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NHQ, P.O.Box 3, BUDAPEST 1426, HUNGARY

Mihály Fülöp—Miklós Nagy—László Póti

The Iron Curtain Years

Eastern Europe since the war

The liberation of Europe started with Stalingrad and the landing in Italy in the summer of 1943. The United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union had not originally prepared the partition of Europe into spheres of interest. From the autumn of 1943 onwards, by establishing a European Advisory Committee (EAC) in London, by jointly formulating armistice terms, and by setting up Allied Control Commissions for Italy, then for Rumania, Bulgaria, Finland and Hungary, they made an attempt to agree on a common policy. In October 1944 the British recognized the military dominance of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, but in their view this did not imply the introduction of Soviet-type systems. The agreement between Churchill and Stalin on the division by percentage of war-time influence was an interim arrangement of a military character for participation in the Allied Control Commissions, a compromise which in practice was ended with the three-power conference at Yalta—although the parties abided by the bargain later as well. The aim defined in the declaration of the 11th of February 1945 was not division into spheres of interest but political coordination among the three powers, the establishing of democratic institutions and the restoration of lost sovereignty, with a view to forming provisional governments comprising all democratic parties, to be followed by free elections and stable governments in harmony with the will of the people.

The victorious powers considered three-power cooperation indispensable not only to the conduct of the war, but to a peace settlement and to the drafting of peace treaties as well. National governments implied coalitions uniting all anti-fascist forces in the East European countries. At the end of the war the Soviet Union believed that such democratic multi-party systems would survive for about ten to fifteen years. Soviet strategic dominance in Eastern Europe and the priority of Soviet security interests were recognized by the British in the autumn of 1944, by the Americans at the Foreign Ministers' Conference in Moscow in December 1945, after the Soviets had conceded the priority of the Western allies in Italy in the spring of 1944, and in Japan by the autumn of 1945. Conflicts between the Great Powers arose from the fact that they were unable to map out

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The three authors are members of a team which produced the 1990, Nr. 2. issue of Külpolitika *(Foreign Policy), a periodical published by the Hungarian Institute of International Relations. This is the introductory article to the issue which is devoted to changes in Eastern Europe.*

a common European policy. The strength of the anti-fascist coalition proved sufficient to ensure peace treaties with Italy, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Finland before the end of 1946, but great-power cooperation broke down in the discussion of the central problems—the treaties with Germany and Austria.

The Soviet government's interpretation of the priority of its interests in the territories it had brought under military control was different. It tolerated no meddling by the U.K. or the U.S. in the formation of governments and as regards Communist dominance in the domestic affairs of Poland, Rumania or Bulgaria (one gave access to the heart of Germany, the others to the Mediterranean). Elections were held in the autumn of 1946 or the spring of 1947, but the struggle in these countries was decided in advance by election fraud and police interference, by the ousting of opposition parties from political life, by exploiting the Soviet military presence, and (in the case of Rumania) by means of reparations. The British—and later the Americans—put up with the existence of security zones that differed from their 1943 ideas, but they did not accept the principle of exclusive Soviet influence. In their interpretation, influence might be wielded by the West in Eastern Europe and by the Soviets in Western Europe. As regards the main strategic lines, however, the Soviets interpreted influence in accordance with the precedent established in 1943 by the Western allies in Italy.

In the autumn of 1945 and the spring of 1946, three countries—of minor strategic importance to the Soviet Union—Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, were able to hold free elections; in these the Communist Parties of the first two countries did very badly. Until the end of 1946 and early 1947, Stalin did not consider Communist dominance to be important, he wanted rather the governing parties in those countries to pursue friendship towards the Soviet Union. At that time the presence of Soviet troops was not crucial either: they withdrew from Czechoslovakia in December 1945, from Bulgaria towards the end of 1947; and late in 1946, early in 1947, during preparations for an Austrian peace treaty, troop withdrawals from Austria and Hungary were also under consideration.

Soviet foreign policy between 1943 and 1947 relied on the allied Slav states: Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Poland. Soviet policy centred around a possible future German threat. The Moscow agreement of December 1943 between Stalin and Benes served as a model for pacts of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance. Accession to this alliance was made possible for the defeated states, Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary, by bilateral agreements with Moscow and with one another, only later, between 1947 and 1948. The territorial status of the Soviet Union's prospective allies, the limitation of their military and economic sovereignty were regulated, in addition to bilateral arrangements, by the peace treaties agreed to by the British and American governments. Defeated Rumania lost Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina and the Southern Dobrogea, but was allowed to regain Northern Transylvania; the frontiers drawn up at Trianon in 1920 remained valid for Hungary—with the loss of an additional three villages on the right bank of the Danube which formed a Czechoslovak bridgehead at Pozsony (Bratislava-Pressburg). On the other hand, Bulgaria—which likewise had been a Nazi satellite—increased her territory after the war. Through the recognition of

the continued validity of the Rumanian-Bulgarian agreement of Craiova (7th of September 1940), it could retain Southern Dobrogea. But no fairer treatment was extended to the countries allied to the Soviet Union. Poland received German territory in compensation for the parts ceded to the Soviet Union, but Czechoslovakia—another victor—was compelled in June 1945 to yield the Carpathian Ukraine to the Soviet Union. Thus a Soviet-Hungarian frontier came into existence. The strength of the armed forces of the defeated countries was limited; Soviet troops were stationed in Rumania and Hungary in order to maintain lines of communication with the Soviet zone in Austria; the two countries paid $300 million each in reparations. Germans were expelled from Poland and Czechoslovakia as well as from Hungary, and Hungarians from Czechoslovakia.

The post-war new democratic start was coupled with landslide changes, with huge movements of populations. The Central and Southeast European democratic systems came into being in keeping with the intentions of the Great Powers; the decisive role in their birth was played by the Soviet Union since the countries concerned—except Yugoslavia—had not themselves forced the German army out of their territory. When negotiating over Hungary in December 1945, Stalin told US Secretary of State Byrnes that "The Soviet Union might have done there what it wanted"; yet the elections were not won by the Communists but by another party. This proved true for the whole region. The Soviet Prime Minister was of the opinion that, to maintain the three-power alliance, the Soviet Union had exercized moderation by accepting multi-party systems and free elections, since it could have introduced a Soviet system immediately after the occupation of Eastern Europe. The wartime alliance had definitively come to an end by the spring of 1947, when negotiations over a German peace treaty ended in failure: this eliminated any considerations that might have moderated Soviet policy in Eastern Europe. The consequences are well known. The Truman doctrine and the Marshall Plan were followed by Cominform. Democracy in Czechoslovakia and Hungary was suppressed in 1948; Eastern Europe introduced a Soviet-type system, and all states—except Yugoslavia—became part of the Soviet alliance.

Stalin's death (5th of March 1953) saw none of his successors willing or able to lead the Soviet Union and international Communism after his manner. It marked the end of an absurdity that turned into tragedy. The grotesque glorification of Stalin as a person was the consequence not only of his personality but also of the Soviet system. Terror in itself did not explain voluntary submission and putting up with collective retaliation. Stalin identified himself, and was identified with, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Superhuman attributes were ascribed to words like "party", "revolution" and "class". The means and the end became abstract notions, outside reality: a man became the embodiment of abstractions. If chance, inertia and human errors are eliminated, any minor economic or political event may be regarded as a miracle or treason. The tragedy of Russian socialism is that it was born as a genuine mass movement and ended as the Stalinist system. Stalin was not an inevitable product of his own time, his

ideology or society. Although he had statesmanlike abilities, his unscrupulousness, cruelty and obsessions could precipitate the tragedy of an entire nation only in a system of the Soviet type.

While he was First Secretary (1953-1964), N. S. Khrushchev made an attempt to confront the Stalinist heritage. But the successors themselves were Stalin's men. This is why the creators of the new line (1953-1955) only partially revised domestic and foreign policies, and no real return to the democratic beginnings of the postwar period, to the idea of great power cooperation, was made.

Collective leadership in the East European states was introduced in different ways. The composition of the Hungarian leadership was decided by the Presidium of the Soviet party at the Moscow negotiations in June 1953. The Berlin crisis saved Ulbricht in the GDR, the leading offices in Czechoslovakia were taken over, after the death of Klement Gottwald, by Zapotocky and, following his death, by Novotny. In Poland the new line sparked off rehabilitations in 1954-1955, and peaceful development then became possible under the leadership of Bierut, Zawadski and Cyrankiewicz. On the 16th of April 1954 Gheorghiu-Dej in Rumania had a potential rival, Lucretiu Patrascanu, put to death, after he had—two years earlier—removed rivals who enjoyed Moscow's support, Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca and Teohari Georgescu. Nonetheless, between April 1954 and October 1955, he was compelled to give up the First Secretaryship to Gheorghe Apostol. Even Enver Hoxha in Albania was forced to appoint Mehmet Shehu prime minister in July 1954. In Bulgaria—at the time of the line associated with Malenkov—it was Todor Zhivkov who became First Secretary after Chervenkov's self-criticism. He managed to hold office for thirty-five years.

Indicative of the change in the East European policy of the Soviet Union were Khrushchev's visit to Belgrade in May 1955, the spectacular apology he made to the Yugoslavs, the conclusion of the Austrian State Treaty, the end of Austria's occupation by the Great Powers, and the transformation of the Soviet alliance into a multilateral treaty organization (Warsaw Pact). In spite of the end to the Korean and the Indochina wars and the four-power summit of 1955 in Geneva, the new Soviet leadership was unable to come to an agreement with Britain, France or the U.S. on a settlement of the status of Germany.

The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, by openly—though ambiguously—rejecting the Stalinist heritage, intensified the polarization which had begun in East Europe during the Thaw. The criticism of Stalin led to a crisis in the Communist Parties of Hungary and Poland. On the other hand, the East German, Czechoslovak, Rumanian, Bulgarian and especially the Albanian party leaderships found a powerful ally in the Chinese Communist Party that wished to take over from Moscow in Asia. The attempts, lasting from April to autumn in 1956, to create a Moscow-Belgrade axis, the dissolution of the Cominform and the recognition of different roads to socialism strengthened anti-Stalinist forces in Hungary and Poland. The Poznan events of the 27th of June 1956 led to a compromise solution to the Polish crisis in October. Gomulka was helped into power by some of the party leadership and a truly popular movement. Khrushchev, who arrived in Warsaw on the 19th of October with influential

members of the Soviet Party Presidium, and a considerable number of army generals, proved unable to overturn this decision. He was compelled to come to terms with the Polish national unity movement. The Soviet communiqué of the 30th of October 1956 gave a gleam of hope for a change in the Soviet Union's East European policy, for the withdrawal of troops, but armed action in Hungary made this a political alternative that was only to come up again years later.

On the 23rd of October 1956 popular indignation swept away the Rákosi-Gerő clique in Hungary. This is not the place for a discussion of October-November 1956: we shall confine ourselves to the factors which influenced Soviet policy concerning Eastern Europe. The Soviet leadership was divided by the struggle between followers of the old and the new line. Khrushchev was in a position to remove Molotov, Kaganovich and their followers who had fought for Stalinist orthodoxy, only in the summer of 1957. The Soviet leadership—recalling the Berlin crisis of June 1953—first resorted to tanks, but to no avail. Echoing the political solution of the Polish crisis, the use of political means was tested up to the end of October. Only in the last few days of October was it decided, under pressure from the outside (China, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Albania, Bulgaria, etc.) and from inside (Kaganovich and Molotov) to begin armed intervention. This was directly preceded by the Soviet government's famous statement of the 30th of October, announcing that Moscow was putting its policy concerning Eastern Europe on a new basis and promising the withdrawal of troops. Khrushchev and Malenkov made other Communist Parties accept their policy pursued prior to the second military action, that of the 4th of November, and came to an agreement with Tito and Kardelj at a meeting on the island of Brioni.

The tragic fate of Imre Nagy and his associates was decided by their abduction facilitated by Soviet-Rumanian-Yugoslav-Hungarian collusion, through quarrels within the international Communist movement, and by those forces intent on restoring the old order in Hungary.

The Hungarian catastrophe made it impossible to oppose the Stalinist system in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe. Yugoslavia was—for its revisionism—again excommunicated, reform in the Central and Southeast European countries lost out, and retaliation in Hungary had effects on a regional level for years to come. In the international Communist movement between 1958 and 1963, China, in its attacks on Yugoslavia, actually attacked Khrushchev; the CPSU, by means of its criticism of Enver Hoxha's Albanian Communist orthodoxy, indirectly condemned Mao Tse Tung's Stalinism. Between 1953 and 1956 the Hungarian and the Polish line had diverted from the old party line; the Khrushchev leadership, again wishing to break with the Stalinist heritage between 1958 and 1964, found itself in opposition first to Albania (1961), then to China (1963) and Rumania (1964).

The 22nd Congress of the CPSU in October 1961 renewed the open criticism of Stalin. Parallel with this, Kádár's consolidation in Hungary and the "late thaw" began in Czechoslovakia early in the 1960s: albeit Poland then saw the rise of Gomulka to dictatorship, and the Berlin wall was erected on the 13th of August 1961. Khrushchev's fall was nevertheless the result not of the events in Eastern

Europe, the missile crisis in Cuba, or the German question, nor of the split in the international Communist movement, but of a well engineered plot.

Khrushchev in his last years as First Secratary of the Party tried to reform the Soviet system but could not go beyond its set limits. The changes he made in the organization of the CPSU, his anti-Stalinist policy, the reductions in the armed forces, his attempts to by-pass the apparatus, to raise prices, were all responsible for his becoming unpopular with the Soviet nomenclatura in the mid-sixties. The others were sick of his pretentious campaigns, his hair-raising ideas, arbitrary methods, devastating reorganizations. His mistakes can be explained by his past and his lack of experience. During the early 1930s he had completed his political schooling under the guidance of Kaganovich. He had inherited serious problems and he sought solutions using obsolete methods. He realised what was needed, and often talked about self-management in industry and agriculture, economic criteria and rational investment policy. He understood better than anyone else within the Soviet leadership that the bureaucratic apparatus distorted and paralysed action. In the last resort, however, he employed only conventional methods.

In the Soviet Union the debate over the Stalinist heritage, over the nature of the Soviet system, was closed by the fall of Khrushchev. L. I. Brezhnev and his chief ideologue, Mikhail Suslov, denounced Khrushchev's subjectivism and voluntarism, and then dropped the subject. In the early seventies they practically rehabilitated Stalin in his role as a military leader. Between October 1964 and August 1968 it was not yet clear whether economic or, perhaps political, reform in the East European region would come up against ideological barriers. The foreign policy of Nicolae Ceausescu, who succeeded Gheorghiu-Dej, was tolerated for the sake of unity and rapprochement. Simultaneously with the debates on the reform of the economy in Hungary and the early stage of political opening in Czechoslovakia, the Soviet leadership was experimenting with an improvement in economic management. The 1965 Kosygin experiment, however, soon ended in failure.

The Czechoslovak political crisis in 1968 and its aftermath decided the main direction of politics in the region for almost two decades. On the 5th of January 1968 Dubcek took over from Novotny as leader of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. The promise of socialism with a human face created a ferment. The Soviet, GDR and Polish leaderships viewed the Prague spring with growing distrust. By the time of the Sofia meeting in March 1968 of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact, a forum was set up—excluding Rumania—which wholly agreed on opposing the Czechoslovak reform. Rumania was not even invited to attend the Dresden meeting of the 23rd and 24th of March 1968. The Czechoslovak communiqué of the 24th of April demanded normalization of relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, a contingency which her northern neighbours looked on as a deadly peril. Soviet troops held manoeuvres in Czechoslovakia in June and did not leave the country until August. A visit to Prague by Kosygin, Grechko and Yepishev was accompanied

by threats. A CPSU CC communiqué declared: "The Soviet Communists are ready to do everything necessary to consolidate the political-economic safety of the socialist community... revisionist, nationalist elements are out to undermine socialist society." A Czechoslovak army general proposed rotating the command within the Warsaw Pact. The manifesto 2000 Words queried the leading role of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. For this reason those five leaders who were later to send their troops in wrote a letter calling upon the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to enter into negotiations concerning the anti-socialist forces in the country. The conflict could be resolved neither by the Ágcsernyő meeting late in July of Soviet and Czechoslovak leaders, nor by the Pozsony meeting of the five letter-writers and Dubcek. The Czechoslovaks promised to safeguard the leading role of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, to accept the agreed conduct of foreign affairs: the preparations for armed intervention were then already in their final stage.

Nor was the Czechoslovak leadership helped by the visits to Prague of Tito on the 9th of August, of Ceausescu on the 15th, nor by the Komarno talks between Kádár and Dubcek on the 17th. On the 21st of August half a million soldiers from five countries, 7,000 tanks and several hundred aircraft rendered "friendly assistance" to Czechoslovakia. This gigantic intervention was justified by the 22nd of August issue of *Pravda:* "Disloyalty and breach of duty in the Organization of the Warsaw Pact cannot be tolerated. Such a political line is contrary to the vital interests of the member states of the Warsaw Pact, including the Soviet Union."

The Czechoslovak government labelled the "rendering of assistance" as unlawful, Rumania denounced it "as a violation of the sovereignty of a fraternal socialist country." The action was successful in military terms, for there was no armed resistance; politically, however, it was a complete fiasco. Alois Indra's proposal for a vote of no confidence in Dubcek was rejected by the Party Presidium by six votes to four. Although the Soviets arrested Dubcek, Prime Minister Cerny as well as Smrkovsky, the Chairman of Parliament, in the building of the Central Committee, President Svoboda refused to install Indra's worker-peasant government. Support had thus arrived but there was nobody to help. On the 22nd of August the 14th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia elected a new Central Committee; the peoples of Czechoslovakia continued their passive resistance.

Dubcek and his fellow-leaders were taken to Moscow, where President Svoboda also arrived on the 23rd. The divided and intimidated Czechoslovak leaders—whom *Pravda* two days before described as the Czechoslovak Party's right-wing opportunist ringleaders—came direct from prison to attend the strange negotiations. The situation was humiliating to both sides: the Soviet party leaders negotiated with those whom they had wanted to turn out of power; Dubcek and associates, after being arrested and vilified, undertook the consolidating role, that is their own liquidation. After Dubcek's surrender, the Czechoslovak leaders, as appears from a Czechoslovak-Soviet joint communiqué made public on the 28th of August 1968, accepted the provisional stationing of

Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia, which was laid down in a treaty signed a few weeks later. The four other states withdrew their armed forces from Czechoslovakia.

The intervention in Czechoslovakia gravely damaged reform processes in the region. In Czechoslovakia the "normalization" made political and economic reform, as well as opening outward or inward, impossible until 1989. In April 1969, Dubcek was removed from office, five thousand people were condemned for political reasons and half a million members were expelled from the Party within a decade. "The doctrine of capitulation has led to the decline of the nation," wrote Pavel Tigrid.

Hungary was alone with its reform of economic management. The deviations of Rumanian foreign policy were kept by the Soviet Union within the bounds of tolerable annoyance. Rumania returned to the conferences of the Warsaw Pact. East-West rapprochement was not disturbed by the action in Czechoslovakia (Michel Debré called it an *accident de parcours*); Poland and Rumania launched, instead of an economic reform, a new high-speed industrialization and economic growth drive. In the Soviet Union economic reform was taken off the agenda, criticism of the Stalinist heritage ended and ideological orthodoxy returned.

The repression of reform in Eastern Europe between 1968 and 1972 did not hinder the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe convened following the Budapest Appeal of March 1969. The United States and Western Europe supplied credit and investment for Polish and Rumanian industrialization. Ceausescu, with his notion of a developing socialist country behind his system created in the spirit of Communist orthodoxy, made his Western partners pay for his apparent opposition to Moscow. The idea of *Ostpolitik,* understanding with the Soviet Union and Poland, the quadripartite agreement on Berlin, the start of the intra-German dialogue made way for a general East-West rapprochement. In the autumn of 1972, simultaneously with Soviet-American détente during the early seventies, the Czechoslovak events entailed a dogmatic change in dogma for states in the Southeast European region. The emphasis on the promotion of working-class interests, the proclamation of the construction of a Developed Socialist Society and the tightening of administrative controls were intended to counteract the opening towards the West. In the period preceding the 1975 session of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the conciliation forums of the ideological secretaries of Communist Parties emphasised the sharpening of the ideological struggle. The Soviet leadership responded with closer political cooperation to Eurocommunism in 1975-1976 and the economic problems aggravated by the oil price explosion of 1973.

By 1978-1979 Brezhnev's Soviet Union was politically inert. Early in that period there were still many who believed in economic prosperity, in changes and reforms. A decade and a half later, the total absence of any ability for renewal became evident. The penultimate moves in East-West rapprochement before intervention in Afghanistan, the need to improve systems of economic management or, in Hungary, to continue reform must have reminded the systems of the East European region that they had reached the limits of their political and

economic potential. Tito's death in 1980 and the rise of Solidarnosc in August 1980 indicated a political crisis in Yugoslavia and Poland. Yugoslavia, Poland and Rumania became insolvent practically at the same time, and the debt crisis also lightly touched Hungary in the spring of 1982. The limitations of détente and domestic reform came to light simultaneously.

Poland, wedged between the Soviet Union and the GDR, had only socialist neighbours. Participation in the 1968 intervention in Czechoslovakia prevented the formation of a Warsaw-Prague-Budapest axis. Economic difficulties led to the spread of discontent in 1968, 1970 and 1976; Gierek's programme for the construction of a second Poland fell through unexpectedly in the summer of 1980. KOR, the Polish opposition movement, stuck to legal means and took into consideration the country's dependence on the Soviet Union. Fearing Germany, it set as an aim neither independence, neutrality nor power; it thought the leading role of the Communist Party unshakable for external reasons and did not believe in internal agitation. It wanted to force a compromise on the political leadership and in 1980-1981 Solidarnosc, in the spirit of evolutionism, refrained from seeking exclusive power. The introduction of a state of emergency on the 13th of December 1981 caused Solidarnosc, organized as a mass movement, to become a political opposition. Attempts to prevent confrontation failed. The—temporary—failure of Solidarnosc strengthened the conviction in Eastern Europe that any strategy the opposition might choose, whether it acted within the Communist Party (Dubcek) or whether it exercised social pressure from outside (Solidarnosc), a multi-party system (Budapest, 1956), a free press (Prague, 1968) or free trade unions (Warsaw, 1980) was incompatible with the nature of these systems. The Soviet Union would refuse to accept, within its security zone, any serious transformation of "existing socialism".

Brezhnev's death on the 10th of November 1982 did not mark the close of an era, since everything important in the Soviet Union had happened in the preceding period, and the rejection of reform and renewal was not followed by confrontation with the nature of the Soviet system; the accumulation of problems caused by the Stalinist heritage continued. The East European systems were born during the Stalinist period. After the autumn of 1947 a break occurred in the continuity of their national history; this state of affairs was maintained by the 1968 intervention in Czechoslovakia. The generation which came into power in 1964, who had started their political careers in 1938 at the time of the Stalinist purges, slowly died off in the 1980s. Changes at the top in the Soviet Union thus took place not as a result of the popular will, nor through elections, but simply because the leaders had grown senescent. After Secretary-Generals Yuri Andropov (November 1982 to February 1984) and Konstantin Chernenko (February 1984 to March 1985) had died, there came to the helm Mikhail Gorbachev, a younger man, who in the beginning envisaged the handling of the heritage within the framework of the system by accelerating economic growth and not by instituting reform. But the accumulated problems forced a radical revision, first in Soviet-US relations, in East-West strategic negotiations, later in internal affairs and in the Soviet policy concerning Eastern Europe.

The policy of *perestroika* and *glasnost,* started within three years by the new Secretary-General, acquired ever clearer overtones of reform. In its East European policy, the Soviet Union no longer protected aging leaderships or their outworn methods; at last an opportunity presented itself for peaceful transition.

The changes started in Poland. The solution to the Polish crisis, the introduction of a State of Emergency, made for two years of disturbances and street riots. The termination on the 22nd of July 1983 of the State of Emergency was followed by the release of political prisoners on the 11th of September 1986. In November 1987 government economic policy was rejected by a referendum. In September 1988 the Messmer government that had announced the second stage of reform was replaced by Rakowski's, in which the prime minister reserved four seats for the "constructive" opposition. On the 6th of February 1989, round-table talks started in Warsaw with the participation of the government, the coalition parties, the official trade unions, Solidarnosc and the independent opposition; a model for peaceful transition in Eastern Europe. Through a compromise between the state and the opposition, Kiszczak and Walesa sanctioned departure from the Stalinist model. The agreement guaranteed trade-union pluralism, the establishment of a presidential system (Jaruzelski was elected President with the help of Solidarnosc and the distribution of parliamentary seats independently of election results). The PUWP and the two coalition parties received 60 per cent of the seats, the Christian organizations obtained 5 per cent, and non-party independent and opposition forces competed for the remaining 35 per cent. As a result of the elections of June 1989, when Solidarnosc won 99 of the 100 seats in the Senate, and PUWP members obtained guaranteed seats in parliament only with the help of Walesa, the monopoly of the Communist Party came to an end in a peaceful way. In the summer of 1989 a Solidarnosc Prime Minister, T. Mazowiecki, formed a government in which the PUWP was given the portfolios of home affairs and national defence, of foreign trade and of transport and communication.At the end of 1989 drastic changes occurred in Eastern Europe. The democratic experiments of 1956 and 1968 remained isolated events, and the 1980/81 upswing in Poland also failed to spread to other countries; yet Hungary, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Rumania in the autumn and winter of 1989 followed Poland to a change of régime. The changes taking place in the whole region practically at the same time assumed the form of a compromise between the state and the opposition on the model of the Budapest round-table partial agreement of the 18th of September 1989. But the peaceful character of transition to democracy can by no means be regarded as natural; the massacre in the Square of Heavenly Peace in Peking in June 1989 and the explosion into a national revolution by the majority of Rumanian society between the 16th and the 25th of December 1989 demonstrate that supporters of the old régime can resort to the use of force.

