousands continued to live in a state of anxiety, having been terrorised into declaring themselves to be Slovak.



Tamás Stark

A Wartime Inventory

Demographic figures 1941-7

The census taken in January 1941 put the population of Hungary at 9.32 million. In the period from 1941 to 1948 this figure ought to have risen, in consequence of the natural increase somewhat influenced by war, to 9.65 million by the end of 1948. The 1949 census, however, found only 9.2 million Hungarians within the borders of the country. Thus, in January 1949, 112,000 fewer people lived in the same area than had done so eight years before. This decrease covered a tremendous loss of lives, in spite of the relatively favourable wartime and postwar rise in population. Hungary's demographic balance, however, was made worse not only by war and genocide, but it became decidedly negative owing to the wave, especially after the fighting was over, of refugees and those recently settled in the country. From 1941 to 1949 the population of Hungary not only decreased markedly but even underwent some change in composition as a consequence of the mostly forced movement of migration.

The wartime mobility, inclusive of losses, affected by and large one and a half million people here in the centre of the Carpathian Basin. All this is statistics, but every figure involves human destinies and tragedies.

We have relatively accurate information about the casualties suffered by the military. The data issued in 1944/45 by the casualties section of the Ministry of Defence (and later recognised as reliable) show that, up to 31 October 1944, the Hungarian Army had lost as many as 256,431 men. On the strength of the identification tags collected and evidence given by eyewitnesses, it can be established that 37,490 of them were killed in action, 5,755 became prisoners of war, and nearly 90,000 were wounded, while—in default of precise official information—about 125,000 had to be declared missing in action. According to the literature, half of those missing had died in action while those who survived added to the number of prisoners of war. Taking these figures as a basis, therefore, we have to allow for a loss of a total of nearly one hundred thousand Hungarian soldiers by the autumn of 1944. In further fighting to the end of war, at least 10 to 15,000 more Hungarian servicemen lost their lives.

The civilian population suffered greatly as a consequence of the hostilities. The Central Statistical Office's survey of July 1945 stated that the death of almost 45,000 Hungarian nationals was due to actual combat and the extremely hard immediate postwar conditions led to additional losses. Considering this, the number of civilians who died within the present day borders of the country was about 80,000.

The decrease in Hungary's population, however, was caused largely by the genocide of the period between 1941 and 1949. War was waged not only on countries but, in accordance with a National Socialist ideology, on "races" as well. Since there is contradictory data published on the number of Jewish victims who were forcefully removed from Hungary or killed in Hungary, we can get an approximately correct picture of the situation only if we take into account the categories of casualties one by one.

In the autumn of 1941, about 15 to 20,000 Jews of non-Hungarian nationality who lived in this country were deported, for the most part, to

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Galicia. The majority of them were killed in the environs of Kamenets-Podolsk. In the Újvidék (Novi Sad) massacre of January 1942, one thousand Jews lost their lives. But the systematic extermination of Hungarian Jewry began only after 19 March 1944, the date of Hungary's occupation by the Germans. Reports by Edmund Veesenmayer, the Reich's plenipotentiary in Hungary, and by Gendarme Colonel László Ferenczy, who took a direct part in the action, stated that, up to August 1944, nearly 450,000 Hungarian Jews had been deported from the country.

Upon protest from the Vatican and from some foreign diplomatic missions, all that the Regent, Horthy, could do was put off the deportation of the Jews of Budapest. But deportation was resumed after the Arrow-Cross (Hungarian Nazi) take-over on 15 October 1944. By the terms of a Hungarian-German compact (made in the second half of October 1944) approximately 40,000 Budapest Jews were sent off—on foot—towards the West. At the same time several thousand more fell victim to the Arrow-Cross reign of terror. The loss of Jews pressed into the forced labour battalions can be estimated at 20,000, according to information from the Ministry of Defence.

As part of the deportations carried out in the autumn of 1944, about 500,000 Hungarians, who came within the scope of the anti-Jewish laws, were removed to the territory of the German Reich. As stated by the National Commission for Deportees, only 140,000 of them managed to return home: 80,000 of them moved to places within the present-day borders of Hungary, and 60,000 to the Sub-Carpathian Ukraine and Northern Transylvania. The overwhelming majority of those who did not return had been killed in the gas-chambers. It is impossible to determine exactly, but one may put at a couple of thousands the number of those who, surviving the concentration camps, made their way direct to Palestine, the United States or other parts of the world. Together with those killed in Galicia, and with the victims of the forced labour service and of the Arrow-Cross terror, the total loss to Hungarian Jewry may have amounted to about 400,000.

With the war coming to an end, however, the decline in the population did not cease. During the course of the Second World War, both Germany and the Soviet Union sought not only to defeat their enemies militarily but also to hold them to material and demographic ransom. An object of the genocide perpetrated by Nazism was the physical extinction of some peoples, primarily the Jews. On the other hand, the Soviet attitude was characterised more by intimidation and massive retaliation. In the course of the war and in the postwar years—as contemporary reports of the Central Statistical Office and the Ministry of Defence tell us—Hungarian nationals in PoW camps or in forced labour camps of the Soviet Union totalled up to 600,000. Not even half of this huge mass of people were prisoners of war properly speaking. A great part of the Hungarian victims were carried off from Sub-Carpathia and the Tisza Highlands, from Csanád, Békés and Baranya counties and from Budapest. At least 200,000 of them never got back home.

Hungary's loses suffered in the course of war or in consequence of it may be estimated, in the aggregate, at 800,000 people all told. The loss of lives counted within the present-day borders of the country can be supposed to have amounted to half a million. But we must likewise not forget about the forced migrations affecting hundreds of thousands of people. Hungary admitted into its post-war territory some 120,000 people from Czechoslovakia, 100,000 from Rumania, 10,000 from the Sub-Carpathian Ukraine and 65,000 from Yugoslavia. At the same time, nearly 60,000 Slovaks left Hungary, and 190,000 ethnic Germans were expelled, while those who found permanent shelter in the West between 1944 and 1947 numbered more than 200,000.

The wartime mobility, inclusive of losses, affected by and large one and a half million people here in the centre of the Carpathian Basin. All this is statistics, but every figure involves human destinies and tragedies.

Sándor Tóth

Plenary Interruptus

An extraordinary CC session in Bucharest and its background

Great attention throughout the world was aroused when the April 1964 resolution of the Central Committee of the Rumanian Workers' Party (as it was then officially called) snapped its fingers at Moscow and proudly rejected the Soviet Union's tutelage and its unwarranted interference with Rumania's internal affairs. This was the beginning of the Bucharest policy that advocated control over the fate of the nation and which frequently criticised both the Warsaw Pact and CMEA with surprising openness and vehemence. These gestures charmed western powers to such an extent that Rumania was for many years their favoured country, distinguished by their goodwill and heaped with benefits. The West has since been cured of this credulity, but in Rumania it was, up to the end of the Ceausescu regime, a widely held view that the party resolution of 1964 was a document which asserted state sovereignity and the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, the document of a Rumanian Communist Party that had attained maturity and its emancipation from Soviet tutelage, and the taking on of the responsibility of representing Rumanian national interests.

But the truth is that this step to which the leadership of the Rumanian party braced itself in Spring 1964 was dictated—as every important step since 1956—by fear of the consequences of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, of Khrushchev's reform endeavours and by fear for its own power.

Georghiu-Dej and his team decided on this final and risky step only when all their efforts to turn the course of things in Moscow had failed and they judged that this situation was going to continue.

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One attempt by Gheorghiu-Dej—which ended in failure—left its imprint also in the Rumanian press. The traces are conspicuous and smell no less of scandal; thus it seems incomprehensible today how the affair could have been forgotten or, when forgotten, why nobody was there to rediscover it. What is involved was the role the Rumanian party leadership took in the failed conspiracy to overthrow Khrushchev in the summer of 1957.

What has since then been well-known in informed circles is that the Moscow events started by the Political Committe of the CC of the CPSU removing Krushchev in his absence (he was on an official visit to Helsinki). However, on his unexpected return, Khrushchev did not resign himself to his dismissal but called an extraordinary plenary session of the Central Committee, for which the crucial technical assistance was provided by Marshall Zhukov, the Commander in Chief of the Army, who transported from all corners of the empire members of the CC to Moscow on air force planes, thus ensuring a quorum for the Committee. This extraordinary plenary session of the CC called the Political Committee to account, then removed and elected a new committee. It returned and confirmed Khrushchev in his position of Secretary General and expelled from the party the main conspirators, Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich and Shepilov.

What was the Rumanian citizen able to read of these Moscow events in his accustomed newspapers? These newspapers—both in the capital and in the provinces—were all made to the pattern of the central party organ *Scînteia*. Consequently, everybody who read newspapers, even anticommunists, preferred *Scînteia*. What then was he able to read on the struggle in Moscow? Nothing for four full days after it had ended, and then, on the fifth day, came word.

On the first page of the July 4, 1957 number of *Scînteia* appeared a short communiqué—not on what happened in Moscow, but—on the plenary session of the CC of the Rumanian Communist Party held on June 28-29 and July 1-3 *(Communicat cu privire la şedintă plenară al CC al PMR care s-a întrunit [...] in zilele de 28-29 iunie si 1-3 iulie 1957)*. The only significant communication in the few lines was that at this session the CC expelled from the political committe for their anti-party activities Iosif Chisinevschi and Miron Constantinescu.

What was extraordinary was that a short communiqué reported the result of a CC session, one of such length normally given to the announcement of the summoning of the CC or of the beginning of its work. Before then, and since then, *on the day after* such a session a lengthly and voluminous resolution, and several approved documents were published in the newspapers. (The secret of this fast and immediate publication was that these texts were already written and edited when the session was convoked, and waited only for the gathered members of the CC to nod and clap. The printing works could have typeset the whole text in advance.) Another extraordinary feature was that such a session never lasted more than two days. But now—as if this had been a genuine party congress—they sat for over five full days. And what should certainly attract the attention of the reader: the day following the first two days (June 30) was missed (did they rest?), and they only continued the session from July 1 over three further days. Such an—interrupted—plenary session had certainly not appeared in *Scînteia*—at least not since the paper had been first published openly in September 1944.

The last page of the same issue, reserved for foreign policy news, was devoted to a further "informative communiqué." This deals with the plenary session of the CC of the CPSU held between June 22 and 29 *(Communicat informativ cu privire la plenara al CC al PCUS din 22-29 iunie)*. We learn that the "anti-party group" formed by Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, and Shepilov had been unmasked and expelled from the party (after—though this information is not published in *Scînteia*—their attempt to overthrow Khruhschev had failed). Paying closer attention to this communiqué, the reader can ponder the following peculiarities: 1. The Moscow session was even longer than that in Bucharest, a marathon lasting eight days; 2. In an unprecedented way, *Scînteia* reported it with a delay of four days; 3. The Bucharest plenum suspended its work—for a day—exactly when the Moscow session ended and its outcome became known.

Is it possible that such a strange coincidence of two events would be mere chance? The extraordinary features of the communiqués almost excluded this. What is given, on the other hand, is the well-known aversion of Gheorghiu-Dej and his friends towards Khrushchev's policies, fed by fears for their own position of power. Looking at it from this angle, the key question is the interpretation of June 29 and 30. Can a connection be assumed between the conclusion of the plenary session in Moscow (and what it involved: the knowledge of its outcome) and the suspension of the Bucharest conference (and its continuation after an interruption of one day)? If yes, then there is a single explanation: that Bucharest was confused, its plans were muddled by the outcome in Moscow, that it had expected something else from Moscow (had prepared for something else?). It awaited (could have awaited) something from Moscow, and something else came. (Its opposite?)

If Gheorghiu-Dej expected something different, in what state of readiness could he have expected it? What could he prepare for? Could he have got wind that the Stalinists in Moscow were preparing for a removal, and did he start out to be first among the claque? Or, did his Moscow patrons pick him as the most reliable bit player—and even partner—for a role? In this case we must assume concerted closer cooperation between the Stalinsts in Moscow and in Bucharest. Whether it was a concept worked out in Moscow, or the well-informed reflex of the good pupil in Bucharest, if it came through, its function was unequivocal: the removal of Khrushchev would have been supported immediately by the approving claque of a fraternal party, even constituting an example to be followed by the other parties, and in a strengthened position against them! The Rumanian Workers' Party would had entered the scene almost simultaneosly with the CPSU, by promptly making order in its own quarters, and expelling from its ranks the disruptive Khrushchev agents. Then Chisinevschi and Constantinescu would not have got away with merely being accused of certain character flaws: they

would have been labelled as a revisionist anti-party fraction. These are much graver things in the Stalinist scheme of things. In any case, if the plot had succeeded, Gheorghiu-Dej and his party, as second only to the first, would have put themselves into an exceptional position against—and at the expense of—the other fraternal parties and allies.

However, the game was lost in Moscow. This unexpected turn forced Bucharest to improvise. In its confusion, and due to lack of information, it suspended its own plenary session in order to collect its breath and win time in order to change horses in mid-stream. What it had started three days before, counting on something entirely different, it tried to conclude in the next three days by adjusting to the new situation. Until this was done it embargoed the news of the CC session in Moscow so as to avoid any unpleasant effects. Nevetheless, when it had to go public with the new concept so hurriedly invented, the pre-written resolution that was dependent on the overthrow of Khrushchev proved to be unusable. Adjusting it to the new concept—indeed radically revamping and editing it—required further days. This was why only a short communiqué could be published in *Scînteia* on July 4 on the plenary session of the CC of the Rumanian Workers' Party. And if only a few lines could be published about this, then the news about the plenary session of the CPSU could no longer be delayed but could be presented only equally briefly. (Probably a full or at least somewhat more detailed publication of the Moscow resolution was undertaken for thorough political reasons and not for considerations of prestige, although in Bucharest prestige always counts as a substantial political consideration.) By then the press of the entire "socialist camp", and even the western press was full of the unmasking of the "antiparty group", and of news from Moscow, commentaries and documents. The Rumanian newspaper accounts were conspicuously late and short.

The propaganda apparatus in Bucharest tried first to counteract this being out of step, then did its best to ensure that it be forgotten, but even this betrayed the confusion and inconsistency of the Rumanian party leadership.

We learn from the two numbers of *Scînteia* following on the publication of the communiqués that, on the day after the conslusion of the Bucharest plenary session, all members of the Political Committee were organizing and directing demonstrations of party unity at meetings of party functionaries called at provincial headquarters. In the July 5 issue of *Scînteia* reports appeared under the summary title "Huge manifestations of party unity" *(Puternica manifestare a unității partidului)*, and in the July 6 issue under the title "Enthusiastic manifestations of the unity and loyalty of the party *(Insufletite manifestari ale coeziunii si unității partidului)*, of the meetings of party functionaries held in the provincial centres) in the presence everywhere of a member of the Political Committee or of some other high-ranking leader). Under the pretext of a critique of the Chisinevschi-Constantinescu pair, these meetings are described as manifestations of the "unshakable loyalty" to Gheorghiu-Dej and to the "CC united behind him by a firm will."

The alleged deviation of Chisinevschi and Constantinescu was, of course, only a pretext. In the given constellation, they would have been unable to weaken the position of Ghreorghiu-Dej and of the Central Committee, even if they had wanted to. In the Rumanian context this huge demonstration of unity made no sense. It was intended for the outside world and was directed at Khrushchev. Let him know that an entire country stood behind Gheorghiu-Dej. He should not be encouraged to present the bill to Gheorghiu-Dej for having been an accomplice in the plot against him.

Two further numbers of *Scînteia* are worth mentioning. The July 9 issue finally contained the resolution of the ominous Bucharest CC plenary session—with a delay of five days, for it took this long to work over the resolution and adjust it to the new situation. One noteworthy formal peculiarity of this communiqué was that, in contrast to the communiqué of July 4, here no mention was made of the suspension of the session for a day on June 30. This was how the title inferred the time span of the session: *Rezolutia plenarie al CC al PMR din 28 iunie—3 iulie*. For that matter, the resolution did not undertake the usual political description of the "anti-party activities" of Chisinevschi and Constantinescu. Instead, it reproached them for flaws of character: careerism, conceit, etc. This is also understandable: if at first they wanted to unveil them as agents of the revisionist Khrushchev—and this must obviously have been so during the first two days of the plenary

session—then, later, it would have been going too far to apply the opposite label of 'sectarian dogmatism', which would have corresponded to the new situation.

And finally, in the July 13 issue of *Scînteia*, a document conceived in Byzantine style: a telegramme. Its text is a declaration of loyalty to the CPSU led by Khushchev and its wise policies, and the grave condemnation of the "antiparty group" of Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, and Shepilov. The addressee of the telegramme is the Central Committee of the CPSU, and its signatory the Central Committee of the Rumanian Workers' Party. The telegramme was dated July 12, 1957. This was a day when the CC of the Rumanian Party was not even together in order to pass a resolution on such a telegramme. But it had been together between July 1 and 3. Then it forgot to swear loyalty.

After what had happened, Gheorghiu-Dej could not expect much good from further cooperation with Khrushchev. What was left him as the only way of maintaining his power was loyalty to the spirit of orthodox Stalinism, at the expense of his loyalty to Moscow. So he set his party off on the road which led to the decisive step of April 1964. Such was the step that, when after six months Khrushchev was overthrown, it could no longer be reversed. The post-Khrushchev Soviet leadership treated, according to all signs, the—then still rather fresh—separate road of Gheorghiu-Dej and his group as a course they had to take and with a lot of understanding. It took note that in such circumstances, in its new role, Rumania would not be an easy partner in CMEA and in the Warsaw Pact, and would often be an expressly uncomfortable partner. There were three considerations for treating this predictable (and actual) rebel attitude of Rumania with patience: 1. The Rumanian party leadership had earlier undertaken a risk for the common cause, the overthrow of Khrushchev, thereby getting into a handicapped position, from which it was fleeing, and thus went onto a forced path; 2. They did not have to fear the danger that the rebellion of the Rumanians would exceed the critical point (this was guaranteed by the political will of the Rumanian leaders and by the fact that the country was encircled); 3. For their rebellious behaviour the Rumanians could get western benefits from which even Moscow could profit.

Finally, considering the above, the question becomes justified whether if Khrushchev had been overthrown not in October 1964 but at the beginning of the year, let us say before March, Rumania would have undertaken the step of April 1964, which could no longer be reversed? It seems that it would not have done so. At least not as long as the policies of the Soviet Union were not hallmarked by a reform politician of the Gorbachev mould.

(Incidentally, numerous views have been published in connection with the April 1964 resolution of the Rumanian Workers' Party, some in agreement and some in conflict with each other. Among these I recommed Kenneth Jowitt's: "The Rumanian Communist Party and the World Socialist System. A Redefinition of Unity." In: *World Politics*, Volume XXIII, Number 1, October 1970.)

László Varga

Kádár's Safe Conduct to Imre Nagy

Contemporary Hungarian and Yugoslav diplomatic papers

In the evening of 2 November 1956 a Soviet IL-14 landed in Pula. The two passengers—N.S. Khrushchev, General Secretary of the CPSU, and G.M. Malenkov, Stalin's successor who had almost been dismissed a year and a half earlier—had reached the town on the Yugoslav seaboard after a tiring, unpleasant flight. The turbulent air trip was then followed by a sea voyage, not a bit more pleasant, to Brioni, the residence of President Tito of Yugoslavia. The hardships endured, however, were compensated by the results of the negotiations that lasted till the following dawn.

It was there that Khrushchev informed the Yugoslavs of the plan to crush the Hungarian revolt. The Yugoslavs had no major objection to the intervention. They were anxious lest unreserved acquiescence in the Soviet decision should prejudice relatively problem-free Yugoslav-American relations (Yugoslavia had signed a treaty of mutual assistance with the United States a few days earlier) or that it might damage the prestige which the Yugoslav leadership enjoyed amongst the non-aligned nations thanks to its war record and its resistance to Stalin.

Tito and his advisers argued against the Soviet plan on one point only. They opposed the Soviet choice of Ferenc Münnich (a former exile in Moscow), as head of the new Hungarian Government and recommended János Kádár who, with Münnich, was on Soviet territory at that time. Khrushchev unhesitatingly gave way and asked for something in return. They no longer had any influence on Prime Minister Imre Nagy and the Hungarian Government. It would therefore be up to the Yugoslavs to ensure that Nagy and his associates be prevented from interfering with the future course of events.

Prime Minister Alexander Rankovic promptly responded with a possible solution. He said that Zoltán Szántó, member of the Executive Committee of the recently formed HSWP, and also a former exile in Moscow had, before the Soviet-Yugoslav negotiations, made enquiries about the possibility of obtaining political asylum.

At the time of the Soviet military intervention in Hungary on 4 November Dalibor Soldatic, the Yugoslav Ambassador in Budapest, had, therefore, acting on instructions received from Belgrade, offered political asylum to Prime Minister Imre Nagy and a number of his close associates. The second Soviet intervention was certainly not unexpected; Imre Nagy and his associates, in a state of shock, walked into the trap.

At the Yugoslav Embassy a message from Tito had awaited Imre Nagy. He did not simply offer the Prime Minister asylum but demanded his resignation. Since this attempt to induce Nagy to resign failed, the Soviet note of 7 November addressed to Tito made the Imre Nagy affair a central issue of the relations between the two countries. Continuing the granting of asylum, the note stated, would make it obvious that Nagy had already earlier followed instructions from Yugoslavia.

Impossible as it had thus become for Yugoslavia to try and save face by neglecting to mention the agreement with the Soviet Union, it strove by all manner of means to improve the international standing of the Kádár Government and thus dissipate the anxieties of the Soviet leadership. It was, however, easy to see that Yugoslavia was caught between two fires.

Earlier anti-Yugoslav accusations of 1948

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were first rehashed by the Albanian leader, Enver Hoxha, when he argued against questioning the Soviet, the only road to salvation, and called upon the Yugoslavs to act in accordance with a true proletarian spirit. It boded ill that the polemic by the Albanian party boss appeared in *Pravda*. Still graver accusations were expressed by French Communists who had labelled Yugoslavia a "perfidious agent of Western imperialism". On the other hand the West accused Yugoslavia of giving up its anti-interventionist position. On 8 November, in the midst of recurring attacks, Tito sent Khrushchev a message in which he showed readiness to settle the Imre Nagy business. The CPSU Central Committee approved a Soviet reply dated the day after, in which Khruschev et al. proposed that Nagy and his associates (and especially Géza Losonczy) should be transported to Rumania, pointing out at the same time that the Rumanian leaders had already agreed to this.

On 11th November Tito addressed Istrian party militants in Pula. Tito, in harmony with the official Hungarian position of that time, said that it was a tragedy that owing to the errors of Rákosi's Stalinist regime "the working class and a great number of progressive-minded people had fought the Soviet armed forces" and that "reactionaries, since they found extremely fertile ground there", had tried to exploit justified popular anger.

He also severely criticised Ernő Gerő, the former Hungarian party chief, especially for his radio address of 23 October: "Gerő got himself into a fix and showed his fangs again. He called a crowd of a hundred thousand a rabble, when all they did was to demonstrate, and he thus offended the whole Hungarian people". Tito said it was a serious mistake to call on the army or to ask Soviet troops to help: "A spontaneous uprising followed, in which Communists found themselves, against their will, acting together with various reactionary elements... General indignation and an uprising against the rule of a clique turned into a revolt against Socialism and the Soviet Union". What is more, even the Communists, fighting in the ranks of the people in revolt were, involuntarily, "clamouring for the return of the ancien regime".

The logic of this argument inevitably led to the denunciation of Imre Nagy, who had for a week already enjoyed Yugoslav asylum. Tito, too, was inclined to interpret legitimacy in a peculiar way, arguing: "Nagy has run away and a new government has been formed". Though Tito censured the first Soviet intervention, yet he called the second one, which took place on the 4th of November, a necessary measure, designed to prevent the outbreak of a new world war. Tito listed arguments employed in Hungary as well (the form of address "comrade" was suppressed, Red Stars had been torn down), and he referred to lynching: "Had they been sporadic, and if one or another policeman with a bad reputation had been strung up, one might say it happened as a consequence of spontaneous indignation. But is was a wholesale massacre. In Sopron twenty Communists were hanged".

This speech gave the first vague hint of secret negotiations between the Soviet and the Yugoslav leadership. But Tito (who said that the Soviet leaders had promised to withdraw their troops in due time) categorically denied the rumour that Belgrade had advised that these troops march in.

The essential flaw in the Yugoslav party chief's train of thought was not that nobody had been hanged in Sopron, but that such tight rope walking had to end in a fall. Tito was of course discomfited by the instability of János Kádár's Hungarian leadership. The climax was his saying "even though we oppose intervention, it must be said that Soviet interference was necessary".

At the time of Tito's speech Micunovic, the Yugoslav Ambassador in Moscow, called on Khrushchev. During an unusually long conversation Khrushchev—without, of course, knowing about the speech Tito was delivering practically at the same time—sharply criticised Yugoslavia and pointed out its inconsistency. He emphasised that, outside the West, it was the Yugoslavs alone that talked about Stalinism and de-Stalinisation and mentioned democracy and freedom of the press, albeit it was not difficult to see that the Yugoslav press was also under central control. Khrushchev mentioned the case of Milovan Djilas as a commendable limitation on freedom of speech. (To the greater glory of Yugoslav democracy, Djilas was arrested eight days later.) Kádár in Budapest correctly interpreted the Tito speech as supporting him.

Owing to the delayed publication of Tito's Pula speech, its substance did not become known

in Moscow until the 17th of November and, it seems, took the Soviet leaders by surprise. Tito's earlier message, in which he expressed his consent to the "peaceful" settlement of the Imre Nagy affair, deluded the Soviets into believing they might succeed in what Stalin had failed to achieve eight or nine years earlier. The Yugoslav leadership might be forced to throw in the towel to Moscow.

The 19th November issue of Pravda commented on the speech with apparent irritation, and it was known in Yugoslavia that the anonymous journalist spoke in the name of the Presidium of the CPSU. The article included every argument that would be used to back Soviet intervention, but it was extremely critical of people who directly or indirectly criticised the Soviet leadership or any other "friendly" country or Party. The Soviet Party paper, in interpreting Tito, took the side of those who argued that the Yugoslavs had played a crucial background role in the Polish and Hungarian events.