The violent change of system in Rumania means greater political instability than in the other countries: it is not certain that Ceausescu's despotism will be replaced by a democratic constitutional state, attempts may be made to establish another authoritarian régime. The Hungarian and Czechoslovak process is rather

like democratic transition in Spain, while Rumania resembles the Portuguese model.

Transition to democracy in the region started in the wake of the pioneering moves of Poland and Hungary. But the East European states have not simply followed suit, although there are many common features in the discarding of the systems of the Stalinist or Soviet type. The fundamental laws or Constitutional Acts ensure free elections by doing away with the leading role of the Communist Party, introducing a multi-party system, proclaiming a republic, dissolving the workers' militia, etc. The differences manifest themselves in the constitutional position of the presidency. Czechoslovakia and Rumania, so far from each other in other ways, both prefer a presidential system, Hungary has opted for a ceremonial president.

The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia as multinational federal states grapple with similar problems: in both, one nation predominates. The systems have come into being as the result of internal factors, they have not been forced upon those countries from the outside. Ethnic conflicts assume violent forms, and desires to reform have resulted in attempts to secede. Broad sections of society are interested in the maintenance of the *status quo:* the Communist Party apparatuses join hands with the military and the conservatives. Transition can thus easily lead to the use of force, and peaceful, legal ways are difficult even where a presidential system has been introduced.

Between March and June 1990 elections were held in the GDR, Hungary, Rumania, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. The former oppositions have everywhere taken part in the electoral campaign. The historical parties have resumed their activites after more than four decades. Charta 77, KOR and other opposition forums have established political parties expressing liberal or Christian-national trends. The satellite parties (GDR, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria) have again become independent. The Communist Parties, many after splitting, have formed, or are forming, socialist or social-democratic parties. Owing to the multifilter effect of the election process, the fragmentation of political life (30 to 80 parties have emerged in each country) is no real danger; four or five parties at most have a chance to play a role in Parliament. The parties of the left are divided and begin to lose their importance.

If everything works out well, the Central and Southeast European countries will become democratic constitutional states; the major European political movements—social democracy, liberalism, Christian democracy—will contend for power in accordance with the rules of the game in a parliamentary system. Still, transition to democracy is accompanied by economic crises, ethnic, interstate and social conflicts. The cooperation of the great powers, a united Germany and a united Europe are indispensable conditions for the progress of democratic constitutional states in the Central and Southeast European region.

Attila József

Poems

Translated by Frederick Turner and Zsuzsanna Ozsváth

With a Pure Heart

Tiszta szívvel

Fatherless and motherless,
godless in my statelessness,
neither crib nor shroud have I,
kiss nor lover's lullaby.

Three days, three days, I've fasted three—
what is bread to such as me?
My twenty years shall prevail,
my twenty years are up for sale.

If nobody wants to buy,
devil take them then, say I.
With a pure heart I would steal,
if it needed, I could kill.

Catch me, hang me on a tree—
earth is blessed that covers me:
gravegrass on my heart yet grows,
heart as lovely as a rose.

(1925)

The English-born American poet **Frederick Turner** *and his Hungarian co-translator* **Zsuzsanna Ozsváth**, *both professors at the University of Texas at Dallas, are currently translating a selection of poems by Attila József to be published in the US. Their volume of translations from Miklós Radnóti,* Foamy Sky, *is due, later this year, from Princeton University Press.*

For My Birthday

Születésnapomra

Upon my thirty-second year—
what a surprise, this poem here,
knicky-
knacky:

a little gift with which I say,
lurking alone in this cafe:
happy
happy.

Thirty-two years just blew away,
I never made ten bucks a day:
hungry,
Hungary.

A pedagogue I might have been,
not this pen-busting, might-have-been,
saddie
laddie.

But no; Herr College Chancellor
showed me the outside of the door:
mocktor
Doktor.

It was a short sharp shock for sure,
my "father" poem got its cure;
his word
and sword,

that saved the fatherland from me,
evoked my spirit and set free
its name
and flame.

"As long as I have any say
you'll not teach here a single day"—
bibble-
babble.

If Mr. Antal Horger's pleased
our poet's grammar-study's ceased
—folly's
jollies—

no high school, but a nation I
although he like not, by and by,
shall teach,
shall teach.

(1932)

A 1935 signed photograph of the poet

György Tverdota

Text and Context

On two poems by Attila József

"That a lie could be beautiful, he simply could never accept. He clung dogmatically to the real facts... He regarded as bogus any poet who said his beloved was blonde for the sake of a rhyme or the atmosphere, when in fact she was a brunette. No matter how wildly his fancy ran away with him, he clung to every particle of reality as if to an item in an inventory for which he had to render account under penalty of death." These fine and much quoted lines were written by Pál Ignotus in his obituary on Attila József, "The Poet and Death", published in the literary magazine *Szép Szó,* which they had earlier edited together. It was a laudatory description, perhaps too much so. I find it hard to raise the mildest of doubts about Attila József. Yet I cannot suppress the suspicion that he did not invariably apply to himself his own standards of truth telling as Ignotus supposed: if he had done so, he would have sacrificed artistic quality to a falsely interpreted verisimilitude.

There are instructive cases which enable poetic statements to be confronted with extra-poetic reality; they thus may be used to turn our doubts into certainties or to dispel our suspicions.

One such case is the serious conflict in which the young poet, then an undergraduate at Szeged, found himself embroiled with the Dean of the University, Antal Horger, in the spring of 1925, following the publication of his poem "With a Pure Heart". The account of one who witnessed the clash may serve as a good starting point for us. "Mr József, you published a poem in last Saturday's issue of *Szeged*", said Horger to the poet summoned before him. "Among other things you wrote that you had neither God nor country. And if necessary, you'd sell yourself and kill a man. I am to inform you of the Arts Faculty's stand in this matter: with the views you profess to have, you may not become a secondary school teacher; Hungarian youth cannot be taught things like that. You may finish your studies, but as long as I am here you shall not receive a teacher's diploma". "But, Professor, when I wrote that poem, I hadn't eaten for three days" "Listen," he cut into Attila very abruptly, "Your poem was published. That's all I wanted to tell you."

The recollection seems to lend support to Ignotus's claims, namely, that the poet himself, in his interrupted attempt at defending himself, derived his work

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György Tverdota *is a literary historian; he is one of the editors of the critical edition of Attila József's works.*

from the bitterness caused by going without food. When he wrote down the sentence "Three days, three days, I've fasted three—", he set pen to paper with a rumbling stomach. He referred the poetic statement back to its autobiographical basis. It is, however, not at all clear that this desperate appeal, improvised on the spur of the moment, reflects his real views on what relationship is to be desired between biographical fact and poetic expression. For, a few years later, it was in a discussion of the sentence "I am hungry", that he argued against the misconception that adherence to real facts would be in itself sufficient justification for the statement in question to be set down in a poem. This particular sentence, Attila József argues, means one thing when said by a beggar, something else when said by someone before dinner at home, and still another thing when encountered in a poem. In the latter case it calls our attention to the existence of hunger. Anything that figures in a poem has social rather than purely personal significance, and therefore must be judged according to its truth or otherwise. The judgement of whether the poet was going hungry or not is a minor question compared to whether the statement has or has not artistic validity, whether or not we are prepared to accord aesthetic credence to the poem containing that statement.

Horger, however, was ruthless in his treatment of the author of the poem on quite different grounds; he hardly called into question the truth of the statement "Three days, three days, I've fasted three". The real state of affairs was simply beside the point from his point of view. He too treated the artistic assertion as an everyday statement, but thought it more relevant to refer other parts of the poem back to the real world. If the witness's account is to be believed, he interpreted the lines "my twenty years are up for sale"[...]"With a pure heart I would steal, / if it needed I could kill" as a threat, an admission to preparing to commit crime. "Among other things you wrote that... you'd sell yourself and kill a man," he remonstrated. If the professor actually did use those words, then he perfectly satisfied what Ignotus required from a recipient: he dogmatically insisted on the sentences as faithful statements of the poet's real intentions—while completely misunderstanding the true message of "With a Pure Heart."

But let's suppose that memory exaggerates at the expense of Horger by exaggerating and simplifying his thinking, and let's devote our attention benevolently to the more discreet elements of his speech. Horger seems to infer from the poem that the author has no god, and is thus deplorably atheistic, he has no country, and is thus not patriotic. He observes neither the norms of religious nor secular morality: "Among other things you wrote that you had neither God nor country". Now "Hungarian youth cannot be taught things like that." Which means that Horger does not impute to the poet the wilful intention of committing a crime, but supposes that anyone who wrote poems like that would as a teacher instigate his charges to renounce their religious faith and betray their country. But anyone who equates classroom work and writing poetry ignores the specific nature of poetry, its complex of indirect effects on human attitudes no less than anyone who treats anything he reads in a poem as an admission, a slip of the tongue, or a statement made to the police.

The "Christian course" of the mid-20s in Hungary thus has a typical representative in Horger, who requires absolute loyalty to that same course from the student body. Since the poet was unwilling to comply but called attention to hunger and its destructive effect on the personality, showing himself to be in sympathy with the non-conformism, deviancy even, of the needy; what's more, he was willing to identify with them, he therefore condemned him for, in the vogue word of the period, destructiveness.

Attila József understood the charge very well. Twelve years later he used delicate irony to suggest the lack of foundation of the charge in his "For My Birthday". "It was a short sharp shock for sure, / my 'father' poem got its cure / his word / and sword,/ that saved the fatherland from me". The turn of phrase he employs here is appropriate in an historical context, when a nation fights a life-and-death struggle against an enemy without; if, however, the enemy is a poem and its author a penniless and hungry poet, then the mildly archaic, lofty expression reveals itself as a vacuous catch-phrase. The poet describes Horger's procedure with this expression of false pathos. But the irony of the lines is deeply bitter since he was to experience in his own life what terrible consequences can confront a man of the most peaceful intentions if one of his—perhaps thoughtless or wild—gestures is misconstrued and he is then treated as an aggressor, with his pursuers appealing to justifiable self-defence in their witch-hunt.

It is for this reason that the author resorts to direct self-vindication: "no high school, but a nation I / although he like not, by and by, / shall teach, / shall teach." If ever there was a role incompatible with a destructive or anti-national attitude, then it is that of the poet as teacher of his whole nation. This self-vindicating interpretation of his role is of interest insofar as the poet counted "With a Pure Heart" among his works that taught his nation the finest sentiments. This evaluation is one that Professor Horger would certainly have refused to accept. If, like him, we see in it incitement to reject god, betray one's country and to manslaughter, we might feel ourselves inclined at this point to revoke his right to teach his nation. If, on the other hand, we regard the poet's retrospective view of his role as authentic and accept him as a teacher of his nation, then we have to admit that the poem doesn't say what it seems to be saying, that is, its author is not after all clinging so dogmatically to the minutest particles of truth as Pál Ignotus unsuspectingly supposed. We are nearer the truth if we see in "With a Pure Heart" a fusion of the poet's black humour and the grievance he justly felt at his hopeless situation, if we see in it a state of mind expressed with hyperbole of the imagination, with ideas grotesquely overdone.

But the misunderstanding did take place, it could be said, and the poet had no chance of defending himself; the incident thus had real and fateful consequences for his future: "A pedagogue I might have been, / not this pen-busting, might-have-been, / saddie / laddie. / But no; Herr College Chancellor / showed me the outside of the door: / mocktor / Doctor." How did being sent down register in his mind? He recalled the words of Professor Antal Horger: "A man who writes poems like this, and with that he thrust a copy of *Szeged* before me, cannot be

entrusted with the education of the future generation." He adds a little further on: "I didn't sit for a teacher's examination after all, because—keeping Antal Horger's threat in mind—I thought I wouldn't get a post anyway."

The same aspect of the incident figures in the birthday poem which he began at the same time as the lines just quoted: "As long as I have any say / you'll not teach here a single day—". The prose account and the poetic version differ only negligibly in substance and both tally with the eyewitness's accounts. Collating all the versions would seem to justify Pál Ignotus's thesis. If the youthful "With a Pure Heart" cannot be translated directly into the language of police investigations, or at least that of moral judgements, then in "For My Birthday" the poet once again insisted on a factually authentic recollection of the event.

It is beyond doubt that the clash with the dean is not diction but a real event which shook a sensitive and even somewhat unstable young man. The significance of the event was enhanced by the remarkably favourable reception the poem received among left-wing intellectuals and writers. "It has become very famous," the poet boasts in the Curriculum Vitae quoted from above, "with seven articles being written about it and Lajos Hatvany[1] declaring it several times a document of the post-war generation for posterity."

With that "With a Pure Heart" entered a peculiar literary-political field of force. From the conservative-official side the poet experienced cold rejection, from various spokesmen of the leftist opposition, enthusiasm. This spectacular polarization of the poem's reception was obviously to play a major part in consolidating his political orientation, hitherto rather flexible, and in his commitment to leftist, bourgeois radical, and later, socialist ideas. Very likely it was just the unexpected magnitude of the success that reinforced in the poet's mind the significance of Horger's gesture of repudiation. The dean's figure was launched on its slow but sure, decade-long transformation. He approached Attila József with prejudice; by the same token the poet also began to relate to him in a similarly negative way. The eminent philologist, the discoverer and eponym of one of the phonological rules of the Hungarian language, was fixed in the pose of a narrow-minded, prudish professor.

According to the evidence of the memoirs, Attila József, in the wake of expulsion and noisy success, measured his contemporaries' relationship to him by their attitude to "With a Pure Heart". He called Ernő Osvát, the editor of *Nyugat* (West), one of the leading literary journals of he day, a fool point blank because he rejected the poem for publication. He registered with all the more satisfaction that Ignotus, the former editor of *Nyugat,* living in exile, who, by quoting the poem in full in an article, managed to smuggle the much battered poem into the magazine. What's more, as the poet later recalled with pleasure, "he cajoled in his soul, hummed and murmured this 'exquisite' poem as he wrote

[1]Lajos Hatvany (1880-1961), a rich baron, was an author and critic who generously supported writers and artists and was deeply involved in politics as a left-wing liberal. He suffered persecution, imprisonment and spent years in exile, living in Germany, France and Britain.

about it in *Nyugat,* making it in his *ars poetica* an exemplary piece of modern poetry."

It is worth stopping at the second half of this sentence. The new poetry, of which Ignotus made "With a Pure Heart" an exemplary specimen, represented a kind of modern classicism or classical modernism, that was to follow the dissolution of the avantgarde and the fashion for free verse. The noted journalist and editor celebrated Attila József's poem as a triumphant return to "versified verse". The recognition that was accorded his "versified verse", hastened the poet's break with the avantgarde, and his return to the poetic traditions he had earlier rejected in the spirit of the avantgarde.

"With a Pure Heart" is among the experimenting poet's tour de forces, rarely surpassed masterpieces. Seeing how well his poem had been received, he deliberately moulded his well-known persona, the portrait of an outsider, a young man putting up with vicissitudes with a jaunty cheeriness and the perkiness of an adolescent. He chose the first line of "With a Pure Heart": "Fatherless and Motherless" as the title for a selection of his poetic output of this period (1929).

If his poem took on this great significance subjectively and objectively over the years, it can be taken for granted that the destiny of the poem and its impact on its author's conduct of life were also to gain an almost symbolic meaning, becoming a paradigm. The success of the poem put the Horger affair, in a negative sense, in a pivotal position. For it must be pointed out that the clash with the dean had no lasting effect on his plans. Admittedly, he discontinued his studies at Szeged University in the summer of 1925, in which the unpleasant repercussions of his conflict with officialdom might have had a part, but he continued his university studies in Vienna in 1925-26, in Paris 1926-27, and in Budapest 1927-28. In the 30s he made plans with another Szeged professor, Sándor Sík, for a doctoral thesis. Had he stuck to his original determination to obtain a teacher's diploma, he would hardly have been prevented from doing so by Horger's warning. Why he never obtained a degree is not our present concern.

What is important is that in the late 20s the Horger affair took a well-known turn: life began to reflect poetry. "With a Pure Heart" assimilated, in fact, raised to its final level of importance, the student-professor exchange, which, sharp and unpleasant as it may have been, was still to be taken as no more than a serious threat at the worst. After the poet had discovered in it the possibility of erecting it into a legend of himself, he placed the episode at a crucial dramatic node in the web of his life story. Before he couched the legend in its definitive form, he had made several statements about the incident. It would be wrong to see in these utterances a tendentious mystification, a cunning attempt to mislead. Much rather they reveal the natural teleology of a half-conscious, half-unconscious mechanism of self-justification at work.

The dramatic locus where the conflict ended up, through the teleological workings of the poet's psyche, was the initial point where the divergent processes in the poet's existential failure and his rise to poetic excellence began. At

the time of writing "With a Pure Heart" the opportunity was still given, or so the poet thought reflecting on the adversities in his life, to realize his ambition of becoming a teacher who would devote himself simultaneously to poetic creation. But then came Horger, who blocked the way to a secure livelihood. An ordinary job and poetic vocation were already in hostile, mutually exclusive conflict at the time of the creation of "For My Birthday". He had not become a teacher but was making a living as a pen-pushing intellectual, or as he called Villon, his acknowledged poetic ancestor, as "a learned outlaw". In the meantime, however, he had matured as a poet to deserve the highest rank a man is capable of, to become the teacher of his entire people. The poem for his thirty-second birthday is the working out of this formula, within the span of the awkwardness of a "pen-busting, might-have-been" and "a nation I...shall teach".

The Horger affair as a biographical or thematic element may be set apart from the poetic sphere, but it must be noted that it is no longer mere biography, neither is it unworked raw material: it is itself poeticized—adjusted to the requirements of aesthetics. Although the Horger affair and "For My Birthday" both grew out of the poet's life, their relationship cannot be interpreted as if the poet had included the biographical element in the poem, and included it in the way he did, because he insisted dogmatically on the real facts. The Horger affair, as we have come to know it, is no longer an individual case but an element of destiny transformed by the poet in the course of the reception of "With a Pure Heart" into a telling example of the many attacks he suffered during his life, of several unnamed grievances that must be complained about. It was enough for him to point out: this is how this age, this regime treats the teacher of its people.

"For My Birthday" drew two responses in Attila József's life, before his tragic death a few months later. The first, on the day following publication, summed up very neatly the antecedents of "For My Birthday", picking out the "tells us about an incident in the relatively middle-class period of his past, when he was an arts student at Szeged... But a poem was then published, the bitter little song beginning 'Fatherless and motherless', which made a deservedly great sensation at the time. Attila József arrived in literary life with this poem, and eminent writers called public attention to it in enthusiastic articles. But its destructiveness shocked the stern dean of Szeged University, who stated that anyone who wrote stuff like that could not be given a teacher's job in Hungary."

The second article responding to the poem was written in the autumn of that year, in the knowledge of the poet's nervous breakdown. Although its author does not mention the Horger affair, he drew the lesson of "For My Birthday" with all the more forceful generalization: the shocking antithesis of poetic greatness and human defencelessness in the development of Attila József's life. "Attila József is 'one' of our greatest poets. The much referred to 'poetic lot' treated Attila József rather adversely, to be sure. The thirty-two year old poet's road to the sanatorium is understandable but unforgivable. Unforgivable, that is, to society. For while it supports any number of hacks, while the various literary prizes, lucrative readerships and editorships are being conferred on all and sundry, in the poet's words:

Thirty-two years just blew away,
I never made ten bucks a day:
hungry,
Hungary.

Yes, Attila József has written his most exquisite, most brilliant poems in vain. His reward has been to lack the necessities of life."

After his suicide, the trinity of "With a Pure Heart," the Horger affair, "For My Birthday", took its final place in the reception of Attila József and was accorded a pivotal role in all the biographical accounts and sketches: "He wrote his poem beginning 'Fatherless and motherless' at the age of 16 (sic!) in which he expressed the state of mind of the needy and determined postwar young in a marvellously terse and straightforward stanza: 'Three days, three days I've fasted three—'. This poetic voice, however, was not unanimously well received in the official literary and scholarly circles, and because of the poem, after it was published, he was advised to leave the univesity, at least he said so in a later jocular poem of his. His life continued to have its ups and downs. The loud *succés d'estimes* he scored among the young followed one another but his financial cares hardly became less. 'Thirty-two years blew away...'." Thus, one of the obituaries, tracing the tragic denouement of his life back to the wants he spoke of in his "With a Pure Heart," the hostile reception of the poem and the deprivations summed up in "For My Birthday." Even the earliest obituaries adumbrate the archetypal pattern, the patterning of Attila József's life on the Christian passion, his death on the cross. In this context Horger was given the negative role in the passion. He became the target of attacks in the search for a scapegoat. So much so that when, a few years later, a journalist interviewed the retired professor about that infamous clash with the by then dead and immortal poet, the elderly gentleman's answers sounded more like illustrations, justifications of the statements to be found in the poems. The Attila József cult had by then assimilated the reality, transforming it to its own ends.

Attila József did more than what Pál Ignotus thought him capable of. It wasn't he who stuck dogmatically to real facts—even lesser talents are capable of that—but paradoxically, it was the facts that adjusted themselves to the statements, judgements that he had formulated concerning them in the poems. Such a reversal of the relationship of reality and poetry falls only to the lot of the greatest.

Péter Gosztonyi

Operation Spring Awakening

German generals remember Hungary

For seven months, Hungary was a theatre of war during the Second World War. Soviet, Rumanian, Bulgarian and Yugoslav troops on one side, and German and Hungarian forces on the other, fought their battles in the Southeastern marches of the German Reich. The Soviet aim was to get to Austria as soon as possible in order to make Bavaria the meeting point with US troops, the German High Command concentrated motorised and armoured divisions in Hungary, hoping to gain time.

Germans familiar with the political and military writings of General Erich von Ludendorff recalled what he had foretold about the war of the future. Ludendorff had written that the last decisive battle of the next European war will be fought in the Lake Balaton area: there opposed armies will clash in "a fight to the end". The German Reich will triumph, though at the cost of great sacrifices. Hitler thought highly of General Ludendorff. This played a part in making Hungary the location of the hard fought battles in the autumn, winter and spring of 1944/45.

The commanding general of Army Group South was in charge of German forces in Hungary. When Army Group South was reorganised in Eastern Hungary in September 1944 after Rumania had changed sides, it was commanded by the 52-year-old Colonel-General Hans Friessner. He was a native of Dresden and a professional soldier who had fought in the Great War. He had started the Second with the rank of Colonel. From 1942 he served on the Eastern front. In July 1944 he was promoted Colonel-General and appointed to command Army Group North; on the 25th of July Hitler transferred him to Rumania to command Army Group South Ukraine. This Army Group was made up of two German and two Rumanian armies, a total of around 900,000 men.

The major Soviet attack in the Iasi-Chisinev area started on the 20th of August 1944, and the Rumanian surrender on the twenty-third doomed all of Friessner's strategic efforts to failure. In the days and weeks that followed, Army Group South Ukraine essentially ceased to exist. The Rumanian troops stopped fighting and, in some places, turned against their allies of the day before. The German Sixth Army was routed; only some units of the German Eighth Army made it through the Carpathian passes to Northern Transylvania. Friessner had to

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establish a new Group and front in Hungary, practically from scratch, within the shortest possible time. He succeeded, and by mid-October he again commanded two German and two Hungarian armies (the Second under Lajos Dálnoki Veress and the Third under József Heszlényi). This was Army Group South.

Marshal Malinovski's Second Ukrainian Front, joined now by the Royal Rumanian Army, compelled Friessner's Army Group to retreat. In later October the Germans proved victorious in the Debrecen tank battle but, by November, Marshal Tolbukhin's Third Ukrainian Front assembled in Southern Hungary. It was to take an active part in the operations in Hungary and against Vienna. Part of Transdanubia (Western Hungary) was lost; by mid-December the Red Army was ready to attack Budapest.

Friessner was not fully in control. True, the Red Army Command was surprised by the stubbornness with which the German High Command defended Hungary, and the Soviet political and military leaders were disturbed by Admiral Horthy's failure in October to lead Hungary out of the war. In Berlin they simply could not understand why Friessner was unable to defeat the Soviet Army in the Budapest area. The Germans, though short of central reserves, had nevertheless transferred a number of panzer divisions to the Hungarian theatre. According to Colonel-General Heinz Guderian, Chief of the German Army General Staff, such a large number (six to eight) of panzer divisions was nowhere else in action as a single force against the Russians. The expected success still failed to materialize. In mid-December 1944 the Soviet Army invested Budapest; in the south they had broken through the Margaret Line, and in an offensive in the north, on Slovak territory, had crossed the river Garam.