Despite all this, on 16 November (the very day of the publication of the Pula speech) an agreement was reached between the Yugoslav and the Hungarian Governments, represented by Soldatic and Kádár. The Yugoslav Ambassador saw two ways of resolving the increasingly intolerable situation. The Hungarian Government must guarantee the safety of those at the Embassy or consent to their leaving for Yugoslavia. Although the Hungarian authorities would rather have Imre Nagy and his group go to Rumania, it was nevertheless agreed ultimately that the persons in the Embassy should return home as early as next day. Kádár, Chairman of the Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government, committed himself to confirming in writing the assurance given to Imre Nagy and his associates. Though Kádár pointed out to the Yugoslav Ambassador that, for the time being, this was only his personal opinion, it was evident that Khrushchev, at least tacitly, had likewise accepted this solution.

According to the Yugoslavs, it was probably due to a more thorough analysis of Tito's Pula speech in Moscow that on the day after, the Hungarian Government unexpectedly set new conditions, demanding essentially that Nagy and Losonczy should resign their ministerial office and declare that they would join the Hungarian Government in its struggle against the Counter-Revolution, exercise self-criticism and undertake not to do anything hostile to the Hungarian Government. The conditions stipulated by the Kádár Government also included that Nagy, Losonczy and the others should seek asylum in one of the Socialist countries until the situation in Hungary was settled.

The Imre Nagy group refused to accept these conditions.

The next day the Yugoslav Government sent the Kádár Government a note requesting settlement of the issue (see Document 1). This note was personally presented to János Kádár in Budapest, by Deputy Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs Dobrivoje Vidic. In the meantime three of the persons least concerned (György Lukács, Zoltán Szántó and Zoltán Vas) and their wives left the Embassy but, as it turned out, did not reach their homes. They were arrested by the Russians in the vicinity of the Embassy. The Yugoslav Government stated in the aforesaid note that it had had no part in any of the activities of the "Nagy group" or with events in Hungary. It was interested only in "an agreed friendly solution regarding the issue of asylum".

The Yugoslav Government refused to take up a position regarding the new demands of November 17, stating in the note that this was exclusively within the domestic jurisdiction of Hungary: "What is left for us to do under these circumstances is only to repeat our proposal that your Government shall give our Government a written guarantee for the personal safety of Imre Nagy and his associates... to the effect that they may freely leave the Embassy of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and return to their respective homes".

After his arrival at Budapest, Deputy Under Secretary Vidic talked to Kádár on three occasions (see Documents 2-4). He tried to make Kádár understand that Yugoslavia had from the beginning endeavoured to help him, and it was for this very reason that Imre Nagy and his associates had been granted asylum at the Yugoslav Embassy. On the other hand, Kádár—like the leader of every puppet government in history—felt aggrieved at the fact that the Yugoslavs were bargaining with the Soviets behind his back, although he had such bargaining to thank for is own position.

Kádár was extremely worried about the New York activity of Anna Kéthly (the Imre Nagy Government's Social Democrat Minister of State). Anna Kéthly, who could not return to

Budapest from the Vienna meeting of the Socialist International because of the Soviet intervention, intended to represent the legitimate Imre Nagy Government in the United Nations. This was precisely why Kádár insisted—to no avail—on the resignation of Imre Nagy. Such a resignation would have made it impossible for Anna Kéthly to represent Hungary at the U.N.

In his reply dated 21 November (see Document 5) János Kádár finally clearly gave his assent: "With a view to closing the affair the Hungarian Government—going along with the Yugoslav Government's suggestion made in the eighth paragraph on page 3 of its note addressed to me on 18 November—hereby repeats in writing its repeated verbal declaration that it does not wish to punish Imre Nagy and members of his group for acts they committed in the past. We understand that in this way the asylum offered to the group will come to an end, that they themselves will leave the Yugoslav Embassy and be free to go home". In his letter, however, Kádár rejected the Yugoslav Government's position that asylum had been granted only to private individuals. In his opinion "Imre Nagy and his associates had asked for asylum at the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest with a political purpose".

On hearing of the agreement, Ambassador Micunovic in Moscow heaved a sigh of relief in the hope that it might put a stop to the worsening of Yugoslav-Soviet relations. It cannot be altogether clarified whether Yugoslav politicians, better informed than Micunovic, gave credence to the Hungarian Government's promise. In Budapest Imre Nagy and his associates were shown the letter containing the agreement the very same day and told they would be taken home the day after. On the other hand, nothing was said about the fact that three days earlier György Lukács and others had been arrested by the Russians. A number of small signs also pointed to serious doubts. Miklós Vásárhelyi, who had been unable to get to the Embassy on the 4th of November and thus found refuge at the home of two Yugoslav diplomats, talked to Vidic after the agreement had been reached and was not reassured by the words of the Deputy Under Secretary. On the following day he also was taken quite unreasonably not to his own home but to the Yugoslav Embassy. There, however, according to those who were present, neither Ambassador Soldatic nor Imre Nagy had any illusions about the future. (See Box.) Soldatic offered Imre Nagy an opportunity of staying on at the Embassy, but Nagy said he wished to share the fate of his associates.

The bus which was to take the group home took on its passengers on 22 November at 6.30 p.m. in front of the Yugoslav Embassy building. Soviet soldiers seized the vehicle and, after ordering the Yugoslav journalists and diplomats who had intended to accompany the group to leave, took the Hungarian politicians and their families to the Soviet military base at Mátyásföld on the outskirts of Budapest. There they met the three men and their wives who had supposedly returned home earlier. Later Ferenc Münnich showed up there, but his offer of a compromise was rejected by Imre Nagy. Thus, on the next day, 23 November, all of them were transported by plane to Rumania.

At midnight on the 22nd of November the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Belgrade announced that an agreement had been made with the Hungarian Government and published the list of those who "had left" the Embassy in Budapest. The next day Assistant Secretary Vidic in Belgrade summoned the Hungarian Chargé d'Affairs Kuti and handed him a Yugoslav note asking for immediate information about the fate of the abducted persons demanding the fulfilment of the agreement, and emphasising that the abduction had a negative effect on relations between the two countries and was contrary to the norms of international law. The same day Ambassador Soldatic handed János Kádár a protest note of identical purport (see Document 6).

On 22-23 November the avalanche rolled on. On the 23rd the Kádár Government issued an official communiqué asserting that two weeks earlier Imre Nagy had asked to be allowed to leave the country. In spite of the deceitful communiqué the abduction gave rise to indignation all over the country. The Central Workers' Council of Greater Budapest demanded an explanation personally from János Kádár—without an effective result.

On 24 November the Yugoslav press reported in detail on the abduction of Imre Nagy and his group and on the stir it created in Budapest. Belying Tito's Pula speech, the newspapers wrote that "Imre Nagy is undoubtedly the most popular political figure in the country, he enjoys high prestige as well as the

The Coach-Ride

A crowd had gathered around Imre Nagy. They stood there in the embassy hall and listened to his argument with the Ambassador. I think they spoke half in French, and half in Russian. The trouble was that the Ambassador's Russian was not very good, nor was Imre Nagy's French, which made the argument a long, drawn out one. Many got bored, me too; I took the two children by the hand, and went out into the street. There I boarded the curtained coach that was parked there. The two children ran ahead and found a place. I bent down to the driver and asked him if he knew his way around Budapest. He just sat there, as if he were carved out of stone and did not answer. I got suspicious and peered below his helmet—he was wearing the sort of helmet that motorcyclists do now, and I saw a typically Russian face.

In my fright I dragged the children off the coach and rushed back inside where the argument was still going on. I pushed through the crowd and said: "Let's not go out, Uncle Imre. They will kidnap us." He answered: "I know dear, the Ambassador knows it too, that is why he is urging us not to go out. But it is my opinion that we must confront our fate now. You know best"—me and Julia had busied ourselves in the kitchen, helping the woman to look after all these people, cooking, washing up, laying the table—"how we stand when it comes to food. The children are in danger of going hungry, we'll have to go out."

With that the discussion had come to an end. Everyone picked up the small parcel the cook had prepared for every single family. Of course all there was in them was tins, so we'd have tinned food at least, wherever we might get to.

We boarded the coach. At the gate I was surprised that Miklós Vásárhelyi was there too, whom we had not seen in all the time we were there. We all got in. Jóska had another try, he took out the list someone had given him inside, with all the addresses on it, and then my husband asked the driver, "Are you familiar with Budapest?" Losonczy spoke to him: "Jóska, can't you see he's a Russian?" A Hungarian soldier armed with a submachine-gun was there in the coach too, making it obvious that we were being abducted.

The coach with us inside was off at full speed. Me and my children were in the back seat, Szilárd Újhelyi was next to me and said: "Ella, turn round!" I drew the curtain and faced the following scene: a Russian armoured car was approaching from the Park, and another from the Nefelelejts or the Damjanich utca, I cannot remember which. They stopped on the carriageway, facing each other, and cut us off from the two Embassy cars that had been following us. They could no longer do so and could no longer see where they were taking us.

Ella Szilágyi *is widow of József Szilágyi, co-defendant in the Imre Nagy trial, who was sentenced to death and executed in April 1958. She remembers in Judit Ember's documentary film,* Menedékjog—1956 *(The right to asylum—1956).*

sympathies of even those who blame him for one or another step he took in the days beween 24 October and 4 November... The passengers on that notorious bus were exclusively Communists, mostly militant opponents of Rákosi's."

There is no doubt that the Imre Nagy affair grew in importance and became a sort of touchstone by which Yugoslav-Soviet relations could be judged. Khrushchev and his advisors reckoned that the trap called asylum would force Yugoslavia to return to the fold. On the other hand, Tito and his comrades would have been disposed to comply only if the Soviet Union granted in return a kind of autonomous status within the Peace Camp. During the following one and a half to two years both sides made several attempts to attain their original goals, but the results were temporary at best. Relations between the two countries were to reach a new all-time low—and this can even be considered symbolic—precisely after the execution of Imre Nagy and his associates.

Since the Kádár Government was fighting for its mere existence, Yugoslav support had an extraordinarily positive role to play in this respect. When forced to choose however, there was no doubt that Kádár would give up Tito. Over and above this, of course, the Imre Nagy affair also had serious domestic political implications. Of the two governments—that of Imre Nagy and that of Kádár—only one could be legitimate, and Imre Nagy's popularity surpassing that any one had enjoyed earlier, implied a threat to Kádár's Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government. János Kádár, in an odd way, tried to extract political mileage out of the peculiar way in which the Imre Nagy affair was settled.

"We have succeeded in proving", Kádár told Western journalists a few days after the abduction, "that it was not us who had discarded Imre Nagy and his group, with whom we had cooperated earlier, but it was they who initiated the break with us, actually in a highly unpopular way: they washed their hands of Hungary by expressing the desire to leave the country—not for ever but till the situation was settled".

These last words of Kádár's proved to be true.

Gyula Horn, Foreign Minister in the Német Government, when on a visit to Belgrade in 1989, and while the political changes leading to democracy in Hungary were in full flow, asked that the 1956 Yugoslav documents relating to Hungary be made available. The Yugoslav Government partly compiled with the rather unusual—though no longer unique—request, and handed over some of the papers.

The documents include some of the reports of the Yugoslav Ambassador in Budapest, the texts of diplomatic notes, as well as Yugoslav aide mémoires related to Hungarian-Yugoslav negotiations. The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs placed the papers received from Belgrade at the disposal of the Institute for History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Three historians, József Kis, István Vida and myself, intend to arrange the publication of the whole documentary material, complete with obtainable Hungarian diplomatic sources.

Anticipating the Hungarian publication we now publish six documents of particular relevance which were to determine eventually the fate of Prime Minister Imre Nagy and his associates.

The first and the last two documents come from Hungarian archives, while the other three are Yugoslav aide mémoires of the negotiations conducted by the two Governments between the 19th and 21st November 1956, and thus are among the papers delivered by the Yugoslav Government.

Hungarian-Yugoslav Negotiations, November 1956

Six documents

1

On 16 November the Yugoslav Ambassador, Dalibor Soldatic, and Prime Minister János Kádár made an agreement to the effect that Imre Nagy and his associates should be allowed to leave the Yugoslav Embassy in safety. On 17 November, however, János Kádár demanded, as a condition for the agreement, the resignation of Imre Nagy. It was under these circumstances that Yugoslav Deputy Prime Minister Edward Kardelj wrote the following letter which the Deputy Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs Dobrivoje Vidic handed to Kádár personally in Budapest on 19 November 1956.

Belgrade, 18 November 1956

Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government of the Hungarian People's Republic
Budapest

Comrade Prime Minister,

We have been informed by Comrade Dalibor Soldatic, our Ambassador in Budapest that, on 17 November this year, you had summoned him and stated your position on a possible solution of the question of granting asylum to Imre Nagy, and another 15 persons, as well as their families, in the building of our Embassy in Budapest:

Nagy and Losonczy must resign the offices they hold in the Government, they must make a statement to the effect that they agree with the fight waged by your Government against the Counter-Revolution. They must exercise self-criticism with regard to their earlier actions, and undertake not to engage in any action hostile to your Government.

At the same time you expressed your view and request that, until the situation in your country is settled, Nagy, Losonczy, Haraszti, Donáth, Jánossy, Tánczos, Szilágyi and Júlia Rajk should seek asylum in one of the socialist countries.

Bearing in mind that the government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia has had no part in any of the activities of the Imre Nagy group, or in what has happened in your country, and since it is interested only in an agreed friendly solution regarding the issue of asylum, the present note aims to set out the whole case in some detail as well as to formulate certain proposals.

On 2 November, Zoltán Szántó had a conversation with the head of our diplomatic mission in Budapest. On that occasion Zoltán Szántó expressed the desire that he and a number of other Communists should, if possible, leave the buildings of the Government and the Central Committee and seek asylum at our Embassy, in case reactionary gangs with a pogrom in mind endangered their lives. In the afternoon of 3 November, our diplomatic representative replied to Szántó that we were ready to grant asylum on condition that it would be taken up right away. We expected him to answer by Sunday, 4 November. By that time, however, operations by the Soviet Army had already begun, and talks about the granting of asylum could not be concluded. Instead, early in the morning of the same day, in accordance with previous talks, Nagy, Szántó as well as 14 other Government and Party leaders, together with their families, went to the Embassy.

In the meantime your Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government was formed. We supported it right from the beginning in the conviction that the continued progress of socialism in the Hungarian People's Republic was of great impotance to peace in this part of the world as well as for the international working-class movement. This and the explicit support which Josip Broz Tito, President of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, pledged to your Government in his speech at Pula on 11 November of this year clearly indicates that the granting of asylum to Imre Nagy and his group means that our Government wishes to keep its word, and fulfil its obligations under international law.

Being aware of your interest conceived in the best sense that the question of asylum should be solved with a view to the consolidation of conditions in Hungary; moreover bearing in mind that it is not a matter of indifference for us either in what way that situation in the Hungarian People's Republic will be consolidated, and in order that friendly relations between our countries are maintained and developed further—we have forwarded your various proposals to Nagy, Losonczy and the others.

We have explained to them that asylum and exile are not a genuine solution.

They have informed us that they now consider certain points in the programme of the former Imre Nagy Government to have been unreasonable and damaging to Hungary. (Neutrality, immediate withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, immediate evacuation of Soviet troops from Hungary, a multiparty system, etc.)

Imre Nagy and the group staying at our Embassy also take the view that the settling of the situation in Hungary requires that they resume normal life. They have expressed their wish and readiness—provided their personal safety is guaranteed—to live in Hungary and to return to their homes after leaving the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest.

On Friday, the 16th of November, our Ambassador, Comrade Soldatic, informed you of the views of Imre Nagy and his associates. At the same time he repeated our proposal that your Government give the Yugoslav Government an assurance that Imre Nagy, and the others, might leave our Embassy and freely return, with a guarantee of their personal safety, to their respective homes.

Upon concluding the talks with Soldatic you agreed on giving the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia a guarantee in writing for the personal safety of Imre Nagy and his associates; you stated at the same time that, in your opinion, they would be in a position to leave our Embassy probably as early as the morning of 17 November. What remained to be done was for you to forward the promised written assurance to the Yugoslav Government.

Our Ambassador informed his Government, Imre Nagy and the others, of your position. Thus, on 16 November of this year, we were under the impression that the question of asylum granted to the said group had been dealt with definitively and favourably in accordance with the interests of both the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and the Hungarian People's Republic.

On 17 November of this year, however, you summoned Ambassador Soldatic and informed him of the new conditions mentioned in the introduction of this note.

We must state with profound regret that your new conditions have put further difficulties in the way of a solution.

As we have already observed by way of introduction, the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia had no part in the activities of the Imre Nagy group or in events in your country; this means that the only interest it has is to achieve an agreed friendly solution exclusively regarding the issue of asylum. Consequently the conditions which you have stipulated cannot concern the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia. Our Government is in no position to exercise any further influence on Imre Nagy and his associates. In its view the questions raised by you when talking to Soldatic on 17 November concern your mutual relationship and matters exclusively within the domestic jurisdiction of Hungary.

What is left for us to do under such circumstances is only to repeat our proposal that your Government give our Government a written guarantee regarding the personal safety of Imre Nagy and his associates, to the effect that they may freely leave the Embassy of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and return to their respective homes.

As regards the statements which you ask of Imre Nagy and Losonczy, this is a matter within the discretion of the persons in question and is, we repeat, exclusively your business.

We request you to advise us of your decisions on our aforementioned proposals.

In connection with the above issue we wish to inform you that, on 16 November of this year, the First Secretary to the Central Committee of the Rumanian Workers' Party, Comrade Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, had a conversation with Nikola Vujanovic, our Ambassador in Bucharest, whom he requested on that occassion to inform President Tito that on Monday, 19 November, or on Tuesday, 20 November, he would go to Budapest and try to help to reach an agreed solution. Gheorghiu-Dej is of the view that it would be best:

a) if Nagy and a few members of his group were given asylum and stayed in the Rumanian

People's Republic until the situation in Hungary had settled. They will be assured an unhampered life and all kinds of assistance, concerning which the Government of the People's Republic of Rumania is willing to give our Government a written guarantee; or

b) if Imre Nagy exercised self-criticism in the form of a statement which expressed support for your Government and then continued to stay in your country.

Gheorghiu-Dej expressed the opinion at the same time that the first solution was the better and he asked our Government to give him an urgent reply.

On 17 November of this year, the government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia despatched, through Ambassador Vujanovic, its reply informing Gheorghiu-Dej on the circumstances under which asylum was granted; then it notified him of the following:

a) The Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia has no objection to Imre Nagy and the others leaving for Rumania. It is up to them to decide.

b) It is willing to agree that, subject to your Government's approval, Gheorghiu-Dej, or members of his delegation, should meet Nagy.

c) This is to inform you as well concerning our readines, of which we have informed Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej.

d) Comrade Gomulka, the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, told Milatovic, our Ambassador in Warsaw, that it would be best for you to come to an agreement with Nagy. Should this not be feasible it would still be right to enable him and the others to live as free men in Hungary; we herewith inform you about this as well.

The Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, attaching particular importance to the matter, has instructed Dobrivoje Vidic, Deputy Undersecretary of State in the Secretariat for Foreign Affairs, to hand over this note, furnish all necessary supplementary information and receive your reply.

Federal Executive Council
of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia
via
Yours respectfully
(signed): Edvard Kardelj

2.

Vidic presented Kardelj's letter to Kádár on the day of his arrival. István Dobi, Chairman of the Presidential Council which functioned as a collective head of State, took part in the negotiations, on behalf of Hungary. He was not a Party member and formerly had been a member of the Smallholders' Party. He had played a major part in the Communist takeover of 1947/48. A similar role had been played also by György Marosán, earlier a Social Democrat, who likewise participated in the negotiations. Notwithstanding the services he had rendered the Communists he had been imprisoned from 1951 to 1956. After his release he again joined the Communist leadership, in which he was renowned as a fanatical hard liner. At the time of the negotiations in question he was a member of the Hungarian Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government. Deputy Foreign Minister István Sebes, also a Communist politician of long standing, represented Foreign Minister Imre Horváth at the talks.

Aide memoire
concerning a conversation between Comrade Dobrivoje Vidic, Deputy Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and János Kádár, Chairman of the Hungarian Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government, held in Budapest on 19 November 1956.

Also present, with the consent of Comrade Vidic, were István Dobi, President of the Presidential Council of the Hungarian People's Republic; Minister of State Marosán, on behalf of the Government; Deputy Foreign Minister Sebes (Hungary) and Dalibor Soldatic, Ambassador to Hungary of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, and Secretary M. Zigmund, as interpreter (Yugoslavia).

Comrade Vidic handed Kádár the Yugoslav Government's note concerning the request of Imre Nagy and associates for asylum, and stated

that he was in a position to offer all the necessary information in connection with the note and that he was at the service of Comrade Kádár and his Government in the interest of a solution of the matter. His duties include, if possible, to receive the Hungarian Government's reply to the Yugoslav Government.

Kádár then read out aloud the Hungarian translation of the Yugoslav Government note. In connection with that note Kádár had only one remark to make: in the course of his talk with Soldatic on the 16th inst., when Soldatic acquainted him with the proposal of the Yugoslav Government, he (Kádár) pointed out that he was pleased with the stated position and thought that in this way it would become possible to solve the question. But he had also mentioned that this was his personal opinion, and he was still considering it, he would talk it over with others as well, and thought he would be in a position to answer in a very short time. But he was able to give his answer only on the occasion of their next talk, when he likewise raised questions contained in the note, too. For this reason he remarked right away that it was only during a later talk with Soldatic that he became aware that the Ambassador had informed his Government of his (Kádár's) acceptance of the Yugoslav Government's proposal. Kádár said that he parted with Soldatic on the understanding that he would give a definitive answer only after having consulted his comrades. This has led to a misunderstanding.

When resuming their conversation, Kádár had stated that the second issue was the following: a prompt solution was of particular importance to Hungary for certain reasons of domestic politics, which he had earlier explained to Comrade Soldatic. While wrestling with serious issues in the present, grave stituation, they were compelled to spend one third of their working time on the solution of this problem. With respect to Hungarian-Yugoslav relations, this problem was of secondary importance, but it was a troublesome one which hindered cooperation. As regards the reply to the Yugoslav Government's note, Kádár asked Yugoslavia to agree that he should consult other members of his Government first, and reply later.

Comrade Vidic spoke next. He said he was fully aware of the problem, he was familiar with the views of all Yugoslav comrades; he wished, in a frank and friendly conversation, to express his regret that this case has become a problem for Hungary and for them, especially for them: "Comrade Kádár and the other comrades can be assured by my declaration that we received Imre Nagy and his associates into our Embassy, and granted them asylum, because we thought this was the way we could help them in the situation that existed in Hungary at that time. This was our only motive, since we have no other ideas or aims, we only wished to overcome the predicament that had come about around the 4th of November."

Comrade Vidic conveyed to Comrade Kádár and the others the opinion of all leading Yugoslav comrades. They categorically rejected any possible suspicion and doubt concerning the keeping of Imre Nagy at their Embassy as something like a Government in reserve. (Marosán interrupted by saying that nobody had ever thought that.) Comrade Vidic continued by pointing out that the highest-ranking Soviet comrades knew well the motives underlying the Yugoslav act of granting Nagy asylum. On the night from the 2nd to the 3rd of November they held the same opinion, namely that, with a view to strengthening the Kádár Government it might be as well to have Imre Nagy removed in one way or another. Comrade Vidic supposed that Comrade Kádár and the others knew that. That this is really so can be shown by a number of facts.

To Kádár's question, what the term "removed" meant, Comrade Vidic replied as follows: "If Imre Nagy stood aside and vacated his post, this would facilitate the formation of the new Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government in order to prevent the existence of two governments." (Marosán interjected that in reality there are two governments, but Kádár maintains that this is not true.) Vidic went on and said he agreed with Kádár. The fact is that Kádár's Government took an oath of office before the Presidential Council, it is acting legally and there can be no doubt in this respect. (Marosán again interrupted to point out that this is legally true.) Vidic continued and stated that, according to international law, this was the fundamental issue, the rest is domestic business.

Kádár asked to make a comment: he declared that there is a government of which it is said that it has fallen apart. This view has been taken by the countries which recognise his Government, those which want socialism to continue. According to Hungarian law, only one govern-

ment existed. The fact was, however, that the former head of government, who is staying at the Yugoslav Embassy, at the diplomatic mission of a friendly country, has not yet declared that he had ceased to be Prime Minister. This is why Anna Kéthly had risen to speak at the United Nations claiming that Foreign Minister Imre Horváth was not authorised to represent the Hungarian Government, since Imre Nagy had recalled him; she, on the other hand, was entitled to represent that Government because she had received authorisation from Imre Nagy; she regarded Imre Nagy as the legitimate head of the Hungarian Government, etc. Kádár now proceeded to state that Comrade Marosán was wrong to claim that there were two governments because according to Hungarian law only one government existed. Kádár stressed: "Those who do not sympathise with Hungary have a chance of doubting this, therefore this matter is also of foreign policy significance. We might suitably refute these arguments and repel such intrigues. Our hands, however, are tied since Imre Nagy is at the Yugoslav Embassy. Such things being unknown inside the country they are particularly damaging, since it is impossible to do anything about them."

Comrade Vidic said he was not fully acquainted with Hungarian law, but he tried to give a Yugoslav interpretation as regards the situation of the former Imre Nagy Government: that Government existed no longer. The new Government set up by the Presidential Council had taken the oath of office before that Council. It is this administration that the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia recognises as the legitimate Hungarian Government, and this Government is recognised by all friendly countries. As regards those who are out to take advantage of this situation—and it is presumed that they do so since they assume a hostile attitude towards Hungary—this matter can be settled by issuing a decree of the Presidential Council on the Imre Nagy Government's dismissal from office and on the appointment of the new Government. From the legal position this is a simple affair, since it is the truth. As far as those different elements are concerned who, according to Kádár, would misuse this situation, the Yugoslav Government will not join them in any respect. The Yugoslav Government's note has been motivated by its search for a solution. It is anxious to get out of this predicament, and so is the other side, therefore it has to examine what could be done in the interest of both sides. Comrade Vidic added that he must revert to what he had already said, namely that the reasons for granting asylum to Imre Nagy and his associates are clear, and he expects the (Hungarian) comrades to believe him that Yugoslavia does not contemplate leaving any aspect of the question unsolved. This is demonstrated also by the following: on the night between the 2nd and the 3rd of November, when the Soviet comrades had a talk with the Yugoslav leaders, it was the Yugoslav comrades who suggested that Imre Nagy's Government should be removed and thus excluded—of course, in the interest of the formation of the new Government; on this point the Yugoslav and the Soviet comrades fully agreed. Vidic said he did not wish to be misunderstood, but it is a fact that the leading Yugoslav comrades had given as their opinion that in these difficult days the best solution would be for Comrade Kádár to form the new Hungarian Government. The Soviet comrades know this full well. Thus our relation to Kádár and his Government, just as to Imre Nagy, is quite clear.