On the night of the 22nd and 23rd of December (the ring around Budapest closed the next day) the H.Q. of Army Group South received a phone call from Zossen near Berlin. Lieutenant-General Wenck rang from Wehrmacht headquarters and announced that Colonel-General Friessner was relieved of his command with immediate effect. Friessner could not grasp what was going on. He had just returned from seeing Hitler, everything had been in apple-pie order, and now precisely at the most critical time, the Führer was relieving him of his command.

Friessner would have liked to take leave of Hitler in person and to make enquiries about a new command. But the Führer would not receive him. The General was transferred to the Reserve of Officers of Field Rank. The end of the war found him in a small Austrian village, Sankt Johann im Pongau. He became a prisoner of the Americans and until 1947 he spent time in various PoW camps for generals. After 1949, when the Federal Republic of Germany was established, he was in receipt of a substantial pension as a retired general. He did not engage in politics, but in 1952 he became an honorary member of the Comradely Union of Hungarian Warriors (MHBK) in Munich. In 1956 he published his memoirs of Rumania and Hungary under the title, *Verratene Schlachten: Die Tragödie der deutschen Wehrmacht in Rumänien und Ungarn* (Betrayed battles: the tragedy of the German Army in Rumania and Hungary). In it he argued that the defeats of the Wehrmacht in the Rumanian and Hungarian theatres were due to the treacheries of King Michael of Rumania and Regent Horthy of Hungary in 1944.

Friessner's book raised a storm amongst Hungarian soldier exiles. MHBK argued that Friessner's criticism of the Royal Hungarian Army was slanderous. Colonel-General Justhy sounded the alarm against the book's author in a closely-typed six-page round robin. In response, Friessner ostentatiously resigned from the MHBK and, with a number of fellow generals who had fought in Hungary, broke off all contacts with Hungarian Old Soldiers' associations in the West.

On the 28th of December 1944 the command of Army Group South was taken over by General of the Infantry Otto Wöhler. Of him Hitler had once said in private that the General may not be National Socialist in feeling but was at least paradigmatic of a good soldier. Like Friessner, Wöhler had started his carreer in the Kaiser's Army; he was fifty when he was sent to Hungary as an army commander in 1944. Previously he had filled several responsible posts on the eastern front. In August 1944 he was Commanding General of the Eighth Army in Rumania. When the front collapsed, he managed to retreat, with the majority of his troops, to Transylvania. Exploiting the battle in Debrecen, he brilliantly saved his troops from another Soviet encirclement. For a short while in November, the Hungarian First Army was part of Army Group Wöhler under his command. He defended the Tisza line, then the Bükk Hills and the city of Miskolc. Step by step his troops were forced out of Northern Hungary into Slovakia.

Officially Wöhler took over command of Army Group South on the 28th of December. Attempts to lift the siege of Budapest (January 1945), the unsuccessful break-out by the German-Hungarian garrison of the capital (February 1945), and *Unternehmen Frühlingserwachen* (Operation Spring Awakening), the last great offensive of the Wehrmacht (March 1945) during the Second World War, were all his doing. Since operations in Transdanubia were literally stuck in the mud of Sárvíz, and faced vigorous resistance from the Soviets, the Soviet counterattack, launched north of Székesfehérvár under Marshal Tolbukhin, from the 16th of March to the first week in April, drove the Germans and the still fighting Hungarian forces with them out of Western Hungary. This failure cost Wöhler his command, in early April 1945. He was also transferred to the Reserve of Officers of Field Rank by Hitler.

The postwar years proved rough for Otto Wöhler. He fell into British captivity. It came to light that, as *Korrück (Kommandeur des rückwärtingen Gebietes)*, i.e., commander of the hinterland of the Eleventh Army in the Crimea in 1942/3, he had initiated a number of punitive campaigns against partisans. Wöhler figured on the Soviet list of war criminals in Western PoW camps whose extradition they demanded.

The Cold War started in 1948. This saved Wöhler by aborting his extradition to Moscow. His trial was held in West Germany; he was found guilty. The General was freed under a 1951 amnesty. He moved to a village near Hannover. Federal law permitted only a minimum officer's pension to be paid to those convicted of war crimes.

After 1958 Wöhler also fought his private war with the Hungarian veterans in Munich. In consequence of the attack on Friessner he broke all links with MHBK. He saw very few of his fellow countrymen or former comrades in arms. I twice tried to approach Wöhler. He rejected my advances on both occasions. I have kept his letters as documentary evidence although their tone is sarcastic—though not really offensive. Wöhler died on the 5th of February of 1987, at the age of ninety-three.

General Maximilian Fretter-Pico, an Italian, commanded the German Sixth Army in Hungary. His close association with the Royal Hungarian Army started in 1943, when he had hastily assembled reserves to fill the breach created by the collapse of the Hungarian Second Army.

In July 1944 Fretter-Pico was in charge of the Sixth Army, transferred to Rumania to hold the southern flank of the German Army Group South Ukraine. The Soviet attack in the Iasi-Chisinev area on the 20th of August cut the Sixth Army off. The Sixth Army was in a pocket, as Field Marshal Paulus had been in Stalingrad. In a really hopeless situation it surrendered. But Fretter-Pico was not to share his men's fate. On Hitler's special instructions, the General and some of his staff were flown out to the safety of Transylvania. There—for the third time—the Sixth Army was formed, this time out of the flotsam the tides of war had washed up early in September 1944; it was deployed with Colonel-General Lajos Dálnoki Veress's Second Hungarian Army in defence of Transylvania.

In the 1960s I exchanged a number of letters with General Fretter-Pico, who was then living in West Berlin. He told me that he had maintained good relations with the Hungarian forces. This was confirmed by Lajos Dálnoki Veress in London. "Hungarian equipment was simply terrible," General Fretter-Pico wrote to me. "Units assembled in a hurry, without any fighting experience, could not hold their ground. I gave them whatever I could, but at the time we had little to spare. In Transylvania the Hungarians fought well when they had the support of German armour. They did not want to lose Transylvania."

Pushed out of Transylvania towards the end of October, the German Sixth Army retreated to the Danube-Tisza plain and from there to Transdanubia. Early in December it took up a line running from the southeast corner of Lake Balaton to Székesfehérvár, Lake Velence and Érd. This was the Margaret Line of improvised earth-works. Fretter-Pico's army group (the German Sixth and the Hungarian Third Army) was meant to cover northern Transdanubia up to the Danube.

On December 21st and 22nd 1944, Marshal Tolbukhin's Third Ukrainian Front broke through the Margaret Line at several points and advanced in the general direction of Esztergom. In the afternoon of December 24th, it advanced across the Buda Hills. Two days later the ring was closed.

Hitler held General Friessner and General Fretter-Pico responsible for the collapse of the Margaret Line. He promptly dismissed them. When I asked Fretter-Pico whether he had been given an explanation, he replied in a letter: *"Never!"* He added that he had long been a thorn in the flesh of the German High

Command. Instrumental in his dismissal was probably the fact that he had from the start opposed turning Budapest into a fortress. (The German garrison in Budapest had been part of the Sixth Army.)

Fretter-Pico was transferred to the reserve. Late in April 1945, he was the deputy commander of an army corps on the western front and was taken prisoner by the Americans. He was released only in December 1947. After 1948 he worked in Heidelberg with the Historical Division attached to the headquarters of the US Army of Occupation. German ex-generals were for years engaged in writing up, for the US military authorities, the history of the European war. Sixteen bulky volumes were compiled which were never published. I am in possession of the volume dealing with the Hungarian Army's role in the Second World War. The German generals as war historians have painted a relatively fair picture of the Hungarian Army's role in the war. Their conclusions are acceptable.

Later Fretter-Pico lived in West Berlin and received a general's pension. He wrote a number of books, in which he always dealt fairly with the Hungarians. He died on the 4th of April 1984, at the age of ninety-two. Several of his letters discuss the fighting in Hungary.

Command of the Sixth Army was taken over, on the 28th of December 1944, by a remarkable soldier, General Hermann Balck. He was fifty-one. During the Great War, Lieutenant Balck—of an old Prussian family of soldiers (in 1914 his father had been a Lieutenant-General)—had fought in Galicia and in the Carpathians. In the 1960s, when Balck lived in Stuttgart, I stayed more than once as a guest in his home. I spent whole afternoons in his study where, poring over maps, he expounded on his operations in Hungary. He kept a diary which, a few years before his death, was published as *Ordnung im Chaos* (Order in Chaos). During the Second World War he served in almost all the European theatres. He had a reputation as an expert in armoured warfare. In the autumn of 1944 he commanded Army Group G, and managed to hold Patton in Luxemburg, when the Americans had to take the Siegfried Line, as it were, on the move.

On the 23rd of December, a courier plane took him to the Army High Command in Zossen near Berlin. Twenty-four hours later he was in Transdanubia. "The situation was a mess. I knew I had to act, without asking many questions, all on my own" he told me. All he had at his disposal were seven panzer divisions, four infantry divisions and two cavalry divisions. "And the Hungarians, on whom I could not really count in a dangerous situation. In effect, their strength consisted of four infantry divisions and one mounted division..." The major question was whether he should try to hold Budapest. The garrison was made up of 30,000 Germans, and about 70,000 Hungarians according to General Balck. I told him that the total strength had been 70,000 men at most, Hungarians and Germans, half and half.

By the time Balck surveyed the situation in Transdanubia, Budapest was in a tightening vice of massive Soviet forces. The General proposed the immediate abandonment of Budapest with a sortie in a westerly direction. But Hitler upset

his calculations. At the end of December he directed the Fourth SS Panzer Corps from Warsaw to Transdanubia, in order to launch an offensive and cut a corridor between the German front and Budapest. Hitler wanted Budapest held at all costs.

Balck had a low opinion of most of the higher-ranking Waffen-SS commanders. He disliked Herbert O. Gille, commander of the Fourth SS Panzer Corps. He expressed himself maliciously on SS Obergruppenführer Pfeffer von Wildenbruch who commanded in Budapest. "Military command in Budapest was in the hands of a civilian or, rather, a political general. Neither he nor his Chief of Staff were equal to the task. I was persuaded of this within a few days. But they could not be replaced. Their reports from Budapest were for the most part lying and tendentious..." Balck told me that the garrison included two divisions at most with fighting experience. Most of the men of the SS cavalry division trapped in the city had not even been properly trained, and—what is more—a mutiny had taken place. The Volksdeutsche men had attacked the Reich officers and NCOs. (This was not true. *P.G.*)

When I asked about the fighting quality of the Hungarian troops, he shrugged his shoulders. With few exceptions, he said, they did not stand the test. True enough, their equipment was impossible.

"Why didn't you arrange for the defenders of Fortress Budapest to break out later, when you saw that Gille's relief attempts had met with failure?" I asked. Balck replied, "The most important reason was that I had no confidence in the Budapest military command. I recognized that it was beyond its ability to organize a sortie". He had seen a number of such operations, and he knew that the principal difficulty is that a soldier imagines he can more easily escape an encirclement if he acts on his own; first he'll discard his gun, then he'll leave his unit, and make his way on his own over the terrain. The consequence? The unit turns into a confused crowd which rushes onto the first enemy machine-gun nest, and there they can force a breakthrough—if they are lucky—only at the cost of heavy casualties.

"In Budapest in February 1945 all this was done in a still more dilettantish manner. The assembly order to break out was issued to the garrison troops either too late or not at all. Before, all vehicles and telecommunication equipment had been destroyed. Then orders were given for a mass assault. The result is known. Perhaps 800 out of 20,000 men reached the main German defence line. The rest of them perished in Buda. Breaking out of encirclement requires armour, self-propelled guns, automatic weapons, antitank guns. And, of course, a sufficiency of telecommunication equipment, motor lorries, and petrol. Why it was these that the defenders destroyed, remains a lasting mystery to me."

I described the wooded, hilly terrain of Buda and the difficulties making it impossible for defenders to break out of Buda Castle with armour and motor vehicles on the Hidegkúti út under fire, but I think he failed to understand me. In his book he devotes a chapter to "the Hungarians". Here Balck takes too far one view of the Hungarian soldier. "When he fights for his country, when the *honvéd* indentifies himself with the goal, he is a good soldier, but even then only in offensive operations. In defensive warfare he is of less use..."

General Balck was assigned a key role in the offensive launched by the German Army in Transdanubia on the 6th of March 1945, the last major offensive operation by the Wehrmacht. The Sixth Panzer Army, brought back from the West, four outstanding Waffen-SS panzer divisions, some complementary army corps under the command of SS-Oberstgruppenführer Joseph ("Sepp") Dietrich, were deployed in the area of the Sixth Army. The Prussian Balck held the SS in contempt: this "party army" was composed of praetorians of the "brown revolution", who owed their successes only to the fact that they were recruited from the "best human material" and also were given more and better equipment and supplies than similar Wehrmacht divisions.

The aim of the German offensive in March was to occupy the whole of Transdanubia, including Buda, and thus to defend the Danube line and to hold on to the oilfields of Southern Transdanubia for the German war effort. At least these were the objectives which Balck indicated to me on the occasion of my visit to Stuttgart in 1961.

In the beginning the offensive was successful, albeit it did not attain the set goals by a long way. It was Balck's job to secure the northern flank of the assaulting Sixth Panzer Army, starting from Székesfehérvár and hinged on the Vértes Hills, up to the Danube. Hungarian troops under his command included the remains of the First Cavalry Division. I remember the General saying that, on or about the 8th or 9th of March, high-ranking Hungarian officers had come to see him at his headquarters to discuss arrangements for their ceremonial entry into Budapest. "I would gladly have exchanged their problems for mine," said Balck. "At that time I already knew that the Dietrich offensive was slowing down. And also that the Russians were active in the sector of the front-line facing me. I received news of fresh troops being moved forward." (Tolbukhin was preparing to make a decisive thrust on Vienna. His units were reinforced by armoured corps and mounted troops.)

On the 16th of March, Balck began to move north of Székesfehérvár. Soviet reconnaissance again worked well. The Russians launched their attack in the Vértes Hills, in the sector held by Hungarian forces, the Cavalry Division and the Second Armoured Division. The attack did not take Balck by surprise, as he himself told me and as the documents show. He blamed the failure on the commander of the Fourth SS Panzer Division, SS General Gille. "I told him in time to set up a communications crew behind the Hungarians. It would have been its duty to report promptly on any sign of crisis. Gille acknowledged the order but did not comply. We heard too late about the rout of the Hungarians and were thus too late with our countermeasures." On the 17th and 18th of March the Germans' line of defence, running north of Székesfehérvár, was broken. Balck violently dressed down SS General Gille, but this did not alter the situation. Then Balck turned to the SS chief, Heinrich Himmler, who promised to look into the case on the spot, in Hungary. From the 20th of March—and I now quote Balck—the Waffen-SS in Hungary showed signs of disintegration. By that time the Sixth Panzer Army was also in retreat across the Bakony Hills.

On or about the 24th of March 1945 (the date cannot be established precisely), Himmler in fact did visit Eszterháza, the HQ of Army Group South. He summoned Balck and Gille, with other responsible German generals attending, Otto Wöhler among them. Dietrich was also present—I shall discuss what he said later. Balck quarrelled with everyone present, including the Hungarians. But all this was no use, the German-Hungarian defences in Transdanubia had been broken. On the 25th March there was fighting at Kőszeg. Szálasi and his Arrow Cross government fled. Wöhler and his men could only hope that the Red Army would be held before the German-Hungarian border. Perhaps the Russians would run out of steam, after a week-long offensive they would be unable to keep up with the retreating Germans; the Russians too must rest sometime.

Early in April Balck tried to establish a defensive position in Styria. He succeeded in breaking off from the Red Army, while shaking off the Hungarian allies. Balck, who often showed up in his staff car in an effort to overcome the chaos by his commanding presence, saw his fears come true: the Hungarians clearly did not want to continue fighting. Once across the frontier, their low—and how low!—fighting spirit entirely disappeared. Subsequently, he regarded the order he had given the Sixth Army, a few days before, on the 31st of March, as sound.

This instruction, known as "the Balck command", later became famous—indeed, notorious—and entailed humiliating consequences for the Hungarian troops with the Sixth Army. These consequences, for years after 1945, engaged the attention of the Hungarian soldier exiles in the West or, rather, their leaders in the MHBK group.

Balck did not really care for Hungarians. I tried to find some explanation for this aversion. Balck never mentioned it, and I was not in a position to draw him out. Yet I feel I found the key to the puzzle. The General must have suffered some slight as a young officer in the Great War, serving with Hungarians. Balck carried this wound with him, although he told no-one of his grievances.

Towards the end of March 1945, when the German line in Western Hungary was about to collapse, and the Wehrmacht and the Waffen-SS made haste to get behind the "Reich defence line", Balck received news that the élite formation of the Hungarian Army, the St Ladislas Division, had stopped fighting against the Red Army on reaching the frontier; in fact, it had gone over "in serried ranks" to the Russians and "had turned against the Wehrmacht". Balck—and here he committed a blunder—issued an order at once. On the 31st of March 1945, he gave strict orders to his men to disarm the Hungarian units as a consequence of "this heinous treason"; their arms and ammunition to be surrendered to the Germans and their motor transport to be seized at once. In many places Balck personally checked upon the execution of his orders. The Hungarian soldiers of the Sixth Army were prisoners of war. Not only the weapons of some Hungarians were seized but their personal effects were also pilfered. In some places it almost came to armed conflict. Ferenc Fiala, press chief of the Szálasi government, told me that in Austria he had more than once been invited to prove his identity. An SS patrol, referring to the Balck command, wanted to impound his motorcar.

These incidents gave rise also to the rumour that the Germans had forced Colonel-General Heszlényi, the commander of the Hungarian Third Army, to get out of his car; the Hungarian General wore the Ritterkreuz awarded by Hitler, but the Germans still wanted him and his staff to dig trenches. Whereupon the Colonel-General, to avoid suffering this humiliation, blew his brains out. (The truth is that Heszlényi committed suicide in American captivity on the 15th of May 1945.)

The Balck order was largely instrumental in destroying the morale of those who were retreating towards Germany. Feeling betrayed, they were in no mood to fight on foreign soil. In this respect Balck's memoirs are true, although his allegations concerning the St Ladislas Division lacked foundation. In April 1945 the St Ladislas Division—and this is part of the story—was still fighting against the Russians; when the war ended, they all became British prisoners.

The controversy on the St Ladislas Division was still on Balck's mind in the 1970s. He received letters dealing with the matter from Hungarian veterans in the United States and Australia, too. In his memoirs, he reviews the events of that time as they came to his notice then. When recounting the battles fought in Austria in April 1945, he mentions the St Ladislas Division as fighting under German command. That is to say, the Division could not have gone over to the Red Army on March 30th.

Ultimately Balck surrendered to the US Army. When he was asked about Szálasi, whom he had once met at Kőszeg, he said: "He is too clever to be a man of character!" Then, "The situation would have called for a different personality," but he added that he (Szálasi) was "clever and quick of understanding". It fell to me to tell him that Szálasi was hanged after the war.

Balck was released in 1947. In 1948 he was tried for war crimes by a court in Stuttgart. In November 1944, he had ordered a German Lieutenant-Colonel of artillery to be shot who had been too drunk to carry out his duties. As a result, an infantry attack had no artillery support. Since the Lieutenant-Colonel had not been court martialled, Balck was found guilty of "instigation of murder". He was sentenced to three years in prison: of this he served eighteen months. He received no pension. Later, in the 1960s, Balck was appointed, with comradely help, the agent in Germany of a South African airline. In his seventies he and his wife often travelled in South Africa. He showed me photographs of trips in a jeep. When he finally retired, he received a general's pension. He died at Ludwigsburg, on the 28th of November 1982, at the age of 88.

It was in 1960 that I met General de Angelis for the first time. In 1945 the General was commander of the German Second Panzer Army in Southern Transdanubia. He was responsible for a line running south of Lake Balaton down to the river Dráva. Of Italian parentage, he was born in Budapest in 1889. His father had been an officer of the Austro-Hungarian Army, and until the Anschluss in 1938, de Angelis had served in the Austrian Army. With the aid of maps, the two of us reconstructed military operations in Hungary. Later, at my request, he wrote down what he remembered of the 1945 battles.

The German Second Panzer Army—*panzer* only in name—performed no particular feat of arms in Southern Transdanubia. Its duty was to protect the southern flank of Balck's army group, and later that of the Dietrich offensive. Its composition was mixed: Wehrmacht, Waffen-SS divisions (including a Bosnian SS division) and some Hungarian army corps.

"Our flanks were protected by Lake Balaton in the north and by the river Dráva in the south. Early in February I was summoned to Berlin. The bunker of the Reich Chancellery was the scene of a conference, at which Hitler was present. The offensive code-named Spring Awakening came up for discussion. I positively remember that the aim of the operation was to clear up the situation around Budapest. The General Staff inquired whether I thought the Sárvíz area would be suitable for large-scale movements of armour. I knew the terrain and said that it would be in winter, if the ground was frozen, but in the spring the mud made it unsuited for armour. They took note of what I said, and yet the panzer offensive was launched in March, in the spring..."

Under Operation Spring Awakening he was to thrust as far as Kaposvár. His conditions were that he could operate in dry weather and be given proper armoured and air support. He was promised both and even the regroupment of a cavalry brigade, for which de Angelis expressed his thanks. He told me he had known that he faced Bulgarians as well as Soviet forces. This was the first time that Germans had fought Bulgarians. The Bulgarians were inexperienced, having so far only been in action on the Balkans. The Germans primarily used the 50 self-propelled guns, brought from Italy, against the Bulgarians with the expected results.

The attack launched by the German Second Panzer Army on the 6th of March ended in failure after some initial successes. De Angelis: "Our offensive was decided in the last resort by the fighting north and southeast of Lake Balaton. When that bogged down, there was no point in forcing a breakthrough in the south. Later we only protected Nagykanizsa on account of the oilfields of the area. The Soviet army threatened us with encirclement from the north. We had to retreat towards the Mura. We became British prisoners of war..."

In 1945, under the inter-allied agreement, the British extradited the General to the Soviet authorities. De Angelis was taken to Moscow and was sentenced to 25 years as a war criminal. He was set free in 1955, when Chancellor Adenauer, on a visit to Moscow to establish diplomatic relations, persuaded Marshal Bulganin to repatriate all German prisoners of war. Thus Maximilian de Angelis returned to West Germany.

I first met Joseph Dietrich in 1960, in Ludwigsburg near Stuttgart.
The 1945 major panzer offensive in Hungary is associated with his name. Dietrich occupied an important place in the German National Socialist Party nomenclature. He was born of a poor peasant family in 1892. After the Great War he was discharged as a sergeant. He then became a policeman in Munich, leaving in 1927. Afterwards he did various jobs until, in 1929, he joined Hitler's National Socialist German Workers' Party. The Führer soon noticed "Sepp" and

engaged him as his personal chauffeur. He rose fast. After Hitler came to power, he organized the Führer's personal bodyguard, of which he became commander, holding the rank of colonel. In the summer of 1934, Dietrich led the SS detachments which, using lists prepared in advance, killed various SA leaders. In other words, Dietrich was the executioner of the "night of long knives". He is said to have shown no mercy, not even to friends or old comrades.

Later Dietrich organized the SS Leibstandarte "Adolf Hitler", a bodyguard detachment protecting the government in Berlin. In the course of the Second World War, holding the rank of SS Obergruppenführer (equivalent of a three-star general), Dietrich served in all theatres of war in Europe. Although he had never received even basic officer training, he commanded a Waffen-SS army corps. He was a General with the common touch, with real organizing and leadership skills. His charisma made up for his lack of staff training. Hitler often received him in person. They were on first-name terms from the early days in the movement. In October 1944, when Hitler was planning the Ardennes offensive, success in which was expected to have far-reaching political consequences (dealing the Allies on the western front so devastating a blow that they, falling out with another, would stop their advance on Germany) Sepp Dietrich was put in command of the Sixth Panzer Army, formed at the time and composed of selected Waffen-SS panzer divisions.

The offensive launched in the environs of Luxembourg on the 16th of December 1944—after initial successes—bogged down before the end of year. Despite some territorial gains it failed to attain its objective. In January 1945 the Western allies went over into the counter-attack. Dietrich—now Oberst-gruppenführer (i.e., Colonel-General)—and his army, were being rested, brought up to strength and ready for action. "This was in February," Dietrich told me in 1960 at his modest Ludwigsburg home. He was informal and amiable. He took out a few maps and explained how he had got to Hungary in 1945. "I was briefed in Berlin. Adolf himself received me and said I was to move with my army to Lake Balaton. I argued against this. I knew what the situation was like on the eastern front, where the Reds stood on the river Oder. Berlin was in danger! I insisted. My army is the best equipped army of the Reich. What business have we in Hungary? Berlin must be defended! But Adolf explained to me that we need a victory now, Sepp, you must understand. At all costs! The people must be roused. In Hungary you will have an easy job. There the Soviets have only troops assembled from here and there, new allies, Bulgarians and Rumanians. You may imagine that these will not exert themselves for Stalin's sake! You will occupy the Danube line and then come back, to Berlin... By that time the miracle weapons will be ready..."

The archives verified what he had said in his quiet tone.

Dietrich went on to say that he had not known much about Hungary. In February his troops were already on their way to Transdanubia; he was forbidden to show himself before March. Dietrich was a favourite of the Nazi press. Anybody might have recognized him by his sharp features, and that would put an end to his unit's secret move! In the meantime Dietrich read up on Hungarian

affairs. I asked him what he had read. A book on Hungary by an Austrian called Zarek, sent to him from Zurich.

The last major German offensive of the war was launched in Transdanubia with three armies, between Székesfehérvár and the northern point of Lake Balaton, on the 6th of March 1945. The leading role was assigned to Dietrich's Sixth Panzer Army, well-equipped with heavy Royal Tiger tanks, some of which were even supplied with infrared aiming devices, for night fighting, a technical innovation no other army possessed.

Dietrich used the map to explain how the offensive had run its course; fifteen years later, his memory served him well. He said that nobody had told him that the army would have to move across the Sárvíz. He had about 600 (!) tanks and self-propelled guns, a formidable force in 1945. In June-July Sárvíz would have been perfect for armour. In March, however, the terrain was terrible because of the rain and slush. As the tanks left the roads, they sank. "As to the Royal Tigers", Dietrich said, "I withdrew them from the battle on the second day. They could pick off the Soviet T-34s with the greatest of ease, but once they left the safe roads they proved to be lame ducks! Thirty-five of them stood idly behind the front—I intended to bring them back as reserves to use at Berlin." By the 15th of March the Dietrich offensive stopped at the line of the Sió Canal. "The Soviets fought hard. I did not reckon on such resistance! At Kálóz, for example, we had to pay a stiff price for every metre we advanced."

It was I who told Dietrich that the Soviets had had early information about Operation Spring Awakening and had been prepared to parry the blow. I knew about this from Soviet publications; I told him at Ludwigsburg also that the Soviets had nevertheless reckoned on having to fight at Budapest. "Budapest," Dietrich said, making a deprecatory gesture. "We could not even reach the Danube! True, the rest of the assaulting armies were also held up, thus the Second Panzer Army and the Sixth Army in the north..." Then he told me about his clash with General Balck: "I warned him. Reconnaissance had brought news that Soviet armour was assembling north of Székesfehérvár, they wanted to break through the line of the Sixth Army... He must ensure reserves and reinforcements." But Balck did not believe Dietrich. "Those are small fry, they won't trouble our waters."

Dietrich was really off now. He pushed aside the map, his face turned red. He spoke of Balck in unflattering terms. Balck had been careless when organizing the reserves. By the 15th of March there was a shortage of fuel, and ammunition as well. "It was in that condition that we crossed the Sió Canal at Simontornya on the 6th of March—and that was the end of it. We stopped. There was no way forward. By that time some of our armour was out of action. What can I say? We were out of breath!"

Ten years later, in the West German war archives at Freiburg, I found reports of the Sixth Panzer Army that bore Dietrich out.

The spring offensive of the Third Ukrainian Front north of Székesfehérvár started on the 6th of March. The strategic aim was Vienna. Dietrich said with no little malice: "The small fry got a move on." Balck's line collapsed within a few

days. The Soviet attack threatened the Sixth Army with encirclement at the Sió Canal, which leads from Lake Balaton to the Danube. Dietrich did not await special orders. He sounded the retreat. A race began between the Germans and Soviets to reach Balatonfűzfő, at the northeastern end of Lake Balaton, first. Since fuel was short, the Germans themselves blew up many a German tank. They moved a large number of them in "convoys" (two being pulled by one). "Dunaföldvár or, more exactly, the bridge across the Danube there, was the original objective of my attack on the 6th of March. On the 18th, I personally directed the withdrawal at Fűzfő, and endeavoured, with forces gathered from here and there, to organize a counter-attack towards Székesfehérvár to interfere with the forward movement of the Soviets". Dietrich said that in the meantime he had transferred his command post to Pannonhalma, southeast of Győr. His staff was already on the way to set up a new defensive position on the Rába.

Much happened in Transdanubia in the last ten days of March. Not a great deal has been published on these events. Balck complained of Dietrich to OKH (Oberkommando des Heeres: the Army High Command). He talked to Guderian. He blamed the Waffen-SS Oberstgruppenführer for the failure of operations in Hungary. Meanwhile OKH orders arrived—incomprehensible orders—for the Sixth Panzer Army and the Sixth Army to exchange sectors. In the chaos of a general retreat? At Ludwigsburg Dietrich was still of the opinion that OKH had not been wholly aware of what had gone on in Transdanubia. He himself appealed to his immediate superior, Himmler, to intercede.

There were other problems, too. During the retreat from the Sió Canal, certain SS units felt they were misused by the Wehrmacht, that Wehrmacht officers employed them as a rearguard to the rearguards. When their protests proved useless, more than one Waffen-SS unit abandoned its appointed sector, opening the flanks of the units on its right or left. Such action was without precedent.

All this, and particularly the failure of Spring Awakening, shook Hitler's faith in the Waffen-SS that had been utterly loyal to him. He had long mistrusted the Wehrmacht, referring to the Generals' defeatism, blaming them for the unfavourable, often disastrous situations. And now the Waffen-SS had also left him in the lurch. On the 27th of March 1945, a special urgent order from the Führer was sent to the headquarters of the Sixth Panzer Army, forbidding the Waffen-SS in Hungary to wear the band on their lapels, considered a special distinction. "I order," he wired, "these to be removed in the shortest possible time!"

To my question as to what he had then done, Dietrich only waved his hand: "My smallest worries were more urgent than that. Adolf was mad! He had been misinformed... I simply disregarded the order. The troops did not even find out about it..." Indeed, for secrecy, the troops of the line were forbidden to wear their regular Waffen-SS uniforms until the 18th of March. Afterwards—who cared?

At Fűzfő—not least as a result of his organization and energy—Dietrich managed to keep the pocket open until the last German soldier had retreated from the Sió Canal area. Marshal Tolbukhin was not able—as he had intended—to cut off the Sixth Panzer Army.

"We did not succeed in holding onto Western Hungary. We had to give up the Susan position too. We were simply pushed out of Hungary."

When I asked Dietrich about Hungarian soldiers, he only shook his head: they had hardly any Hungarians with them. On the 3rd of April an order arrived that part of his army was to defend Vienna. He appointed Wilhelm Bittrich's army corps. He himself called on Baldur von Schirach, the Gauleiter of Vienna. The Viennese were not overenthusiastic about their city becoming a German fortress. Dietrich was bombarded with questions: what forces would defend the city? He answered, not without irony, "The Sixth Panzer Army!" And he explained, "We call ourselves the Sixth Panzer Army because we have all in all six serviceable tanks!" An exaggeration, but two thirds of the equipment of the panzer army had been left behind in Transdanubia. Dietrich emphasized that most of the armour was lost during the retreat, and not in battle. The tanks had run out of fuel and had to be destroyed in large numbers...

Towards the end of the war Sepp Dietrich became a prisoner of the Americans. In 1946 he was tried (together with other officers of his army) by an American war tribunal. He was accused of having ordered the massacre of American prisoners of war during the Ardennes offensive. This was the notorious Malmédy case, which still occupied West German public opinion in the 1950s. Dietrich was found guilty, as he had been the last commander of the Waffen-SS unit which, near the village of Malmédy on the 17th of December 1944, murdered a hundred US prisoners of war in cold blood. The trial ended in a number of death sentences. Dietrich himself got life imprisonment. When I asked him about these matters, he became gloomy: "You know what," he said, "do not ask me about that. Let us forget this part of my life." Silence fell. Dietrich looked up to the ceiling: "It was difficult. I was beaten and starved. Finally I signed everything."

In 1950 his sentence was reduced to 25 years. On the 22nd of October 1955, Dietrich was set free under a joint US—German amnesty. In August 1956, however, he was arrested again. Before a German court he had to answer for his part in the Röhm putsch. He was sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment but released in February 1959, because of ill health. After that he lived—he told me—with friends at Ludwigsburg. I suggested that he write his memoirs. What he told me of what he did in Hungary is interesting. And the other things he might be able to tell! He waved his hand to indicate that writing was not in his line. We agreed to return to the matter later on; I myself toyed with the idea of writing down all that Sepp Dietrich might say.

In April 1966 Sepp Dietrich died of a heart attack at Ludwigsburg, at the age of 74.

László Krasznahorkai

The Last Boat

(Short story)

It was still dark when we set out, and, though we knew very well that foolish optimism of that kind was irrational at this day and hour, for it being night or day could make no difference, yet we still believed that on this day, as on all other days, the dawn would break, the sun would rise and light would irradiate the earth—that morning would come, in short, and we would be there to see one another, see the other's worn, tired, crumpled face, baggy, bloodshot eyes and the creased skin at the nape of the neck; see the water ripple behind us, and see it become smooth and still again; see the desolate buildings aligning the quay and the untouched, empty streets creeping in among them, and far behind, beyond the city, the sloping banks, the whole length of them, threatening to disintegrate in any moment. We set out in the dark, and though one seldom accosted another[1] (if and when one met anyone at all on the way to the Danube side docks, if and when one was lucky enough to pass someone by, or be passed by someone!) the faint and wraith-like outlines of the others were very necessary, for they were all we had to determine our present position and the right direction by—the headlights of the EVA-squad's jeeps whizzing dizzyingly past were more a hindrance than a help in orientation, and with everything so fraught with risks, we really could not afford to rely on habit to guide us. In our excitement at hearing over the megaphones at daybreak and reading on handwritten bills on the walls the exact time of departure at last, after the harassing suspense of the past weeks, we set out without waiting for the inane morning ceremony, of late hopelessly disorganized, to commence; set out from diverse—close-by and more distant—

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[1] "Hey, Mister! Is this the right way to the Temporary Dock?"
"Hm. Ghrr."
"You misunderstood me. In any case... Never mind, perhaps you're right."
"Enough of that. Stop molesting me."
"Don't run away. All I wanted to say was... I mean, now that we've met and all that, couldn't you lend me a hand? You've only that little bit of a bag to carry, and here I am with these hulking great suitcases..."
"I'm just about ready to throw this little bit of a bag away as far as it will go—and I'm just about ready to knock your block off. I am being quite clear, amn't I?"

László Krasznahorkai *is the author of two novels and a volume of short stories,* Kegyelmi viszonyok. Halálnovellák *(Conditions of Grace. Death Stories.) Magvető, 1986, from which this story was taken.*

corners of the capital, but from the same regions all: from beneath the earth, like rats which, thanks to their amazing capacity for survival, had for us become a sacred animal of sorts, and thus the sole object of our attention during the last few months; crept out from cellars and burrows, from holes in the ground that had once served as pits, from cesspools and temporary bomb-shelters, or, in the case of those for whom even this did not seem precaution enough, from the tunnels of the local and underground railways, from the depths of Turkish baths and subterranean repair depots, or from the labyrinths of sewers, pronounced to be the safest of all—crept up and set out on the longer and shorter journey with or without luggage packed well in advance. But it would be stretching things to say that the streets soon became "crowded with people", for—as it later turned out—there was scarcely sixty of us left in the city, so the EVA was quite right in thinking that an average-sized Danube boat would fit the bill to a nicety; and it was only this—the size of it—that caused consternation among a number of us, and that only until we cast off and put forth, for every one of us was fully aware that with land and air transport impracticable, conveyance by water was the only solution left to us. Until we reached the docks our greatest concern was the luggage, the utility or futility of that haphazard collection of travelling-bags, valises and suitcases, carrier-bags and cardboard boxes; for owing to the nature of our situation the useful objects amassed during the initial stages with common sense automatically dictating each choice gradually came to be replaced by effects of a more personal nature, until a single serviceable piece of equipment remained; a broken cuckoo clock took the place of woolen underwear, a collection of matchbox-labels occupied that of flour and cooking chocolate, and in the days immediately preceding our departure a wooden cigarette-holder seemed more important than a spirit stove, a couple of sea shells infinitely more precious than headache and toothache pills. Knowing both solutions to be equally and perfectly pointless made us react in different ways: some dragged themselves across the city hauling the entire collection behind them and reached the boat panting and with limbs gone numb, ready to drop; others arrived empty-handed, and there were some whose clenched fists were the only indication that there had been one thing at least they had not had the heart to cast aside along the way. We reached the "Temporary Dock" one by one, and since we were all sure—numbering as we did no more than sixty—that we were but a vanguard of sorts, it was the ship itself that caused the greatest consternation, the ship lying up silently in the dark; a consternation too strong to be dispelled by the overwhelming but short-lived sense of relief at seeing, as we each came to the end of the street of our choice all converging at this point of the quay, that there had been no mistake, there really was something on the water. Our relief was short-lived because the "average-sized Danube boat", as we unanimously agreed, looked more like an aimlessly floating, sombre wreck than a seaworthy vessel; a travel agency may once have deemed that its pleasant rolling would be a perfectly acceptable substitute for a real cruise on a school outing, but many a day must have passed since then, for this vessel allocated to us was so deep in the water that it looked as though three or four passengers would suffice for it to sink completely

and for ever—the higher waves were already licking its decks hungrily. Our apprehensions were further enhanced by the fact that we saw no movement on board whatsoever; there was not a sailor or EVA-officer in sight, the wheelhouse was dark, as dark and empty as the docks we scanned to no avail. And as we waited with growing impatience for someone to show up on the gangway or for an EVA-jeep to appear and the identity check to commence at last, our misgivings concerning the ship intensified, for after a closer look at it, we kept discovering an increasing number of defects on its boards and deck: a couple of handbreadths from its bow there was a gaping, circular hole that looked as is it had been made by a shell; several planks were missing from the stern, the wheelhouse windows were smashed and so on, endlessly, down to the moorings that appeared to have completely rotted away; one of the bollards was standing askew in its concrete bed, as though rooted up in stealth by a sly subterranean animal. We stood about grumbling in the cutting wind, and realizing that further scrutiny might kindle the embers of initial indignation into a blaze of anger, doubtful but surely perilous in effect, we began to castigate our miserable vessel, scourging it in word rather than in deed, subjecting it to scathing remarks that did it no harm but lent it some kind of immunity and surprised us with the pleasurable if ephemeral feeling of release. We had so long been deprived of release, that even those who had seemed the most taciturn in the beginning spoke up to complement the remarks already made, and thus, tempered by the gaiety evoked by taunts such as "rotten old tub" followed by "battered old barge" and the even better "dilapidated, decrepit little dinghy", we had begun to contemplate our vessel creaking and pitching down below with something akin to affection—with the kind of affection one feels for the odds and ends one carries about in one's pockets. And by the time the two EVA-jeeps shot out almost simultaneously from the parallel streets leading to "our dock" and came to a stop beside our somewhat scattered group with brakes screeching, we were all quite certain that "our boat would not let us down"... The sudden and somewhat cataclysmic arrival of the EVA-squad caused no particular commotion, aroused an irate kind of satisfaction rather than anxiety, and the sub-lieutenant in charge of the squad had to rant at us before we moved to form the compulsory double-file. A few years hence, of course, the mere sight of a white uniform or a jeep sufficed to have us cowering with our backs to the wall, our hearts in our mouths and perspiring from terror, but ever since the general staff had left with most of the troops and only this, special-in-name-only squad, was left to organize the evacuation of those left behind, discipline had broken down and confusion reigned everywhere; young louts had donned the once-feared uniforms and no longer bothered with interpreters—words were unnecessary for plunder; so it was not really surprising that all that was left of the former ruthlessness was this inarticulate shrieking, all that remained of the effective trappings of old, characteristic moves was this empty, futile, desperate and ridiculous "cataclysmicity". But, though we knew from experience that the machinery which had once functioned so smoothly was now but a pale duplicate of what it had formerly been, we thought they would make an effort, just this once, in order to dispatch the remaining formalities—which under the circum-

stances were in any case quite unnecessary—all the more quickly. Instead, nothing happened for a long time. Four or five civilians got out of one of the jeeps and were escorted on board; they passed by us without once looking up at us, their legs unsteady and their heads bowed. Our luggage was then examined at length and since none of the suitcases held a single object to their liking, a number of them were angrily thrown into the water. Later, as they strolled up and down along our ranks, they would stop awhile behind one or the other of us but never quite managed to take a single whisperer unawares[2], let alone catch us at a more serious offence. Their helplessness was all the more regrettable as it proved to us their inability to recognize that our former stubborn resistance had, in the course of time, been converted into an inevitable willingness to cooperate, which undoubtedly has a paralyzing effect on an organisation for which the fact of persistent defiance is more important than victory for it to remain in operation. When the absurdity of the situation finally struck them, they had no choice but to begin the identity check without delay. For this we had to line up again, in single file this time, facing the gangway, and by the time they were beyond caring that the file did not remain as such for more than a couple of minutes and was more like a weary, muddle-minded mob than an orderly group of people. Establishing our identity was more of an ordeal for them than for us, since it was all the same to us which of our cards passed muster: neither our identity nor our person had any particular significance. Our papers hid nothing, for we ourselves could no longer decide which was genuine and which false: we thought any name, any data would do as we were not in a position to predict whom it would be best to be; so we resolved—since we had accumulated so many—that we would keep all of them. The boat which we boarded one by one gave no indication that we would be leaving soon; though the light was on in the wheelhouse, the sight of the two civilians moving about uncertainly inside was none too cheering: they did not seem to know what they were about and appeared to be pushing and pulling at the buttons and levers pot-luck fashion, at random, looking as though they hoped to hit upon the right switch accidentally sooner or later, as for the other two or three civilians, they had so long disappeared down the hold—where they had undoubtedly been sent to repair the obvious imperfections of the engines—that one could almost bet on it that the first thing those lazy loafers did was to find a suitable niche where they could sleep right through the trip in peace (which, as it later turned out, is exactly what they did). In this unpromising situation it came as a real surprise when, in half an hour or so, we suddenly felt a delicate tremor beneath our feet then heard, casting aside all doubt, the first racking snorts of the engines; the two civilians in the wheelhouse nodded their heads at each other happily and, as we watched them, some of their cheerful relief rubbed off on us for now, when we had no choice but to leave, the very thought of having to stay

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[2] "What mugs we are, damn it! I mean, tell me, what was the point in not taking the first boat when here we are taking the last one?"
"Don't you understand? After all, this was the..."
"Shut up. They're coming."

after all made us shudder. And strangely enough, now that there was nothing to prevent our leaving—for it now seemed quite certain that the engines at least would not let us down—we suddenly lost patience and without exception immediately found it terribly important that we should start at once, without tarrying a single moment, and these moments seemed all the more unendurable as we were all quite convinced that the majority had yet to arrive and thus there would be hours of waiting still before us. And appearances confirmed our misapprehension, for the EVAs stood indifferently, unhurriedly and silently around their jeeps on the quay; some had even lit cigarettes, which led us to think that they too were preparing themselves for a long wait—in fact it was only a question of security measures. This possibility quite escaped our imaginations; we stared restlessly and tensely at the openings of the two parallel roads leading to our dock and thought with loathing of those who were perhaps at this moment preparing to haul themselves out of bed to arrive God knows when on the quay. We stood there as though we were watching the dark gaping entrances of tunnels from where someone would surely have to turn up in the end—for, as time passed, we would have been content to see a single person come along that street; our hatred soon turned to anxiety, for the thought of a totally empty and deserted capital was intolerable. Some of us pressed against the rails and our vision had begun to blur with the strain but it was all in vain; no one came. Then, when the EVA sub-lieutenant contemptuously signalled to the two civilians (the others had apparently disappeared down the hold for good) and they cast off and weighed anchor, we all stood on deck with our eyes riveted on the mouths of those streets, and could not really grasp that we were on our way at last, for we needed time to put something in place of the absurdity which intimated that there would be some staying here for good with the other: the vacuous insanity of the deserted city. There were some who breathed more freely as soon as we lost sight of the jeeps and the indifferent squad and attempted to voice their relief[3], but most of us only took heart again when we suddenly and "practically simultaneously" perceived that dawn was breaking. We settled down in the stern and around the wheelhouse, tried to make ourselves as comfortable as possible, then some of us attempted—let us add, with little success—to fall into conversation with the two civilians in order to form at least a vague idea of what we should expect in the hours to come[4],

3. "Well, what have you to say to that? We don't have a coast, yet here we are leaving by water! Perfectly absurd, don't you think?"
"Leave me alone!"
"What a farce!"
"One more word and I'll kick you into the river."

4. "Excuse me, could you tell me where the captain is?"
"Well? What is it you want?"
"I'm looking for the captain. Are you the captain?"
"Come on, get on with it."
"So it is you. You don't look like a sailor."
"I'm not a sailor."
"But you just told me you were the captain."
"I'm not a captain. Can't you see I've got things to do."
"But... I've got to talk to the captain."
"Why don't you go and look for him then? Find yourself one. I'm sure you'll manage. Just get the hell away from here."

to ascertain whether we would be stopping before the border or only after, to assess whether there was any hope of wresting some sort of favour on this our boat, sailing under EVA jurisdiction but without their actual presence. The failure of our attempt caused no surprise and in point of fact we were not quite sure whether it might be better this way, not knowing anything for certain. Those of us who had brought food along ate a little, some dozed awhile, then we all watched the countryside slipping slowly by; the erratic spirals of the deserted look-out posts, the butterfly-shaped strong-points rising in the distance, the gentle undulation of old landing-strips, baked hard and full of cracks from the drought; the mementoes of pine forests, burnt to cinders on the slopes extending far into the horizon; listened to the howling of the wind, the monotonous throbbing of the engines, the river splashing against the battered hull, and the peaceful silence settled upon us was only rarely disturbed by the fleeting forebodings of our more exhausted companions[5]. Our boat sailed upstream in similar tranquility, and because their fate resembled ours, even if their course did not, our fond attention soon turned to the objects passed on the way: old, rusty basins washed ashore, disembowelled refrigerators and oilstoves lying up on the river stones, the debris of trees snapped in two, car tyres and chairs, tin drums and plastic toys, the carcasses of deer, dogs and horses floating past them—until we found ourselves staring at whatever turned up in our vicinity with ever deepening interest, but only till we realized that our curiosity, attraction and, in many cases our pity, had been aroused solely by the direction they were drifting in. Exhaustion soon overcame us; those who could covered themselves, those who could not endeavoured to find a sheltered nook on deck where they could curl up with their hands in their pockets; only the two civilians remained awake in the lighted wheelhouse, where they watched the bow cutting into the calm sheet of water stretching before them silently and contentedly. We were still lying dazed with exhaustion when night set in again, and a muffled grumbling was the only reply when one of us suddenly looked up, scrambled to his feet, hurried back to the stern and, pointing at the sooty-black countryside disappearing forever from our sight cried, in bitter relief, "People! That was Hungary we just left behind."

Translated by Eszter Molnár

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[5] "Hey! This is the end. We're sinking! The boat is sinking!"
"Goddamn Hungarian. Shut up. Here's something at last that's not sinking and he's squealing like a stuck pig."

Ádám Nádasdy

Poems

Translated by George Szirtes

Rainbow

Szivárvány

I don't know why I didn't pick the stage
since you and I must live an equal age,
I see no more, no longer than you do
desire as long as you desire me to;
And why did I ignore the Church's call,
my patience is so inexhaustible
I'll wrestle with the most unusual heart
and will not choose who'll stay and who'll depart;
Why not pick careless music for career,
abandoning both part and whole, and steer
my fate into some microcosm, since
I'd hoard it anyway or serve it minced;
I could have gone for lecturer, now neat,
now prodigal in manner to repeat
the lessons learned from others, trite though true
or rediscovered and proclaimed as new;
I don't know why I have no family,
to give me rank of sorts, to make me—
I've only you, Sir, in melodious grief,
arctic indifference, or scared relief,
I grasp at straws still, trust in this and that—
a mite more credit and I'll wipe the debt.

Ádám Nádasdy, *a poet, teaches linguistics at the Department of English of the the University of Budapest.*

Useful Information about Angels

Mit kell tudni az angyalokról

They have accepted and proclaimed with trumpets
the sweet condition of emasculation;
they're not to be rebuked, are cold, creative,
their loyalty exceeds one's expectation.

Their gowns are daring, their wings practical,
perhaps they're over-sensitive to smells,
that's why they like the heights: it suits them fine,
they need no more than light and decibels.

They're never thirsty: on returning home
they do not jostle round the civic taps—
does their flesh store water? have they no throats?
They tend to appear at moments of collapse

and make for me through creaking chains of bridges:
are loners and impertinent, chilled seagulls.
They circle greedily, they offer nothing,
are worse than me as fathers, and more regal.

Ethology

Etológia

The diet of the young is unrefined,
that's why their innards are in such a pother;
they understand those who respond in kind
and so they sick up everything twice over.

The caresses of the young are crude, poor souls;
the miracle goes wrong, their palms gush water.
In vain the razor blades fixed in their soles,
the grass beneath their feet erupts with laughter.