Kádár stated that he had earlier told Comrade Soldatic that the Yugoslav comrades' opinion on the situation in Hungary had been known on the 3rd of November in view of the fact that, when the suggestion was made that a new government should be formed in Hungary, the position adopted by the friendly parties and countries was not indifferent to him (Kádár) and to the other comrades who had taken the initiative, thus his personal determination and decision were influenced by the fact that the Soviet and Yugoslav Communists as well as the Communists of other socialist countries were of one mind about this matter. In this way they had got into a still more awkward position owing to a fact unknown to them: it had surprised them that the Imre Nagy group had gone to the Yugoslav Embassy and was then staying there. This created a situation whose implications had very unpleasant and alarming effects both in Hungary and abroad.

Comrade Dobi mentioned the well-known activity displayed by different parties when the establishment of a multi-party system had been announced. The Smallholders Party had been so active that it seemed to sweep away all other political parties. The leader of the Smallholders, Tildy, who was a member of the Imre Nagy

cabinet, had been with him (Dobi) and Imre Nagy on the morning when they had gone down to the upper ground floor of the Parliament building. Imre Nagy had gripped his suitcase and had started after them. When Tildy had turned round and looked back, he no longer saw Imre Nagy, who had vanished down a passage. Tildy was left alone with his wife and—though noted for his piety—he had cursed furiously, practically beside himself, in Dobi's presence and had even wept, crying out what kind of man Imre Nagy was to abandon him in this way. This was important because rumours were circulating everywhere on how and in what way Imre Nagy had made his escape to the Yugoslav Embassy.

Comrade Vidic stated that Comrade Tito also maintained that Imre Nagy had fled, and, as far as he (Vidic) knew, Nagy was exasperated by Comrade Tito's opinion. He referred to Comrade Kádár's statement that he had gained moral strength from, and that his personal decisions had been influenced by, his awareness of being supported by the Communist Parties. Since it was understood that there was no problem between the Hungarian and the Yugoslav comrades, Vidic thought that this issue had been clarified.

As to the issue raised by Comrade Dobi, who had vividly discussed the growing role and ambitions of the Smallholders Party, Comrade Vidic presumed that the Hungarian comrades knew that the Yugoslav leadership had never agreed to, and (in respect of lending assistance) had never approved of, a multi-party system in the sense that Imre Nagy restored it. In Yugoslavia it was felt at once that this might put an end to socialism in Hungary and would let loose the bourgeois and reactionary forces in the country.

Kádár interposed that this precisely would have been the case if a secret ballot had brought back capitalism. Marosán remarked: it would have been a come-back not only for capitalism but also for nationalism and chauvinism, which might become dangerous to all neighbouring countries.

Comrade Vidic added that this would have happened, and the bourgeois parties, through a secret ballot envisaged by Imre Nagy, would have swept away both Imre Nagy and the Communists in Hungary. He also shared Comrade Marosán's view that it would have been highly likely for nationalist passions to have been freed and he went on: "We in Yugoslavia can understand this clearly since, as neighbours and as Communists, we are interested in protecting socialist and friendly Hungary, just as we are certain that the Hungarian people and their Government are interested in maintaining friendly relations with Yugoslavia. For this reason I think the Imre Nagy affair, because of which I have travelled here, is something we can and must deal with, for the above reason as well, as soon as possible.

Vidic asked the comrades, however, to understand that the Imre Nagy business was an issue of high moral significance to Yugoslavia. A promise relating to asylum is an obligation that derives from international law. He has every understanding for the question raised by Comrade Kádár as to the aspect concerning the possible resignation of Imre Nagy and Losonczy and the statements to be made by them, but these cannot concern the Yugoslav Government. It is unable to compel Imre Nagy to make such a statement. Comrade Kádár must be aware of this, as he had already been informed by Soldatic, who told him that everything possible had been done by the Yugoslavs to convince Imre Nagy, Losonczy and the others that at the time when they were members of the Government, their ideas had not been reasonable, they had damaged the interests of Hungarian socialism in respect of questions such as, e.g., free elections, the senseless requirement of solving within 24 hours questions of such great consquence to the balance of forces in Europe as neutrality, withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and the immediate evacuation of Soviet troops from Hungary.

The Yugoslavs have endeavoured to persuade those persons to understand this, and are pleased to be able to inform Comrade Kádár that Nagy, Losonczy and the others—having been concvinced during those talks—had admitted the unreasonableness and damaging effects of their ideas. "When we noticed", Vidic continues, "that Imre Nagy and his group began to look more realistically at the problem of the concrete interests of socialism in Hungary, we thought it would be easy to solve those questions which did not concern Yugoslavia, i. e. the relationship between Nagy, Losonczy and associates and the Government of Comrade Kádár, and vice versa. The only problem left to us has been to find a solution to those people leaving the Embassy in accordance with the moral and

legal obligations of Yugoslavia. This is why we, as a state, cannot deal with what Imre Nagy is ready to do in respect of supporting the Kádár Government, of making public statements, etc. We think this is entirely an internal matter which the Hungarian comrades must deal with themselves. Of course, it would serve the interests of stabilization and Socialism if they were ready in this situation to render assistance in one form or another, but this is their own affair. The impressions and the opinion of the leading Yugoslav comrades are, however, that Nagy, Losonczy and their associates are, according to every indication and their intentions, honest Communists. We have to suppose that sometime soon—upon leaving the Embassy and when returning to normal life, and having been confronted with the real problems of the country—they will come down to earth and understand that they must aid Comrade Kádár's Government in order to strengthen Socialism in Hungary. The Yugoslav comrades sincerely think that, in this situation, it is necessary to do their utmost in order to save these men for Socialism, to show patience and perseverance, to see this whole affair in a broader perspective, and to believe that there are many people who can be won over to support the Kádár Government". Vidic pointed out that this problem must be solved in a simple manner that is to the credit of the Kádár Government and the Yugoslav Government as well; that is, the proposals of the Yugoslav Government should be accepted.

In the view of Vidic, all that has been said before makes it possible to reduce the problem to the following: Imre Nagy and associates must be allowed to leave the Embassy, to return home with guarantees for their safety, which the Yugoslav Government should be given to allow it to keep its given word. Later, after those persons have returned to normal life, it might be necessary to try and save them for Socialism, to unite the Socialist forces in the interest of the stabilization of the country, etc. But the Yugoslavs do not meddle in this, since it is the internal affair of Hungary. In so far as he (Vidic) talked at all about prospects, he did so exclusively from the point of view of friendly relations between the two countries, in the interest of socialism in Hungary and in these parts of the world, where they live together and have to help each other. In this tragedy that has befallen Hungary, other Communist countries also try their best to help. Yugoslavia is frankly willing to do so, it will do everything in its power to this end. In stressing this he conveyed a message of the leading Yugoslav comrades in a sincere effort to contribute as far as possible to the victory and triumph of Socialism in Hungary. The Yugoslav comrades wish Comrade Kádár and all his colleagues much success in their difficult work to save the cause of Socialism in friendly Hungary and to develop the immense strength of the Hungarian working class and the Hungarian people, and to attain their goal, which Yugoslavia fully supports.

Comrade Kádár wished to explain that at the time he himself also had voted with deep conviction in support of the decisions of the Imre Nagy Government. He must say candidly, however, that he had had unfavourable experiences, and he will not forget these. He had found out that members of the group—except for Imre Nagy—were persons who would give him much more trouble if he cooperated with them than if he contended against them. He added that he had found it very difficult to ask for the intervention of Soviet troops both in the first and in the second instance. He was of the opinion that it did not suit the Soviet Union either. He pointed out that Imre Nagy had taken part in all the Party and Government discussions where these issues were decided upon. He knew that Comrade Tito was convinced that on the first occasion there was no need for the intervention of Soviet troops; this was so, and Imre Nagy as a Communist took part in all conferences and voted as he (Kádár) had done. But Imre Nagy went as far as to put an end to what he had voted for by ordering fire to be opened on the Soviet troops. Here, strictly speaking, there arises also the question of Communist morality.

Comrade Vidic mentioned that Comrade Tito had clearly denounced Imre Nagy's order to fire on the Soviet troops.

Comrade Kádár went on and declared that it is not that simple to try and save Imre Nagy and his associates for Socialism, if his experience of them so far is taken into consideration.

Comrade Vidic replied to Comrade Kádár's comment on that passage of the Yugoslav Government's note which concerns the talk between Comrade Kádár and Ambassador Soldatic on 16 November. He was able to say that Soldatic informed the Yugoslav Government precisely in the same terms as Comrade Kádár had done; i. e. it was Comrade Kádár's

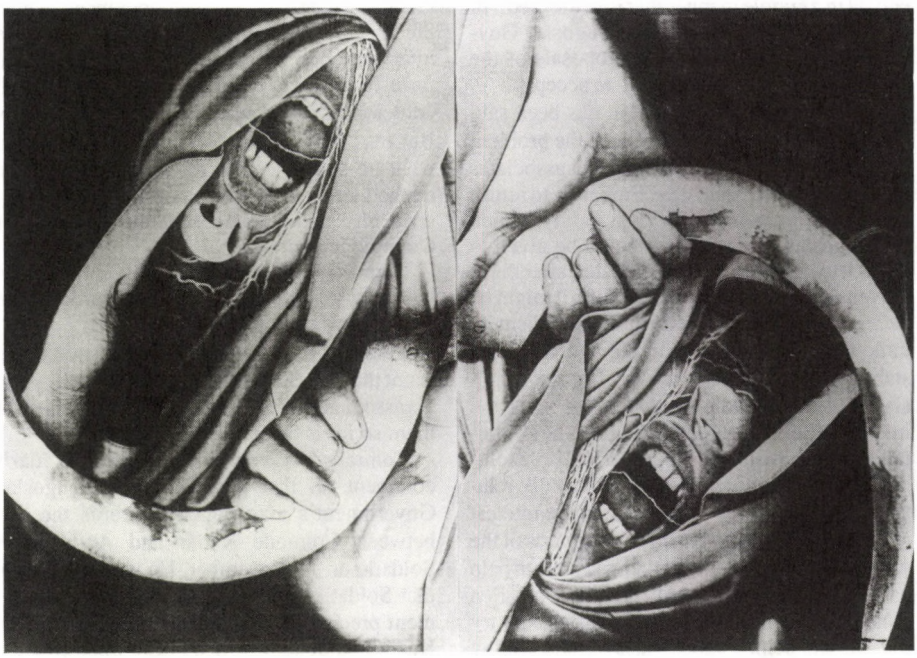
personal opinion that the solution had to be sought on this basis. Comrade Soldatic had informed his Government, that the definitive answer was still to come, but the Government, relying on the conversation and on Comrade Kádár's declaration, thought that the affair could be considered more or less settled. This was so formulated, in the note, as well.

Comrade Marosán declared that Comrade Tito has been correctly informed on the situation in Hungary, and was thus familiar with the details. He said the Hungarians thought that what Comrade Tito had said was very positive, but at the same time they in Budapest found it strange that Imre Nagy and his group were staying at the Yugoslav Embassy, and this state of affairs caused them great concern.

Comrade Vidic replied to the point raised by Comrade Marosán saying that, in his opinion the present discussions have proved the Yugoslavs had always made every effort to deal with this matter; and now it is the business of the Hungarian side to clarify the situation in order to find a common solution. He underlines that hypocrisy of any kind on the part of Comrade Tito is out of the question. Only one practical question is open: how Imre Nagy is to leave the Embassy. The Yugoslav Government has made a concrete proposal in this matter. It is convinced that Comrade Kádár and his Government are also interested in settling the problem as soon as possible.

(The conversation lasted 1 hour and 45 minutes.)

(Documents 3-6 will appear in the next issue.)



Júlia Váradi

A Danish Witness

Nina Bang-Jensen was sent by the Democratic Party of the United States to give advice to the Hungarian opposition on the election campaign and party organization. Part of her brief was to keep a close eye on the referendum in November 1989. During her wanderings in Budapest, however, she heard a strange piece of news.

How did you hear about the memorial?

I was walking down Münnich Ferenc utca with my interpreter at a quarter to six one Sunday morning, since I was supposed to cover as many polling stations as possible. I was just trying to explain how my name is spelt when someone in our group asked me: "Are you of Danish origin?" Yes, I said, my father was Danish. At which he said: "Good God, a memorial was raised to a man by that name the day before yesterday on Lot 301..."

In Hungary, you know, few people know the name Paul Beng-Jensen, so I think we'd better start the story from the beginning.

My father was very young when he left Denmark to go to university in the United States. He studied economics before the war, and he was stranded there when the Germans marched into Denmark on April 9, 1940. As far as I know he was in the process of writing a book commissioned by the Danish government, so right away he became an employee of the Danish Embassy. Perhaps you know that after the Nazis occupied Denmark, the provisional, but only legitimate, Danish government was formed in the Danish Embassy in Washington.

I gather your father had a significant role in that.

Being an energetic young man, he was the person who announced the formation of the government—with the consent of the Ambassador of course. He soon met my mother, who, at the time, was working for a federal organization which was trying to convince the United States government to provide support for Europe in the fight against Fascism. There was a huge debate going on in America as to whether they should intervene in the war or not. Anyway, my mother was on Europe's side. They got together and they were married during the war. When the war came to an end and the United Nations was set up, my father was given a good position.

Do you know what his job was at the time?

I'm afraid I don't. I wasn't born then, just my two brothers and two sisters. I was born in 1955. All I know is that after the 1956 Revolution he was asked to study the Hungarian affair, as it was called, and to write an accurate account of it.

So he came here in 1957?

Yes, he spent a long time in Hungary talking to a great number of people whom he questioned on what they had been through. He was looking for witnesses, and he did what any right-minded person would do: he promised that he would not reveal the names of any of the Hungarians he had spoken to. He gave his word. When he returned to the United States and handed in his report to the appropriate UN authority, he was asked to give names. He naturally refused to do this.

He must have been acutely aware of the dangers involved for those people.

Of course. After all, by then at least one execution had taken place and he was well aware of the repression. Not only did he know that a brutal wave of terror was sweeping Hungary, but also that some of the people working for the UN were unfortunately under strong Soviet influence, and therefore it was impossible to predict how they would act. I'm sorry to say his colleagues did not take his side. They were afraid.

Júlia Váradi *is a reporter for Hungarian Radio in Budapest. This conversation was broadcast in November 1989.*

Those must have been difficult times in America too. That was the period immediately after the notorious McCarthy era, wasn't it?

Yes, at the end of 1950s the world was on a razor's edge, so one had to watch one's every step in America too. Everyone was afraid of the Soviet Union—scaremongering was behind this of course, plus a big dose of naivety.

What happened to your father next? Do you know?

However much they worked on him, he would not give a list of names to the UN. In fact eventually he went up to the roof of the UN Building in New York and burnt all the information.

What was the result?

He was discredited and deprived of all his rights in the UN. The Soviet Union was naturally very angry with him. They forced that UN department to dismiss my father.

Was he thrown out without notice?

Yes. I was told that without any prior notice he was literally turned out of his office. Everything was taken away from him and he found himself in the street.

Didn't anyone try to help him?

Yes, of course they did. Some of the representatives of the Western Allies tried to take up his case, but they weren't strong enough, faced with a propaganda campaign of that sort.

Could he get another job?

After much trouble he managed to find work as a social worker. He tried to help people who had come to the States from the developing countries. But it was not easy for him to support five children. Then, in the autumn of 1959, in November, at the time of Thanksgiving, he disappeared. After a two or three day search he was found dead in a New York park, on November 25, 1959. Beside him was a note saying that he had committed suicide. No one believed it of course, and since then we are more and more convinced that he was murdered.

Do you know exactly what the note said?

Something like: "I underestimated the strength of those I was trying to fight". The writing was obviously not his. And it wasn't in his style. And another thing: there was a number on the note, in tiny figures. It was the number of the house in Budapest where the talks had taken place.

I imagine there are various theories as to what really happened to him?

One of them—which is shared by most people in the United States today—is based on the fact that shortly before his death a Soviet officer came to see him with some information. We don't know whether the officer or the information he brought played any role in his death, but it was very probable the KGB were behind the whole business.

Was there any investigation?

Yes, the police tried to work on it, but it was not the sort of crime the New York police could cope with. Congress didn't get far either.

Does that mean there is still no result?

No, nothing so far. I don't think it matters so much who pulled the trigger. The reasons are what count, and the fact that an innocent man was killed. So, I was walking down Münnich Ferenc utca at a quarter to six on Sunday morning with my interpreter, because part of my job was to go around as many polling stations as possible. I was just trying to explain how my name is spelt when someone asked me: "Are you of Danish origin?" Yes, I said, my father was Danish. At which he said: "Good God, a memorial was raised to a man by that name the day before yesterday, on Lot 301". I could not believe it, I said, he was my father, Paul Bang-Jensen. It was fantastic. Then—since one of the polling stations was very close to the cemetery —at around noon my interpreter took me to the memorial, and the most amazing thing was that up till then I had no clue about the whole thing. That such a significant memorial had been erected here, and especially that it happened to be on Lot 301. It's marvellous.

Géza Perneczky

New Utopias and Times of Trouble

One of the speakers at the Catholic Days held in Munich late in May 1989 was Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, elder brother of the present West German President. I came upon his lecture while listening to a radio programme, broadcast as usual at half past eight on a Sunday morning.

This half-hour talk differed from the customary sermons transmitted at that time. On the one hand, the day was not a Sunday but a Thursday or, more exactly, it was Ascension Day. On the other hand, the speech did not fall under any religious subject. The eminent physicist and philosopher used a tone that would have better fitted a discourse in which physicists had been represented by Heisenberg and Schrödinger, economists by Ludwig Erhard and Karl Schiller and artists by Franz Kafka, Paul Klee and Glenn Gould (yes, approximately in this arrangement!), and he had intended to convince these people of something else. In fact he spoke about simple things, in fairly plain language, from an absolutely intelligible and yet absolutely unusual point of view. The disquieting content of the lecture could only be compared with the great avant-garde manifestos. Perhaps that's why it had such a profound effect on me, an art historian who is on the periphery of ecological problems. I feel I won't find it easy to digest this manifesto.

This is partly because Carl Friedrich Weizsäcker did not use the language of modern science (or of the arts, literature or music), but the ticklish idiom of postmodern utopias. After all, this is understandable if we come to think that we are no longer living in the days of quantum physics but in the decade of megabits and digital rock-music recordings, when it would be outmoded to extravagate on nuclear energy. In fact, it is rather the strangely novel prospects of ridding ourselves of the threatening power of such energies and the almost democratic mannerism of refraining from loud speech which are in vogue. That is to say, we are in every respect most (neo-) restrained.

I myself am writing this article on a word processor, whose thesaurus of 30,000 words is its smallest accomplishment. This, too, is so strangely new, small and soft that it in no way befits the usual dynamism of a typewriter or the press articles intended to have a public life. The lettuce I can buy in the supermarket is also so pale that I rather expect it to come with a label calling for it to be flavoured with vinegar, oil, salt and sugar—and then thrown away. Perhaps from tomorrow on, I will find enclosed with my salary a little slip giving the account number to which I can remit my money to support the chemical neutralisation of the dying forests, seas and poorer nations (or those who, despite all changes, have remained captive) in various parts of the world. They call on me to lead a more economical life, allowing the utilisation of wind-power between the hall and the living-room. In short, that I, too, should turn into a tiny microprocessor, to become digitally resolved. I should communicate in a positive way with the environment, I

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should become a waste-retrieving force, in short, I should be excessively calm, attractively cheap and well-balanced.

But what was really striking in Weizsäcker's talk was that he outlined a postmodern ecology which would mean the radicalisation of this velvety, delicate disillusionment. For the operative word of his speech was far from being "cheap". He spoke about expensive energy, that was what he praised. He used incredibly convincing examples (for Japan, South Korea, Singapore), to prove that the really ecological national economies were all built on very little raw material and very expensive energy. But those highly developed industrial countries which, unfortunately for them, have preserved relatively low twentieth century price levels—including West Germany—will develop, let us say, a car whose petrol consumption is three litres per 100 kilometres (which in fact they developed long ago) in vain, since with the current low price of petrol the technology of these cheap cars would be too costly: in short, these cars are prohibitively costly. The same applies in all fields of life. The modernity of various machines and equipment, for instance, lies not only in that they are small, light and inexpensive—no, a really up-to-date technology is, beyond this and amongst other things, also fault-friendly (meaning that, just like living organisms, it is able to automatically avoid faults occurring during its operation, that is to say, it can mend). But fault-friendly technologies are extremely expensive technologies... and so on and so forth.

Weizsäcker's sequence of thought was based on simple calculations, easy to check. The advantage of such expensive technologies is that they could be put to use even at long range here on Earth. This is not the case with the current West German or American technologies, which will exhaust the Earth within one or, at best, two decades. With humorous spontaneity, Weizsäcker used the term dinosaur techniques for the current civilisation of these countries. The momentary cheapness of these awkward techniques, and their consequential wasteful use is the greatest enemy of mankind, as this can cause truly irreparable destruction. Only very expensive technologies can (some time in the future) be so cheap and forbearing that their use should be really profitable.

The audience—as one could hear over the air—repeatedly interrupted this irregular Ascension Day speech with applause. But I was sitting with a somewhat ricked back in the armchair of my Cologne flat and could not help starting to take stock of the (West German) dinosaur technology around me, on which one of Europe's greatest physicists and ecologists had just passed the death sentence. The speech left no doubt on the fact that a profitable rise in energy prices would mean not the doubling of petrol prices (for which in fact there has already been an example) but a minimum of fivehold, possibly tenfold increase of energy costs. The cost of things that can be expressed in square metres and cubic metres must rise at a similar rate—living space and working space, arable land, grass, trees, and the air, not to mention articles such as cut flowers or animal protein. Equally tight was the calculation concerning the amount of time we have at best at our disposal. According to Weizsäcker, we must have the new technologies at our disposal at the latest by the decade beginning in the year 2000.

I was wondering whether this urbane, kindly and learned, mild-eyed gentleman, every inch a European, was aware of the scathing grim humour with which he presented all this? Was he aware of the fact that the overwhelming majority of the world was equipped, at the very best, with the technology of the 1950s, and right now was in its death agony precisely because this equipment has made it absolutely impossible to raise the energy prices and financial conditions of 1990?

As it turned out from his talk, the aged physicist was aware of all this. He said simply and kindly, as befits a Catholic holiday, that only the very rich countries will be able to

produce the ecological technology with the help of which they will manage, somehow or other, very poorly, to muddle through the troubles that are imminent. This part of his speech was not accompanied by applause. I think most people thought of the same thing as I did. Reacting to the silence, as it were, Weizsäcker did not go on to dwell on the prospects of the poor countries, that is of the larger part of the world. He felt that with a tactful silence he might perhaps achieve more than by opening out his humanist's soul to the audience and bathing them in the shoreless sea of a sense of responsibility. Anyway, what will solidarity be worth, what will the helping hands be able to do in the given case? With this in mind, I first went out quickly for some fresh air. Of course, to little avail: one can feel when one assumes—at least inwardly—a face like a Shakespearian character who has just been stabbed in the guts.

I was thinking, among other things, of a controversy that an American historian had started, echoes of which reached Hungarian periodicals in the first months of the year. The title of his book was *The End of History?*—question mark included; but not in the sense I was feeling now, with the dagger in my belly. On the contrary, the author started out from the situation which had developed around the Christmas of 1989: thus he postulated the final overthrow of fascist and communist ideologies and the full victory of bourgeois liberalism. His main problem was that in such a perfectly resolved world one can only go on to vegetate happily, and so human life, interspersed with struggles and romantic events, known as history, would become something of the past.

What a mercy that the few months that have passed since have proved that these ideologies and all the ills and sufferings they involve have still not disappeared for good, and that the victory of liberalism cannot be taken to be as complete as that. To top it all, here now comes this new apocalypse, with a five-fold or ten-fold rise in energy prices just announced, a technology softer and dearer even than software and, in the midst of approaching annihilation, the portended and scientifically proved chance of survival of the rich countries.

Can the whole thing again be a mere utopia, which we may be able to successfully neutralise with counter-utopias? Possibly. But who would feel reassured by this prospect if, on the other hand, one knows—the debate among historians started out from this supposition—that it is precisely the mortal vortex of utopias, an endless apocalypse, this threatening embrace, that makes up prevailing history.

János Kornai

My Days as a Naive Reformer

Thirty-three years ago, in the autumn of 1956, I submitted the manuscript of this book to the Economic and Legal Publishing House. Now, the preface to a new edition offers a choice as to what to discuss from a variety of issues that come to mind. Personal reminiscences might be in order, invoking the tempestuous times of first publication. Another possibility might be to take inspiration from Frigyes Karinthy's classic short story "Meeting a young man" and to ask to what extent I fulfilled the plans of my youth. But no matter how attractive these approaches are, I propose to discuss a different question: to what extent do I still consider the message of this small book valid and in what respect has my opinion changed since.

Given that I chose this to be the subject of the new preface, I would like to implement this task objectively, as objectively as I can. False modesty will not prompt me to gloss over points that I still consider timely and instructive, but I shall also discuss the weaknesses and the problematic features of the work. This does not, however, preempt criticism of the second edition. Critics will certainly find in this work things to which they take exception, and perhaps also merits, of which I do not speak here and now.

Let me quote the preface of the first edition: "The first necessary step is a description of the situation as it is. This, it may be thought, should already be available in dozens of books. Unfortunately this is not the case. There are, of course, dozens of textbooks and collections of notes for use at universities which describe our methods of economic administration and planning, our pricing and wage systems, etc. However, all these have a serious fault in common: instead of telling us how our economic mechanism really works, they merely describe how it would work if it worked as their authors would wish. ...For this reason a coherent description of how the mechanism of our economy really does work represents a new task, not hitherto performed in the economic literature of our country." Or: "These methods of running the economy were increasingly beginning to show the disadvantages attached to them. The task set for the present study lies in just this sphere. It is to reveal these faults, the contradictions within the economic mechanism we have used."