The carapace of the young is thin and fine
and underneath they're soft and pink, alas;
an X-ray session turns them on, like wine,
their liver is honey and their ribs are glass.

They live in closets, sweaty atriums,
make civilized and tiny drumming noises.
And then they start to run, to shake and run,
and sprinkle kerosene over my roses.

At the Door

Az ajtóban

He stood at the door, would not let me in, as if he
had something vital to do; but then he confessed it,
that they were in bed just now (in bright mid-morning!)—
and I had two plump perfect cherries in liqueur
prepared in my case, which, had occasion arisen
I might have produced (oh, look, I have brought you something!)
as if by accident. So why won't he kick the man out?

Oberon Gets His Cloak

Oberon köpenyt vesz

Above the stones, above the glowing knots
of tangled roots, Oberon flies home.
He dare not take a detour: a day or so
since he assumed the throne, and in some nook
deep in the forest there might exist a faun
in whom his turquoise cloak wakes no respect.
He has been known to disappear and then return:
he is only king by virtue of the fact
that he alone can keep track of his days.
He drills his heart and face like troops: that only
after so many hard words should one smile follow.
He looks more serious, more secretive:
he'd jest as well, were his father still alive.

Again the Piano

Megint a zongora

The latest was a bean-pole of a boy,
his legs were endless, his tousled head
was clever and his fingers were
miraculously long. We sat him down at the piano,
my old friend and I, who brought him over
to show him off to me: they met
down in the street. The boy began to play
(once again the piano draws
my wires tight), some exceptional
piece by Bach, continuous filtering.

János György Szilágyi

The Exhibition as Alibi

Reflections on a catalogue

Sigmund Freud and Art. His Personal Collection of Antiquities (Published in conjunction with the exhibition of the Sigmund Freud Antiquities: Fragments from a Buried Past). Edited by Lynn Gamwell and Richard Wells. State University of New York—Freud Museum, London. Binghampton, N.Y. 1989. 192 pp.

Mostromania—exhibition mania. Naturally, the term itself was coined where the phenomenon is most striking, in Italy. True, it is no less rampant in Germany and the United States, and is found all over the world. Itt all started in the 50s: the alarming symptoms have been clear for the past decade or so. Two obvious causes out of the many—the extraordinary growth of the importance of visuality in modern cultures and the implosive integration of all cultures—are of course merely at their beginning. Tourism in its slightly negative form, the longing to get to know strange countries, regions, peoples, cultures, that has never before assumed such dimensions, is one of the most noticable reflections. Another, complementary, aspect is the itch to travel that cultures themselves, and the objects that represent them, now show. At first all this was unambiguously beneficial, by turning things worth knowing into spectacles, thus making them available to a greater number of people, and as an instrument hastening that integration which can save our world. The best of foreign cultures was taken by travelling exhibitions to those unable to indulge in the luxury of travel, and—perhaps more frequently—to others who usually only cast a cursory glance at museums, on a rainy day.

Exhibitions have become prestige. All self-respecting specialized fields, institutions, corporations have staged exhibitions of themselves. Exhibitions have become big business. International firms have been formed to organize travelling exhibitions; travel agencies have scented the publicity potential in them. Exhibitions have flooded Europe and America—other places too have seen plenty of them, true, perhaps fewer than desirable. At one point, however, they turned on themselves, at least as regards their original positive sense. Exhibitions have to be arranged—the more, the larger, the more unusual, the better. A considerable proportion of the ventures, each outbidding the other, long

János György Szilágyi, *head of Antiquities at the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts, is an authority on Etruscan pottery.*

ago forget the original, positive meaning of staging exhibitions, and scholarship is incapable of keeping pace with the appetite for exhibitions that increases apace in keeping with publicity—goals of the organizers. But the hunger must be appeased for all sorts of reasons. This state of affairs has given rise to a new, dangerously spreading form: the alibi exhibition.

At the outset, two potential misunderstandings have to be eliminated. One is trivial. Naturally, not all exhibitions belong to this type. The other is graver. Museums are all too often identified with exhibitions. That is a mistake; museums collect, preserve, process and present; exhibitions only present. The exhibition as alibi became the subject of heated debates, primarily in Italy, because it was there the potential conflict between museum and exhibition has taken the most extreme, most spectacular forms. In the whole world, Italy's museums contain most objects: their number is estimated at thirty-five million, and this leaves out of account objects of limited value and the huge quantity of material that has never been classified. Their placing on a national register, begun a few years ago, will take at least another thirty years. These are the data of the Ministry of Cultural Assets. About one quarter of the material in museums is on display; a considerable portion of the museums is closed or is open only for half the day. However, museums are state supported institutions: they have to deliver the goods. The material in the store-rooms ought to be classified, restored, the principles of potential exhibitions worked out and realized; therefore "no museum but rather exhibitions," wrote the president of the Institution of National Archeology and Art History in an outburst, "they come ready-made from abroad; the catalogues have to be translated, that's all, a good chance to avoid thinking." Or in the words of a renowned Professor at Perugia University: "Exhibitions are becoming more and more a surrogate, an easy and prestige-getting exemption from serious scholarly work."

But this is only one kind of alibi exhibition. An improvised typology can distinguish several different kinds and the types are proliferating rapidly. Here are some of the more characteristic: the attention-arresting exhibition in which it is almost immaterial what is displayed, the main purpose being publicity for the sponsor; the anti-exhibition whose material is impossible to present visually, e.g., a Wittgenstein exhibition; the "must"exhibition, put on because it was included in a plan, or because an exhibition is usually organized at such and such a time; the "why not us/me" exhibition, staged by an artist even though he may not have any new works to show, or by a city because another city has also had one, etc.; the Potemkin exhibition, in which 1 or 2 per cent of a considerable quantity of unpublished material is displayed, say, grave N° 256 is shown fully with special lighting effects, with the rest removed from sight indefinitely; the narcissistic exhibition, in which the organizer's individual limited research is presented as of universal interest; a subvariety of this is the showing of an insignificant collection with the collector's support; the exhibition-substituting exhibition, in which exhibition-worthy material is presented in an arbitrary selection, to look as though the items picked according to various practical considerations were really the exhibition of the title.

It is unnecessary to go on—we have arrived. Collecting antiques was a passion of Freud's almost all his life. He salvaged his collection with jealous care when he moved from Vienna to London; he kept his pieces in his practice and in his study. His daughter Anna maintained them in place until her death in 1982. The material formed part of his estate and was transformed, together with the entire furniture of the house, into the Freud Museum. The Museum opened in 1986. The collection and some selected items have been the subject of articles in magazines for at least fifteen years. Photographs of the Vienna apartment testify that the arrangement of the objects had not been substantially altered in his London house; it had first significance for their collector. This is in itself revealing in the case of a scholar whose epoch-making, revolutionary work stemmed from self-analysis. And it is at the same time a warning.

A museum exhibition almost without exception decontextualizes its material by wrenching it from its natural environment. The question is what it offers instead, in compensation for what is thus necessarily lost. It might provide, for example, the experience of seeing together pieces, far apart in time and space and never otherwise seen together. It might throw light on details not seen originally, or—among other things—it might select whatever was of greatest importance from the mass, incomprehensible to the non-specialist, and thus render it accessible to him. That was the avowed objective of the Freud Exhibition. But the exhibition has proved to be an alibi. Not just the presentation; one typical concommitant of alibi-exhibitions is the alibi-catalogue, a genre which can be characterized by the fact that one cannot tell who it was written for.

Freud's collection of antiques consisted of over two thousand items. Sixty-seven are displayed in this exhibition that has reached the first stage of its circuit. Travelling exhibitions today have international ratings like hotels. Small museums cannot start their lives by putting on first-class shows. The University Art Museum of the State University of New York, Binghampton, which first showed the exhibition, indicates a third-class classification and this predetermines what other museums can be considered as further hosts.

The joint undertaking with the newly opened London Freud Museum deserves the praise that is the due of pioneers. It is much more than nothing. On the other hand, it is less. I did not see the arrangement of the objects, so I can only judge on the basis of the catalogue. Even so it is obvious that the exhibition has avoided every option that could have deprived it of its alibi character. It could have aimed at showing part of the objects in the context (possibly, in an imitated environment) as Freud had liked them to be seen; the importance of that point was noted above. In that case they would have thrown light on the personal relationship of Freud to his antique objects. It could have been a representative selection of the genres that appealed to him, to illustrate his tastes as a man and scholar. It could also have been, and perhaps has been to some extent, a spatial composition, which, independent of the exhibited objects, could be judged as the work of the designer.

Whether the organizers availed themselves of this last mentioned opportunity, I could not decide; if they did, the title chosen was misleading. They missed the other meaningful possibilities—as well as still others here not listed—of the

exhibition suggested by the title. It has become an alibi exhibition, the realization of an eye-catching idea, where success was expected of the idea rather than of its realization. The exhibition really does not teach one anything. The objects exhibited are not always the most important artistically in the collection, they do not represent their collector's taste, their selection having apparently been guided by which of the two thousand objects were in a proper condition to be displayed, as well as by which of them had been the subject of scholarly examination. Both points of view are totally extraneous but give an idea of the broad characteristics of alibi exhibitions. Restoration requires money, time and special skills, the scholarly treatment of the individual items no less. But if we set out from the opposite side—and that is the main characteristic of all alibi exhibitions—we can dispense with all those things. A good title is enough for success, the rest the catalogue can take care of. The main objective of the alibi catalogue of an alibi exhibition is that it should explain why it is not an alibi exhibition for which it has been written.

Naturally, an alibi catalogue must be dressed up in a strictly scholarly garb. It explains why it was the best selection of the material from a scientific point of view. Scientific is the buzz word today, and is the perfect alibi. Half of the catalogue to the Freud Exhibition is taken up by the description and reproduction of the objects displayed; the texts—and the catalogue leaves no one in the least doubt about that—are strictly scholarly stuff of the purest water, the authors being mostly on the staff of the British Museum. The visitor, bowled over by their authority on entrance, can learn from the texts the dimensions of the individual objects, their inventory numbers, various facts about their genres, techniques, in a word, everything that is of interest if they are viewing the exhibits independent of, or divorced from, the main thrust of the exhibition as given in the title, as well as many other details which are totally irrelevant. "A very similar piece was recently sold on the New York market; see Sotheby's *Antiquities and Islamic Art*, New York, May 29, 1987, lot 90," or "the vase has been attributed to the Gela Painter, who was named after the Sicilian colony of Gela, where more than forty vases by his hand were found," or, à propos of an oil-lamp decorated with an erotic scene, "erotic scenes, both heterosexual and homosexual, are commonly found on lamps of the Roman period," and it was thought fit to add that "a lamp, in the British Museum (Q934) comes from a parallel mold."

As we know, the characteristic feature of an alibi catalogue is that you don't know whom it addresses. Anyone interested in the relationship between Freud and antiquity will scarcely learn anything from such and similar commentaries supplied by the specialist experts of the British Museum, and for the specialist it is too little, or overtly trivial. The British Museum contributors apparently did not want to say more than the professional minimum—knowing full well the absurdity of the enterprise.

Some of the items in the catalogue, however, are supplemented by "material relating individual research objects to Freud's thought... gathered from research in progress conducted at the Freud Museum". These are mostly much quoted sentences from Freud's works but have a cardinal significance for the exhibition.

Together with the descriptive texts accompanying the exhibits they are called upon to make it appear that the arbitrary and random choice is, in effect, a deeply considered documentation of the relationship between Freud and antique art, and beyond that, between Freud and antiquity, between Freud and archeology. That is the most deceptive and most obviously self-revealing part of the catalogue. So much so that it is in fact an integral part of Freud studies—even though in a negative sense.

The main reason is not difficult to see: the art historians working on the objects and the psychoanalysts writing the essays and the commentaries had a deep and mutual contempt for each other. This is less obvious in the scholarly texts, which simply ignore the purpose for which they were written, keeping to the hackneyed stereotypes of professional routine; for that psychoanylitic expertise was not needed. But the psychoanalysts naturally want to interpret, and their readings might go hopelessly wrong if they are at ease with only one element of their dual subject, Freud and his antique pieces.

In one of the informative essays, on psychoanalysis and the legacies of antiquity, E.H. Spitz, in connection with a terracotta head of Demeter, is out to make up for what Freud missed with his evaluation of woman as deficient by his analysis of the mother-daughter relationship, illustrated by the myth of Persephone and Demeter. But the trouble is that the small head—whatever happens to be the case regarding Freud—does not depict Demeter! However, the writers of the essay did not look at the objects, and would have done so in vain anyway; they simply read their Freud. Hence the fantastic parallels drawn between an object and a Freudian statement; for example, a Boeotian terracotta equestrian figurine, in which horse and rider are fused, "is an especially apt image" of Freud's metaphor according to which the ego "in its relation to the id is like a man on horseback." A Roman bronze figurine depicting Venus with a mirror will similarly remind few of "Freud's view that women are characterized by narcissism". But all these things are trifles; in some cases the relationship between the exhibits and Freud's thinking is pretty obvious, as in the objects showing the Sphinx or Oedipus and the Sphinx; in other cases their relationship cannot, at least, be denied—e.g. the two-faced bronze vessel or the Eros statuette.

But it is just here that we stumble on the main issue: it cannot be decided from the catalogue to what extent these were the guiding principles of Freud's collecting. The selection and the commentaries suggest that his collection served mainly as illustrative material for Freud in support of his theses, or as metaphors for them. However, the photographs published in the catalogue and elsewhere do not seem to confirm this supposition in the least. About a hundred Roman glass vessels are in one of the showcases, all of them undecorated, in refutation of the—presumably self-vindicating—statement that "he was more strongly attracted to works of art by their subject-matter than by their formal and technical qualities." The clay vases, undecorated or only with linear decorations, collected from different periods and cultures, would also seem to give the lie to that interpretation.

But the main issue running through all the essays of the catalogue, which seems to be the guiding thought and justification of the entire exhibition, is Freud's relationship to archeology. That is at the centre of the principal contribution to the catalogue, Donald Kuspit's "A Mighty Metaphor: the Analogy of Archeology and Psychoanalysis." Throughout Freud's life he formulated one idea again and again: the similarity of the work of the archeologist and the psychoanalyst in bringing to light the buried and superimposed elements, or reconstructing ruins and fragments. It is common knowledge and is made clear by the unfortunately, subjectively selected list of his books on archeology, given at the end of the catalogue, that Freud took a lively interest in the profession, methods and work of archeologists. Much has also been written about his attraction to Rome, the magical effect of his visit to Athens, and about his longing to see Crete. If, however, we infer with Kuspit that the antique objects were for Freud "petrified parts of the psyche," and that when he surrounded himself with these objects he "symbolically immersed himself in the psyche," we ignore something essential: the items in the Freud collection have almost nothing to do with archeology, they are pieces that had become objects of art, removed from their original context and purchased from a nearby dealer. Their original arrangement in his home shows no trace that their stratification meant anything much to him; on the contrary, we see by a Mycenaean vase a grotesque terracotta head a good thousand years younger; a Corinthian clay vase amid the Egyptian bronzes; on top of the case of Roman glass vessels, genuine and fake Chinese terracotta figurines. There is just as little sign in all the collection of his interest in fragments and shards as in any attraction to "primitive worlds." Bronze age sculpture, already known at the beginning of the century, left him almost as cold as African or medieval art did.

All this leads us to another major mistake, which was highlighted in the catalogue's attempt to lend theoretical support to the exhibition, that Freud was attracted to Egyptian and classical Greco-Roman art in compensation for his "Judaic birth and heritage." This notion is the burden of two essays, both supported by a number of arguments: "None of his cherished ancient objects is in any sense Jewish," and perhaps, says one of the essays, the subconscious striving of the collection is "to separate himself from his own past", it was out of anti-Jewishness that he surrounded himself with alien gods, and so on and so forth. But the objects have something different to say. The items of the private collection which could be described as considerable in their time were bought, as the many records testify, one by one, after careful consideration. Seen in their totality, on the basis of the photographs, what is striking at first blush is how little he was attracted to classical Greek art; the apogee of that art, sculpture, is represented only by a single small marble head and its scholarly commentator also notes how unique it is in all the collection as an example of "the truly classical". He seems to have been attracted most to Egyptian art, with more than half of the items deriving from Egypt; peculiarly, the Greco-Roman works of art that were close to his heart represented something other than the classical expression: archaic terracotta figurines, the Boeotian rider statuette, already

mentioned, Umbrian small bronzes, Hellenistic grotesques, Etruscan statuettes and mostly mirrors, of which, according to the recollections of his dealer, he kept a drawer-full in his home. Jewish antiquities were hard to come by in those days, he could hardly have purchased them even if he had wanted to.

We can see, therefore, that no matter where we start from, the wrong roads are closed off and lead us to the main road. Freud's collection can be better understood bearing in mind the Viennese intellectual climate of the time than with the help of his psychoanalytical writings. His dislike of the classical idea—as much as of that of the Renaissance—his emphasis on Roman copies instead of classical originals, the juxtaposition of objects of many periods and cultures—in one well-known photograph, a Roman Venus, an Egyptian Osiris, a Chinese sage, and an Umbrian warrior brushed shoulders on his desk—bespeak the age of historicism, the equation of the expressive forms of all the cultures in contrast with a normative aesthetics, just as the crowdedness of the objects evoke the atmosphere of the *Kunst- und Wunderkammer* of turn of the century museums. But it is no less obvious within what limits Freud was willing to accept the up and coming new taste: no breach towards the exotic, expressionism or constructivism for that matter. The great revolutionary did not want to enter the new world, created in no small measure by his own work. He uncovered the forces below the surface of the human conscious but refused to confront them in their manifestation of the irrational. His break with Jung, which was one of the symbolic frontiers within the history of modern European culture, occured necessarily just at that point; the disciple, appointed heir who showed himself to be a rebel, spoke of "materialist prejudices" and "superficial positivism", with the impatience of one wanting to press forward. Freud himself, however, was, as his Old Testament model, the Outward Guide rather than the Arriver. This is testified to by his taste as reflected in his collection. Beyond Makart and this side of Cézanne.

An exhibition showing Freud's collection can only be an alibi sensation if it passes completely over this aspect, hard to pin down but easy to document. It missed its great chance, inherent in its subject, to make its visitors understand more of the world than before they entered its rooms. Instead, it has given them the fleeting fair-ground satisfaction of "I've been to it." The epiphany did not occur.

Gyula Kodolányi

A Memorial Is Being Built

What does the country mean to someone who loves it? For instance, the views cherished at the depths of one's mind. But "view" is not really what I am thinking about. They are mental images, which one does not view from the outside; but interiorized landscapes, which merge with what one did in them or experienced in them for a couple of minutes. Those corners of the world, and our native country, that we love, are pieced together of such memories.

[...]

These landscape memories penetrate our cells. They are personal. It is this that gives them their strength. A blank wall needing a coat of paint or a vacant lot, long hence built on, can be as important as the Great Church of Debrecen or the viaduct at Veszprém.

Nevertheless some of these mental images are of importance to the community. They have become identified with this country in the minds of many thousands and provide its outer and inner features. Parliament from under the horse chestnuts on the opposite bank of the Danube; the upper Tisza at the Tiszakanyár pontoon bridge; Sárospatak castle above the Bodrog; the vineyards and basalt hills of Badacsony, with the Kisfaludy cottage; the Esztergom Basilica levitating somewhere beyond the last straight of the highway, of the disproportionate size of which both architects and town planners rightly complain, or the village of Tihany, crouching around the Inner Lake in a semicircle. There are few parts of the country that abound in such places as does the Danube bend: Visegrád and its environs.

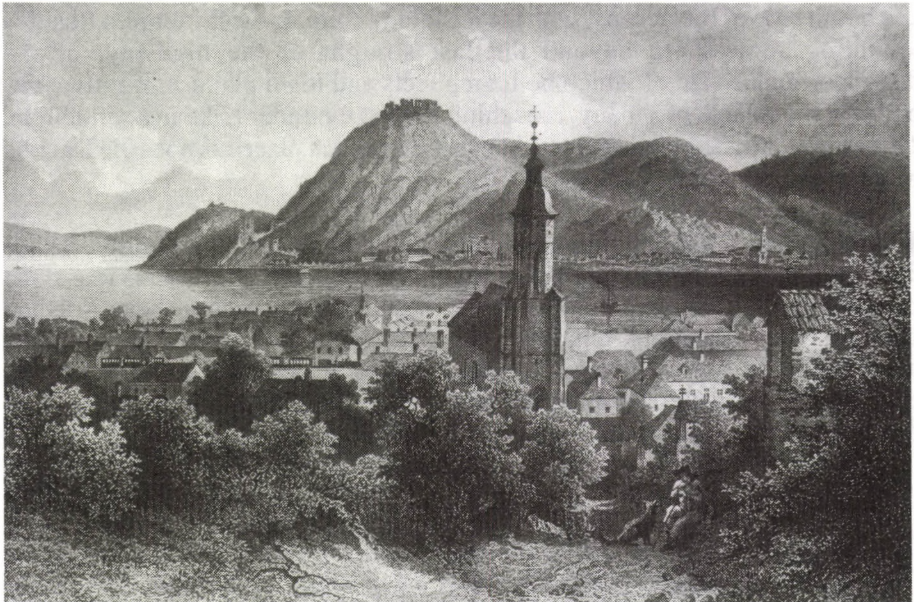
Driving up to Visegrád castle, we always stop at one of the S-turns. Those with local knowledge are aware that this lay-by offers the finest view of the Danube between Nagymaros and Dömös. It is perhaps even more beautiful than from the Nagyvillám look-out. The majestic water surface, calm in the meander but lively in the way it reflects the light, is almost under our feet. We stand and stare, lost in the rustle of immobility and motion, distance and nearness, and the rare noises of civilization which intensify the silence.

Gyula Kodolányi, *a poet and former Lecturer in Comparative Literature at the University of Budapest, is Titular Secretary of State in the Prime Minister's Office, responsible for foreign relations. This is an excerpt from an essay in* Nagymaros, *a pamphlet published in 1988, in German and Hungarian, in Vienna.*

A few years ago a strip of land started to move from the Visegrád bank, towards the middle of the river, stretching into the centre of the picture, above Visegrád and Nagymaros. It kept worming its way inwards, first in a straight line, then somewhat swinging sidewards. "Behold: Hungarian land art" we kept saying to each other. An American artist had a huge spiral built out of tip-truck loads of earth taken to the middle of the Arizona desert. *Land art* is purely decorative, and excludes any kind of usefulness. Let us have our own land art, financed by the state, approved by our silence, we said, after all, a private person could never pile up such a dam. Utility is excluded in this case too, we thought, as it was out of the question that the power station would ever be built. If the awkward stone dam will be the only price paid by the state for the hydroengineers' whim—well, why not. It will turn into a joke, and laughter will help us endure other similar absurdities.

Lately we no longer stop at the lay-by. The view is distressing. The dyke is lengthening, and the joke is turning sour, as Austrian firms have joined the game with their gigantic equipment and workforce. This is not land art any longer. Another dyke has been built as well, and the mud, parallel with the bank, is being grubbed up by grunting bulldozers, the giants of our time, weekdays and feast days. This is no kind of land art, as the models show, these are unmistakably bleak industrial monuments of twentieth-century man: concrete dyke, concrete bridge, concrete rail, concrete embankment, concrete power-house.

ÁGNES BAKOS



Nagy-Maros. Engraving by Lajos Rohbock in János Hunfalvy and Lajos Rohbock: Magyarország és Erdély eredeti képekben (Hungary and Transylvania in Original Pictures). Darmstadt—Pest, 1856.

Péter Hanák

The Danube in History

The present short paper was written seven years ago, in the autumn of 1982. In this country such gaps between writing and publication are not unusual even in the case of commonplace articles. The past seven years, however, were certainly not a mere passage of time nor can this writing be counted as a normal historical essay. Its aim at the time was to agitate. Today it has documentary value.

It was to provide scientific backing for the doubts, worries and counter-arguments that arose at the actual start of work on the Bős (Gabcikovo)-Nagymaros River Barrage System. In the early 1980s, a growing majority of the informed public began to recognize that the agreement between Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia, signed on September 16, 1977, had shocking gaps when it came to environmental considerations. The construction and operation of the project involved grave dangers. Art. 19 of the agreement just touches the subject stating, "Through solutions stipulated in the jointly agreed plan, the Contracting Parties will make provisions to satisfy environmental requirements connected with the implementation and operation of the barrage system."

At a time of growing doubts and mounting protests, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the National Technical Development Commission decided to contribute a joint paper on "The Complex Utilization of the Danube", that is, to present their doubts and arguments concerning the threatening project in scientific language. We had only six weeks to write, discuss and edit the various contributions. The full exploration of the pre-history of complex utilization seemed impossible, from the start I therefore concentrated on emphasizing the Danube's many functions and meanings from a historian's point of view. I referred to the project as something that would pollute the environment and minds, as a source of trouble betwen two nations and countries.

Anxieties and protests were expressed more openly during the discussion of the individual papers. In addition to weighty economic and ecological arguments, the problem of drying out the Danube as the country's border also emerged: a long section of the river's main stream was to be re-directed onto Czecho-Slovak territory without an adjustment of the frontier. I pointed out that the agreement was directly opposed to centuries-old laws and international

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Péter Hanák, *a historian, has published extensively on social history and the history of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This is a shorter version of an article which appeared in* Századvég, *1990. Nr. 1.*

agreements on borders and border rivers. The Academy's paper criticized a practice which, in 1977, prevented not only the public but even the wider academic community from familiarizing itself with the details of the project, or to study possible side-effects.

The committee work did not include monument protection. Architects and the staff of OMF (National Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments) had earlier expressed their opposition in a well argued paper, pointing out the ways in which the project threatened ancient monuments.

The Danube Bend and the whole Danube region have a key role in Hungary's natural and historical heritage. This is the land, from the city of Esztergom down to Csepel Island, where the leading tribe settled, the centre of princes and kings, from Árpád, who led the Hungarians around the year 900, to King Matthias Corvinus, who was crowned in mid-15th century. Esztergom is the seat of the Catholic Primate even today: the large-scale transformation of nature would have jeopardized some of its historical buildings. The worst damage, however, would undoubtedly have been done to the section of the Danube Bend between Visegrád/Nagymaros and Vác/Szentendre. So far the Danube flows east; here, squeezed between the Börzsöny and Pilis hills, it is forced to turn south. In the bend the Danube splits in two, embracing Szentendre Island. It ornaments the landscape and fertilizes riparian towns and villages.

No wonder the Danube Bend became a favoured resort and place of excursion of kings, lords and (later) Budapest burghers. A castle crowns the hill of Visegrád, built by King Béla IV in the 13th century, where in 1335 the kings of Bohemia, Poland and Hungary met in a Central European congress. Below the hill, the still imposing ruins of King Matthias's splendid palace have been laid bare, a late 15th-century centre of Renaissance arts and scholarship. Across the river there is picturesque Nagymaros, which boasts a number of beautiful late 19th-century villas. Zebegény, up-river, nestling in the Börzsöny hills, has a Hungarian Art Nouveau church, many summer homes, and houses an important arts workshop. There are pictoresque villages on both Danube banks. Szentendre, with its many church steeples, one of the Serbian centres on the Hungarian Danube, stands out among them. It contains a Serbian Orthodox cathedral, a parish church built on 11th-century foundations, some small but superb museums and a triangular, late Baroque main square where open-air theatre productions are staged every summer.

The Danube Bend is framed by historical monuments, shrines, works of art: the fruits of the past. Villas and hotels cater to holidaymakers. The foundations of the dam at Nagymaros, a wound in the landscape, provide a foretaste of the miserable fate the Danube Bend faced, had that project been completed.

At the Academy debate, held on February 25, 1983, the sociologist Tibor Huszár considered it "unfortunate and very painful that the manifold negative consequences of grave issues influencing social development are only noted post facto." The agricultural scientist Imre Dimény emphasized that

today's main stream of the river must not be turned into a backwater. A majority of the speakers expressed their anxiety over the expected ecological and social consequences, dismissed the concept of peak operation and strongly opposed the relocation of a 30 km section of the Danube's navigable main stream to Czecho-Slovak territory.

There was a general consensus that the Danube's transformation deeply affected and disturbed the thinking of the nation and was not just an economic or technical problem.

The meeting concluded that it was necessary to bring the project as a whole before the public eye and invite debates "on all the essential questions by the appropriate scholarly and public forums."

The political leadership, however, did not appear to share in the Academic consensus. Their views on science probably differed too, since the government later stated that "authoritative scientific circles" agreed with the project.

A national river

Though at 2,842 kms only the second longest river in Europe, the Danube is first in historical importance. The Volga is on the fringe but the Danube, both geographically and historically, lies at the very centre of the continent. It was along the Danube that the town-building Celts advanced towards Pannonia. The Danube was the Roman Empire's northeastern *limes* and the Romans held it for three and a half centuries. Its strategic and commercial importance was considered so great that, soon after conquering the region, a road was hewn out of rock at the Iron Gates (A.D. 33-34) in the reign of the Emperor Tiberius. Under Trajan, that reach of the river was regulated in A.D. 100-101, facilitating navigation. The Avars, Franks, a number of minor Slavic states, and the settling Hungarians all used the Danube as a base. Árpád's clan chose Csepel Island as their home ground and, later, castles along the river became royal seats: Esztergom, Visegrád and finally Buda. Buda, with a harbour protected by islands, had such a central situation that even the Ottomans and, after Joseph II, the Habsburgs used it as the country's capital.

In the Middle Ages and early modern times, the Danube was an important war, and just as important trading route linking the South German merchant towns and imperial Vienna with the "fabulous Orient". Until the Turks took Constantinople in 1453, one of the routes to India led either on or along the Danube across Hungary. Thus the river was of primary importance for the Kingdom of Hungary which controlled a third (935 km) of the Danube's total length and almost half of its navigable reaches.

It appeared in the kingdom's coat-of-arms as early as the 15th century. Its first appearance together with the other three national rivers: the Tisza, Dráva and Száva, was in the form of a silver streak in the coat-of-arms of the city of Kassa in 1369. That was adopted by King Vladislav II in his 1502 arms-extending deed. The coat-of-arms was institutionalized in the *Tripartitum* code dated 1514, which

declared the silver streaks, the *fesses*, a symbol of the four rivers: *quattour flumina nominatissima* (four most renowned rivers) *Danubius, Tibiscus, Dravus, Savus primaria specialiaque huius regni* (symbols of this kingdom) *nostri insignia" (sunt)*. Long before its modern role in transport and water management, the Danube was a primary factor and symbol in the everyday lives and thinking of the nations of Central Europe.

Navigation in history

In Turkish times, navigation on the Danube shrank to a local level. It was therefore only natural that plans for its restoration, the regulation of the river and the construction of a Danube-Tisza canal were formulated soon after the reconquest, at early 18th-century meetings of the Diet and various committees. In the last third of the century barges towed by horses were much in use. At the same time there were plans for a shipping line, then a Danube-Black Sea Commercial Company. For a long time, only trade in produce and spice was of practical economic importance. The Greek (Macedonian) and Serbian merchant towns clearly indicate the major stations of the Danube trade: Zimony, Mohács, Baja, Pest, and Komárom. Upstream navigation stopped at Vienna. Work on regulating the Bavarian section started at Ingolstadt in 1790, and the Linz section was regulated as late as the mid-19th century.

Three periods can be distinguished in modern Danube transport.

The first lasted from the 18th-century boom until 1830. From areas near the river, grain was taken to one or another river port, loaded onto barges and towed by horses upstream as far as Vienna. The volume of trade was limited and the area served was small, the opening in 1802 of the Ferenc canal added only small parts of the Banat and the Lower Tisza region. Barges took three long months to reach Vienna from the southern reaches, and a month even from Pest. Horse and serf-labour was expensive and inefficient. A small quantity of goods was taken to European Turkey, but the bulk of trade was with Vienna. At that time Komárom was the centre of upstream traffic. Towed barges on the Danube made a major contribution to modernization. Danube traffic established the future centres of wholesale trade, and was a major source of the necessary capital accumulation as well as providing the first stepping stones of major entrepreneurs.

The beginning of the second period can be dated precisely: the first steamboat of the *Erste Donau-Dampfschiffahrt Gesellschaft* (DDSG), founded the previous year, left Vienna for Pest in September 1830. This early capitalist enterprise was based on cold calculations. Not only the booming domestic trade and that between various parts of the Habsburg Empire promised high profits but also the liberation of shipping on the Lower Danube and the Black Sea, determined by the 1829 Peace of Adrianople. Thus, the restoration (at a level guaranteed by steam) of one of the main medieval long-distance trading routes, from Ulm and Augsburg via Hungary to the Black Sea and Constantinople, no longer seemed a pipe-dream.

Free Danube, worldwide markets for Hungarian goods—such ideas excited Count István Széchenyi, Hungary's first reforming aristocrat. Though initially he lacked the confidence to accept the DDSG offer to cooperate, the company's first results and his journey to the region in 1830 convinced him of the daring plan's feasibility. First of all, steamboats reduced transport time to a tenth, the Danube had been navigable downstream as far as Belgrade but, by eliminating the natural barrier of rocks at the Iron Gates, the lower section would also become accessible. In his *Világ* (World), Széchenyi reports on what he observed. "Our huge Danube," he writes, "which now provides so little good for us and is the most ruthless enemy of much of our homeland, might shower the blessings of plenty, instead of water, on our land", after some major civil engineering work. In the earlier *Hitel* (Credit), he had thought of low-interest loans as the key to the country's modernization, now he added that transport and foreign trade were just as important. "Do your best to stop Budapest being a dead end; to achieve that, the Danube must be opened to shipping and trading."

Between the years 1830 and 1841 Széchenyi made eight longer or shorter journeys to the region. He spent altogether 15 months on studying the area's geography and hydrography, as well as the economic and political conditions of river regulation. He dealt with Pashas and Princes as if he were a Royal Commissioner, he made plans and sent reports to the Palatine and Chancellor Metternich. His basic idea was clear and unchanged: "As far as the Iron Gates, there do not seem to be any difficulties for larger ships, especially steamships... travelling upstream. Downstream from the Iron Gates, it would certainly be possible for seagoing vessels to... sail to the Black Sea; or actually even from Pest, if there were cuts in some places as far as the mouth of the Drava and, together with the Iron Gates, regulation between Moldova and Orsova." Since the progress of steam was closely connected to the regulation of the Lower Danube, Széchenyi endeavoured to persuade the management of DDSG to blow up the riverbed rocks between Belgrade and Orsova. Then it would be possible to operate a whole fleet. A waterway would be open to Silistra and even farther, to Odessa and Constantinople. Real world trade, with Pest as its centre!

Supporting both steamships and the regulation of the Danube, Széchenyi was confident that navigation from Vienna to the Black Sea could be realized as the result of cooperation between "many good landowners," "wise government" and entrepreneurs, yet there was a shortage of either wisdom, courage or concord. Of all the ambitious plans, only a modest regulation of the Danube (clearing up the rocks of the Iron Gates) and the construction of the Chain Bridge came about and the DDSG flourished.

Launched with five ships, the DDSG transported 17,000 persons and a mere 2,000 tons in 1835. By 1848 the company owned 41 ships and 100 barges, with a turnover of almost a million passengers and 150,000 tons. In the boom of the next quarter of a century, the figures rose to five or six times the 1848 ones. Early in the 19th century 5,000 tons of grain a year were being taken to Vienna. That figure rose to 100,000 tons in 1848.

In this phase of the transport revolution, the centre of Danube shipping shifted to the city of Győr. In 1846 approximately 250,000 tons of grain was taken there. A third was stored in huge granaries. Produce merchants flourished in Pest as well, but they were not properly supported by flour mills and could not really compete with Győr, which enjoyed the support of Vienna entrepreneurs.

The third period of Danube transport started with the heroic age of the railways in the 1860s. It might be supposed that railways, covering the whole country, would slowly eliminate water transport. But no, cheap water transport suited bulky, non-fragile, non-perishable goods. In a number of places railways and shipping cooperated, as indeed, the two railway lines between Vienna and Budapest followed the Danube on both banks.

Two additional factors contributed to the Danube's central significance. The concord of modernizing landowners, enterprising capitalists and the "wise government", painfully absent in Metternich's time, was realized after the 1867 *Ausgleich* or Compromise between Hungary and the Habsburgs. The construction of railways, regulation of waters and river shipping enjoyed state support, generous financing and several other benefits. The Budapest embankments and, later, the sewage system were built in the 1870s. The next decade saw the regulation of the upper section of the Danube between Dévény and Győr. The clean-up of the Iron Gates started in the 1870s and was completed by the turn of the century. A century-old plan was thus realized: from the Bavarian section and Vienna, the Danube became navigable all the way to the Black Sea.

The other factor of modernization was the DDSG, which skillfully adapted itself to the requirements of the railway age. The company acquired Hungary's best coal mines, controlling over half of the country's hard coal production for decades. It provided the railway companies, especially the Hungarian State Railways, with coal and participated in railway construction. In 1914 the DDSG was already one of the largest river shipping companies in the world, with a capital of 90 million crowns, 140 steamships, 2.5m passengers and 2.5m tons of goods every year. In addition to DDSG, the Hungarian Royal River and Sea Shipping, Ltd. (MFTR), founded in 1894, was also firmly established. Before 1914 its passenger and goods turnover was between a fifth and a fourth of that of the DDSG. Between the wars, naturally, MFTR overtook DDSG. With the facilities and mines of DDSG, that had earlier passed into German hands, MFTR combined to form MESZHART in 1946, a jointly owned Soviet-Hungarian company. In 1955, when the Soviet Union made over its share to the Hungarian government, the company was reborn as MAHART. It shipped 28m tons of goods on the Danube in 1965; the figure is now double of that.

The regulation of the Iron Gates and the construction of a navigable canal had been an international political issue since 1878, when the Congress of Berlin commissioned the Habsburg Empire to do the job. The regulation took place in the 1890s, the final touches being added in 1902. When the Emperor-King Francis Joseph, in the presence of the Kings of Rumania and Serbia, opened the Iron Gates as a part of the Millenary festivities in 1896, that ceremony meant

more than the successful modernization of Austro-Hungarian water transport. It was also a reminder of the Habsburg Empire's status as a great power.

Danubian cooperation

That opening ceremony was not exactly how Széchenyi and his fellows had envisaged it. The reformers' generation already had nations in mind. In their interpretation the Danube was a national treasure and, especially downstream, a river connecting small nations. The national struggles during the 1848 revolution amply demonstrated the conflicts inherent in the Danube region's special structure and its actual power relations. Three absolutist empires, the Habsburgs, the Russians and the Turks, weighed on the region's small nations. Their system of domination shackled the socio-economic and administrative modernization of Eastern Central and Southeastern Europe, as well as free national progress. These nations were too weak to achieve and maintain their independent progress by themselves.

The idea of an alliance of small nations, a new interpretation of the Danube's political significance, first arose among the post-1848 exiles. The notion of a league of subject peoples *(fraternité des peuples)* had already been present in the French Revolution, then in the works of Mazzini, the Hungarian Baron Wesselényi, and the Rumanian Balcescu. As a political project it was, as far as I know, first formulated by Polish exiles (Adam Czartoryski) in Paris, in the summer of 1848 when, alarmed by ethnic strife in Hungary, they aimed to pave the way to reconciliation.

At a Paris conference of foreign secretaries, held in September 1848, Czartoryski argued that a new state should be established to replace the Habsburg Empire, joined by the Serbian and Danubian principalities. An alliance might be formed, which was unlike the *Deutscher Bund*, and might be called the Danube Confederation.

In the years to come, this Polish idea served as a basis of negotiations between Italians, Rumanians, Bohemians and Hungarians who, after their bitter disappointments, realized that, rather than each other, they should fight the Habsburg and Russian Empires. These plans and negotiations have merely ideological-historical significance; in the 1848 revolutionary period itself they had few tangible results. They were made timely by the common defeat, the common lot meted out to them by despotic systems. Count Zamoyski, Czartoryski's delegate, coordinated the Polish ideas with Kossuth as early as November 1849, then also with Serbian and Rumanian political leaders. The league's name, according to plans, would have been the Danubian United States, including Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Moldavia and Wallachia. Administrative borders were to be based on the national principle, which would have ensured autonomous rights to any ethnic minority.

Leading Hungarian exiles also supported such a solution. A new interpretation of the role of the Danube was beginning to take shape. The primary interest of

Hungarians demanded that the Danube should be considered a link, rather than a border, between nations. Count László Teleki and György Klapka conducted their talks in exile along lines that were embodied in a plan formulated by Klapka and Canini (an Italian in Greece) and, agreed to by Kossuth in 1862, became known as Kossuth's Danube Confederation. It would have been made up of Hungary, Rumania, Serbia and Croatia (and, depending on a plebiscite, even Transylvania), with the Danube as a substantial and symbolic link. Kossuth felt it to be the command of history that Hungarian, Rumanian and Slav brethen "should let bygones be bygones and hold out their hands towards each other, rising as one for common liberty… following the old example of the Swiss… Unity, concord, fraternity among Hungarians, Rumanians, and Slavs! Behold, this is my keenest desire, my most sincere advice! A shining future for all of us!"

With the Compromise of 1867, the idea of a Danube league fell into abeyance in Hungary. In the vocabulary of the time, the Danube as a symbol was replaced by the Carpathians and the Adriatic. However, the Danube idea re-emerged in the early 20th century, re-interpreted by the second generation of reformists. Endre Ady was the first to say out loud in a poem in which he declares himself to be a Hungarian Jacobin: "Danube and Olt both speak in the same voice / A murmuring, soft voice, as of the dead", the murmuring waters flowed over sorrow, the historical and common sorrow of Hungarians, Rumanians and Slavs.

Ady's poetic ideas were put into plain prose by Oszkár Jászi, a sociologist and politician. In the Danube region, ethnically the most motley in Europe, there are two major trends shaping history, Jászi wrote in 1912. Establishing national states is an objective that appears with the force of laws of nature. Absolute priority goes therefore to the free use of native languages, national culture and autonomy: "Mankind is so created that the path to internationality leads via nationality, and there via the language of the masses of the people." The shortest route from this recognition logically led to small national states. In history, however, the shortest route is not always the most effective one. From Palacky to Balcescu to Kossuth to Eötvös to Karl Renner to Otto Bauer to T.G. Masaryk, the Danube region's major thinkers were all aware that no ethnically pure national states could be founded here, and the divided, small states would be weak in themselves.

Jászi himself also opposed small statehood, all the more so since the other major trend of development pointed towards integration. Such integration, however, cannot be something overriding the national framework. Neither dynastic-cosmopolitan unification, nor a worldwide union based on class are realistic. There is good reason why the literal interpretation of internationalism: *foederatio inter nationes* was put into words in the Danube region: in Bohemia and Poland, in Budapest and among the Southern Slav politicians. During the Great War, Jászi formulated a new plan, based on the co-existence of the nations of the region: the United States of the Danube that were to replace the Empire in dissolution. The plan reached back to 1848 and the post-revolution exiles, to Czartoryski, Balcescu and especially, Kossuth. It reckoned with a federal Monarchy as a basis, inviting Serbia, Rumania and a restored Poland to join. Jászi

regarded close co-operation between the nations of the Danube Basin peoples to be desirable and, even in 1918, possible. At the same time he was aware of the grave difficulties, including the barriers erected by the great powers. Because of frequent national injustices and never satisfied national aspirations, the region's small nations had sunk deep into the mire of a nationalism that had become an end in itself. They do not share an awareness of regional community, or a Danubian patriotism. Without that, Jászi's message is, there will never be genuine reconciliation and friendship in the Danube region.

The Danube Commission

The 1859 Congress of Paris after the Crimean War declared the principle of free navigation on the Danube, and formed two commissions: the European Danube Commission, of which the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Austria, Prussia, the Kingdom of Sardinia, and Turkey were members (Turkey was replaced by Rumania after 1878); and the Commission of Riparian States. The former's duty was only to control the section of the Danube between Galati and the mouth but, as its members included the great powers of the period, its influence extended to the whole Danube region. The latter did nothing.

The 1878 Congress of Berlin boosted the influence of the riparian states: Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Rumania. The Commission's extensive authority was retained even after the Great War with the victors: the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Rumania, as members. To counter their influence, an International Danube Commission was founded to include all riparian states, with authority over the Danube between Ulm and Braila, as well as confluents that were declared to be international waters. During and immediately after the Second World War, all free international shipping ceased on the Danube.

The accord on Danube shipping, signed in Belgrade in 1948, created the Danube Commission with the riparian states as members. (Austria joined in 1960.) The principle of free navigation was declared by the Belgrade conference, as well as by the convention accepted there, which laid the basis of the new legal structure of Danube shipping. In view of Hungary's central position, the Danube Commission's headquarters were moved from Galati to Budapest in 1954.

The Danube Commission still envisages its main duty to be the promotion of what was laid down in the convention, and to further cooperation between the Danube riparian countries, and with other countries as well.

In the 35 years of its activity, the Commission has published over 250 works for use by sailors, hydraulic engineers, hydrologists, meteorologists, statisticans, lawyers and others in connection with Danube shipping and the Danube itself.

The Danube offers the right conditions for further improving existing close international co-operation. It is characteristic of the links between the countries participating in the convention that they mutually respect each other's independence and sovereignty, and strive for the establishment and extension of multilateral

connections, granting ample opportunities for free shipping on the Danube, where the craft of over 50 countries have sailed since 1948.

The timeliness of the Danubian idea

However unrealistic it may have proved to be in international politics and in the realized system of state organization, the Danube idea stayed alive and influential in literature. I have already quoted the poet Ady, who often complained about the division, the mutually spiteful passions, the incomprehension and historical blindness of Danube nations that shared a common fate. In another of his poems, he presents the essence. The poet here interrogates the Danube, this old, cunning drunkard. Has the world always been like this: original sin, tears, agony, historical drought? "Have happy, strong, laughing peoples / Never lived along the Danube?" And the river's answer is "Not since it burst out roaring, / Has it seen here a happy people." "The Danube land is a sad lighting-rod, / a pillory made for halfling people and halfling nations. / There wings are clipped and nights are dead."

Such a voice shocked the Hungary of the Millenary celebrations. It put into words a new perception of history, a national idea where the Hungarians are not the successors of the nation of free nobles, dominating their part of the world. They are the people of crushed peasant rebels forced to cannibalize their leader, the people of fugitive Rákóczi rebels, of beheaded Jacobins, convicts locked in the pillory of the Danube region. Another poet, Dezső Kosztolányi, gives a similar interpretation of the region in the early 1920s: "Not even the Ganges is as sacred as the Danube,... / Blessed be the one who is cursed here / with ridicule and thistles growing over his dust."

Despite the unanimous demand for a revision of the Trianon Treaty, the legacy of Ady and Jászi stubbornly remained alive in the Hungarian Left between the two world wars. In his poem *At the Danube*, Attila József remembers his parents and ancestors while musing on the lower embankment:

Árpád, Werbőczy, Dózsa, and Zalán,
Rumanian, Turk, Slovakian, and Tatar,
gentle future of each Hungarian!

... I must have work. Would it were task sufficient
that one confess the past. The ripples of
the Danube, that is future, past, and present,
fondle and hold each other in their love.
Our forebears' struggle, with its strife and slaughter,
remembrance melts and renders into peace:
our common labours now to set in order,
were pains enough to be our masterpiece.

(Translated by Frederick Turner and Zsuzsanna Ozsváth)

In the 1930s Gyula Illyés also felt that, by becoming a border river, the Danube has separated us from our neighbours. "The dark strip around orphan nations… is guarded warily by orphaned, dumb troops here, and there." Illyés cries "against all the curses and battles, against everything that might raise barriers to our brave, purifying hearts." László Németh, another Hungarian populist writer, revived the notion of Danubian integration. In the 2nd and 4th issue of his periodical *Tanú* (Witness) in the early 1930s, he discussed the common fate of Eastern Europe's small nations, the foster-brothers. He tried to convince the nascent intellectual élite of the importance of co-operation.

Though memory often turned the past into the cause of new border disputes and grievances rather than peace, yet the Danube remains in the conscience and imagination of the riparian nations as their shared setting, a home and a live creature. Verses do not merely prophesy, there are gentle lines as well, nature poems of huts and castles, of bridges, the embankment, Margaret Island, the Danube Bend.

The essence of the Danube lies in its natural and historical ambiguity. It became the Eastern Central European river not thanks to its geographical position or the direction of its flow, but owing to spiritualization, attached historical and political meanings, and eschatological expectations.

There are economic, political and cultural phenomena that point towards an increased value of the Danube in Hungary's economy and thought, with a potentiated meaning, embodying the openness to Europe (both East and West), the free exchange of goods, ideas and people. The Danube is not a cheap source of energy. It is a symbol of European orientation, it is the natural and historical framework of Hungary's existence. We must protect this huge river against pollution, including intellectual pollution.

The still timely aspect of the Danube idea in our age is the rapprochement and close co-operation, in politics, in the economy and culture, of the peoples forming sovereign national states in the area. This is the only realistic way.

Anna Várkonyi

A Monster Born of Politics: The Danube Remade

The Bős (Gabcikovo)–Nagymaros River Barrage System embodies everything that led to the social, moral and economic crisis in Hungary. In its monumental dimensions it embodies everything that requires urgent change. It was born out of years of mistaken decisions, irresponsible decisions taken to justify each other. It stands as an example of a type of forced and unequal collaboration in the region; instead of creating links that would lead to better understanding, it has laid tracks that can only lead to recriminations and hostility.

András Lányi

Hungary's relations with two of its neighbours, Austria and Czecho-Slovakia, are unpleasantly burdened by the fact that logical arguments against constructing the Bős (Gabcikovo)–Nagymaros River Barrage System (GNRBS), have, at long last, won acceptance.