This is still my aim. I have considered it the principal objective of my research activity ever since. This is not a self-evident pledge. It is frequent that the committed partisans of some system, political current or party feel that they must primarily and above all

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János Kornai *is Professor of Economics at Harvard University and the author of* Economics of Shortage, *North Holland Publishing House Co., Amsterdam, Oxford, New York, 1980. This is the preface the new edition of* to Overcentralisation in the Economy, *which was first published in 1957.*

emphasise in all their works, written and oral presentations, whatever serves the interests of the system, current, or party supported by them, keeping silent as far as possible about what could damage these interests. The conviction ripened in my mind in the 1954–1955 period to play a different role: I would no longer be the *propagandist* of the socialist or any other system, but become a researcher. Before I commit pen to paper, I ask first of all whether what I want to say is true, and not to which cause it does harm or benefit. To use an almost forgotten but nowadays again timely expression, I have no wish to practise partisan science. To avoid any misunderstanding: I have no desire to eliminate from the public sphere and the sphere of ideas the desire by political actors to be in the company of their fellows, serve a common cause and identify themselves with a party or movement. I respect those who choose this approach to life, although I do not believe that this is the only morally acceptable attitude. Partisanship and political commitment are values of a high order, but their place is outside science. Scholarship begins whenever somebody tries to rise above his commitments and to apply the criteria of scientific truth. It is clear to me, and I shall deal with this in detail below, that those active in the social sciences never entirely succeed in this, but I believe that they are at least obliged to *strive* to do so. I do not only accept this view but even wish to suggest it, although I know that in the West and in the East, at home and abroad, numerous "antipositivist" intellectual currents reject this as obsolete.

The researcher is neither prosecutor, nor counsel for the defence, nor presiding judge, but his role, to stay with the legal metaphor, is akin to that of the *juge d'instruction* of the continental system who, before the trial, collects all possible facts, questions witnesses, but does not himself pass any judgement. In this respect, it is in good conscience that I pass this small work to the reader for the second time: even today I think that what I wrote then was a correct report on the classical socialist system prior to the reforms.

The concrete system itself, about which this book speaks, no longer exists in Hungary; today it will be of interest primarily to students of economic history. But this past left such a deep imprint that we still feel its effects. It is impossible to understand truly the Hungarian economy of 1989 and 1990 and the problems of transformation, if we are not familiar with the initial conditions. In addition, numerous relics of the overcentralised, bureaucratic economy, relying on instructions and other administrative measures, are still alive and kicking. Not to mention that what already belongs to the more remote past in the Hungarian economy, is more recent in the Soviet Union or Poland, and is the present in East Germany, Rumania, North Korea and Cuba. (Since I wrote the present Preface, East Germany has ceased to exist, and the situation in Rumania has also changed although the future system of its economy is uncertain.)

It is not only an emphasis on a descriptive-explanatory approach in scientific analyses that I consider a timely requirement; the book makes a contribution to scientific philosophy and methodology on numerous other questions as well. These I still fully accept. Here I shall mention but one range of questions: the relationship of the book to Marxist political economy.

I ask the reader to place himself back into the intellectual atmosphere of the time. Abroad, the socialist economy was of course much discussed employing a non-Marxist approach. In Hungary, however, just as in the other socialist countries, Marxist political economy enjoyed an officially proclaimed monopoly. Not only blind supporters of the existing system, but its sharp-eyed critics as well relied on this apparatus. Reformers demanded respect for the Law of Value, and among other things, debated whether the means of production or labour were commodities. The method, conceptual apparatus and

terminology of overcentralization are not part of the above. As I was writing, I was not only convinced that Stalinist innovations in political economy (Basic Law, The Law of Planned Proportionate Development, etc.) were unusable and misleading, but also that the conceptual apparatus of the Marxist theory of labour value was unworkable. It provided no constructive help in the analysis of the reality of the socialist system. I did not argue against it, but simply ignored it. I have been doing so ever since.

I wished to suggest to the readers that they could reach noteworthy and substantial conclusions if they avoided the texts and jargon of the anointed priests of Marxist political economy and did not get bogged down in their arguments. Instead they should try to observe reality directly and from a pragmatic perspective and then draw generalising conclusions. What makes a work theoretical is not the number of references to *Das Kapital* or the repetition of the term "Law of Values" but generalisation based on the observation of reality. In numerous other disciplines (thus, philosophy festering in the shadow of György Lukács) not only dogmatic Stalinist social scientists but others critical of the classical socialist system were still caught for a long time in the tight chambers of Marxist doctrine, or tried to expand its walls by cautiously exchanging a brick or two. In other socialist countries (for instance in the Soviet Union under the influence of Kantorovich and Novozhilov) a similar situation prevailed over a long time in economics, too. Perhaps I may say without appearing immodest that it was also due to this book that the profession of economics in Hungary was freed of these shackles earlier.

At the same time it is worth stressing that the influence of Marxism can still be felt in several aspects of the book, and that in these aspects I have remained loyal to this understanding of Marxist method since. I think, for instance, it is a fertile approach to consider that if something appears on a large scale, and goes on for some time, one should not be satisfied with a superficial explanation which seeks the explanation in individual mistakes, in policy errors, or in the personal characteristics of the man in power. Let us examine whether it is not the system which is the principal or at least one of the principal factors in the explanation of the problems.

Socialism, whether in its classical pre-reform shape or in the variant which came about in the course of the reforms, is not a coincidental agglomeration of individual phenomena. Regularities, general tendencies, ingrained patterns of behaviour came into being. In the fully-formed system, characteristic situations occur repeatedly and this gives rise to characteristic attitudes. The basic duty of the social scientist is the study and description of these regularities, tendencies, patterns of behaviour, and response functions, as well as synthesising them into a theory. I am now aware that this approach is not particular to Marxist social science. Not all schools of thought may accept them; yet it is true all the same that such methodological principles form part of several respectable non-Marxist, or institutionalist research strategies.

An example of this approach in the book is the examination of how a particular system of planning, control, and financial incentives induces certain reactions in the management of firms, against the will of the allegedly almighty centre. Chapter III describes seven regularities. While the standard textbook at the time taught that the ever higher level of consumption or the planned nature of all activities were "laws" of socialism, I tried to present what the *real* laws were, that is more precisely and more modestly, the real regularities: making a fetish of the plan, plan-speculation, plan bargaining and the rush at the end of plan period, among others. Not a pretty sight but inevitable under the given conditions.

Others may have learned this from other sources but in my case it was Marxism which taught me that things occur on different levels. There are chains of causality and at the

same time more superficial and deeper regularities. *Overcentralisation* made several attempts at applying this approach. In fact, this first book of mine already raised all the important questions that were to torment me throughout my life as a scholar. To what degree can human action be planned? To what extent does uncertainty govern society? What is the relationship between bureaucratic control, forced growth, and chronic shortages? To what extent can the selection and behaviour of bureaucrats according to certain criteria (uncritical obedience, lack of initiative, etc.) be explained by the characteristics of the political and social system? Why does the huge bureaucratic apparatus tenaciously recreate itself? Now that, after more than thirty years, I re-read my first book, I became aware that the questions which I asked were drafted in my mind as I took my first tentative steps. What has changed in my later works was the answer to these questions. On some problems I changed my views more than once. I cannot provide infallibility retrospectively either, nor for the future. All I have done was to try and establish the truth and I will do that in the future as well.

One of the sources of the weaknesses in the book was ignorance, or perhaps I should call it knowing things by half. I was twenty-eight when I wrote it. I knew a thing or two about the way the system I examined worked, I was a trained Marxist-Leninist, familiar with the debate in Hungary. Yet this was about all. The book was my dissertation for a Candidate's Degree, comparable to the thesis a graduate student has to submit to obtain a Ph.D. in a university in an English-speaking country. I knew just about nothing of the literature and ideas which a student at a good university has to be familiar with if he wishes to graduate in Economics. What skills I acquired in this area, I obtained after the publication of *Overcentralisation,* in the years when I found myself on the fringes of the Hungarian academic community and thus had the time to spend all my waking hours reading. Those years were my "Universities", when I learned, with considerable effort and by teaching myself many things which students at western universities are spoonfed by their lecturers and tutors.

The book refers to some Hungarian authors, primarily to György Péter, whose ideas influenced me very much. On the other hand, there is no reference in it to the western literature, or in general to contemporary foreign literature on economics. This was not done to steal the ideas of other men or to hide my sources for tactical reasons, but simply because I was unfamiliar with these writings. I look at the man I was then with a certain astonishment and hair-raising respect: how could I attempt such neck-breaking heights with such poor equipment? And yet, I had no illusions about my knowledge at that time either. It was clear to me that I did my work almost instinctively: my only instrument was the interpretation of elementary statistics, the observation of individual cases and the questioning of persons taking part in economic events, as well as comparing the pieces of information thus obtained. In this respect my work resembled the practice of the Hungarian rural sociologists of the 1930s and made no use of the advanced methodology of western empirical surveys. Aside from lacking methodological skills, I knew little about the results achieved by Western economists in clarifying the general problems of the working of an economic system, such as prices and markets, the behaviour of firms, risk and uncertainty, or the theory of conflicts. I was aware neither of the debate between Ludwig von Mises, Oskar Lange, Friedrich von Hayek and others concerning the nature of socialism and planning nor of the work done by western students on the economic system of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries.

Perhaps I even benefited from this situation. Ignorance sometimes acts as the midwife in the birth of original ideas. Take an example: section IV.4. describes the "model" of the

old economic mechanism, differentiating between vertical and horizontal links, and stressing the dominant role of the former. As far as I know, this kind of differentiation was introduced by *Overcentralisation* and has become part of common knowledge to such a degree that no one now remembers the source. It is possible that if when writing the book, I had known about what economists today call a model, I would not even have dared to write these few pages.

But I do not want to make avirtue out of necessity after the deed either. I have overcome this phase, as have many other Hungarian economists. From the time that I began to become familiar with the world economic literature and its conceptual and analytical apparatus, I felt it indispensable that I too should join the blood circulation of the international professional community. I felt that we had to break out of narrow provincialism. There is no obligation to agree with the methods or theories of this or that foreign school of thought. I myself have engaged in numerous disputes. But I believe it is imperative that we familiarise ourselves with the scientific results of the time; that we take over everything that can be adapted, and reject only what, on the basis of thorough argument and not of prejudice, we do not consider workable under our circumstances. I would therefore advise readers of this second edition, and especially students and young scholars that they transcend the methodological standards of the book. What was perhaps a forgivable weakness, a pardonable sin, on the part of the early pioneers several decades ago, is an unpardonable omission today.

Regarding the length of the text, approximately 95 per cent is descriptive, positive analysis, and at the most five per cent falls into the category of normative theory. In my later works I strove to keep the two clearly apart, even if they appeared within a single study. At that time, however, I had not yet formulated this goal, and consequently normative arguments appear here and there, sometimes in a sentence or two, condensed into a requirement or recommendation, in various places, mainly in the second half of the book. Nevertheless, the normative arguments hang together and together suggest a certain notion of reform.

The book influenced the Hungarian reform process. Among other factors this book also shares responsibility for its virtues and shortcomings—even if nobody mentioned this influence at the time. Its influence was, of course, indirect. It manifested itself as an influence on the thinking of the intellectual leaders of the Hungarian reform process.

Although at the time it was not really formulated in my mind in a sharp manner, but I felt—and this was also expressed in the book—that the purpose of the reform was not only to improve economic efficiency but also to give more scope to other things valued by human beings, such as intitiative, spontaneous action, a life free of fear and reprisals by the authorities, the opportunity to make autonomous decisions. On the level of practical economic tasks the reform here outlined is linked to the principles that in the Hungarian literature were first formulated by György Péter: greater autonomy for the firms, prices ensuring equilibrium between supply and demand, the central role of profitability in the material and moral incentives offered to management. In addition, in some more specific proposals, *Overcentralisation* contributed another substantial idea to this system of thoughts: one should not be satisfied with partial measures, the whole of the economic mechanism had to be changed radically, and at one stroke.

I well remember that when the manuscript was first discussed in the Institute of Economics it was precisely this message that irritated some, they objected that my book argued as follows: If we changed the mechanism this way, then this would be bad, and if we changed it that way, then that would cause trouble as well. What then did I want?

Did nothing please me? A couple of years later the same objection called the tune in a hostile official press campaign against *Overcentralisation,* alleging that it rejected the entire existing economic mechanism of the socialist economy.

The principle of a package of measures became one of the distinguishing features of the Hungarian reform process. The reform of 1968 was the first and so far the only action which produced substantial changes in almost all areas of the socialist economy at one full sweep. *Overcentralisation* had pointed out many years earlier that the introduction of the profit incentive might produce scant results and might even do damage, without a simultaneous radical change in the pricing system, i.e. without introducing market-clearing prices. It is hopeless to reduce the size of the apparatus without changing the mechanism. New ratios must be established between production and consumption, and between supply and demand; chronic shortages have to be put an end to so that the market and horizontal inter-firm contacts can function successfully. There is a close relationship between forced growth and overcentralisation; consequently the growth policy and the economic mechanism must be changed concurrently. On all these questions the book was much more consistent and unequivocal than later "neither-fish-nor-fowl" Hungarian (and Soviet, Chinese, Polish, etc.) practice. Within the limitations to be mentioned it proposed that uniform and complete change should take place. Truly comprehensive changes were needed in the domain of prices, financial incentives,growth policy, power positions in the market

The book reflects the recognition that much had to be included in a package of simultaneous measures so that detailed measures should not run counter to each other but should have a beneficial joint effect. But as the years passed and experience was gathered, it became more and more obvious that much had been missing in the package, not only in the reform plan sketched in *Overcentralisation,* but also in the points debated in later years, as well as in the practical measures of the 1968 reform. These shortcomings were exactly what I had in mind when I mentioned that *Overcentralisation* shared responsibility for weaknesses which became more and more distressing in later years.

Already in the beginning of the 1970s the discussions about the reform in Hungary revealed that those who had theoretically prepared the first wave of reform and those who later carried it out in practice had thought that the "division of labour" between plan and market would be very simple to achieve. The idea was to entrust short-term regulation, the input-output flow necessary for current production and consumption, to the autonomous decisions of profit motivated firms, while leaving long-term regulation, primarily investment decisions, in the hands of centralised planning authorities. The error is now obvious. As long the truly vital decisions, such as entry and exit contraction and expansion of output, the changing of the product pattern, decisions concerning technical development and investment in general are left mostly in the hands of the central authorities, it is a self-deception to speak of a genuine autonomy of firms.

Overcentralisation had a position on this question, though it was mistaken. But what was not even mentioned, not even in the form of a hint is even worthier of attention. Not only this book, but all those who participated in the discussions taking place in the economic journals and the economic and business institutions of the existing system, neglected to deal with the fundamental issues of ownership, political power, and socialist ideology.

In more recent writing I have called that type of reform economist, to which I also belonged between 1954 and 1956, the naive reformers. At that time in Hungary this group included György Péter and Tibor Liska. In the 1950s and 1960s Wlodzimierz Brus in Poland, Sun Ye-fang in China, and Ota Sik in Czechoslovakia could be included with

them. If we were naive then Evsei Lieberman who was the first apostle of the profit motive in the Soviet Union in the 1950s was ultranaive. (It is essential to give dates because most of the reform economists still alive have changed at least some of their views since.)

The word naive is not pejorative. Used in its original sense, it refers to a peculiar well-intentioned childlike attitude, the stage of development of the mind in which somebody courageously engages in a task because he does not even suspect how difficult it is. He puts his hand into the fire without hesitation because he has never burnt himself. In addition naivité is not merely a state of mind but also a form of behaviour. A naive person is completely outspoken, since he feels he has nothing to hide and he cannot yet evaluate the consequences of what was said. It is of course easy to be wise after the event. It is not my aim to point out old errors, including mine at the time, knowing what I know now. But it is worth asking why we were not interested in the depths of the problems.

Before trying to answer, I must seek to eliminate in advance a possible misunderstanding. Naive reformers did not keep silent about difficult and delicate questions of this sort because they exercised self-censorship. It does not mean that I condemn self-censorship. In a system in which legal publication and public lectures are subjected to formal or informal censorship, self-censorship is unavoidable if one wishes to propagate ideas in a legal way that transcend officially set limits. Those who speak and write can decide to give up legality. This choice implies much gain in speaking without self-imposed limits and at the same time loss of influence, not to speak of other gains and losses. If a scholar chooses legal publication, he faces thousands of further concrete dilemmas: how far to go in self-censorship; what to say out loud and what to throttle; how to suggest to readers implicitly what cannot be communicated explicitly. An enlightened and far from naive critic of the existing system usually holds back a great deal. He consciously or half-instictively suppresses much of his message. Compared to him the naive reformer is refreshingly outspoken, since he does not even understand the grave implications of the problems he tackles. When, in later decades, there were debates among the various schools of reformers, the naive ones were always in a more favourable psychological position. They could easily answer the questions put to them, because they simply said what they thought. Every major question confronted the "enlightened" with complicated intellectual and moral dilemmas and forced them to decide how far they might be able to go, and how far they wanted to go, in providing an answer.

Looking back at the evolution of my own ideas, I can say that *Overcentralisation* was not only my first book but also the last which I wrote as a naive reformer. Back then the reason I omitted one or the other difficult question was not because I recognised after much brooding and fretting that it made sense to draw the limits at that point. I omitted them, because at the time of gathering material for the book and of writing it, I simply did not sense the importance of numerous major problems. Now is the time to ask why not?

One reason has already been mentioned, and that was my incomplete knowledge. My impression is that this was of secondary importance. By that time those listed above, and numerous other economists who thought along the same lines, already had the chance to read as much western literature as they wanted to. There were certainly a few amongst them who then knew more economics than I did. The problem at such times is not that there is no broadcast but that the set is unable to receive it.

Anybody who tries to think about social issues on a theoretical level, takes certain axioms as given, or adheres to the declared axioms of some school of thought. There are some whose minds are governed by an implicit system of axioms, and unaware that a few

final principles, postulates and taboos limit their thinking. What distinguished the naive reformers from their successors was that their axioms had not yet been questioned by anybody . These axioms ceased to function as such for the later generation of reformers.

Let me mention a single, though very important question, that of ownership. It is the most important aspect of the Hungarian economic reform that the formal and informal private sector gained as much ground as it did. Compared to that it is of secondary importance that in some respects changes occurred in the state sector as well. But if I think back to conversations at the time of working on *Overcentralisation,* I have to say that the problem did not even arise. The desirability of state ownership was an axiom that was not questioned either by myself or by those I talked to.

The system of axioms of a social scientist does not usually take shape on the basis of an individual intellectual choice. It can, of course, be imagined that an individual chooses amongst different possible systems of axioms, just as he chooses amongst TV-sets or suits in a store, and then fits into his mind the one which he finds most attractive. It can be imagined, but I do not believe that this is the typical course. The system of axioms is already predetermined by metarational values, which are largely linked to feelings, passions, and prejudices. Those who detest private property do not compare the advantages and disadvantages of public property and private property with an open mind. They only think of how the operation of public property should be organized. Usually a trauma, a shock or some stirring historic experience are needed for an axiom or an entire system of axioms to be suddenly shaken, for the internal taboo to disappear, and for thinking suddenly to become open to rational argument and comparative analysis. The part of the Hungarian intelligentsia which started out with a belief in socialism can be divided into many groups, according to the following criteria: when and under the influence of what experience they suffered such a trauma, how thorough the catharsis was, and which axioms or group of axioms it destroyed. Perception and understanding is selective. It is ready to expel certain impressions and ideas, and the selection is also subordinate to the system of axioms. Starting with the lifting of one or two internal barriers and the expansion of the receptivity of thinking, numerous questions which were considered uninteresting before suddenly become important. Men of science suffer shocks of recognition: all of a sudden they realise how clearly this or that author had seen the essence of the problem twenty or one hundred years earlier.

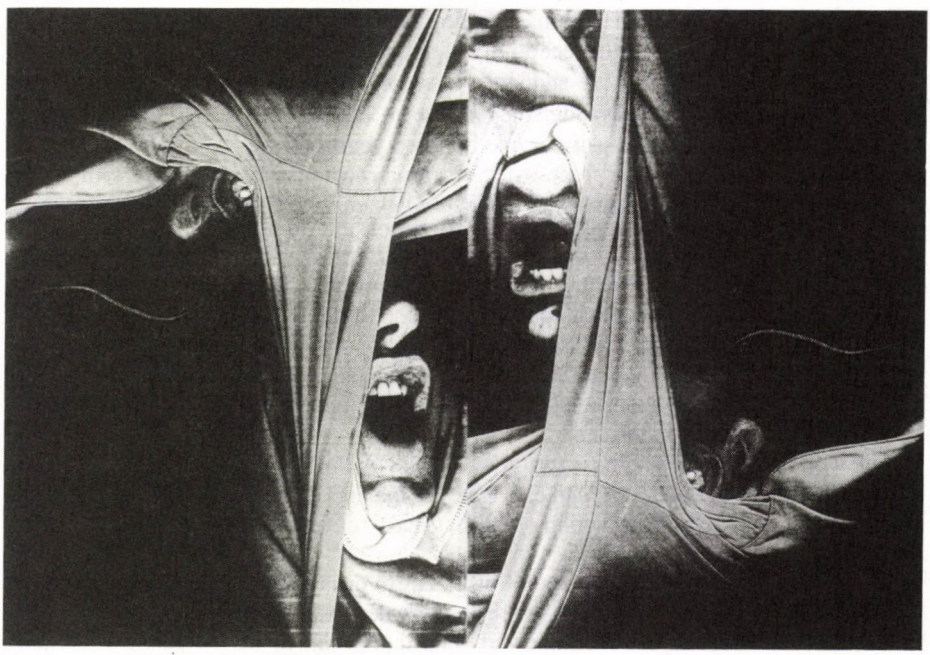
A comparison of the reform process in the different socialist countries offers important indirect evidence for this argument. It seems that no country ever learned anything important from the experience of another. It is possible that one or the other partial measure is adopted; let us say that in the Soviet Union they copy the bad Hungarian personal income tax. But did the first naive group of Soviet reform economists pay attention to what the second, third, fourth generations of no longer naive but enlightened, disillusioned, sharply critical and radical Hungarian economists disclosed of the failures of the first attempts? No. They start all over again. No matter how many intelligent people there may be among them, the received axioms stop up their ears. The voice of Hungarian social scientists cannot reach them.

The work of social scientists is seriously limited by their inhibitions. These blunt and narrow the influence which a man can have on his colleagues, let alone on the wider public. A bitter recognition, which should at least serve as a sign of caution against immodesty.

Nevertheless, without exaggerated illusions as to possible influence, or exaggerated expectations as to political impact, there is great need for more research in the social sciences. We are taking part in unique and important events in the socialist world; many

kinds of duties await the economist. There is great need for what Americans call monitoring: presenting in detail on the screen of scientific works the events and processes of the immediate past and of the present. This can also provide useful help to active participants in political struggles. Researchers can help to clarify what can be realised in a given situation and what is impossible; what the options are among which we can choose, and what are the expected consequences of alternative political and economic actions. In other words, the researchers, although they do not remove responsibility from the shoulders of those who make the political decisions and who govern the country, can help make sure that their decisions and their governing in general serve the progress of the country. And they can further this aim indirectly as well, through educating, through adding a ferment to intellectual life.

But however many-sided the duties of the scientific researcher may be, his task is always conditioned by the fact that he has to take positive perception and thorough analysis of reality as his point of departure. This lends credibility to his words; this is the particular job that nobody can do in his place. These days everybody is busy preparing programmes and proposals, arguing. It is good that many do so. But I believe that it would be desirable that there should continue to be some whose main activity continues to be research, the honest, the more complete exploration of reality.



Gergely Hajdu

On Law and Disorder

László Krasznahorkai: *Az ellenállás melankóliája* (The Melancholy of Resistance), Magvető, 1989, 386 pp.; Miklós Mészöly: *Wimbledoni jácint* (Wimbledon Hyacinth), Szépirodalmi, 1990, 116 pp.; György Konrád: *Agenda 1. Kerti mulatság* (Agenda 1. The Garden Party,), Magvető, 1989, 676 pp; Péter Esterházy: *Hrabal könyve* (The Book of Hrabal), Magvető, 1990, 190 pp.

László Krasznahorkai's first novel, *Sátántangó* (Satan's Tango, 1985; *NHQ* 100 contains an extract) was about hope, his second one is about hopelessness. The characters in the first were demoralised paupers, who ultimately served the regime as informers; the rebels in the new novel overthrow those in control and (involuntarily) raise a more corrupt set to power. The world in *Satan's Tango* lived in a state of apocalyptic expectation; in *The Melancholy of Resistance* there is chaos rather than a story, vegetation rather than expectation.

It would be an error to believe from the typical, distressing atmosphere that marks all of Krasznahorkai's works, that the author always keeps reformulating the same experience. It would be an error, too, to look for the reason of the change in historical circumstances instead of the author's way of seeing. For Krasznahorkai history has ended much earlier, and the political crisis that has taken place in recent years in Hungary means nothing to him. Most of his characters' thoughts are narrow, making use of newspaper clichés; among them is a demagogue, who often uses the word "evolvement", which was used in 1988 as the Hungarian equivalent of perestroika. Despite all this, the work is far from being a political satire. The story starts with the arrival of strange, dumb peasants from the neighbourhood into a small town. (No name is supplied, but it is easy to recognize Gyula, the author's home town in the south-east of the country.) Their appearance prompts the sceptical comment: "Nobody among the local onlookers would have believed so far that after the high-falutin' plans of national flourishing announced every thirty years, there were still so many of these frightfully shifty, destitute good-for-nothings." Later on, these hordes nearly destroy the town—the like of which has occurred in the Soviet Union or in Rumania over the last year, but the novel is not a premonition of this. Real events do have their rational, even if diabolically evil, explanation; here, however, there is no question of any political struggle, any religious, ethnic or social tension. These assailants resemble football fans in Western Europe, they are hypnotised zombies. They are like the human-faced locusts of the Apocalypse. They represent the force of Chaos, the "rebellion of the parts" discovering that the whole does not exist.

Satan's Tango showed Krasznahorkai as a mystic with an intimate knowledge not of God but of His absence. His approach was profoundly influenced by the Rumanian Matei Calinescu's *The Life and Views of Zacharias Lichter,* which appeared in Hungarian in 1971 in a translation by the tragically-fated Transylvanian poet, Domokos Szilágyi. It had been very popular with some Hungarian writers. This is a sober mysticism, which is not so much interested in divinity as in the possibility of how to live in harmony with the world. In the present novel this goal is caricatured, together with its means, intuitive thinking—but this is not done in the name of logic, faith, or even despair. In the novel all these possible attitudes meet with minutely analyised failure when confronted by the power of chaos.