Expressing patience and understanding and asking Donaukraftwerke, the Austrian main contractor, to behave likewise, the government of Austria also signalled that Hungarian fairness towards small Austrian subcontractors would benefit relations between the two countries. The essence of Hungary's position concerning Austrian claims for compensation is that, in order to maintain the trouble-free nature of exemplary Austro-Hungarian relations, the country intends to honour its obligations. And pay we shall, even though Donaukraftwerke, in spite of protests by the European Parliament, fully aware of its responsibility and refusing to heed even a World Bank warning, undertook the design and execution of the project in 1985, after stopping—following demonstrations by Austrian Greens—the construction of the Hainburg power plant. Since by that time it was impossible to squeeze Hungary's economy to produce the 50-60 billion forints necessary and, because, after Hainburg, Donaukraftwerke was running idle, the two huge state-owned hydro-constructing firms, Donaukraftwerke and OVIBER, a state civil engineering company specializing in water, in Hungary, found themselves in alliance, with the eager assistance of heads of state, party leaders, politicians and bankers. Donaukraftwerke, the

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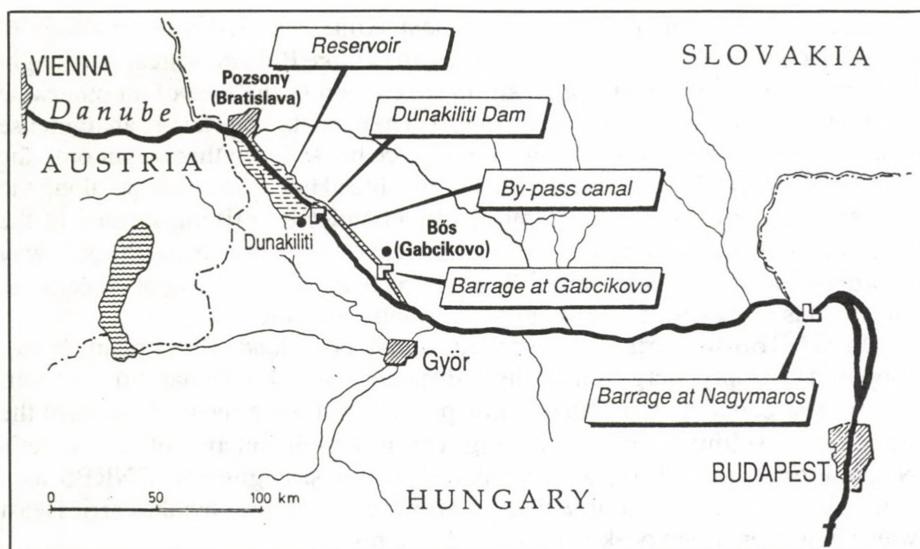


Austrian main contractor, was to finance construction, the credit to be repaid by supplies of power over twenty years (1996-2016). Payment was guaranteed by the Austrian government using a banking consortium as agents. Public opinion was told this was an advance payment. In fact the Bank of International Settlements recorded it as a Hungarian debt which only increased the burdens of a balance of payments which was already very much in the red. This is the basis of Donaukraftwerke's claim settled out of court at November 1990 negotations at 2,650 million Austrian Schillings.

A major part of the GNRBS as a power engineering unit was constructed at Bős (Gabcikovo) on Slovak territory. The power plant at Nagymaros would have been a minor, supporting unit. The two units were to have been connected by a 25 km long by-pass canal.

The situation concerning Czecho-Slovakia is far more complicated. Over decades, joint construction was motivated by politics. As the course of democratization and economic restructuring in Czecho-Slovakia is still largely unpredictable, further negotiations are necessary to arrive at a mutually satisfactory agreement. The new Hungarian government's position for those negotiations is determined by the fact that its programme includes the end of work at Nagymaros and its conviction that Bős ought to suffer a similar fate.

The monster at Bős (Gabcikovo)

Visegrád, where a dazzling setting and ruins created by history combine to create the jewel of the Danube Bend, escaped with a black eye. It will not turn into an industrial wasteland. The Szigetköz and the Csallóköz fared worse, as the Bős power plant and the attached by-pass canal have been built along with

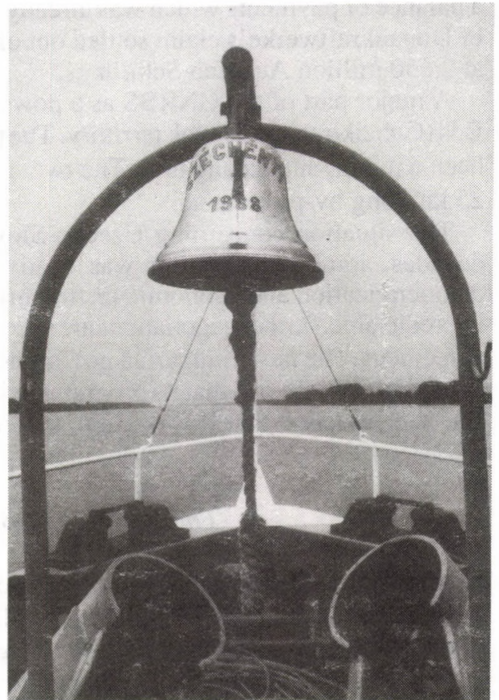
the reservoir and weir at Dunakiliti. The Dunakiliti or Bratislava reservoir is 20 km long, covering a surface of 62 km^2, a tenth of Lake Balaton's area. At a height of 20m, the by-pass canal is a 20 km long scar across the face of an otherwise picturesque landscape. If you climb the 20 m high bank, you can see an immense concrete basin below, resembling a motor race track. From this height only the tops of the church steeples can be seen of the three Hungarian villages along the riverside. The Bős monster is almost fully completed, a fitting symbol of the delusion-ridden age in which mankind, East and West, believed that the only way of progress was to shackle Nature. The sight is frightening. The depth recalls the dimensions of a canyon, say, Canyon de Chelly, in America.

The GNRBS was originally planned to be a peak-load power plant. It was supposed to supply energy during the daily peak period. The Dunakiliti reservoir, the by-pass canal, and the Nagymaros power plant were meant to control the water flow resulting from peak running. This is the sole function of the project's Nagymaros section. The power produced is almost negligible. GNRBS as a whole, however, had a major fault as regards energetics: the Danube carries least water in winter, when peak-energy needs are highest.

Of the Danube's average flow of 2,200 m^3/sec, a mere 50m^3/sec would have remained in the original bed of the river, which is the frontier. The Danube's full flow would have roared down the by-pass canal. The old Danube would have looked like a dried-up river bed.

The damming was meant to produce a fluctuation in the water level of 1 to 5 metres. This could well result in a sewage backflow at the city of Győr (200,000 inhabitants). That danger could be avoided only by biological treatment of the sewage of the Danube riparian towns and villages. Alas, the original plans failed even to mention that particular ecological risk, a fact that the Danube movements pinned on their banners. If Nagymaros is not built, Bős can only run continually, like the Danube plants in Austria where peak-power plants on the Danube are prohibited by law. In that case the construction of the by-pass canal was superfluous and the power plant itself will be oversized.

For whom the bell tolls.

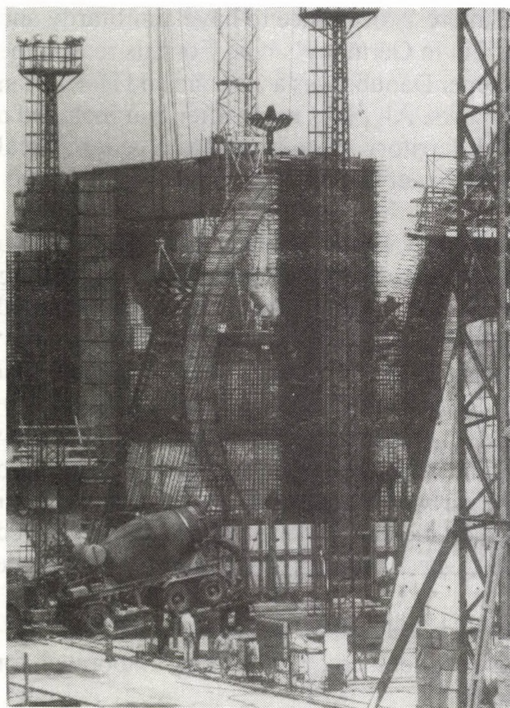


In the debates raging around GNRBS, sums between 56 billion forints and 130 billion were men-

tioned as the cost of the Nagymaros project, depending on whether the person making the estimate was in favour of or against the construction. What would the country have received in return for this huge sum, to be spent on what was by 1988 Hungary's single major state-run construction project? Bős and Nagymaros would have produced 720 MW (megawatt) and 160 MW electric energy respectively, to be given away until 2016 under the energy agreement with Austria. The project's planners took into consideration the costs of developing shipping and the road network, defence against floods or a rising water table as well as urban and rural development. But they left the prevention of environmental damage out of the account.

The worst and irreparable damage would be caused by the reservoir below Pozsony (Bratislava-Pressburg). Sediment containing polluting materials would settle in that reservoir and, under pressure of the water there, enter the several hundred metres deep pebbly subsoil, polluting the invaluable drinking water reserves of 10 km^3. The underground basin there is Hungary's most important drinking water resource, accounting for 25 per cent of the country's reserves. The river would flow into the by-pass canal through the already completed system of sluice gates at Dunakiliti, across the Danube from Pozsony. The same danger threatens the water of the bank-filtered wells along the dammed river section between Komárom and Nagymaros, which contribute to the Budapest water supply.

Almost completed facilities at Bős (Gabcikovo).



TAMÁS RÉVÉSZ

On the section of the Moson-Danube arm near the city of Győr, the water level would rise above flood level several times every day in peak running periods, with the Danube passing the city of Esztergom at a level 100 cm higher than the all-time record flood level.

The area ultimately occupied by GNRBS was to be 120 km^2 (12,000 hectares); 7,300 hectares of agricultural land, the rest woodland. Owing to the expected sinking of the water table, 3,700 hectares of forests would dry out. A rich flora and fauna in the flood plains would become endangered. Fishing would cease between Dunakiliti and Nagymaros and the pitiful quantity of water remaining in the Danube's original bed would be threatened by eutrophisation and anaerobic decay.

Dunakiliti and Bős are in a seismically dangerous zone. A breach of the dam would flood Budapest to a depth of several meters.

The inhabitants of the three ethnic Hungarian villages in Slovakia, Vajka, Dobrogaz and Nagybodak, caught between the by-pass canal and the Danube bed, would become isolated from Pozsony, losing most of their arable land as well.

The Danube is a border and international waterway. 30 km of its navigable section would find itself in the by-pass canal, that is on Slovak territory. The old Danube would become a lazy creek, a grave economic loss to Hungary.

In return for the listed disadvantages, GNRBS would supply a mere 3.5 per cent of Hungary's electric energy needs.

A favourite dream of environmentalists would leave GNRBS as a reminder for posterity, like the half-finished nuclear power plant at Zwentendorf in Austria. One day, perhaps, travel agencies will organize tours to the scenes of crimes committed by mankind. One such tour might take the grisly route of Nagymaros–Bős–Dunakiliti.

A chairman is dismissed

Making Czecho-Slovakia a Danubian state is an old idea. In the mid-19th century the historian Frantisek Palacky argued in favour of uniting Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia. That would have opened the way to the sea and linked the Czechs, surrounded by Germans, with their Slav kin.

After the Great War it was in the interests of France to have a militarily and economically powerful Czechoslovakia in Germany's rear. For this reason the French disregarded the fact that the upper Danube was a German and Hungarian river with no Slovak villages on its banks. All plans made after that included a by-pass canal leading through Slovak territory, even though the geographical character of the region favoured a river power station—had engineering considerations alone prevailed.

On April 18th, 1953, Hungarian Deputy Prime Minister Ernő Gerő held a conference in his office about the hydroelectric works. Some interesting conclusions can be drawn from the minutes, available in 12 copies, all marked "top secret". It is clear, for instance, that decision makers even that long ago were aware of the environmental damage involved. Obviously, they also knew that the construction would not be cost effective. They were familiar with the disadvantages of the left-bank by-pass canal, and also considered that diverting the Danube's navigable channel might justify a border correction. It can also be learnt from the minutes that, in the early 1950s, the Czecho-Slovaks were far more enthusiastic about the project than the Hungarians and impatiently urged the deal. Ernő Gerő clearly saw that a by-pass canal on Slovak territory would be the worst scenario for Hungary.

The project received a boost after Gustav Husak came to power in Czechoslovakia. In the early 1970s a joint investment programme was elaborated for GNRBS, followed by a draft agreement.

Miklós Duray

A Political Investment

According to the 1980 census, 560,000 Hungarians live in Czecho-Slovakia along the whole length of the southern border, though estimates speak of 750,000 Hungarians. About half of them live in the region endangered by the Bős (Gabcikovo) Nagymaros project and the dams built along the lower reaches of the river Vág. This means that the problems deriving from the hydroelectric scheme, the physical and psychological effects, weigh only on the Hungarians on both banks of the Danube. Over and above the environmental damage, the effects on agriculture transcend the national economy and change the daily lives of hundreds of thousands of people. It should also be said that the Hungarian minority in Czecho-Slovakia has been left with scarcely any consciousness of having a country. What replaces it is their attachment to their native locality. But as an effect of the hydroelectric power stations, this *pays natale* will perish [...]

Thirty-five per cent of the ethnic Hungarians in Czecho-Slovakia live on the land, and about 80 to 85 per cent of the whole Hungarian minority, directly or indirectly, derive their incomes from agriculture. The changing natural conditions due to the Bős (Gabcikovo) project on the Danube will basically change the conditions of agriculture. They will lead to the introduction of new technologies and a complete shift in crop growing. Presumably the result will be the same as of industrialization. Persecution in 1945-8, and the ensuing pauperization of the Hungarians, led to their mass migration in the 1950s to better financed and industrialized Slovak and Czech areas, and broke up their integral social and settlement structure.

From Nagymaros, *a pamphlet published in German and Hungarian by Edition ÖH and Grüne Bildungswerkstatt Vienna, in 1988. Miklós Duray, a prominent figure of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, was imprisoned and suffered persecution in the Husak era. See also Tibor Fényi's article in this issue.*

On the basis of considerations never made public, the Hungarian Communist Party and state leadership abandoned the idea of a border correction (See Vanda Lamm's article in this issue) and consented to the diversion of a 30 km long section of the Danube to Czecho-Slovak territory and to the construction. The relevant treaty was signed by Prime Ministers György Lázár and Lubomir Strougal in 1977, following a meeting between János Kádár and Gustav Husák. The treaty was ratified by the Parliament in Czechoslovakia but only by a Presidium decree in Hungary.

According to witnesses, the ink was not dry yet on the treaty when green wheat was hastily ploughed in on the planned track of the by-pass canal, in order to confront Hungary with a fait accompli.

György Konrád

Flirtation or Marriage?

After we had a good lunch in Vienna or Budapest and over coffee and brandy, agreed to have dinner together soon, let us speak our minds. My dear friends, this will not do. You, Austrians have sinned against the main condition of our friendship: democratic solidarity. It is the business of your embassy to find out what Hungarians think about this joint project. It has been, and still is, in your power to gather information. If non-official Hungary does not like this project, why do you like it? Is it because you primarily want to be on good terms with official Hungary? Make up your minds whether you want to nurse friendship or whether we should rather bury this idea of a Central Europe, so often talked of nowadays, as one of the usual Central European illusions, not to say self-delusions? If we take Central Europe seriously, we also have to take democratic friendship seriously. Friends, let us decide, whether the idea of a Central European marriage is still valid, or should we take it to be merely a passing flirtation?

From "The Condition of Friendship" in: Nagymaros, *1988.*

The project was gradually taken over in Hungary by Deputy Prime Minister József Marjai, the evil spirit of Hungary's economy, who terrorized even the academic community. The criticisms expressed by successive committees of the Hungarian Academy over many years were all kept secret.

January 1984 saw the foundation of the illegal Danube Circle, which won the Right Livelihood Award in 1985. This is annually awarded in Stockholm, at the same time as the Nobel prizes and is thus also called the Alternative Nobel Prize. (In the Hungarian press the prize was first mentioned in 1988.) Following the foundation of the Danube Circle, public discussions became increasingly open, though the government promptly banned the publication of any material concerning the project.

A paper on the environmental effects was drawn up in order to reassure opponents, who grew ever louder. The project was declared feasible, given some additonal work. This declaration was made by the National Water Board itself, excluding critics as well as the National Environmental Authority that had originally commissioned the paper. When the latter authority (the OKTH) objected, its chairman, György Gonda, was dismissed. Item 5 of the confidential document triggering his fall, dated March 14, 1984, and signed by György Gonda, reads as follows: "In connection with the building of the Nagymaros weir, contrary to the solution suggested, we consider it desirable that the project

be abandoned. If that is impossible, it should be constructed near the mouth of the river Ipoly."

Meanwhile, the Danube Circle collected signatures. In late 1984 Parliament and the government received the first anti-GNRBS petition. The 6,068 signatories considered it vital that plans for the regulation of the joint Hungaro-Czechoslovakian section of the Danube should take the river's "ecological, social and economic role into consideration, with special attention to the drinking water supply of both countries."

Unfortunately, the fate of the Hungarian project cannot be treated in isolation from the great success of the Austrian environmentalists who, after colossal action, prevented the construction of the Hainburg weir. Hardly a year later, in December 1985, the Yugoslav news agency Tanjug reported that Hungary was involving Austrian firms in the construction of the Nagymaros project and, according to the plans, would pay Austria with electric energy to be supplied after 1996.

Indeed, in May 1986 Hungarian and Austrian firms signed contracts. And then, in an interview given to the Communist party daily *Népszabadság*, President Iván T. Berend of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences stated that the government had accepted the Academy's opinion in which, if the project is constructed according to the original plans, it is indispensable to ensure sewage treatment on both banks of the Danube in advance of implementation. That all but spelled out that the project was an investment policy disaster. If there was no money for the GNRBS itself, how could the construction of sewage treatment plants be financed?

Endgame

The 30th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian revolution made the authorities particularly careful in 1986 to block any action initiated with the excuse of a GNRBS protest. Police broke up a walk organized in Budapest by the Danube Circle almost before it started from Batthyányi tér on the Right Bank. The procession to Margaret Island was dispersed with the use of tear gas and rubber truncheons.

The biologist Günter Schobesberger, earlier a member of the Austrian Government Ecological Commission, the initiator and organizer of the protest against the Hainburg power plant, writes on "Austria's help": "I was surprised by our journalists' reluctance to deal with this subject. We invited them to our press conference but hardly any turned up and, of those who did, hardly any wrote anything. I asked many journalists why this was so. Why is so little interest displayed in this case by the same journalists whose coverage of Hainburg filled whole pages? They said, we must really give a break to those Austrian firms who had suffered losses at Hainburg, let them build something somewhere. I was struck by a mean little thought; the West wishes the East to suffer disasters, be they political, economic or ecological."

Concrete, concrete everywhere. The newly made Danube bed between Dunakiliti and Bős (Gabcikovo).

In September 1987 the chief engineer of VIZITERV (waterworks planning company) announced that Austrian contractors had started digging a temporary Danube bed near Visegrád to help navigation during the construction of the dam. As the government intended to ensure a trouble-free political situation for the project's construction, the National Bureau of Waterworks (OVH) and the National Bureau of Environmental and Nature Protection (OKTH) merged to become the Ministry of Environment and Water Conservancy under László Maróthy, who was reputed to be a confidant of János Kádár.

1988 was the most turbulent year in the history of the project. That was when, as in a well-made play, events started up. In January 1988 a US based organization, named The Hungarian Fund for Environmental Protection, sent an open letter, written by expatriate Hungarians, to the Presidium. The letter summed up the GNRBS in 26 points. Many thousands signed as individuals, as well as 232 organizations representing approximately 3 million members. The Presidium was asked to order a plebiscite on the issue. OVH reacted once again in the usual way, just as it had some years before, by doubting János Vargha's qualifications as a biologist. It spread the rumour that Béla Lipták, organizer of the protest, did not teach at Yale. That, however, had no influence on the sequence of events. For millions, the essence of Professor Lipták's argument became clear when he compared peak-power operation to pulling the chain of a W.C.

May 1988 demonstration against Bős-Nagymaros and Austrian financial and technical participation.

The spring demonstration, following the Communist Party Conference in May that year, where the totalitarian regime started to fall apart, proved to be a climax. A peaceful, optimistic and good natured crowd of 2-3,000 people gathered in Vörösmarty tér in Budapest and walked to the Austrian Embassy, where they handed over a petition protesting against the project and Austrian involvement. While the crowd was still gathering, it was impossible to know whether the police would disperse or help them. It was probably considered a victory for the mass media as well to be able to include a few frames of the good natured demonstration, held in a liberated mood, in that night's TV news.

It was the turn of the press to liberate itself after years under a heavy thumb. Articles pro and contra abounded. Those against drew the public's attention to ecological dangers: drinking water resources, biological sewage treatment, flora and fauna, flood-plain forests, peak-running became everyday notions in the press.

Zoltán Király, a Member of Parliament, suggested at a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee for Settlement Development and Environmental Protection, that the government should suspend construction of the Nagymaros dam and work out alternative solutions by employing foreign experts. The Committee turned down the suggestion but accepted a motion, suggesting that the government should submit a report to Parliament in the autumn that year. The summer's events were determined by preparations for the Parliamentary autumn session.

With construction going on at a feverish pace at Nagymaros, the leadership carefully prepared that session. Sparing neither money, nor trouble nor hard drink, the water lobby arranged a river trip between Dunakiliti and Greifenstein in Austria, for Members of Parliament, even permitting a little shopping in Vienna. This way the lobby created the impression that the project's fate depended on the MPs' well–founded decision. The MPs proved to have been easily corruptible. When articles in the press were almost entirely critical, the water lobby organized a press conference where Péter Havas, the Government Commissioner in charge of the project at the time, poured forth much fudging in defence of the Austrian credit package.

The water lobby's bunch of lies, presented in gift wrapping, "Bős–Nagymaros, a Changing Danube Region," was also launched at this press conference. This is what the colourful propaganda leaflet has to say about the project so grievously threatening co-operation between the nations of Eastern Central Europe: "One of the major investment projects changing the face of the river the Bős–Nagymaros project is a means of exploiting reserves left untapped too long, and a good example of the creative co-operation of nations sharing the same fate in mutual interdependence."

The water lobby got wind of the alternative organizations' preparing for an international scientific convention to be held on September 2nd, under the auspices of the Danube Circle. Two days before that, the water lobby formed the Vásárhelyi Pál Society, camouflaged as a scientific team, which was to try to anticipate events. The society gathered all its more and less compromised scientists to defend the project.

However, even the scientific establishment lined up behind the Danube Circle's conference. The Academy took note of the convention. Árpád Berczik, who represented it, delivered the opening address, and demanded the immediate end of construction. The hydrologists sat through the two days in offended silence, troubled by the unfamiliar situation of the opposition having the floor. This was the first open forum where all the scientifically based counterarguments could be expressed. In their light, this suicidal project appeared as the embodiment of ecological, economic and political impotence. The emotional tension of the prevailing mood was best expressed in the address of the architect Imre Makovecz: "Our protest is ... a desperate pleading, over the brink of irrationality, a pleading for human dignity and the right of self-determination, a pleading to those who have deprived us of these rights for over 65 years now in slow-motion cruelty." Women sobbed, the water lobby's men, deflated, kept a stony silence. Perhaps that address was the best indicator of the approaching sad finale of the 1988 drama.

On September 7th, 1988, the government agreed to the construction of GNRBS, but graciously accepted the offer of the President of the Academy to set up an ad hoc committee to examine the alternative of stopping work at Nagymaros. In the umpteenth committee's opinion, stopping the Nagymaros section was to be a minor economic burden compared to carrying on with the project as a whole.

János Vargha

Signs of the Scandal?

A Hungarian citizen may well muse why a small country in Central Europe needs the world's longest elevated side-channel and the largest ever investment project in the history of Hungarian hydroengineering. He might perhaps find a relationship between the thousands of millions thrown into the Danube and his own empty purse now that an income tax has been introduced—to balance the budget once again as is said. It is in the interest of the present leadership, which is essentially the same as the one which took the country into this senseless undertaking, that the citizens should not recognize this and other similar relationships. But once real changes take place, this might also change, and if the personal prestige of the powers that be no longer prescribes silence, the position taken on the Danube dam question may change. In that case the influence of the water mafia would no longer ensure continuation of work. An example to be followed would be the suspension of the project of reversing the flow of rivers in Siberia.

From Nagymaros, 1988. *János Vargha is one of the founders of the Danube Circle.*

Three days later 25,000-30,000 people assembled before the Parliament building, demanding the suspension of work and a plebiscite.

The Hungarian Parliament first discussed the GNRBS, which had been on the agenda of the nation for decades, on October 6th. Shouting, "Dams and democracy!", László Maróthy, the Minister for the Environment and Water Conservancy, moved that the project be completed. Former President (until 1985) of the Academy, János Szentágothai, moved that Parliament refuse to accept the government report, decide the suspension or postponement of work at Nagymaros, and order the government to refrain from resuming construction until biological sewage treatment plants were in operation on both sides of the river. But the summer river trip bore fruit: only 19 were in support—with Iván Boldizsár, then editor of *NHQ* among them. Members turned down János Szentágothai's motion and voted in favour of the Minister's report, based on falsehood.