The novel consists—at first sight in the most traditional manner—of three parts. The introduction bears the title "States of Emergency". It

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depicts a chaotic, disintegrating world, in which nothing is predictable any longer, a world of catastrophe, turbulence and tiny signs, none of which is significant in itself. The thermometer stands at 20 degrees below zero in November (a temperature rare in Hungary even in winter), a huge tree is rooted up, electricity services break down, the rubbish has not been removed for quite some time—taken together, they may indicate the imminent end of an aeon. Mrs Pflaum is an 58-year-old widow, a veritable Madame Homais in her obtuseness. She does not even try to understand the perplexing world, whenever possible she shuts herself up in her flat furnished after tasteless magazine tips, entry into which she refuses even to her only son. She can barely get home from a distance of fifty kilometres, since the train services are irregular. She first encounters the silent hordes on the train, and becomes aware of their aggressiveness, as she can scarcely escape a man in a cloth overcoat who molests her with his improper advances. On her way home from the station, a frightening route, as there is no street lighting, no petrol, and law and order is non-existent, she encounters a strange van: it belongs to a travelling circus, displaying a huge whale. A suspicious crowd follows them, from station to station.

Mrs Eszter, an evil and aggresssive middle-aged woman, tries in vain to involve Mrs Pflaum in her intrigues. Mr Eszter, the retired head of the local music school, does not want to set eyes on his wife any more. She, however, as the mistress of the police chief and the president of the Municipal Women's Committee, thinks the general respect in which her husband is held would be useful to her career. She tries to convince him to lend his name to an anti-litter campaign, sending a message through Mrs Pflaum's son, Valuska, a hard-drinking postman, the only person (apart from his housekeeper) whom the music teacher is willing to see.

The longest section, the "discussion" is entitled "The Werckmeister Harmonies". Here the reader is given the two possible answers to the question of the order of the world.

Intellectual effort is represented by Mr Eszter. He has been living for decades in the belief that musical harmony provides proof for the sublime order of the universe. During a conversation with a piano-tuner he realises that this harmony is only a human artifact, an illusion. He retires from all activity (scarcely getting out of his bed) and reaches the conclusion that tempered sound (first described by Andreas Werckmeister in the 17th century) in fact is a deceit but that there does exist another, divine harmony, as the Pythagoreans believed. He has his piano retuned and plays on it the *Wohltemperiertes Klavier,* which sounds dreadful. He tries to accustom himself to this order hostile to man and feels bitter satisfaction in hearing news of decline.

Valuska, the holy fool enchanted by the starlit sky, is in fact in the Lichter-stage of Calinescu's novel. He is convinced of the magnificence of cosmic order and does not let his impressions confuse him. He carries on conversations with Eszter day after day: each of them—the resigned and the enthusiastic—speaking in an endless monologue.

The town is terrified by the circus and its attendants, who are obviously interested not in the whale but a mysterious artist, the three-eyed monster called the Prince. Nobody has seen him except his two Felliniesque escorts. The authorities want to expel them from the town, but Mrs Eszter prevents them from doing so. Now comes the catastrophe: the Prince commands his followers to destroy the town. They spend a whole night looting and raping, murdering anyone who gets in their way. One of their groups kidnaps Valuska; their leader, the Man in the Cloth-Overcoat, rapes and strangles Mrs Pflaum. Mrs Eszter sets up a crisis committee, which calls for military help: the attackers are shot down or imprisoned, but no explanation can be got out of them for their acts. The Man in the Cloth-Overcoat and the Prince escape and there is no evidence against the circus director.

As a result of the events, both friends have to change their views. Eszter is forced to take practical action. While he is boarding up his window, he suddenly sees the light: this time it is he who is granted intuitive knowledge. He realises he has been mistaken: only details have their order, the world as a whole never had one. It was an error to seek it, exaggerating the validity of logic, and to solace himself with *amor fati.* The dignity of the thinking reed does not exist. The only thing to do is love, which—had he been interested in things other than his theories—he could have learned from Valuska.

Valuska, too, comes in for a share of seeing the light, but in a negative sense. When he is surrounded in the street by a squad armed with

iron bars, he suddenly feels that "there is nothing in the place of heaven". He thinks Eszter has been right and that the decline has reached its goal. Half-conscious, he lets himself be dragged away by the peasants. He tries to think logically: he dismisses the models of a macrocosm and a microcosm, and feels he must accept the law of *bellum omnium contra omnes*, but he still believes it possible to achieve victory in the struggle. At dawn, escaping from the soldiers, he understands that everyone can only be a victim. Finally he is caught and taken to a lunatic asylum. Mr Eszter visits him every day, they sit there holding hands and never say a word.

The third part, the "deduction", bears the Latin title of the earliest Hungarian literary text (1192): *Sermo super sepulchrum*. The reader here comes on a number of surprises. The first among these is the humour which up till now has mostly remained hidden. Mrs Eszter, the "resistance fighter", becomes the mayor, with the help of her new lover, the commanding officer of the soldiers. The pitiable efforts she makes in building up her new power are extremely funny, particularly the way in which she sets up a new police force loyal to her, out of the "warriors" who have proved their strength during the night of destruction and avoided subsequent prosecution.

At last she can carry out her anti-litter campaign—and here comes the second surprise. She succeeds in having the streets cleaned and the damaged houses repaired, and improves public supplies. This corrupt, illegitimate power, it seems, is able to restore order. Collapse does not occur and decline continues from an earlier stage. Melancholy remains justified, as the new situation is obviously temporary. The Prince, the ideologue of destruction, has seemingly lost, but Mrs Eszter honours similar values. Her slogans are strength, order (by which she means her own power) and fight. She organizes a hero's funeral for Mrs Pflaum and delivers the funeral oration of the title.

The last pages portray the decomposition of the corpse, in sentences of artistic beauty that carry pathological precision. This is a reduced repetition of the whole theme, like the mirror in a Flemish painting: the process in which an organic whole has been "ground by the infinite sweep of the chaos that holds the crystals of order".

The picture of a world pulsating between decay and uplift corresponds with everyday experience, but the initial sections have presented final disintegration so forcefully that the postponement of catastrophe leaves the reader with a sense of disappointment. Thus the closing section is not at one with those that preceed it. The structure of the novel is by no means as strictly symmetrical as one would think.

This inconsistency seems to contradict the courage with which the author carries through even the cruelest thought. In fact the explanation lies precisely in his thoroughness. Krasznahorkai is not attracted by an open work, but he does not leave the challenges in the technique of the novel unanswered either. The doubtful identity of the narrator at the end of *Satan's Tango* did in fact lend another dimension to the story. His new experiment with a double ending (one optimistic, the other pessimistic) rather invalidates the effect already achieved. *The Melancholy of Resistance* does not come up to the standard of his first novel; nonetheless it has many virtues which an outline of the plot cannot possibly bring out.

Krasznahorkai's long, sophisticated sentences are a bold innovation in Hungarian prose. A carefully elaborated style provides a detailed analysis of the events, often from several points of view. The important characters are all "reflectors" (in the sense Henry James used the word), but their observations are much more delicate, and their thinking (despite the many platitudes) more methodical than would be credible. In spite of the descriptive elements, the author cannot be considered a traditional realist nor, as he has been often referred to, as the Solzhenitsyn of the present. Although his writing undoubtedly has a certain Russian character, it rather resembles Bulgakov, not only by featuring diabolic powers but also in the ethics of compassion.

The other novelist close to him is Beckett, (nor should one forget Thomas Bernhard) but presumably he owes much to the *genius loci* as well.

The supposition that the absence of any real basis of human dignity and of a firm scale of values can more easily be observed in Eastern Europe, where the dictatorships have to a large extent destroyed these illusions, features in the works of all the authors discussed here. The significance of this view is often exaggerated; they are sometimes sceptical on the issue, but none of them says "no" to it. Perhaps all this amounts to no more than the legend of St Kafka.

If the Holy Grail does not exist, it can still have its knights.

Miklós Mészöly is one of those who have created a Central European mythology all of their own. He has his recurring themes, always presented in a new light. Every book by this sixty-nine year old writer is a surprise, a new experiment. If one tried to divide contemporary Hungarian literature into generations, he would fit into all of them, including the youngest.

His career came to a turning point with his *Film* (1976, German translation: *Rückblenden,* Hanser, Munich, 1980). In this *chef-d'œuvre,* he arrived at the peak of a way of writing akin to the *nouveau roman:* impersonal objectivity and the abolition of a plot. Right away he set out to rehabilitate plot, which appeared in a specific form, as the story of the scene. He himself calls his procedure "present perfect" (a grammatical form that does not exist in the Hungarian language), by it he means a montage of events without any logical relations, taking place at different times.

In this manner he seeks both historical determinants and the archetypes of the Central European past. "I have sought for, and found, not merely abstracted human comedies", he said in one interview, "but comedies most definitely embedded in fates, in historical fates—those of individuals, families and peoples. It is my firm belief that this, in most cases tragical, dynamically heroic tissue has—and can have—a mythology of at least as real a value as has, let's say, the intellectual South America, now in the process of taking shape." The similarity between the works of Mészöly and Garcia Márquez or Juan Rulfo is no accident. This intention of creating mythologies calls for the description of long processes, and this is why his stories include several miniature family novels. His characters also include the Orlando-type, immortal protagonist. (Virginia Woolf is Mészöly's favourite author, whose influence is felt most strongly in his essays.)

In structure, Mészöly's works over the last fifteen years definitely differ from those of the writers just mentioned. He does not "narrate" in a calm, protracted manner. Most usually he puts down "pictures", which he then sets together according to their mood. Of the six stories in his latest volume, *Wimbledon Hyacinth,* one is of this type ("Lock-gate"), with another two consisting only of one picture with one character. The longer stories once again are of a more traditional type, showing a return to the anecdote form—though not in its naive use.

"Wimbledon Hyacinth", perhaps the best piece in the volume, plays an interesting game with time. The motto, "In memoriam 1949-1989" indicates that the subject is the downfall of communist dictatorship. The story, as in the case of the author's first novel, *Az atléta halála,* (The Death of the Athlete), which still betrays the influence of Camus, is set among sportsmen, in a tennis club of the most elegant Budapest district, the "smart ghetto". The members are young people of the privileged Djilas-type new class. They give a wild party to celebrate the 55th birthday of their coach. The mood more and more resembles a dance of death, but only ends with an unpleasant incident: food poisoning. Two of the guests, Dalkó and Zsizel (Giselle) escape the humiliating diarrhoea and end the day with a romantic, naked, moonlit tennis game—but they are too tired to make love. The boy can only speak about his nightmare (a game with an eerie automaton at Wimbledon); three days later he commits suicide, which, without the atmosphere the story creates, would seem to be an *action gratuite.*

To present the system in the process of drowning in its excreta would by itself be no more than a piece of rather rough humour. Nor would it be particularly original: it might have easily been written, for instance, by Kundera. Mészöly uses a great deal of anachronism or, more exactly, elements that *may be* anachronistic. The action takes place not only in the mid-1950s (before the 1956 revolution, the first collapse of the system), but also in the 1980s (before the second collapse). In a deeper sense, it portrays the decadence of all the parties of a period, somewhat like Thomas Pynchon's *Entropy.*

In a witty manner, Mészöly finds many small similarities between the mid-1950s and thirty years later. (For example, swing music was in fashion in both periods.) At first reading, his beautiful but unsentimental style almost hides the differences, yet they do have their significance. To throw an extravagant party, to have scent from Vienna and American videotapes, to get hyacinth bulbs from Lisbon and to know Swiss diplomats (in the usual, or as Panka, the Lesbian character, does, in the Biblical sense of the term) is nothing special in the 1980s. In the pillaged, almost starving country of the '50s,

fenced in by barbed wire, all this practically counted as a sin. The young people do nothing illicit, unlike their fathers who even get away with shooting down the forester at a battue, but unconsciously they feel the food poisoning to be a well-deserved punishment. This self-reproach is a telling metaphor for the sentiments similar social gatherings were marked by in the 1980s, of what those deprived of any possibility of sensible action felt over the time that was being frittered away.

"Wimbledon Hyacinth" obviously exhibits little nostalgia, but Mészöly is a humanist rather than a moralist, and he does not deny that even such a memory can become prettified. The conclusion he adds to the twenty-five page story is typical of the 19th century novel: a listing of who of the characters has died, who has emigrated, who has became an embezzler and who an apparatchik. The trainer dies in a public hospital, and all that remains of him is the Beethoven casette he was listening to that evening.

"Oh, che bella notte!" is in part a *hommage* à Jonathan Swift. It takes place around 1960, when it was already possible to travel as a private person "in the other circle of Europe, shut off by minefields, bloodhounds and searchlights". The protagonist is a historian in an institute whose task is to falsify history. He decides to spend a holiday in Naples. On the train he meets Mary, an Irish girl, whose eccentricities he takes as a manifestation of the famous Celtic imagination. The daughter of the victim of an IRA outrage, she claims to be descended from Laetitia Pilkington, the maid-servant of Swift. Listening to her enthusiastic stories, the historian confronts the moral courage which alloved Swift to support the Irish (whom he did not even like). The girl slowly changes the attitudes of the historian as well. In Pompeii, among the indisputable facts of the past, he swears to kill Tiberius—meaning that he will make a break with lying. Returning to Budapest, he proves too weak and carries on with his research. Seven years later he learns from a letter that Mary has really become deranged. The law of the state has turned out stronger than the law of morality, and biology stronger than mythology.

"At the Deportation Squad" is the most traditional short-story, it could even be termed non-fiction. As a "state purchase commissioner of potato stocks", the writer in fact took part in the expatriation of tens of thousands of ethnic Germans to Germany, to which Hungary had been compelled by the Potsdam Conference. Now he shows that this injustice not only ruined the peasants chased off their land but even the soldiers who had survived the war if unable to think cynically enough. Though of cathartic affect, this story cannot be called really original. It proves once again that good literature calls not so much for personal as for adequately shaped experience.

György Konrád's novel is in fact not new. The first version appeared in German, way back in 1986 (*Geisterfest,* Suhrkamp, Frankfurt M.), and a year later it was illegally published in Hungarian by the AAB publishers, naturally in a small edition. At the time the author, a political dissident, was under a publishing ban and he even had to reckon with a search of his home and the confiscation of manuscripts. This position and the road that led to it make one of the important subjects of this partly autobiographical novel. Now that conditions have changed, the work has come into wide circulation in an enlarged edition, and the title *Agenda 1* seems to indicate that further augmentations can still be expected. (The work does hint at a trilogy under way.)

The imaginary party is held by Dávid Kobra in his garden, but actually it takes place in his consciousness. He recalls (like a "medieval man about to die") all those he had once known, the quick and the dead alike. They can become acquainted with each other, carry on conversations, they can narrate and can publish their diaries. All of them continue the story, which in this way remains always open. It is modern picaresque, or, as Raymond Federman calls it, surfiction. "In this book the independence of the parts is an important rule. Every paragraph, every chapter forms a unit worth reading by itself too." Or at least they are intended as such.

The author is aware of the unperceived deformation of memory and thus of the constructed nature of his own personality. He also feels the temptation to attribute reality to this fiction. He has hinted at this temptation, he writes, in calling the protagonist (autobiographically inspired) Kobra (Cobra). Sometimes he merely refers to him as K, which points to his Central European nature and the Kafkaesque character of his experiences; the Christian name David refers to Jewish origins. K's biographi-

cal data mostly coincide with what is known about Konrád. His family were ironmongers in the north-eastern part of the country, in a village "of an unutterable name". As a boy he lived through the war there and in Budapest; the holocaust robbed him of many of his relatives. By mid-century, this part of the liberal Jewish middle-class had become assimilated, and considered itself Hungarian (of Jewish religion). So the holocaust, which reached the country after the 1944 German occupation, and was actively assisted by the Hungarian authorities, was not simply an external assault but a painful crisis of identity as well. The young Kobra saw how many "Christians" became accomplices simply by abiding by the law, and that among the victims those who resptected the law started with much less chances. Neutrality was a crime, and so was avoiding resistance.

These experiences saved him from being manipulated during his secondary school years. For him and his friends to find their bearings in European culture was neither a simple nor a safe proposition in the cold war years. The intellectual autobiography (Chapter 9) forms a most interesting part, even if it may place the development of some of his views at a time earlier than it in fact took place. Detours and errors very rarely occur in this *Bildungsroman*.

In the office where he is working (half-heartedly) as town planner, he is again surrounded by the kind of people who carry out even the most senseless orders. Next come the 1970s, the years of literary work, politics for the opposition and lecturing abroad. The first half of the 1980s brings a lessening of the peril involved in his position, he has no more worries about earning a living—and he is no longer as dissatisfied as many would expect him to be. He arrives at a calm wisdom, ready for a summation "before death".

The central figures among the numerous charcters are his old schoolmates, Antal and Dragoman and their women, Melinda and Regina. Autobiographical elements are plentiful in the figure of János Dragoman as well. Their fates run along mostly parallel lines, but they differ in their practical philosophy. Dragoman, (Turkish for interpreter) is a true cosmopolitan, calling himself a "wandering Jew". It was not merely his prison sentence after the revolution that prompted him in 1966 to leave the country to set off on adventurous paths—he feels at home in the wide world. He is a successful critic and university professor in the States, spending a sabbatical year in Budapest. Here he falls in love with Melinda, the wife of Antal, a film director. Melinda clings to her roots and to tradition. (The author calls her a Catholic, though this is not obvious in her style.) She has kept her father's house, which is no small accomplishment in Budapest, at any time in the last 45 years. She holds together her "wider family", consisting of the family members and regular guests. "I'm sitting at centre, like a spider that weaves the little flies into its own slow tapestry", she says of herself. She would like to keep Dragoman too, whose forte is not fidelity, being a Don Juan always on the move. By the end of the story, she does in fact succeed. Dragoman falls into a depression, and Antal, the husband, suffers a stroke. They both seek salvation in Melinda, "because, my dear ones, no will in the world is more tyrannical than the will of love." In the author's "picaresque" conception, the story can have no ending whatever, it can only be left off somewhere; this chapter is entitled "Provisional End Game". In fact it is an effective ending, leaving no feeling of temporariness.

In another striking inconsistency, Kobra appears both as the counterpart of Dragoman and as his counterpoint. In his love he fights a struggle similar to that of Melinda's to be able to keep the other cosmopolitan, Regina. He often argues with Dragoman, defending the clinging to one's home, one's identity, to the community one belongs to. He criticises the western conforming to the intellectual market and fashionable trends. "My dear Kobra, you with your faithfulness, are a dolt behind your times", Dragoman replies. "...you people take these European questions of who and what we are much too seriously. In America this is really not so exciting..." (p. 504). It is rather confusing to collate these with statements about K. who "is not committed to any tradition of thinking and action" (p. 653), or about Dragoman about whom we are told that if he were a Dutchman, less than a quarter of the dilemmas burdening his mind would survive (p. 345). Even in the 20th century one would expect more coherence than this from a literary character.

Dragoman, of course, is not right in arguing that roots are a non-issue in America. This is in fact a frequent subject of Jewish writing on the East Coast. There are also examples for the idea

of two parallel fates—one European and one American (by Philip Roth). Konrád shows a close kinship with this—unfortunately even to the extent of borrowing its clichés.

The novel (like all Konrád novels, with the exception of *The Case Worker*) contains much essayistic and journalistic material, and not always harmoniously. The aphorisms on literature, politics, or the ultimate reality may be of no small interest, but unfortunately they are devoid of originality. Even the fictitious parts are marked by a wearying verbosity, and this is only partly counterbalanced by the elegance of the prose.

The question of fidelity and order appears in Péter Esterházy's new novel as well. The author has long been concerned with the order of writing. His first major success *Termelési regény* (Production Novel, 1979) was a parody of the "well constructed" Novel as much as of literature exploited in agitprop. No one so far has been able to decide whether his most important work, *Bevezetés a szépirodalomba* (Introduction to Belles Letters, 1986) is a composed whole or a jumble of haphazardly collected parts. *The Book of Hrabal* is an admixture of two genres: the first chapter being a traditional novel and the third more of an essay on the metaphysical goal of human creation. The protagonists are "The Writer" (easily recognizable as Esterházy himself) and his wife, Anna. She forms part of the author's private mythology; he used her photograph to "disguise" one of his (not particularly successful) novels, which three years ago he published under a pseudonym. This time the reader sees their life in an idyllic presentation, until the arrival of troubles. Anna realizes that she is pregnant and she is hesitating whether or not to keep her fourth child. At the same time The Writer would like to write an essay on the 75th birthday of Bohumil Hrabal, but despite all his efforts he does not get on with the work. He sits at his desk all day, becomig more and more irritable, with his favourite Hrabal book, *Postriziny* on his knees.

Of Hrabal's novels, this is the most popular in Hungary; but this popularity, like that of Czech culture as a whole, is somewhat ambivalent. He is liked but not considered a really serious writer, since his scintillating humour conceals his darker tones.

In general, the value accorded to a human life in Europe constantly decreases as one moves from the north southwards. Polish culture is an exception in this respect, being rather "southern", but the borderline between two mentalities can clearly be observed between Bohemia and Hungary, and also between Hungary and Serbia. The Hungarian tradition is much more heroic, and *joie de vivre* is more closely related to self-destruction. A great many Hungarians consider the behaviour patterns of the nobility as a model. Although the historical experiences of the two peoples are very similar, and the milieu presented by Hrabal is well known to Hungarian readers, they have no eye for the apotheosis of small things. They consider caution and willingness to compromise, together with frugality and other Victorian virtues, as petty. In the common mind the Czech is a petty bourgeois *par excellence*. (This opinion is backed by the unfortunate coincidence that some frequent endings to Czech words coincide with Hungarian diminutive suffixes, and so to Hungarian ears the language sounds comically childish.) Esterházy, who is a member of one of the most illustrious families of the country, is in opposition to his compatriots on this issue, and he holds the Czech way of tolerating difficulties in high esteem.

Besides having a high opinion of Hrabal's literary talent, and considering him a "giant", Esterházy also seeks a philosophy in him, a kind of a "plebeian" tradition, which Hungarian literature has allowed to perish. On the other hand, he is also interested in the similarity between Hrabal on the one hand, and Kafka and Paul Celan on the other, who had an utterly different vision about the same Central Europe. The question arises whether a Central European, at the mercy of the state, would more easily understand the position of people subordinated to natural and supernatural forces than do others? This would be the subject of the essay which The Writer is unable to write.

With the pasage of time, the figure of Hrabal appears more and more often in the couple's imagination, almost becoming a member of the family. Anna at last falls in love with Bohumil; the usual end of family idylls. The "Chapter of Fidelity" is followed by "The Chapter of Infidelity": a long letter which has never been written and posted, in which Anna tells the Czech writer about her experiences, desires and fears.

She is not only afraid of childbirth and of becoming ugly, but she also feels that she is

being observed. She thinks that the two men in a Lada (with the familiar registration number of state-owned cars) can only be secret agents, but she is mistaken: they are the angels of God. God has sent them to prevent the planned abortion, but they have been given conflicting directives. This God is a shilly-shallying police chief in the last but one year of the regime: He would like to intervene but holds free will in respect—in the same way as the officials of the liberalised dictatorship have paid heed to sham legality. Conversation with the angels is carried on in the dreadfully faulty language of neo-barbarism, packed with platitudes and awful jokes. Only those who have followed the secret service scandal in Budapest last spring can fully appreciate the splendily satirical characterisation of the angels—poorly qualified, rather dim, eastern James Bonds. One of them is a latent homosexual, cherishing an unrequited love for his younger colleague. (It should be said that Esterházy's book was already in press when the scandal broke out.)

Finally the angels succeed in fulfilling their task—in the same way as they had once saved Anna, when her father wanted to have her virginity verified. One of them "stands in for" the old gynaecologist whom she visits and, pretending to be hard of hearing, persuades her to change her decision. In a rather sentimental scene, the couple decide to bring up their fourth child.

This is much too good to be true, the critic must say. Several critics consider the book a failure, but they are not surprised by the success it has had among readers. Esterházy uses easily identifiable pseudonyms by which he features the must eminent Hungarian critics, hinting somewhat unfairly that they are finding it hard to shake off the influence of György Lukács. At the appearance of *Production Novel,* one of them, Sándor Radnóti, already called attention to the fact that neither the stability of traditional values and family ties nor the protagonist's ability to cut free from his threatening environment follow from the novel. All this is not essential artistically, but an ideological prejudice. It is a consequence of the author's exceptionally fortunate mental constitution.

This time the same prejudice prevails even more rigorously. One does not feel domestic harmony to be under any real threat. Most of the anecdotes, which are meant to depict the enormities of history through a few ruined lives, are banal (as the deportation of The Writer's father), or else much too singular to be generalised (as the portrayal of the eccentric Aunt Georgina). At the end of the letter, Anna suspects Hrabal of having devised Central European *joie de vivre,* which only exists "in his head", but the basic tone of the chapter is nostalgia for a region "in working order". In her vision she sees Prague and Budapest on the coast of the infinite ocean—not the actual cities themselves but even more realistic ones. It is difficult to put into words what this desirable change would consist of: people would decide their own destinies, they could sincerely carry the burden of decision, and all this would also enliven the culture of the cities. It is nothing extraordinary, "only" a normal state—one which, however, has not existed in this part of the world since 1914. "Our presence would not be something like the light, rather like a veil, soft, drizzling, mildly unfriendly weather, in which the cities would flash without loosing their well-earned sorrow that has been inculcated in them... Our presence would urge others too to be present... All those who are, would also be!"

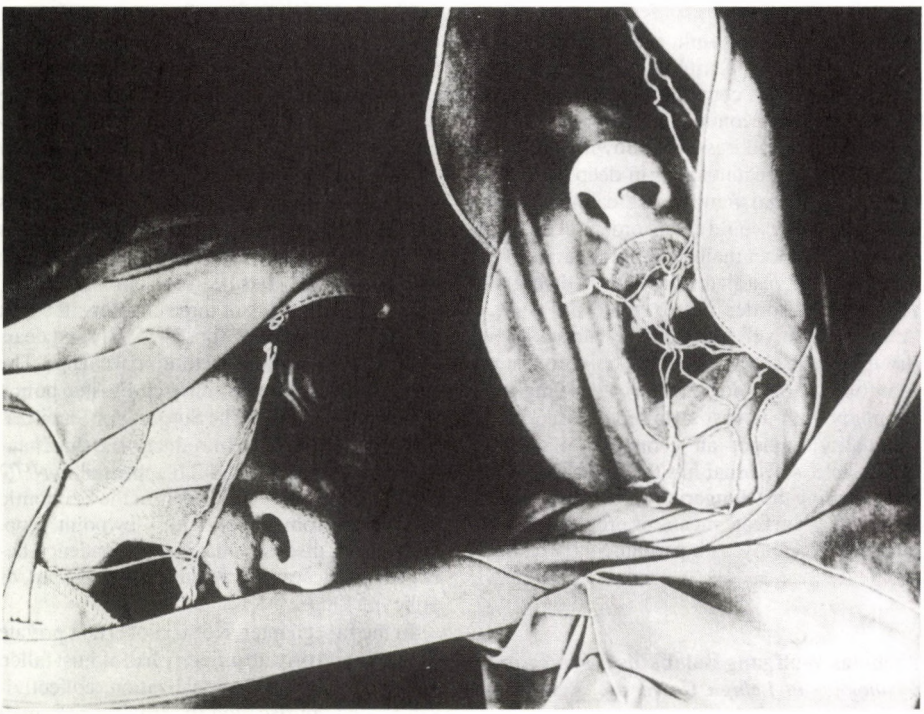
The third and briefest chapter sharply differs from the foregoing. It opens with a blasphemous scene in which God wakes up with bleary eyes one morning. Having breakfast, He skims through the report from the angels. He quarrels with his mother, who has reached her change of life—as if one were to view Max Ernst's *Madonna with Child,* only a few decades older. (The Son nostalgically remembers Euclid and Newton, and therefore His mother teases Him with Heisenberg.) When He runs out of arguments, He turns to watch the Earth—and sees Anna praying and The Writer working instead of praying, because "he thought he would *anyway* be serving the Lord through his work". This view is not without its dangers: one might finally become fonder of one's own abilities than of the Lord. Is a work that has been created out of haughtiness suitable to praise God with? The parable which answers this question is the story of the builder of a cathedral (as in Golding's *The Spire*). Jacob Steiger fell from the Ulm spire, with a face "of disillusionment, of emptiness and hate". Art does not save the artist, but the following section assigns him another metaphysical goal.

God, like all living beings, feels the desire to outdo Himself. The only thing He knows nothing about is art, as the scene in which He learns

to play the saxophone from Charlie Parker shows. This "invalid angel" is a philosophical variant of the musician as seen by Julio Cortazar. He proves that art springs from the fight fought against time."...what is principally needed for music is time. And eternity is not time." In vain does the Lord try to compensate himself for the "sublime and wretched" solitude by playing on Bird's saxophone, the dreadfully off-key sound by which "the whole created world became saturated" in the last sentence of the book, only demonstrates his failure.

The last chapter allows for the second interpretation of the title: *The Book of Hrabal* as one of the Apocrypha. It includes an—unsuccessful—dialogue between the Lord and Hrabal, who is feeding his cat and whom He mistakes for Kafka. Imitating a "rigid" translation, and then adding a carefully wrought sentence that runs over two pages, Esterházy displays the full power of his style.

The idea of human dignity derived from the knowledge of transience shows the influence of Pascal. Esterházy nevertheless does not refer to Pascal in his reflections, but to fictitious authors. He usually does so humorously, though sometimes seems to forget the advice of the French philosopher: "If you want others to say nice things about you, never say nice things about yourself". The Writer appears more often than seems necessary, in the course of his work or while bringing up his children, conversing with his friends about the decline of European culture and so on. He not only indiscreetly features critics, he also refers to many writers, using anagrams or knowledge that is private. This is a game, like crossword puzzles, which Esterházy himself calls the surrogate of great mysteries, the contraption of Satan. As always, the devil must have been diligent indeed—for annoying intimacies such as these have greatly proliferated in recent times.



Nicholas W. Balabkins

An Introduction to Transit Economics

János Kornai: *The Road to a Free Economy. Shiftining from a Socialist System. The Example of Hungary*. New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 1990, 224 pp.

In 1989, a tidal wave swept away the so-called socialist states of Central and Eastern Eurpe. The satellite countries, as they were known for more than four decades, were created after the end of World War II with the assistance of the Red Army. The ideological foundation upon which they were built was Marxism, which called for the elimination of the privately owned means of production, substitution of quantitative-output planning for the market economy, and giving all political power to the communists. All these changes were to produce a material Nirvana, a worker's paradise. They did not.

According to the author, this volume is an "economic policy pamphlet" (p. 212) written by a "specialist of comparative systems theory and the socialist economy" (fn. 49, p. 145). The book sets out to address the following problem: The Hungarian economy is in deep economic crisis and Kornai wants to indicate the policy contours which would create order out of chaos (p. 190). The vast majority of Hungarians feel that they live "in a state of upheaval, disorganization, and disorder" (p. 191). Kornai offers a "third alternative" between the barrack-room discipline and chaos. The basic policy question is as follows: How do you reform the Hungarian economy with its vast state sector? Economic rationality without an economic market is impossible, so Kornai has the difficult task of transforming the Hungarian bureaucratic structure, without private means of production, into a market economy with parliamentary democracy and privately owned means of production. It is a Herculean task and the author knows it. Kornai also makes the important point that the successful currency and economic reform of the British, American, and French zones of occupation in Germany of 1948 is not relevant for Hungary today. The removal of the wartime direct controls and the introduction of a new currency, the *Deutsche Mark,* was done "in a fundamentally private economy" (p. 177). What this means is that in the Third Reich the means of production, for the most part, were in private hands. For this reason, Kornai's economic policy pamphlet deals with the re-making of the three dimensions of the Hungarian social order: first, how to revamp the property ownership and create favorable conditions for the emergence of privately-owned means of production; second, how to move the economy from a highly centralized and bureaucratic system of control to a market economy; third, Kornai assumes that Hungarian parliamentary democracy is already in place and the monopoly power of the communist party has been broken.

His book consists of three chapters: the first is called "Ownership" (pp. 34—101) and deals with the indispensable institutional change. The second chapter outlines the step-by-step policy issues and is called "The Surgery for Stabilization" (pp. 102—178). Introduction to this chapter and Sections 2.1 and 2.6 appeared in *NHQ* 117. The third chapter, "Tasks of the Economic Transition from a Political Viewpoint" (pp. 179—209), discusses the interdependence between politics and economics and the art of policymaking.

In the first chapter, Kornai notes that private initiative and private property had almost fallen victim to post-war nationalization, collectivization, and confiscation (p. 36). Yet the small

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Hungarian private sector today is the only part of the economy that is healthy and growing. To make sure that bureaucracy does not choke the private sector in the future, Kornai spells out six sharply worded requirements or "ought to be's" for the future development of the private sector (pp. 38—47). They are: 1) The private sector must be wholly and truly liberalized; 2) The enforcement of private contracts must be guaranteed by law (p. 45); 3) The absolute security of private property should be emphatically declared; 4) The tax system should not restrain private investment (p. 46); 5) Private investment as well as the formation and growth of private capital must be promoted through credit; and 6) Social respect must be developed toward the private sector (pp. 49—51). Kornai knows from bitter personal experience that "the critical deficiency of socialist state property consists in the impersonalization of ownership" (p. 51). State property belongs to everyone and to no one. He stresses that the communists have liquidated the private sector by state fiat, and that it is impossible to develop the private sector by similar means (p. 52). Kornai notes that, in many ways, the current production methods of the private sector "fall far behind those that characterized Hungary's private sector in the late nineteenth century" (p. 53). Since state ownership permanently recreates bureaucracy (p. 58), even when reforms dismantle the quantitative-output plan economy, direct bureaucratic regulation is replaced by indirect bureaucratic regulation (p. 59) He cautions the reformers against fake illusory changes, practices of simulation and plastic facades (p. 72). He calls for the setting up of an office to manage the privatization of state property, but believes that if his six "ought to be's" are put in place, Hungary will have a chance for successful economic reforms.

The second chapter, dealing with the implementation of the reform policy, calls for simultaneous measures (p. 105), designed to eliminate the existing open and repressed inflation because in conditions of inflationary expectations rational economic calculation becomes impossible (p. 109). Restoration of the budgetary equilibrium is the next major policy item on Kornai's agenda. He calls for the immediate elimination of subsidies (pp. 116 and 135) and the revamping of the entire tax structure. Kornai pleads for the nonprogresive tax system for the period of the reform for reasons of incentives (p. 125). He suggests linear consumption tax, single linear payroll tax, and single linear profit tax (pp. 127—28). He also argues that the production subsidies ought to disappear. Formation of rational prices (pp. 145—154) is the most important task of the reform. Kornai also wants to introduce a uniform exchange rate of the convertibility of the forint as part of the reform package. And, again, Kornai does not want to have the reform process drawn out over many months, but he insists on a "single, radical shock" (p. 161). In the third chapter, Kornai makes it clear that his pragmatism is geared to the generation of incentives to produce more goods and thus to increase the national income in Adam Smith's fashion. He wants to undo the damage done by years of socialism which has sapped personal initiative (p. 183). He also makes clear that his programme does not aim at the creation of Adam Smith's "laissez-faire" type of capitalism. He pleads for an on-going capitalist welfare state (p. 200), but he prefers the French version of the capitalist welfare state to the Swedish type capitalist welfare state (p. 205).

The major shortcoming of this "economic policy pamphlet" (212) is Kornai's omission or unwillingness to spell out what the existing direct controls still are and how to cope with the remnants of repressed inflation. He talks repeatedly about the shortage economy, but never quite tells why it lingers. The great attraction of Kornai's volume consists in having made the Hungarian social order, consisting of three dimensions, the focal point of the analysis. Western economists forever relegate the institutional and political dimension to the *ceteris paribus* cage, and deal exclusively with households, firms, inflationary and deflationary gaps. The second point is that Kornai writes very much like Gunnar Myrdal who was never afraid of spelling out his explicit value premises. For virtually all Anglo-Saxon economists such a stance is not scientific enough. But Kornai knows that esoteric classroom economics and economic policy making are two different things.

At the end of the book, Kornai appends the relevant Hungarian literature, most of which, for many years, has been ably translated by Dr Tamás Felvinczi in his *Abstracts*. In addition, many policy reform issues have been ably articulated in *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, also many years ahead of all the satellite countries. The author of this review saw the ad-

vanced version of perestroika in action in Budapest in April of 1990. Upon return to West Germany, the author saw in the Frankfurt/M. area a few posters with a huge portrait of Karl Marx and the inscription in German read: *Proletarier aller Länder vergebt mir,* which in English translation would mean: "Proletarians of all countries, forgive me." Forgiveness apart, Kornai has written an economic policy brief on how to achieve economic rationality with functioning markets in Hungary. It is a book designed to undo the damage of Marxian fallacies.

All reform in the Soviet Union and other satellite countries would do well to peruse this book. For American economists and students of economics all over the world it is a first-rate introduction into the currently popular "transitional economics".

Tamás Koltai

Season of Take-Overs

The Hungarian theatre world is in ferment. The old order is collapsing and the new is yet to be born. Those in the theatre have launched a battle against a rashly introduced subsidy system, which would allot money according to the seating capacity of the theatres. Private capital is expected to come into play soon. The coalition parties and the opposition are about to discuss draft bills in parliamentary committee, and these may determine the financial management of the theatres in the long run. Money, money, money—this is where most of the discussions end up. Meanwhile, the Katona József Theatre of Budapest has built up an international reputation; they are practically permanently travelling betwen Europe and America. Their latest production, Chekhov's *Platonov* went almost right away to Paris.

The winds of change are blowing the theatre onto new, uncharted waters. The shipwrecked characters of Marivaux's *The Island of Slaves* come to an island where everything is topsy-turvy: the servants have become the masters and the gentlemen servants. When, early in the autumn of 1989, the Csiky Gergely Theatre of Kaposvár opened its season with this 250 year-old piece by a playwright who is rarely performed in Hungary, the country was on the threshold of changing regimes. It could be felt that the somewhat constrained *Marivaudage* was a poetic parable for what was taking place and, even more, of what was about to take place.

What actually took place in society found the theatre unprepared. Theatre companies were left behind by the changes. By the time they put on plays which had earlier been banned, mostly rushing into premieres prematurely, the individual productions were already confronted by a new situation. Pasternak and Koestler, or even Havel, no longer caused any real sensation. To meet aesthetic demands once again took priority over satisfying the day-to-day political appetite. Uncertainty prevailed in the theatre: it was amazed by the speed of changes as much as society itself, and it reacted to it in the same fidgety confusion. As a young playwright has tellingly described the situation, while 1989 was a dramatic year, with conflicts similar to those of *King Lear*, Molière would be more becoming for 1990.

Nonetheless, Molière proved a failure in the Madách Theatre in Budapest. The only striking element in *Don Juan* was when the eponymous hero was beaten to death with the metal plates torn off the statue of the Governor. In Hungary, the demolishing of a statue unavoidably carries metaphoric value; accordingly, everybody tried to explain the director's concept of the play through this scene. Did it mean that, instead of a transcendent power, it is the enraged crowd that does away with moral insanity? Does the victim, elevated into a statue, become the means of revenge in the hands of the people? Does the iconoclastic mob liquidate a provocative individual? Does the incensed multitude throw off the shadow of the past and the present evil together at the same time? None of these suppositions add up: I have been unable to link the comic sight of the statue, deprived of its mail and "stripped to the pants" with what went before. All I could deduce from Tamás Szirtes's production was that he wanted to do something more rough, more real, more modern, more "Katona-József-Theatre".

The Molière esprit was substituted for by the Marivaux prelude, which turned out to be a little too artistic. Some critics failed to notice the irony concealed in the beauty of the Kaposvár production. Its French director, Sophie Loucachevsky, gave an apolitical rendering to a theme almost begging for vulgarisation: the change of power that "had been in the air". It was to be expected that the subject would be

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repeated in several variations and different orechestrations, as in fact happened later. The shipwrecked characters of the season one by one landed on the "island of the changing systems".

Commissioned by the National or, more exactly, by director Imre Csiszár, István Eörsi made a new translation of Sophocles's *Antigone*. The text is laconic and rational enough for an interpretation that breaks with antiquity and takes its pattern by the working of the mechanics of power in the recent past. Accordingly, Creon maintains his position with the aid of the compromising consensus of the Chorus of intellectuals, until Antigone, having lost faith in the movement, rebels against him "within the family". Anna Ráckevei's interpretation made it clear that the faithful follower of Creon, who so far accepted his ideology, tactics and policies, has been seized by hubris once the king denied permission for the burial. It is at this point that Antigone becomes an oppositionist, refusing to cooperate with the dogmatists of power. The conflict does not remain within the family, the pillars of the order. The intellectual advisors are balancing, with growing hesitation, between Creon and Antigone, but they take the side of the girl unanimously only when her martydrom has already caused the fall of the regime. You cannot cast a veil of forgiveness over the past—this is Eörsi's only major intervention in the original work. It is not so much the formulation as the exterior that lends the semblance of anachronism to the production; Györgyi Szakács stylised the antique costume into the loden-type coats of the 'fifties, Interior Ministry uniforms and the suits worn by activists, while Tamás Vayer placed the whole into a flagstoned street of a large city. However, this is not disturbing because it consistently replaces Greek mythology by something more familiar to the audience, something they have lived through personally in recent decades.

The other production of the National company, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, is much more lenient. János Taub has produced a fairy-tale idyll in which the change of regime and the twists that occur in exile do not have to be taken seriously. Imre Sinkovicts's Prospero spends his exile on an island of peace. He is a mixture of stoical old gentleman and retired buffoon, displaying the early signs of sclerosis; at one point he cannot find the magic rod in his pocket, hauling it out at the last minute to paralyse Caliban as he embraces Miranda. He is alone and somewhat bored, with no diversion left to him but to watch the gymnastic training of the young, talented Ariel, who supposedly is preparing for a competition. But one can have enough of this too, and so Sinkovits-Prospero conjures his former enemies to the island to marry off his daughter to Ferdinand, whom he has selected for her. On the stage of the National, Shakespeare's shipwrecked characters strikingly resemble those of Marivaux in their smirks and simpering. Their clothes have been washed white by the sea, and their souls by the atmosphere of Prospero's island. Their spiteful plans are the gestures of a narcotic dream choreographed into a slow-motion picture. In fact there is no longer any need to break the magic rod. The evil ones have mended their ways, the lovers have found each other, and Ariel, who dwelt on his promised freedom without any real conviction, has presumably been freer in the island training camp than he will be in the selected gymnastic team at the court. Shakespeare's characters appear on the curtain that frames the open-air stage in the island—Machiavellian kings, fools, "a pair of star cross'd lovers", the regicidal couple, the notorious wineswigger and listen in meek agreement to the conciliatory appeal. I infer some soft irony in this ending anyway.

The forgiveness of *The Tempest* is a reversal of the prevailing fashion in staging Shakespeare. The Hungarian public has become accustomed to a beclouding of merriment in the comedies, rather than the dispersing of thunder clouds. Tamás Fodor, who directed *As You Like It* in the Szigligeti Theatre of Szolnok, interprets the idyll of banishment with more bitterness than János Taub does. In fact, here too, it is a question of a shift of power, a revenge that does not take place, and forgiveness. Fodor portrays the court of the Duke with darker colours than has been traditional. He dwells long on the business in which the strapping Duke—who has no court wrestler but measures his own strength with Orlando—manhandles the members of his household and the guards. The perfomance by János Derzsi leaves no doubt as to the Duke being a gangster. So the melancholy exiles are bound to reckon with the situation after their return. Fodor has opted for a singular solution to put across the paradox of power. What he presents with "irony" is not the conversion of the bad monarch but the turn that takes place in the

situation. The suddenly immobile characters are combed through by a set element which has opened up on their escape to the forest of Arden and now closes back on them to lock them into the fate that follows for them because of the rotation of power. Far from being relaxed, the moment is rather fearful. Jacques is the only one who knows why, and he draws his conclusion when he chooses the freedom of exile.

Typical of the atmosphere in the country which has spilled over into the theatre as well, one of the most straightforward of Shakespeare's comedies, *Much Ado About Nothing*, has been breathed onto by Central-East Europe. In István Iglódi's production, in the József Attila Theatre, the young men returning victorious from battle to sunny Messina, have forgotten to leave their military manners behind, and they manage their love affairs with a kind of Prussian primness. Even Benedick is able to break out of this militarism only by changing into civilian clothes: before the last act he must have applied for discharge. Finally, even if at the price of some ordeals, the Latin spirit most fitting to the play triumphs, and the military parades and processions peter out.

A fully developed version of militarism appeared in Edward Bond's *Lear*, staged in the Madách Studio, a production by Viktor Nagy. The production was lent an unexpected timeliness by the breaching and destruction of the Berlin Wall, which had not been envisaged during the preparations for the first night. The actual politics do not correspond with Bond's approach, which lags behind the times by at least twenty years. At the end of the British playwright's version of *Lear*, the tyrant-turned-captive is liquidated by the machinery of the "revolutionary state" when he has recognised that there is no need for a wall keeping Europe on the other side. For Bond the play still ends with the terror of the "party state"; the run in the Madách has lasted longer than it took the Eastern European systems to collapse. So the production in a certain sense has aquired a retrospective tinge, even though in its coverage of reality and its style it had been intended to reflect on the company's foresightedness.

Two Schiller productions have also been unavoidably linked to the changes in the political landscape. *Don Carlos*, in the Pécs National, countersigned the impossibility of social reform. Accordingly, in Menyhért Szegváry's production, Ákos Kőszegi, in the part of the Marquis Posa, has become the protagonist. The actor stood out from his environment: instead of a historical figure, he rather looked a university political science student who is unexpectedly given the chance to make good use of what he has learned in actual practice. Naive intellectual conspiracy has been against the power represented by the Church and an, at times seemingly human, tyranny, which is personified by the king, who is wont to declare his intrasigency from a balustrade resembling a mausoleum. Apart from a few pieces of intentional anacronism—e.g., when Philip II takes the file of Posa, whom he has chosen as his confidant, out of an office filing system—the production is not far from the traditional concept: had it reached the stage a few years earlier, it would in all probability have stirred greater excitement.

The other Schiller production was in fact a paraphrase. János Mohácsi, who wrote and directed it for the Csiky Gergely Theatre of Kaposvár, considered his *Luise Miller* as the raw material for a political pamphlet in which the last hours of an irrational dictatorship are followed as it collapses into a reign of terror. The adaptation treated the original without much respect: the minister von Walter is turned into the prime minister, Lady Milford's love for Ferdinand has become fulfilled at least physically in a rash act and, after her burst of generosity, she is beaten to death by her own servants; the lovers are being observed by a hidden camera, the Millers are dragged away by a commando squad, the characters move about by lift, they fire out of glass-barrelled guns—and the production is accompained by jazz music. Several critics took exception to all this but the company has been invited to the Mannheim Schiller Festival. The premiere took place in December 1989, one week before the revolutionary events just before Christmas in Temesvár and Bucharest. So life imitates the theatre after all. The production is perfectly worked out, professionally faultless and stylistically consistent—good stagecraft despite shortcomings that follow from its chaotic assembly. And as time passes, the conditions in the Balkans are providing a justification for the production's exposition and dramatic embroglio and, slowly, even the Shakespearean dénouement, in which power degenerating into lunacy gives way to a pacifying dictatorship.

The classical drama of disappointment in revolution, Georg Büchner's *Danton's Death* also came onto the stage (or, more exactly, into a large room temporarily transformed from a scene-dock in the Móricz Zsigmond Theatre of Nyíregyháza). The director, Erzsébet Gaál, complemented the drastically abridged text by inserting excerpts from *Woyzeck* and from Büchner's letters, in order to achieve a relative equilibrium between the dramatic "above" and "below", the quarelling leaders of the revolution and the people, its mass support. The scenes presented under the title *Danton*, show a singular contrapuntal technique; the soliloquising protagonists—especially Danton, Robespierre and Saint-Just—see their words accompained by the permanent turmoil of the crowd. The events that take place at the lower levels of the revolution are acted out by the various groups in a forceful stylization and carefully choerographed sound and movement. The most striking element is provided by these revolutionary walkers-on, who are given the stature of protagonists. And even their physical looks acquire metaphoric meaning: they are students from a local secondary school specialising in drama.

The people—the crowd—would have a similar role in *Boris Godunov*. Pushkin's historical fresco is set, even if not in a revolutionary period, but in troubled times or, to use a slightly frivolous current term, in a "soft dictatorship". It may even be called a crisis of legitimacy, for Tsar Boris is accused of having assassinated the lawful Tsar and a political fraud is using a false legitimation to achieve power. The real protagonist, caught between the two of them, is the people, and they are sinking into apathy. It is, however, fairly difficult to stage the apathy of the masses who have had enough of the demagogy and manipulation meant to rouse them. Andor Lukáts's direction for the Csiky Gergely Theatre of Kaposvár does not offer more than a sketchy, two-dimensional picture-book. Yet it could have been no accident that he opted for a dramatized medieval putsch, at the end of which the people, called upon to cheer the new Tsar, remain silent.

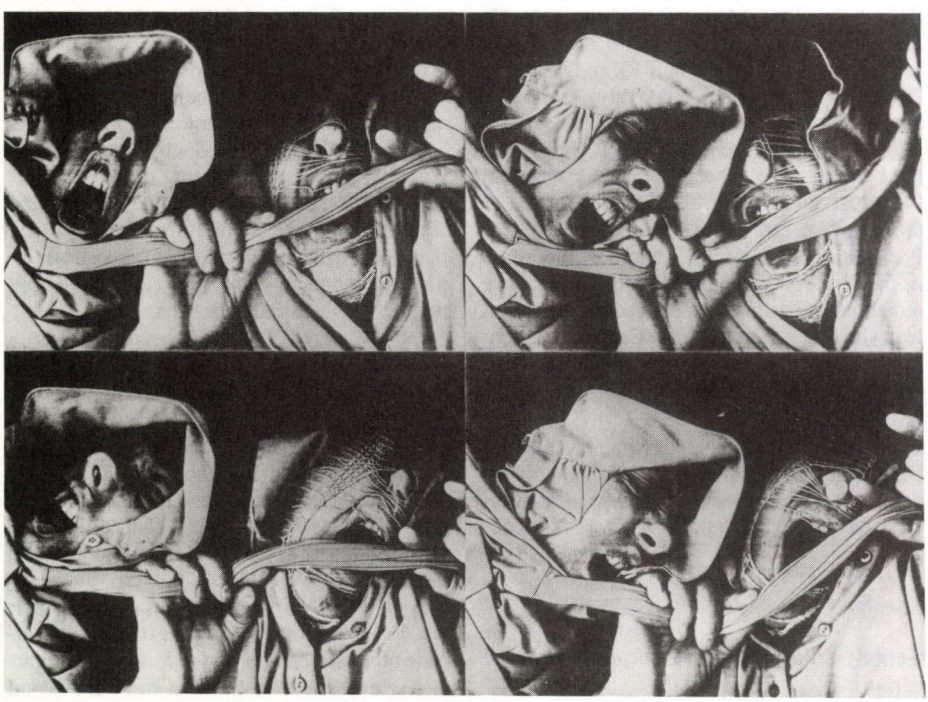
The newly discovered representataive of the "lost" people in Brecht's parable, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, is Azdak. This, too, takes place in troubled times, when Georgia is living through a state of lawlessness; the ruler has been overthrown and until the dynasty returns, the military place the village clerk onto the judge's bench. For the time being, the law is being represented by this uneducated, quick-witted son of the people. True, he works for his own benefit, but according to Brecht, he cannot be so evil as not to enforce, through instinctive class-consciousness, the interest of the oppressed people, as against the judges of the expelled ruling class, representing the law of the jungle of capitalism. By now something somewhat different has been experienced concerning the courts of the descendants of Azdak's class brethren. This, however, does not decrease the enjoyment of Brecht's malicious humour. Imre Csiszár's production at the Budapest National has this crude folk comedy as its best part, allowing György Cserhalmi to engage in bravura comedy, while the other keynote, the staggering temptation to good deeds, is somewhat paler.

Twentieth century drama obviously offers a number of points of linkage to current social processes. *The Mandate*, by the Soviet writer Nikolay Erdman, and directed by a Polish guest, Andrzey Rozhin, in the Gárdonyi Géza Theatre at Eger, could have turned into a bitingly funny play if the humour in it had been treated with blood-curdling seriousness. In one of the scenes, at the climax of farcical misunderstandings, the characters, overdoing party ideology, mistake a servant-maid dressed in a historical costume for a Grand Duchess and think that communism is over and the Tsar has returned. At the opening of the season, in 1989, this Gogolean scene would still have seemed a self-ironical *trouvaille*, as audiences might have felt they were laughing at their own expense in their boundless euphory. Unfortunately, the production borrowed from Feydeau more liberally than from Gogol, and this did not help either the acting or Erdman's more pithy satire.

Miklós Gábor was much more careful about proportions in his production of *The Portrait* by Mrozek in the Buda Castle Theatre. Essentially the play is about the process of a form of exorcism, the goal being to shake off the image of Stalin that lives on within us, even though the photograph had been taken down from the wall long ago. Mrozek uses fairly complicated transpositions, as for instance double casts, to demonstrate this schizophrenic state, while in literary techniques he prefers the simplest means: cabaret jokes and brief, absurd dialogue. So *The Portrait* has remained an intellectual delicacy

rather than developing into an awkward, emotional analysis, or a political exorcism, which would register physical and mental breakdown. It is a frivolous Ionesco laugh rather than a painful Beckett grotesque.

One way to sum up the season would perhaps be through Peter Hall and Richard Peaslee's musical adaptation of Orwell's *Animal Farm* in the Csiky Gergely Theatre at Kaposvár. This is the story, in the form of a fable, of the triumph and distortion of social revolution led by the Soviet Communist (Bolshevik) Party, in words and song. The Hungarian version, translated by István Eörsi and produced by Tamás Ascher, has placed the leading cadres and all the inhabitants of the farm in Hungarian conditions. Comrade Napólajos (coined out of Napoleon and the Hungarian for the name of Louis), who was not "a pig for words", and Vamzi and company all realise, in words and deeds, the familiar Hungarian scenario of the past forty years. It is an almost perfect production, with the Kaposvár actors catching perfectly the party bureaucrat pigs, the carthorse sinking under the voluntarily carried burden, the sheep impossible to teach, the wisely opportunist ass and all the others—almost as if they were playing Chekhov. Orwell, of course, is not Chekhov, which would not matter if only he offered a somewhat better stage quality, and if his satire had not been overtaken by time. *Animal Farm* ought to have been put on when it was impossible to do so. This is not the only paradox of the season of take-overs.



Gergely Bikácsy

Breaking the Rules

Ildikó Enyedi: *Az én huszadik századom* (My Twentieth Century);
Ferenc Grunwalsky: *Kicsi, de nagyon erős* (Little but Tough)

No Hungarian film was invited into official competition at the Cannes Festival this year. In Venice, Hungarian films have not done well over the last few years. On the other hand, in 1989, the European Film Prize went to Géza Beremányi's *Eldorado*. So the assessments made by the different festivals seem to be fairly contradictory—but, then, who knows whether it's really worth keeping track of prizes. What it amounts to is perhaps a radical change rather than a decline in the Hungarian cinema and film making. The last two of the annual presentations of new Hungarian films were dominated by documentaries—which came as no suprise. These are works which reveal and reconstruct facts and events, replace history books. Two of them have attracted attention: Judit Ember's *Pócspetri*, which, after years in its can was released (and also shown on TV), and *Recsk*, by Géza Böszörményi and Livia Gyarmathy, which interviews the former prisoners and—uniquely—the former guards of the infamous (and for long secret and denied) Hungarian forced labour camp of the 1950s. (The title of the two films are the names of two villages: Pócsperti was the scene of a murder committed in the late 1940s, whose circumstances have remained unclarified to the present: it was used for a show trial directed at the Catholic Church; Recsk was the site of the ill-famed forced labour or, rather, annihilating camp in North-Eastern Hungary).

However, after this year's film presentation, both critics and audiences felt saturated with documentaries (most of which were in an interview format, and the impression was of attending a television rather than a film review); the novelty of political outspokenness also seems to have been exhausted. The weakness of the feature films was also striking. Yet it is precisely in the feature films that a certain change can be observed, or, more precisely, the desire for it. The main line in Hungarian feature films so far has led to a gloomy art, imbued with symbolism and conjuring up history. Despite all the differences in their form of expression, Miklós Jancsó, and even András Kovács in his best film so far, *Cold Days*, and indeed, despite all his stylistic changes, István Szabó as well, expressed collective dreams and traumas that had been suppressed. Now the age of suppression has come to an end; the cultural policy based on the alternation of prohibition and tolerance has ceased to exist, and the old system of film production and distribution that was is also coming to an end. In the new situation all that can be done is to conjecture, to predict or to "chart" development in a doctrinaire manner. I would prefer to call attention to two possible paths that can be taken by the new Hungarian film; they deserve attention precisely because they opened up unexpectedly and have no traditions behind them—thus they could have been neither "conjectured" nor "charted".

My Twentieth Century, the first full-length feature film by Ildikó Enyedi, a young, fairly unknown director, with only a few shorts to her name, presents an imaginary twentieth century. The film is set in those years of promise at the turn of the century, and the ideals centred on are Light and Science, and Nature. The film is permeated by a nostalgia for those unrealized promises, with a pantheistic naivety which is in tension with the irony of retrospective knowledge in it. Although the film presents a cavalcade of ideals, beliefs, and of human intentions and sciences, it also has two flesh and blood

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heroines. It is a compound of fairytale and moral philosophy about a pair of twins, Dóra and Lili, the 20th century opportunities open to Woman. One of them is a scatter-brained anarchist, ready to use bombs, the other an adventuress, a *poule de luxe*, the heroine of her own body. Between them is a man, appearing in a dim though strong outline, almost mythical even in the enigmas of his contours, an amateur scientist, inventor and globe-trotter. The adventures of the protagonist are scientific; they sit in on the lectures of Otto Weininger, and engage in laboratory experiments on animals. Their adventures are fabulous: travel to Borneo; one of the women is rescued from the snowy wastes of Siberia by a dog-sledge produced by angels. Their adventures are sentimental as well: indeed, the adventuress is permeated by emotion in much the same way as her anarchistic twin is. Yet sentimentality is perhaps not the right word. Animals too play an important part—just as they would in a folktale. For instance, a grey donkey leads the Man into a labyrinth of mirrors where he can see both girls at the same time and come to sense that what he had considered to be the sole object of his love (and whose strange behaviour his male understanding had failed to grasp) in fact is not one but, two women—thus he can sense something of the ambivalence of feminity, of the feminine roles. The donkey calmly waits beside the man immersed in his problems, as if animals were the wiser. At another point, a chimpanzee in the zoo relates in a human voice the story of its capture. (The chimpanzee is the most attractive supporting player in the film.) And there is all the rest of the animals too. As if one were walking in God's great zoo where man is one, though not necessarily the most sensible, of beings. It is not sentimentality that permeates Miss Enyedi's film, rather some naive, pantheistic disposition that is present in every scene.

Naivety, however, is the subject rather than the manner of the film. In one of the key scenes, Lili the anarchist strays into a lecture by Otto Weininger. The Viennese scholar is enlarging on woman: she is not only a stupid and amoral being, but (with some sophistry) he proves that woman does not even exist, she is merely the sin of man. The audience is made up of emancipated women; they protest vehemently, only Lili sits there with a pensive smile, as if registering that science can be as naive as a goose. The seeming naivety of the film always features in delicate quotation marks. The scenes of the bomb-throwing are also imbued with an understanding irony; it is the men who react in the most cowardly fashion, and Lili exhibits pity and understanding when she does not blow them up. But there is another bomb, an exploded one: we are attending a kind of kinetoscope projection. It is here that the anarchists' bomb goes off and the room is already empty as the projected picture still flickers and moves. Bomb and light, immobility and motion picture, hesitant emotions, mistaken ideas, and the ambivalence of almost all this are transmitted by the seemingly naive form of presentation.

Ildikó Enyedi boldly draws on film history; her choice of names refers to Dorothy and Lillian Gish, Griffith's two actresses, and it is not difficult to discover in the plot a few motifs from Griffith's classical mush, *Orphans of the Storm*. *My Twentieth Century* succeeds in avoiding the didactic, anti-art clichés of the philosophical film wrestling with universal ideas (and of philosophical art as such—if such a thing exists). In this, she is aided by that playfulness of the early masters of the film, Méliés and Griffith. The conceptual elements are not drawn directly or oppressively, but filtered in a playful, fairy-tale-like story, ironically. Hungarian critics have generally stressed the influence of Gábor Bódy, the director who died young, and particularly his *Narcissus and Psyche*. But even this influence is indirect rather than direct, mainly evident in the creative freedom that rejects the "rules" of film-making.

One of the central figures in *My Twentieth Century* is reason, another emotion. They are twins—just as are Lili and Dóra. Reason, if it cares for its reputation, always remains pessimistic. Only the will, and the physical functions themselves, can be optimistic. This film, as if it were a living being itself, draws energy from an engaging biological optimism.

Ever since the mid-1970s, when the mythical, symbolic, historicizing film and manner—till then mainly present through (and in the wake of) Miklós Jancsó's masterpieces—became deflated, a certain neo-academicism, conservatism, emptiness in the garb of realism and a regularity of form, have increasingly dominated the Hungarian cinema. These were the years of the doubtful triumph of the misunderstood well-made film. These years saw "average films" with average plots, and com-

monplace heroes meant to be typical, without an internal world of their own. It was mainly directors of what is now the middle-aged generation who drifted onto this plain, so boring and barren to real explorers. Many of them arrived there after original, irregular and promising starts with some disturbing first films. This is what makes the career (or course correction?) of Ferenc Grunwalsky, who is now almost fifty, worthy of attention. Striving against the main current of Hungarian films in general, Grunwalsky, a former assistant of Miklós Jancsó's, has in his latest films rejected conservatism and the false demands of well-made films.

Grunwalsky is also an experienced cameraman: he was the director of photography for György Szomjas's films (whose bitter comedies and works in general show many kindred features with Grunwalsky's). Almost uniquely in the Hungarian cinema, he is his own cameraman as well. State subsidies for films being on the wane, Grunwalsky's production method also has a lesson in it: he works with an extremely small team and records his material on video from which it is then copied onto film. His films, like those of Szomjas, use much improvisation, and the scenario for him is a skeleton, a possibility. He employs many amateurs, and even professional actors shake off all their stage or film mannerism. The viewer—and perhaps the reader, too—has the sense of being taken back to the early 'sixties, the emergence of the French New Wave; the members of the former middle generation who are now so utterly conservative—István Szabó, Ferenc Kardos, Zsolt Kézdi-Kovács and the others—did at the time draw from Truffaut and Godard.

Grunwalsky still draws from them now when all this seems to have become "passé", and indeed, when fashion would enjoin something quite different. His last but one film, *A Full Day*, received the Hungarian film critics' prize. His latest film, *Little but Tough*, though it had similar virtues, did not come as the same surprise; even so it has proved to be a radical rejection of the dusty conservatism of the last Hungarian feature film review.

Both films have people driven to the fringe of society as their protagonists: in *A Full Day* a young taxi driver, unable to pay off a big debt, and a worker with a double life: a factory-hand by day and burgler by night, in *Little but Tough*. "The world in which we live is not well made, and that's why all the well made films, whose reassurance and conservatism is their content, structure and form, are lying", Grunwalsky said and he added that his experiments with an irregular formal idiom were not merely aesthetic but involve artistic perspicacity and truth as well. Grunwalsky's films, with their heroes wriggling in the vice of horrific external, material constraints, have no traditional structures, no plots that lend themselves to summary narration. The stories consist of episodes, falling into pieces in a mosaic, deliberately ground small. The taxi driver must repay his debt within 24 hours and he is being blackmailed, through his young, very empty and very physical wife, by his creditors (moustached and well-fed moguls of the Budapest underworld). The taxi journeys of "a full day" make up the film. Of course, the money cannot be repaid, and for want of anything better, only the unfaithful wife (who at least puts up with blackmail passively, even with her body) can be murdered.

All this has nothing of grandeur in it, no real tragedy. This is black comedy, washed with absurd elements. These lives and situations or the pictures portraying them have no centre. Grunwalsky consistently composes his shots, and even whole sequences, "defectively", off-centre. In this sense the film has no central scene or episode of major importance; even the relative length of the scenes is of no significance. I mentioned the French and also the Czech new waves as forebears to the director; one could also mention John Cassavetes's early films, principally *Husbands*. This is cunningly deliberate art of decomposition. It should also be mentioned that the fabric of the film is determined by a verbal humour which unfortunately can hardly be followed or appreciated by foreign viewers. The film is an uncoordinated pile, one might say, a refuse dump of waste words and waste sentences: taxi drivers' slang, slum patois, a higgledy-piggledy admixture of the different stylistic layers of the spoken language.

Grunwalsky's latest film can be considered a sequel, though a certain change in style can be seen in it too. *Little but Tough*, the story of an ex-convict turning burglar and finally murderer, does not follow the idiom of the old *nouvelle vague* so closely; it is a work less loose in structure and with less of the gambolling and somersaulting. It kicks about desperately, dragging along spasmodically; indeed, it moves spasmodically as its own protagonist does. This

character no longer believes that he could repay any kind of debt he might contract or that he could make a living out of any kind of work. He sets out to burgle like other people set out to work; yet he is not a true professional criminal. He is not a member of any criminal gang (indeed, finally he is forced to get even with his former fellow prisoner in self defence). He is a man steeped in hatred; Hungarian films have never had such a terrible character.

The sequences at the beginning and the end provide the film with a singular frame. In the introductory sequence the protagonist tries, fairly unsuccessfully, to express himself in a long, broken, incoherent monologue. He is seen in close shot, with tears rolling down his stubbled face. In the final shots, after a multiple murder, he flees along the river bank shown now for the first time. His route continues under water. He moves on, clattering with stubborn determination under water, as if refusing to believe that he is finished.

Flanked by these sequences there are fragments of days, minutes, seconds of banal life. In the earlier film there had been a great deal of blabber from many characters, here hardly anything is being said. Here the fragmentary sentences, broken off and leaving no scope for interpretation, weigh threateningly. The film is mainly in close-up; almost everywhere Grunwalsky has deliberately eliminated not just the transitory cuts but all other cuts too in favour of close shots. This lends unbelievable weight even to the simplest, indifferent looks and glances, the most neutral ones included. It is the film of disconsolation.

After the beginning of the century, here is one facet of the Hungarian *fin de siècle:* after vegetative *joie de vivre*, the pessimism of reason.

Ildikó Nagy

Modern to Postmodern

The New Hungarian Gallery in Székesfehérvár

Earlier this year, in May, an unusual invitation arrived in the post. On a poster folded into eight, the István Király Museum of Székesfehérvár invited "relatives, friends and business partners" to the opening of a contemporary arts exhibiton. The drawings on the poster, shirts, blazers and a cheerful travelling bag, reminded us that we have been travelling for more than a quarter century—as if on a pilgrimage—to Székesfehérvár when we wanted to see a good exhibition.

This city of 170,000 inhabitants, sixty kilometres from Budapest off the road leading to Lake Balaton, looks back to a great past. Its cathedral was founded at the turn of the first millenium by the first king of Hungary, Saint Stephen (István), who is also buried there. The cathedral—only the remains of the original walls can still be seen today—was, until the Turkish conquest in the 16th century, where the kings of Hungary were crowned and buried. The city's museum was established in 1873 and bears the name of King Stephen. It has a significant local history and archeology collection—for instance, it is very rich in finds from the Roman era; for a long time it did not have any fine arts holdings. This collection was established in the past twenty-five years by two outstanding art critics. The friendly invitation thus was in fact also one to anniversary celebrations.

Márta Kovalovszky and Péter Kovács began work at the museum in 1962 with the ink barely dry on their diplomas. In their first year they attracted attention by arranging the exhibition on Tivadar Csontváry Kosztka. This totally original and then unjustly ignored painter died in 1919. Although the best of the critics had stood up for him, and his paintings had been a great success at the Brussels World Fair in 1958, the ideological watchdogs ensured that no museum in Hungary dared to show his paintings at the time. The exhibition at Székesfehérvár was simultaneously a professional success and an official stumbling stone; this duality was to overshadow the work of the two art critics all the time.

The Csontváry exhibition set a standard which could be sustained only by a well thought-out long-term programme. The museum started on two parallel series of exhibitions. One presented the history of twentieth century Hungarian art according to styles, schools, groups; the other covered individual and collective exhibitions of contemporary Hungarian artists. Although these exhibitions were frequently subject to delays on account of objections raised by the guardians of the official cultural policy—some exhibitions were banned outright—the two series conjoined in 1987 when the exhibition "Old and new avant-garde" brought the historic series together with the contemporary. The Székesfehérvár exhibitions were among the most important events in the Hungarian arts, and writers, musicians, artists, art historians, spiritual "relations, friends and business partners" met regularly at their vernissages. At the exhibitions themselves all new movements and important artists, the great names of the avant-garde and the young novices (many discovered by the museum) were to be seen.

Along with the exhibitions, and inseparably from them, the two enthusiasts started collecting works for the museum. A letter addressed "honoured master", which was sent to one hundred artists in 1964, asking them to present one of their works to the museum for the collection of contemporary art to be established, was how it all started. The museum's collection then

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expanded through purchase, gifts, legacies, until today it can claim to be the most important collection of contemporary art in Hungary.

The New Hungarian Gallery, which contains the permanent collection of the museum, selects from this quarter century of collecting. Apart from some halls in the museum of Pécs, this is the only place where modern Hungarian art is on permanent exhibition. The exhibition is housed in a former Cistercian monastery in six halls and the corridor running in front of them. Although the arrangement pays attention to chronology, it does not strictly rely on historicity. It is rather essayistic and hints incessantly at the present through striking associations. The organizers do not deny that they are even now looking at "modern" Hungarian art from the point of view of post-modernism. What is surprising is exactly how the many kinds of divergent trends in the past half century can be seen in a unity in this way. This is confirmed also by the artistic careers, because numerous artists, who set out in the 1960s in abstract art, had returned by the 1990s—after various detours—to the beginnings. The "new ecclecticism" of the end of the century seems to be resolving contradictions which once appeared to be irreconcilable.

The exhibition starts with the older generation of the avant-garde, members of the erstwhile European School, thus in abstraction and surrealism. The lyric branch of abstract painting, which can be linked to experience of nature, is represented by Béla Veszelszky and Ilka Gedő, while the expressive line by Júlia Vajda and Dezső Korniss's *Calligraphy* (1964). But through another Korniss painting (*A Memory of a Summer*, 1950), indicative abstract painting is also present, and this perhaps had the greater influence on the generation embarking on their careers in the 1960s. They are to be found in the nearby halls. But in between there are two painters, Béla Kondor and Lili Ország. Today it can be seen clearly that these two artists, who differ so much in many respects, dealt with the same thing, the past. Kondor experienced it as history, Lili Ország as time (*Gate to All Secrets*, 1972). Kondor in the 1960s was counted as a traditionalist painter compared to the avant-garde but is surprisingly up-to-date in the age of postmodernism. His *Death of King Louis II* (1972)—which never had of course the effect of an "historic" painting—appears very fresh today, precisely because of its pictorial virtues.

The first hall of the exhibition is mostly devoted to IPARTERV. The new Hungarian avant-garde appeared collectively for the first time in 1968 in the club premises of an architectural design institute (IPARTERV). They introduced into Hungarian art the objective approach which relies on autonomy, the freedom of formation, the primary joy of colours, patches and lines. The laws of artistic creation are no longer set by spectacle, the work is not depicting something but is primarily an intellectual creation. Ilona Keserű indicated even through the title of her painting that it has no topic: *Big Merry* (1970). The picture is a composition of colours, shapes, materials, plainly painted and plastic raw canvass surfaces; on the opposite wall hangs its twin, painted twenty years later, *Hommage á Léger*. The same elements prove primarily a special sensitivity to colour and shape through an almost rococo richness of forms—alluding also to Léger—and this, whatever she has done in the past quarter century, has always determined her paintings, statuettes, interiors, theatre sets, painted objects, and textiles.

At the end of the 1960s Hungarian art experienced the shock of the appearance of American pop art in Europe. Although the attraction of Andy Warhol, the tremendous suggestivity of his works could not be overlooked, works by Lakner, Konkoly and Jovánovics have already assimilated and gone beyond Warhol. István Haraszty's *Cage* (1972) is a kinetic work which could only have been created here in Eastern Europe. The door of the cage is open all the time and is only closed when the bird wants to fly out through it.

The topic in the second hall is time. These works might also be called conceptual, yet the works by Erdély, Hajas or Baranyay do not compel one to make any classification. The classics to be seen here include Erdély's *Travel through Time* (1976) or Baranyay's *Self-portrait with Jane Morris* (1982). Erdély's series of photographs consists of five phases in each of which he—approaching fifty—faces the self of his childhood and youth. Baranyay's photographics are the opposite of this. They involve not the doubling of the personality, but the unity of two personalities. He composes the image of Jane Morris, the muse of Pre-Raffaelites, into a self-portrait. This portrait, taking shape after several phases, is the image of the personality who has never existed. Baranyay, who has been

deeply affected by Kirkegaard, expresses in his self-portraits Kirkegaard's incognito, reflected pain. His portraits are hidden faces, shadows. Among them the most anguished is the work exhibited here, because the two faces hidden in each other are separated or, rather, linked, by death. This is the deepest confession of solitude and of the beauty of the meeting of spirits that span the ages. The personality cannot be grasped, cannot be expressed, but those who know the secret and are initiated, recognize each other through the experience of pain. The hope for this same secret meeting brought to life the works of György Jovánovics which can be seen here, the *Sándor Altorjai Sundial* (which is dedicated to his friend, the late painter), and the *House of the Hanged Man* (1984), a plaster relief which is a paraphrase of the picture by Cézanne, a postmodern remembrance of the painter and the experience of the painting.

The third hall is the world of geometry, the "combination of logic and beauty" as Péter Esterházy, the novelist puts it. Here the new geometric art and structuralism have been given their place. In the preceding hall barely suggested contents, unexpected and meta-rational moments determine the works, while here everything is calculable, correct, and logical. The foundation of the works is not empathy, but philosophic discipline and system. There are of course differences, because Tamás Hencze or István Nádler remain painters even in their most calculated works, and their paintings rely on visual and pictorial effects. In contrast, Dóra Maurer produces concept art in which basic arithmetic operations and visual ideas complement each other. By contrast, Péter Türk and András Mengyán make the laws of mathematics visible. In his *Dialectic of Forms* (1978), Mengyán elaborated a logical sequence relying on the permutations of the transformation of a given geometric form.

Going further, we arrive in the hall of instinctive-magic-grotesque works, in the centre of which there is the "agricultural" art of Imre Bukta. On the wall there are the painted guns of poachers, decorated like Indians' guns and obviously invested with the same personal totemic meaning. In the centre of the hall is another essential work in Bukta's "agro-art", *Man Feeding Guinea-Fowl* (1986). The "man" is here a fantastic farm machine, put together of wood and long iron nails (undoubtedly masculine) which, if set into motion, could in principle feed the guinea-fowl which stands on top of a pyramid facing it. Part of the work is a great number of glass pearls spread on the ground, and some objects and forms through which we cannot associate to feeding the bird but to the world "pearl" (in Hungarian the guinea-fowl is called "pearl-fowl"). These elements include a small table standing on curved legs, or repeated double spirals of wrought iron (so typical of fencing), but also with inlaid pearls. Perhaps this is sufficient to indicate how freely Bukta's art handles objects, philosophic, picturial and linguistic associations, the mixture it makes of the magic and of the profane, of the trivial and of the refined. This too is why the organizers placing of István Mazzag's pictures in the same hall was a palpable hit. We are familiar with the refined decadent colour harmony of *Picture of Lovers* and of *Romeo* (violets, greens, golds, reds) from Art Nouveau interiors, and they are rather distant from poaching and agro-art. But Romeo is a sad dog—in a yellowish-green field with red drops of blood and a knife—with a violet sky in the background. Mazzag mixes contrasts just as Bukta does; the mixture is in a different proportion. In Bukta there is more emphasis on the trivial, in Mazzag on the refined.

From here it is just a step—both in thought and in reality—to the New Sensibility, the topic of the fifth hall. To the analysing, objective, conceptual and impersonal works of the 1970s, the sensibility of the turn of the 1980s was a natural reaction: personal involvement and sentiment, the reclaiming of the individual mythologies. Besides Csilla Kelecsényi, Gábor Roskó, Zsigmond Károlyi, here the plastic art of Lujza Gecser attracts attention. The floating white textile figure made rigid with varnish had a transcendental effect at the time it was made for its phantom-like effect. Today, knowing that the artist died suddenly at the age of 45, it is like a message from the grave.

The sixth hall is given over to postmodernism. On the main wall there is Géza Perneczky's *Postmodern Train* from 1984. The train is pulled by a steam engine, the smoke from its stack shapes repetitions of the words YES and NO. This refers not only to one of Perneczky's earlier works (*Yes-No Strategy*, 1972), but also to the strategy of thinking for a whole period. This is a conceptual-philosophic token which unites the binary language of computers with the dichotomy of "art—non art". In the wag-

gons of the postmodern train there are the key notions ("secret", "shadow"), its emblems (eyes, Mickey-Mouse, sphinx, cubes, butterflies, heads of Marx) and idols (Marilyn Monroe, Andy Warhol), which are also the principal motifs in Perneczky's art. This train carries also a personal history, in which the elements of the past are nearly lined up beside each other. This postmodernism is not a synthesis of the past but its addition on a raised level.

On leaving the final hall, visitors find themselves again in the corridor from which they set out, but this time on the other side. On the wall on the right there is Tamás Soós's *Caravaggio* (1985). Postmodernism frequently invokes Warhol from the immediate and Caravaggio from the more distant past (Tibor Csernus, a Hungarian painter living in Paris, built an entire oeuvre on it, claiming that "Caravaggio is my theory", and the British film director Derek Jarman made him a synonym for artistic existence in his film.) Tamás Soós's picture is a paraphrase of *St John the Baptist*, which is in the Doria Pamphili in Rome. The Caravaggio bambino sits embracing the head of the ram, as in the original picture; what is missing is the transcendental substance. Consequently, the title is very exact. The contemporary painter can no longer invoke the faith, only Caravaggio.

Unjustifiably little has been said of the sculpture in the exhibition. For lack of space—since premises created out of the cells of the monastery are small—there is only room for smaller plastic works. Nevertheless here four designs, made for the competition for a memorial to the victims of the 1956 revolution, are to be seen. Gyula Gulyás is represented by his portrait of *Andy Warhol* (1983). Warhol is here no longer the daredevil, as he is in the photographs from the 1960s. He is tired and aged; his hair painted silver and dandyish bow-tie make him see frail and grotesque, but a face destroyed by drugs still retains the consciousness of his greatness. The artist can go through the innermost circles of hell in his life (as did Caravaggio or Warhol), yet he remains pure, if his work transcends this journey.

What is then the afterlife of the artist and of the work? Postmodernism no longer destroys idols as violently as the avant-garde did, because it does not believe that it can build new idols in their place. It looks at them rather with loving irony and distorts them into grotesque grimaces. Tamás Somogyi's statue (*Together*, 1987) makes a limp and bald *Apollo of Belvedere* embrace Meunier's drunken *Sack Heavers*. What has become of these two pillars of sculpture, the classics of light elegance and serene human dignity? Two tottering pigs holding each other. But it is far from being worthwhile to feel sad about this. It suffices to make a half-turn, and at the other end wall of the corridor stands unchanged Béla Veszelszky's beautiful abstract *Landscape*, where the exhibition starts. If we wish, we too can make a new start, both with the exhibition and with faith.

János Fancsali

The Founding of the Hungarian Conservatoire in Kolozsvár in 1819

"A strange little country is this Transylvania... Here is this country on the very limits of European civilization... But I believe I have never told the reader what sort of a place this Klausenburg is. Well then, it is a pretty little town of about twenty-five thousand inhabitants, situated in the valley of the Szamos and overlooked by hills on every side. It is built round a large square, in the centre of which stands the fine old Gothic cathedral. From this square, almost all the streets run off at right angles".[1]

Although in the mid-18th century the seat of the governor of Transylvania was still Nagyszeben (Herrmannstadt—Sibiu), during the reign of Joseph II, and particularly in the years that followed, Kolozsvár (Cluj—Klausenburg) constantly grew in significance. First it became a county seat and one of the two High Courts moved there. In October 1790, the governor, György Bánffy, also moved his seat to Kolozsvár. All this meant more than a political and social attraction induced by the diets. The governor's seat and the High Court, with the officials they involved, and the delegates and senior clerks from the counties needed a total of 729 dwellings. Construction work to modernise the town included the pulling down of outdated fortifications, castle walls and ancient barbicans, and a previously undreamed-of expansion outside the city walls. The paving of public roads (1790-1822), the building of a road leading from the city to Felek (1823-7), daily postal links with Buda (1804), and the reconstruction of two bridges over the Szamos (1801-24) all went hand in hand with the growing role Hungarians were playing again both in Kolozsvár and Transylvania as a whole. At the end of 1790, a Transylvanian Saxon, Michael Conrad, wrote about the first diet held in Kolozsvár: " Even the Governor Bánffy no longer spoke in German. German customs, head dresses and clothes were abandoned, and in less than a month one saw Hungarian ladies walking about, instead of in the former German bonnets and other clothes, in Hungarian c*sákó* hats and short *mente*."[2]

By the end of 1827, street lighting was installed in the city. The new public buildings included the Karolina Hospital, a new town hall, and barracks, which relieved citizens of the burdens of billeting. The water supply was improved and a decision taken to establish a town park. That was when the town centre of Kolozsvár became outlined. The streets were extended to lead from the Castle district beyond the castle walls, and they have remained to the present day the principal traffic conduits of the city.

Alongside public buildings, private building also went up. In 1830, the use of timber in housing was restricted, and from 1832 on a town architect was appointed to supervise building. The new century brought with it many fine late Baroque buildings: the Bánffy, Teleki and Toldalagi-Korda mansions in the Main Square, and the smaller houses of the Thoroczkay, Rhédey, Kemény, Jósika, Kendeffy, Pataki and Mikó families. These names feature in practically all the public events in Kolozsvár. New centres included a Calvinist college (1801-1804), a Unitarian school (1802-1804) and a Catholic school(1817-1821), while the Redoute, the venue for balls, festivals, concerts, and also the Transylvanian diets (where Liszt played in 1846), was opened in the early 1820s. Later, in

János Fancsali *left Kolozsvár, Transylvania, in 1988. He there led the Consort Ensemble of Ancient Music. Old Transylvanian instruments and music history are a special interest.*

the summer of 1848, it was there that the diet proclaimed unification with Hungary.

Perhaps the most significant event in this process was the raising of a building of national significance, the first permanent Hungarian theatre built in stone. The diet voted for the building of a theatre in Kolozsvár at the end of the 18th century, but lacking finances, the first piece of land was only purchased in 1803, out of the donations of the nobility. The building was completed by the middle of 1817, and the next step was to pave the way for performances in Hungarian in Transylvania. Finally, the new theatre was opened on March 12, 1821, providing a worthy setting for Hungarian acting, whose roots in Transylvania reached back to 1792. The opening production was *Zrinyi*, by Theodor Körner, put on by an amateur dramatic society recruited among the Kolozsvár nobility.

Other things Kolozsvár had to offer included the Calvinist college, the Catholic Piarist school, the 19th century palaces of the Teleki and Count Nemes families, and the Hungarian University designed by Ignác Alpár, which all contributed to the beauty of the city.

Financial sacrifices could not be expected form the burghers, even though it was they who were directly interested in progress; however, the aristocrats of Transylvania were generous patrons of national culture. Later, their role in the diets and in the 1848 revolution also proved this, and they looked at the espousal of the cause of music and theatre as also serving the public interest. After all, in the 1810s, Kolozsvár was still a small town of 18,000 inhabitants, in spite of its role in Transylvania. The *Erdélyi Múzeum* (Transylvanian Musem), the first literary and scholarly periodical printed in Hungarian, which appeared between 1814 and 1818, provided an outlet for Hungarian writing. The subscribers ranged from students to aristocrats throughout Transylvania and also in Hungary, and it maintained its position as the best literary periodical of the day.

Musical institutions were nonexistent at the end of the 18th century. Most is known about music in the houses of the aristocracy, where most music teachers were Austrian or Bohemian. The writer Ferenc Kazinczy toured Transylvania in the summer of 1816, and recounted his impressions in *Erdélyi levelek* (Letters from Transylvania). Of Farkas Wesselényi he wrote: "He is a great lover and cultivator of music; to his own delight, and to teach the children of the two houses, he keeps a famous voice-master, Caudela, and a skilful singer, Ménard, at the house. Caudela is always willing to play, and we were willing to listen, and on the fortepiano, one of the best I have heard, he played works by Gluck, the two Bachs, Haydn, Mozart, Pleyel, Salieri, and Rossini from morning till late at night."

Josefa Palm, the wife of Count György Bánffy, was Viennese, and she was said to have been a pupil of Mozart's. "According to news regarding music in Kolozsvár, several families of good repute keep piano masters of their own, decent music receives magnanimous support, and there are several skilful dilettantes in cultivated circles, of whom Count Imre Wass [...] is eminent on the flute [...] These private institutions, however, very rarely comprise the male sex, as the majority of men, due to other, more important engagements, are not closely interested in music."[3] On the other hand, "Ladies of the upper classes receive a very good and careful education. There are few among them who do not know at least three languages, and, moreover, do not receive training in art."[4] Paget also noted this: "I know many ladies to whom the names and works of all our best classics are familiar, either in the originals or translations, and there are very few who cannot talk learnedly of Byron and Scott. This may not be thought to show any very great proficiency in literature but I am afraid if we were to ask English ladies how much they know—not of Hungarian writers—but of those of Germany even, we should often find their knowledge still more shallow."[5]

About music-making in aristocratic homes, Paget has this to say: "A soirée, the first of the season, at the Countess. [...] With some amateur music [...] the party broke up at ten."[6] Alongside the playing of and education in music cultivated in Transylvania, the performance of musical theatre in the Hungarian theatre in Kolozsvár was of major importance. The following are only a few of many: Johann Schenk's *Der Dorfbarbier* in 1794, Dittersdorf's *Doctor und Apotheker* in 1799, Méhul's *Le trésor supposé* in 1800, Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* in 1804, and Martín y Soler's *L'albore di Diana* in 1806. From the very beginning, the significance of the Hungarian theatre in Kolozsvár grew beyond local needs, as people from Szeged and Debrecen, from Marosvásárhely and later

the other towns in Transylvania, too, flocked to the theatre.

In 1800, a Vienna paper, published in Hungarian, expressed the general demand for quality musical works for the stage: "The non-existence of music... has prevented many fine things taking place."[7] The magazine *Erdélyi Múzeum* carried an article by its editor, Gábor Döbrentei, which may have been of crucial importance for the foundation of the Kolozsvár conservatoire. "To support the blossoming of our theatre, we have to disseminate the love of music among us as well. The reason why music and fine singing prosper among Italians is that there are several conservatories in Italy, which, as hospitals, serve as singing and music schools... There are four such institutes in Venice, the largest being the Spedale della Pieta, where [...] seventy children learn music and singing. They all also learn to play different wind instruments and the violin. On holidays and Sundays, the girls perform oratorios in the Church of the Hospital. How delightful it was for me to listen to such music-making in 1814. In the same way, the finest church music is provided by male and female children at the other notable institute (the Conservatorio dei mendicanti)... In the three conservatories in Naples, more than 400 boys learn singing, instrumental music and composition. In Paris too, a great Conservatoire was established after the Revolution. Free instruction is provided for 300 children of both sexes. [...] Our pure Hungarian towns, whether in Transylvania or Hungary, provide no instruction for Hungarian composers and singers [...] Will we thus ever be able to hear genuine Hungarian *Singspiele*, with the music written by a Hungarian, and sung by good Hungarian singers, so that together they can attract well-deserved attention? Without a Hungarian singing school with this end in view, this will never take place."[8]

There is an unquestionable connection between the Kolozsvár theatre and the foundation of the Music Society. The project was initiated by Antal Hollaki, the *gubernialis secretarius* (government secretary). He started canvassing for the establishment of the society as early as 1819. He called on several Kolozsvár burghers and other patriots in their homes, trying to win them over. Having adequately prepared the ground, he called a large meeting in his own home for June 8, 1819. According to the list of names, the meeting was attended by 39 citizens, representing all sections of society from the postmaster to the barons.

At the foundation meeting, voluntary financial offers were made by 80 members, amounting to 1700 forints. An invitation to join was sent to the Governor, Count György Bánffy, and a body of officials was elected.

From that time on, events gathered speed. The committee of the Music Society met on June 11; they interviewed noted music teachers in Kolozsvár, set down regulations, and, on June 22, issued a printed appeal. "The doors of the school teaching singing and the violin are to open on the first day of July to receive children and the young of both sexes and any religion. From the first of November a third master will also be available for proper instruction in wind instruments. (...) To open this noble Institute in a worthy manner, the Musical Society, whose voluntary donations serve to establish such schools and pay the teachers, has decided to (admit) children of both sexes of the inhabitants of this noble city, coming from all walks of life."[9] "The doors of the first Hungarian music school, the Music Institute, were thus open to all the children of Kolozsvár without discrimination.

Instruction started on 1 July. Governor Count Bánffy sent a letter assuring the Society of his support. Meanwhile, opinions started to come on the *Elementarbuch für die Singkunst zum Gebrauche des Musikvereins in Clausenburg* (Elementary Book of the Art of Singing, for Use of the Music Society in Kolozsvár), by the director, Antal Polz, which had been submitted to a nine-member committee. This work must have been the first singing tutor in Transylvania, and work on it must have started earlier. The seal of the Institute read in Hungarian: Muzsikai Egyesület Kolozsvárt (Musical Society in Kolozsvár), and it headed the circular that was sent to cultural institutions and noted personalities in Transylvania, asking for their support. Soon musical academies were also held, but the programmes of these events have not come down to us. They wrote tutors for the violin, flute and bassoon. Girls were taught in the little-shool (the school next to the Greater Church), and boys in the college. The teachers of singing and violin were joined by a third instructor, who taught the flute, the clarinet, the bassoon and the Waldhorn. The rules of the Institute prescribed rehearsals to be held every three months, with a full, public rehearsal once

a year, during the week before Whitsunday. Conditions for admittance for students called for a knowledge of reading and writing, the lower age limit being ten. Students had to use their own writing instruments, music-paper and violin. The wind instruments were purchased from donations, and handed to the pupils. Tuition fees were left to the parents' discretion and poor children were exempted from the payment of fees. "Conscientious instruction and human treatment are the duty of teachers."[10]

The account for the first year shows the receipt of 1373 forints from 74 donors. The fees collected from the students amounted to 213 guilders from 70 girls and 52 guilders from boys, both groups learning singing, 59 guilders from 41 students of the violin, and 9 guilders from 18 students of wind instruments—altogether 333 guilders from 201 pupils.

In the first year of its existence, the Institute held a music academy in honour of Governor Count Bánffy, on December 22. In the years that followed up till 1823, two or three public concerts were given annually, which generated a considerable income. Antal Hollaki translated the libretto of Méhul's opera, *Joseph*, into Hungarian, and this resulted in the most imposing production of the early years, which the Music Society gave with the contribution of the members of the theatre company, the first performance being on May 15, 1821. In the years that followed, they worked out more detailed regulations, which stipulated thorough and strict principles for the running of the school.

Besides manuals by local teachers (those by Polz, mentioned already), the committee decided late in July 1819, to order singing, violin, bassoon, Waldhorn and flute tutors from Paris, costing 50 guilders. Early in 1820, they purchased Schultz's *Singing Tutor*, and "spent 6 forints on orders for various needed choruses, overtures and symphonies."[11] Surviving records indicate a great many valuable donations of scores. The school term ended with a public examination.

The music school had its golden age under György Ruzitska (1789-1869) and Ödön Farkas (1851-1912). Ruzitska, of a Bohemian family, was born and educated in Vienna. He came to Transylvania as the music master of a Hungarian aristocratic family. An organist and pianist, he also played the cello. Being an efficient oganizer, he insisted that the pupils should be given a good education, and he also laid the foundations of orchestral playing in Kolozsvár. Having devoted much time to track down his music library, I can safely state that he kept abreast of European music, which he popularised in the city. He was the author of the first Hungarian *Singing Tutor*, which appeared in 1839. Ruzitska was the most reputable composer in contemporary Transylvania. His works in excellent taste followed Classical and Romantic models. There seems to be an interesting parallel between activities and mentalities of Ruzitska and Ödön Farkas. Farkas became the director of the Conservatory in 1879. He watched over the high standards of the institution with a jealous eye. He too, was a noted composer, and an outstanding representative of Impressionism in Transylvania, particularly in his songs to poems by Endre Ady. His efforts were concentrated on gathering the musical force of Kolozsvár around the conservatorium, which he developed as the centre of the city's musical scene. He expanded the scope of the institution, and under his direction nearly 400 pupils received instruction in piano, violin, cello, contrabass, singing (both solo and choral), composition, musical theory, harmony, music history and chamber music. By the time he died, in 1912, the Conservatory even provided training for its future teachers, and it was equal in rank to the Budapest Academy of Music.

After Transylvania had been annexed to Rumania in the autumn of 1919 (the centenary of the school), the Rumanian "governing council dealt strangely with it [...] when it simply expelled it from the fine Baroque building in Király utca. Of course, the expensive instruments, furniture and scores remained there. All the complaints and petitions were in vain. The school had to fall back on the hospitality of the three Hungarian *gimnáziums* and the Marianum, wandering through ever new classrooms placed at their disposal as a favour, meanwhile trying to draft new articles of foundation to have their rights recognised. The statutes, elaborated in 1926, were followed by new attempts and lobbying. It was reclassified as a private school and compelled to introduce Rumanian as the language of instruction."[12] It could still continue functioning until 1940, under the noted Rezső Zsizsmann.

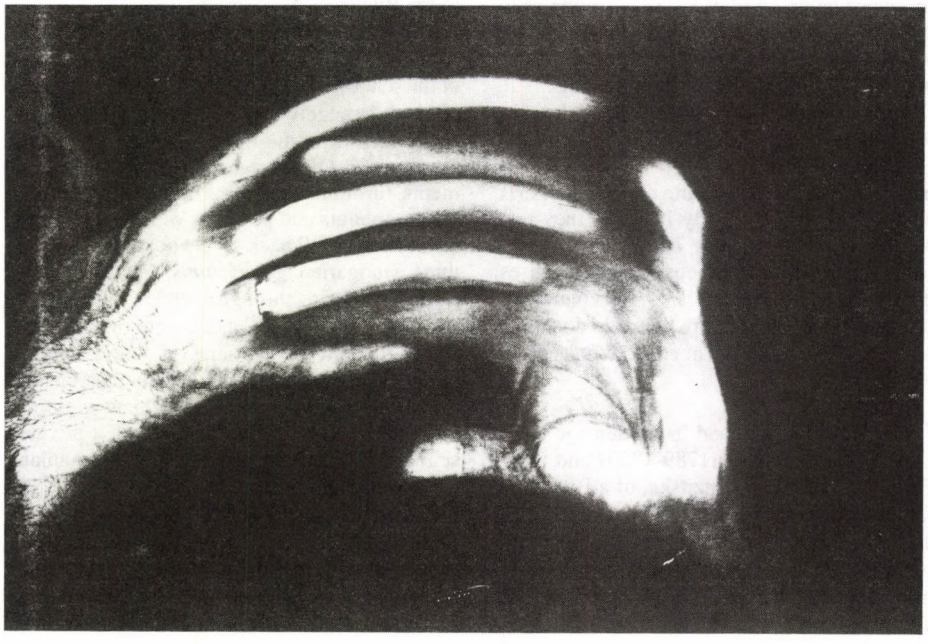
During the Second World War, the Institute continued, under János Visky and Ferenc Farkas, to do decent and serious work. After the

war, it made a last effort, but in the early 1950s it was amalgamated with the Rumanian conservatory, which had been founded in 1920.

Today there is no institutionalised musical education in Hungarian in Kolozsvár.

Notes

1. *Hungary and Transylvania... by John Paget, Esq.*, London, John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1850, Vol. I. p. 181, Vol. II. p. 397.
2. Michael Conrad: *Selbstbiographie*, ed. by Dr. Rudolf Theill, in *Archiv des Vereins f. Siebenbürgische Landeskunde*, 1883, p. 208.
3. "Erdély zenéjének ismerete 1814–ből" (Description of Transylvanian Music in 1814), by Ervin Major, in *Muzsika*, Budapest, 1929, pp. 47-8.
4. Miklós Jósika: *Emlékirat* (Memoirs), Budapest, Magyar Helikon, 1977, pp. 44.
5. Paget, *op.cit.*, Vol, II, pp. 425-6.
6. Paget, *op.cit.*, Vol, II, p. 407.
7. Zoltán Ferenczi: *A kolozsvári színészet és színház története* (A History of Acting and Theatres in Kolozsvár). Kolozsvár, 1897, p. 111.
8. *Erdélyi Múzeum*, 1817, Nr. 8, pp. 1111-14.
9. Lajos Ürmössy: *A kolozsvári zenekonzervatórium története* 1819–1878 (A History of the Conservatoire in Kolozsvár 1819-1878) pp. 2-3.
10. Ürmössy, op.cit. p. 7.
11. *A Muzsikai Egyesület nyilvános számadása.* (Public Financial Report of the Musical Society). 1820. p. 3.
12. Pál Gergely: "A kolozsvári zeneiskola alapítása 1819-ben" (The Foundation of the Conservatoire in Kolozsvár in 1819). *Erdélyi Múzeum, 1935*, p. 371.



Paul Griffiths

Zoltán Jeney's Song Cycle: Brilliantly Simple

There can be no question which of these four records of new Hungarian music must lead this review: Zoltán Jeney's set of Twelve Songs is a very remarkable work, and it has a very remarkable performance from the soprano Luisa Castellani, the violinist András Keller and the pianist Zoltán Kocsis on SLPX 12971. Each of these songs is a small miracle of purity and control, a crystal of sounds perfectly transparent in its structural strategies; each is a moment of beauty achieved in a different way, and yet the twelve together make a consistent family marked not only by candour of design and tone but also by certain favourite intervals, melodic turns and harmonies. If one is looking for definitions, Jeney has to be called a minimalist, but he is—despite an obvious kinship with Cage extending here to the use of poems of Cummings in eight of the songs—a minimalist in his own manner, and a minimalist who is master of a wide range of techniques. To an outsider, his achievement seems distinctively Hungarian, comparable with that of Weöres and Tandori in verse (the notes supplied with the recording remind us that both were noted translators of Cummings, and one poem by each of them is set in Jeney's cycle), and of Bartók or Kurtág in writing piano music for children.

What distinguishes all these artists is the ability to be simple in a fresh way. The fifth of Jeney's songs, for example, is a little duet for voice and violin or, rather, a dialogue in which the two parts exchange roles halfway through in order to respect Cummings' punctuation: in the first half the violin "sings" the words in brackets; in the second it is the other way round. Or take the single Blake song "Silent, Silent Night", which shivers with the same vibrant harmony all through in a state of excitement. Or the following number, where a tiny Weöres poem using just eight similar words (*Hold / Holt bolt/ Volt kort hord / Zord folt / Hold*) is set in monotones, the vocal pitch differently coloured each time by the piano chord. The ideas in each case are utterly elementary; the effect wondrous. And though dealing in simplicities and overt constructions might suggest a certain playfulness, along with the wonder one hears much more a sense of vacancy. A fragment of Hölderlin, set in the final song as a beautiful long melody for violin with dabs of vocal accompaniment, acts as a kind of moral to the rest: "We are a sign, without any sense, / We are painless and have almost forgotten / How to speak in alien lands."

The key word there is "almost": Jeney has not quite forgotten how to speak, or to sing, but oblivion is all around, and indeed within, him. What can be achieved under these circumstances may seem slight, but at night one appreciates even starlight. The performance is such as to redouble one's appreciation. In particular, Jeney's vocal writing demands precision tuning, even in repeated attacks on the high register, and this it receives from Castellani, who has the right angel-child voice. Her only fault is poor English pronunciation (Jeney sets all the poems in their original languages, so that nine of the songs have English words, or near-words). But maybe that will encourage other singers to attempt this half-hour cycle, which certainly deserves to be widely performed and known.

The songs were written at different times between 1975 and 1983, and are joined on this record by three works from around the close of that period. Two of them, *Spaziosa calma* to poems by Ungaretti (1984), and *Cantos para todos* with Spanish words (1983), are for voice and chamber ensemble, and again feature the

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simply brilliant, brilliantly simple singing of Castellani. Péter Eötvös conducts the outstanding ASKO ensemble who present Jeney's deliberately strained but stationary chords with coolness and fragile beauty. The miniature *Heraclitus's Watermark* (1985), a repeated wandering melody which perhaps stands as an emblem of constancy in constant change, is played by the cellist Miklós Perényi and, again, Kocsis. Altogether this is a fascinating, revelatory release.

Barnabás Dukay points in roughly the same direction as Jeney: he was one of the performers on an earlier Jeney record, and now he introduces himself with a record devoted mostly to piano music (SLPX 31125). It is, though, a different introduction. The sleeve carries no information about the composer or his music, only some maddeningly fragmentary extracts from a Hungarian folk tale, and there is something maddeningly fragmentary about the music too. The solo piano piece *The Coming of Light*, played by the composer, is a big work, lasting for almost half an hour, but in its spaced, crumpled progress it keeps coming to an end, landing on a sudden diatonic chord. *Invisible Fire in a Winter Night*, almost as long and requiring two players (the other is András Wilheim), has a more regular rhythmic continuity, but it is again slow, reluctant and trapped into repeated concords. There are also two tiny pieces, *Rondino that Touches the Heart*, for piano, and *As... as the Sun*, for voice and piano, the former worryingly suggesting that Dukay's pursuit of simplicity may lead him into replicating composition exercises rather than to achieving the Jeney-like innocence and clarity intimated by the latter. His choice of a child's drawing (presumably by his daughter) for the cover picture hints at a Klee-like reverence for pure infant vision; his music indicates how very hard this is to reach.

Zsolt Durkó, by contrast, is very much a grown-up. His language is one of avant-garde sophistication formed in the 1960s, and he is a supreme orchestrator, as is demonstrated by this new record (SLPX 12753). There are four works, all linked, as the programme note points out, by a studious delight in the principle of varying short motifs, a feature that may argue a kinship with Bartók, though it is so general in twentieth-century music as to be anonymus. And it is a similar anonymity, a lack of power and individuality in the ideas however masterly their handling, that is most disappointing here. Perhaps the strongest piece is the biggest, the Second Cantata (1972), setting a poem by Ady for chorus and orchestra. Also included are two orchestral works, *Refrains* for violin and chamber groups (1979), and *Ornamenti no. 2* for full orchestra (1985), as well as the virtuoso organ test piece *Lande* (1986). The big orchestral work, in particular, shows that Durkó often seems to be on the brink of a massive Bergian statement but then draws back; the restraint is beautifully achieved, but it would be interesting to see what might happen if it were to be released.

If there is, then, something tantalising here, a new record of cimbalom concertos (SLPX 31127) dashes all hopes. This is a wonderful instrument, and it is winningly played by Ágnes Szakály, but the repertory must surely contain better pieces than these. Kamilló Lendvay's *Concertino semplice* (1986) is at least what it says it is: a nine minute piece of expert neoclassicism, visited by the spirit of *Renard*. The names of the other two composers were unknown to me, and I had imagined that they must be, like Lendvay, in their sixties, if not in their eighties. But no. Attila Reményi, composer of *Al tramonto del mondo* (1984) and *L'aurora del mondo* (1986), was born in 1959, and László Király, whose *Suite Concertante* (1987) has Márta Fábián playing in the second cimbalom part, dates from 1954. It is depressing to find composers in their twenties and early thirties writing music that would not have caused them much trouble in the darkest days of socialist realism.

Ft 200.–

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My undeserved joy, surmounting all my pains and all my troubles, is my 'doctor', which is said to have gone through eleven editions in Italy (in altogether six months). As soon as he appears in Paris, do try to make his acquintance, and then write to me, I beg you. I have always considered it my goal to expect the best and to inspire hope for it in those I love. And now, as I am writing to you, with great tiredness of spirit, I find no trace of it in myself. Obtain a French copy of the doctor, and be in good health.

From Boris Pasternak's unpublished 1958 postcard to Gyula Illyés, on p. 32.