After the parliamentary comedy, both dam and democracy appeared to be in a hopeless state. Nevertheless, the movements continued working. They submitted 140,000 signatures demanding a plebiscite to Speaker István Stadinger. It became clear that the Minister's October promises of environmental protection were not backed by a single penny. The government drifted along until Saturday,

May 13th 1989, when, following an extraordinary government meeting, Deputy Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy announced the immediate suspension of work at Nagymaros.

Those who have worked their way through this barely digestible horror story deserve a happy ending but there is none yet. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Water Conservancy did not feel obliged to act upon the decision of either its own government or the new, freely elected one: as if nothing had happened, the Ministry continued construction until the summer of 1990.

The puzzle of why the argument between advocates and adversaries of such schemes, resembling a conversation of the deaf, continued for decades, is perhaps illuminated by an explanation given by László Sólyom, a prominent member of the Danube Circle, who has since become Presiding Judge of the Constitutional Court: "My reading of the Academy's debate convinced me that the plan was not sound. At the same time I talked to construction engineers who made me aware of a certain hydrological mentality. They find such a huge concrete structure not only professionally perfect but beautiful as well, provided it is well designed, has an appropriate bedding angle and so on. Dams and weirs have always enjoyed the support of engineers. It must be remembered that if somebody has devoted his life to designing a dam, he will find it difficult to change his attitude. It is also a matter of prestige for the firms interested in the construction, and a steady source of income for a whole industry."

Renowned Danube protestors called the public's attention to serious cases of misusing funds in May 1990. Here are the facts: neither Government Commissioner László Udvari, nor State Secretary Miklós Varga of the Water Board had initiated any administrative measures to suspend work on the project until last March, in spite of the announcement last year. The State Institute of Development (AFI) went on transferring moneys to the project, which was controlled by OVIBER. Since the beginning of this year alone, invoices totalling about 2.2 billion forints have piled up at AFI.

They did not save even what could have been rescued.

Vanda Lamm

The Danube as Border

The peace treaties ending the Great War (with Hungary, Art. 275–291 of the Trianon treaty, signed on June 4th 1920) internationalized the Danube below Ulm; together with all the navigable sections of its tributaries, which provide more than one state with access to the sea, with or without transshipment, as well as lateral canals and channels that duplicate or improve naturally navigable sections of the specified river system, or connect two naturally navigable sections of the same river. On the waterways thus internationalized, the citizens, goods and flags of the signatory powers are entitled to fully equal treatment.

Several sections of the Danube became a border between the two world wars until the First Vienna Award of November 2nd 1938. This included a border of about 150 kilometres between Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia.

According to international law, if the border is a river, the line runs along its middle. If however, the river is navigable, the border is in the middle of the navigable channel. That may be closer now to one bank, now to the other. If a bridge spans the river, the border is in the middle of the bridge, regardless of where the border runs in the river.

In the spring of 1990, the Slovak government announced that they would divert the Danube in keeping with the original plans. This is contrary to international law. Even the right of both countries to agree to change the border as they had intended to is questionable. No modification of the Paris peace treaty is permissible without the consent of all signatories.

Following the Second World War, one of the most controversial issues of the peace talks was the Danube. The Soviet Union suggested the Danube be left out of the peace treaties, arguing that questions of management could not be settled in treaties with Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary, but only by a conference of all Danube riparian states.

The Hungarian peace treaty, signed on February 10th 1947 in Paris, was based on the principle that the post-1938 territorial changes were to be considered null and void. The pre-1938 borders were restored, except that item c) of Para. 4. of Art. 1. of the treaty determined that Hungary cede another three villages on the left bank near Pozsony (Bratislava-Pressburg) to Czecho-Slovakia. As a result, the border was moved away from the river and a somewhat shorter stretch of the Danube acted as a frontier. The Prague government had originally claimed five villages (Horvátjárfalu, Oroszvár, Dunacsún, Rajka and Bezenye) but accepting the Hungarian delegation's case, the Conference did not agree. The Czecho-Slovaks had argued that the capital of Slovakia was right on the border and could grow only in the direction of the requested area, which was true also of the port.

The combined area of the villages Oroszvár, Horvátjárfalu and Dunacsún, ceded to Czecho-Slovakia by the peace

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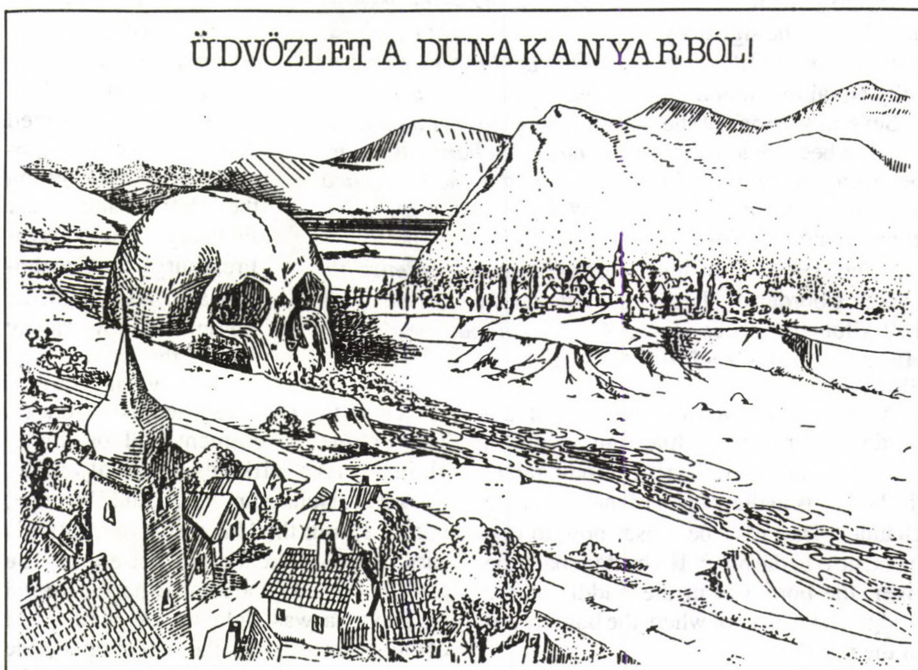
treaty, amounts to 6,344 hectares. According to the 1941 census, Oroszvár had 1,708 inhabitants, Horvátjárfalu 889 and Dunacsún 782.

The treaty between Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia concerning the construction and operation of the Bős-Nagymaros hydroelectric scheme, signed on September 16th 1977, envisaged a modification of the Danube border between Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia. Art. 22. of this document defines how the Danube border will be modified and stipulates that a special agreement would cover the details. Owing to the fact that Hungary abandoned construction, the latter document was never drawn up.

In the spring of 1990, after Hungary ceased operations, the Slovak government announced that they would go on with construction regardless, and that they would divert the Danube in keeping with the original plans. In other words, they were determined to change the nature of the border unilaterally without the consent of one of the parties. This is contrary to international law. Even the right of both countries to agree to change the border as they had intended to is questionable. Hungary's borders were settled by the 1947 Paris peace treaty, signed not only by Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia, but by all the Allied and Associated Powers. No modification of the Paris peace treaty is permissible without the consent of all signatories.



Greetings from the Danube Bend! —A samizdat postcard of 1987.

László Kéri

The First Hundred Days

The political power structure dominating all spheres of life slowly fell apart in 1989. Approximately eighty new political parties emerged, especially on television. Of course, there were huge differences among those eighty, some of which were based on important political movements, whose activities had received some publicity for a year or so. Other parties, however, had perceivably no more political weight than the thin rhetoric of their leadership. All the same, at the beginning of this year, there were few political analysts who dared to predict the support particular parties might mobilize. This is why the rather complicated election system, agreed upon at the 1989 round-table talks, seemed to be so important. By introducing several screening levels, this system provided an opportunity to test the social weight of parties time and again.

Sixty-five parties were registered by the courts, but only 45 took the opportunity radio and television provided to introduce themselves in short broadcasts (of equal length) during the week-long pre-election campaign.

The next screening was the actual nomination of candidates. Only twenty-eight parties turned out to be able to nominate at least one candidate somewhere. Finally, twelve parties could present a nationwide list of candidates; only these had the organizational structure enabling them to seek the minimal necessary support, providing them with at least the chance to enter the finals: the General Election in late March.

By and large, these twelve took part in the political race of the last few pre-election weeks. The country watched or heard party political broadcasts and scrutinized posters. The shades of Hungarian politics were well represented by the dozen which included the heirs to some of the leading parties of old, as well as recently formed political groupings. Entrepreneurs, Christians, Agrarians, Social Democrats, the offspring of the newly old ruling party, all founded parties; so did the SZDSZ (The Alliance of Free Democrats) and MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum), the two major groups able to offer a new voice to the electorate. The 1956 demands found expression again as a party, and so did the young.

A 4 per cent threshold—only those parties can be represented in Parliament that win at least 4 per cent of the popular vote—was adopted. Only six parties managed to achieve it. The handful of independents, and one representative of the

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László Kéri, *a political scientist, is frequently called on by the media to comment on current affairs.*

Agrarian Federation, who came top of the poll in an individual electorate, make up such a small group that they can be ignored for the purposes of the present analysis.

In view of the fact that today's Hungarian multiparty system was formed at a breakneck speed, so much so that even the parties themselves cannot be considered as lasting political groupings, the six new parliamentary parties need a brief introduction.

MDF

This party was born of that movement seeking spiritual and cultural renewal which, confronted with the helplessness of the political superstructure in the mid-1980s, sought alternative solutions to the most difficult social and national problems. It had particularly strong foundations among the non-Budapest middle-class, and members of the non-technical professions dissatisfied with, and often actually confronting, the old régime. Its election victory was the fruit of its ability to convince voters that, should it come to power, it would clearly move towards establishing a new order, endeavouring to carry out its objectives with a minimum of social conflict. Another important factor in its victory was that it had built up a nationwide organization far earlier than any other new party.

In defining their party's thinking, MDF leaders, especially József Antall, regard themselves as the successors of three schools of thought: they strive to create a blend of 19th century liberalism, the populist-national radicalism of the period between the two world wars, and postwar Christian Democracy. In the party's nascent state the national-populist wing dominated but, after the elections, greater emphasis was put on Christian Democracy. MDF is a gathering of widely differing political and ideological trends, and it is impossible even today to safely forecast which of its several political orientations will, in the long term, determine the thinking and political aspirations of the party that, after its victory at the polls, will rule Hungary for some years.

SZDSZ

This party was the most eager advocate of a radical change of system. Its thinking and political actions follow Western liberal patterns. SZDSZ stresses its role of successor both to the democratic opposition in the Kádár period and the urban radical philosophies of the last hundred years. At the elections, this party was mostly supported by the urban middle-class, young and middle-aged professional people and white-collar workers. Its million strong army of supporters is not as much smaller than that of the MDF as their share of parliamentary seats might lead one to believe. The huge difference is chiefly due to Hungary's two-round election system: the second round was mainly fought out by the candidates of the

MDF and the SZDSZ, with supporters of the parties which dropped out after the first round giving their votes to the MDF.

Smallholders' Party

In the coalition period of 1945 to 1948, this party had the largest number of supporters, supplying both the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister. Against that background it is no surprise that in 1990 the party relied mainly on the votes of the elderly and the support of the rural population. Their manifesto was based on the demand for the return of land to its 1947-pre-collectivization owners. In the months preceding the elections, the Smallholders' Party was hesitant about joining either the MDF or the SZDSZ in a coalition. It was obvious at that time that if there was to be a governing coalition, this party might be in a position to tip the balance, as all of the opposition parties rejected the idea of a coalition with MSZP, the Socialist party.

MSZP

Charged with carrying on where the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party—unrestricted rulers of the country for forty years—left off, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) is unable to rid itself of the tag of "heirs", even though its leaders have done their utmost to convince the politically aware public that, of the former ruling party, they represent only those undisputedly in favour of reforms, and wish to enter the race as a gathering of modern leftist forces openly flirting with Social Democracy. They clearly stood to lose the elections a long time in advance. Even the fact that the party's actual leadership was made up of otherwise popular reformists like Imre Pozsgay, Rezső Nyers, Miklós Németh, and Gyula Horn, was not enough to give them a dominant place. Their election results showed that half a million voters appreciated their efforts while still in power.

KDNP

The Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) is the only one to define itself unambigously as an ideological party. Their election results may even be considered as a surprise, as their campaign was temperate and quiet. Their Christian Democratic political credo alone would hardly have been enough to achieve the success they did; it is likely they profited considerably from the backing of the organizational system and political leaning of the Roman Catholic Church. An analysis of votes suggests that they did best in areas with Roman Catholic majorities. In the election race, the KDNP overtook the parties that had conducted far more organized and louder campaigns than theirs, showing that

tradition in Hungary still has a role at least as important as the best devices of modern electioneering.

FIDESZ

Many different conclusions can be drawn as regards this party. The Young Democrats' Association (FIDESZ) probably owes its seats in Parliament to the fact that their campaign and young campaign staff displayed a style of politicking without precedent in Hungary. Their modern, witty, youthful efforts found favour with a far larger number of people, of all ages, than genuine supporters of radical (or, from several aspects, even postmodern) politics. The success of FIDESZ must be considered a major surprise of the elections, since they earlier had been taken to be no more than a handful of young people pulling off spectacular political stunts. Few believed that such an action-oriented ad hoc group could be so quickly transformed into a party.

After the elections

Despite earlier anxieties, an overwhelming majority of voters were able to choose real political weight in the multitude of parties. Of the 7.8 million citizens entitled to vote, over 5 million, that is 65 per cent, did so. 85 per cent of those 5 million citizens cast their vote in favour of one of those six parties.

However, parties which this time failed to win seats in Parliament must not be left unconsidered. The defeat of the ex-rulers, HSWP, the Social Democrats, Environmentalists, Entrepreneurs, Agrarians, and a few tradition-bound parties does not mean that their political role is over.

The most visible result is the spectacular disappearance of the Left. The sole leftist party in Parliament today is the MSZP, with painfully few seats. The Left, however, is far stronger than suggested by that small number. Leftist voters scattered their support to the wind by casting hundreds of thousands of them in favour of small parties. Second, a majority of Hungarians voted against the previous social system: in that respect the elections were unique. In fact, examination of political preferences show that a majority of the population favours values characteristic of modern social democracy. In the present distribution of parties, however, this preference did not really surface.

The six parties in Parliament now cannot be regarded as permanent political alliances, either. In the spring of 1990, millions of Hungarian voters sized up the available political supply. Another reason for emphasizing the temporary nature of the results is that the total number of members of the major parties hardly exceeds 300,000—meaning that a mere 4–5 per cent of voters belong to parties today. Over nine tenths have not yet chosen a party they are prepared to join. This is worth stressing, all the more so since now, in the post-election period, parliamentary parties like to refer to their voters as if they were members.

Parties	Individual constituency	Regional constituency	National list	Total seats
MDF (Democratic Forum)	115	40	10	165
SZDSZ (Free Democrats)	34	34	23	91
FKgP (Smallholders)	11	16	17	44
MSZP (Socialists)	1	14	18	33
FIDESZ (Young Democrats)	1	8	12	21
KDNP (Christian Democrats)	3	8	10	21
Agrarian Federation	1	–	–	1
Independent	6	–	–	6
Joint candidate	4	–	–	4
	176	120	90	386

It is not all that unlikely that the social conflicts of the early 1990s will create new parties that no one can even imagine now.

As could be predicted, the MDF formed a governing coalition with the parties whose political character was closest to its own. On May 3 the new Parliament authorised József Antall to form a government. Its presentation in late May was, however, preceded by a most important event: an arrangement between the two most powerful parties.

The leaders of the MDF and the SZDSZ signed an accord in which they made mutual concessions to each other. MDF, the election winner, agreed that SZDSZ, the largest opposition party, should nominate the President of the Republic to be elected by Parliament. In turn, SZDSZ agreed to various types of legislation no longer being subjected to the need of a two-thirds majority as the Constitution prescribed. Thus the SZDSZ facilitated the government's work. The coalition of the MDF and two small parties did not have a two-thirds majority, meaning that SZDSZ would be in a position to block much important legislation. The compromise between the two major parties made it clear that József Antall did not intend to form a grand coalition. Countless independent observers and political power groups, as well as part of the press urged such a coalition, albeit the MDF and the SZDSZ had fought a sometimes overheated election campaign.

The new cabinet was sworn in before Parliament on May 23. Eight portfolios are held by MDF, four by the Smallholders, one by the Christian Democrats and three by independents. József Antall read out his programme for national renewal and requested a hundred days of grace on the part of the press, the opposition and the public.

The government was confronted by extremely difficult hurdles that had to be taken at the start. Ministerial and other governmental top posts were filled practically overnight by people whose past in opposition to the old regime was clean just because they had been nowhere near office. But what had been an advantage during the election campaign showed its negative side once the job had

to be got down to. All that made countless conflicts likely. It was obvious that this cabinet would make quite a number of errors. After the first hundred days both government and opposition drew up a balance. The differences between the two assessments are naturally great.

The government assumes it has done all that was possible to do, and looks on the creation of a new administrative structure as its most important achievement so far. In the process of restructuring, several ministries were abolished and a new pattern of government was created. Its essence is the endeavour to distinguish between administrative and political action, preparing for what may be frequent reshuffles. Should a cabinet minister have to be replaced for political reasons, there must be an organization structure that guarantees the continued smooth running of the department.

The other essential change is that the Prime Minister's Office has considerably grown, both in staff and expertise, to unprecedented importance. This is largely the result of the present Constitution providing far more power for the Prime Minister than the previous one had.

The government looks on the heavy turn-over of administrative officials to be another achievement. Of the 134 top-ranking civil servants, 94 are new; and only 38 were in high positions under the previous government. An emphasis is given to the priority of foreign policy, since in a few months Hungary's international connections have undergone considerable restructuring. Pursuing intensive diplomatic activites, the government has tried to put an end to the country's unilateral political dependence, trying to replace it with a far more balanced foreign policy orientation, establishing close ties with several international centres. The visits paid abroad by top officials, led by the Prime Minister, indicate the possible new directions of the country's foreign policy. Brussels, Bonn, Paris, Rome were all destinations pointing at the government's intentions concerning Hungary's manifold—but uniformly West European—links. Hungary is a most active participant of the Pentagonale, a regional cooperation involving five nations.

Analysing its own activity, the government claims to have done what it could in dealing with the economic crisis. It considers the increasingly difficult problems of galloping inflation, the budget deficit and the slow changes in ownership to be what the previous government had left behind. A hundred days were not enough to produce a marked change. All that could be done was try to offer the economy a very different management-organizational background that would point towards privatization.

The opposition parties' analysis of the government's first hundred days was very different. In their opinion, the government chiefly dealt with trivia and undertook to solve problems that were highly visible but highly insignificant (e.g., renaming streets, an amnesty, the re-introduction of religious education, etc.). As concerns the reform of the administrative and organizational structure, the opposition fears that the victorious party not only intends to place its men in administration posts, but make it a case of jobs for the boys in many areas. Rather than expertise, so the criticism went, the dominant feature in many new

appointments was the sort of personal connections which the MDF had promised to do away with before the elections.

The primary point of opposition criticism is that the government says one thing and does another. In all spheres of the administration it has started a strong drive for centralization, contrary to the democratization it promised to undertake. All signs point towards the Prime Minister and his office gaining unprecedented executive power.

It should be pointed out that, almost since its establishment, the new government has been engaged in a battle with the media. In the course of a series of mutual misunderstandings, the government had good reason to complain that support and criticism were disproportional. The media, on the other hand, felt that much the government did endangered that freedom of the press which they had gained in two years of tough struggle. They were not willing to give that up even for the sake of the prestige of a democratically elected new government.

Viewing the problems in a broader context, one can see that the rules of political behaviour have to be learnt again from scratch, not only by the voters and the media but also by Parliament and its six parties, as well as the government itself. It will be a tiresome business to learn practical politics in circumstances where all kinds of decisions are promptly met by counter-arguments and opinions of organized political forces.

By far the greater part of the conflicts and contests can be regarded as natural. However, accepting this in theory and civilized political co-existence are two very different things. The difficulties might be best seen in a brief analysis of the new Parliament's work.

The new Parliament

The new Parliament, elected in the spring, is something special, and not only because for the first time in forty years it consists of members of several parties. An examination of its composition allows one to draw a number of interesting conclusions. Over 90 per cent of the 386 members are university graduates who became public figures in the last two years of high-speed political changes. An overwhelming majority of them used to earn their living as teachers, journalists, lawyers or scholars and scientists. Within that over-representation of professionals, arts graduates are in a majority. When preparing for the election, the parties competed for non-technical professional men and women interested in politics. There is no great difference between the individual parties' leaderships and parliamentary representatives.

Thanks to live television and radio coverage, people can keep a wary eye over the work of the new multiparty Parliament. It is no use denying the nationwide irritation. Parliament is often likened to a sort of intellectual circus. Most of the members of Parliament are new to politics and find it difficult to tolerate the different opinions of their fellows. They are expected to deal expertly with daily duties whose dimensions, character and structure they had known nothing about. Neither the members, nor their parties find it easy to cope with this learning

process and the difficulties of the first few months. With all its controversy, this Parliament can be said to serve as a paradigm for a future (and more democratic) public life.

The new Parliament doubtlessly works in a way very different from that of its predecessor. Weekly sessions have been introduced, a novelty after forty years. This innovation was dictated by necessity, as an astounding quantity of legislation has to be tackled. Up to mid-September 1990, forty-six Acts were passed or amended, and at least the same amount has to be dealt with in the final quarter of the year. An essentially new contitutional system must be created.

The need to learn parliamentary skills was a great challenge to the parties themselves as well. After the more spectacular, easier (and more irresponsible) duties of campaigning, they are not yet fully prepared for parliamentary debate. New responsibilities will force them to improve expertise and to professionalize operations. This also implies differentiation within the parties.

Through the media the country is able to monitor week by week the soundness of its electoral decision of last spring. Feeling this pressure, the parties often confuse parliamentary work with ill-disguised electioneering. This was especially visible in September, preceding the local elections.

Some conclusions

The political system in Hungary has so far changed peacefully. Many people celebrate this as if the change of system can already be considered as having been completed. This jubilant mood, however, does not seem to be well-founded. It is far truer to say that in the Hungary of the last few months, the political and institutional bases of a possible change of political systems have been laid down. A multiparty structure has emerged, the general and local elections are over; a functional Parliament and government, a legitimate President of the Republic and political élite, carefully screened and sifted by the local government elections, provide the institutional framework of a future democratic Hungary. Creating institutions, however, is not the same thing as actually operating them.

Compared to the actual social forces behind them, the parties carry too much clout in public life. They endeavour to seize hold of all areas that can be described as political battlefields. In doing so they block the way of independent professional interest groups, hindering the creation of local and other associations. Hungary's new body politic is still a torso in the sense that the re-distribution of power has so far taken place only at the top. The roof of the organizational system is already in place while, for instance, the borderline between political organization and non-political association is not yet clear.

Extreme partisanship is understandable, when changes are compared to the previous one-party rule. Yet if the non-partisan sphere and non-political organizations cannot develop side by side with the parties, the whole process of democratization will be derailed and put on the wrong track.

Local government elections

The first round of the local government elections was held on September 30th. The procedural rules prescribed a minimum 40 per cent poll, and as a result the round only proved decisive in villages with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants, which managed to elect their mayors and councillors.

All the party leaders were surprised by the extent of the victory of independent candidates. Party representatives only obtained 15 to 20 per cent of the seats in villages. This reflects both weaknesses in grass-roots organization, and a certain lack of confidence, the fruit of what is perceived as six months of sterile inter-party strife. In more than 90 per cent of the villages, over half of those entitled to exercised their franchise.

Not so in the towns. At the second round on October 14th—no longer subjected to minimum poll provisions—barely thirty per cent turned up. The choice was predominantly among party candidates, therefore the way the million and a half participants cast their vote gives a pretty good indication of the support enjoyed in the autumn by the six parties represented in Parliament. The government coalition lost considerable ground compared to the spring elections. In the majority of towns the liberal opposition, that is the Free Democrats (SZDSZ) and Young Democrats (FIDESZ) did much better. In the county seats, that is the larger towns, the liberal victory proved decisive.

The opposition victory was overwhelming in Budapest. The government coalition only came out on top in one of twenty-two districts, the first, and there was a dead heat in the fourteenth. Such a shift in the political mood of Budapest within a short six months is not easy to explain—at the spring parliamentary elections the Democratic Forum (MDF), the principal government party, had been victorious in Budapest. No doubt a certain disappointment in the performance of the MDF-led government is largely responsible.

The result is a complicated, and difficult to chart, political equilibrium in Hungary. Since the spring elections an MDF-led three-party coalition dominates Parliament and provides the government. The autumn elections, on the other hand, mean that the liberal opposition dominates all the more important towns and cities. It remains to be seen whether the two great political forces will prove able to manage this fragile political structure in peaceful and fair cooperation.

The huge electoral absenteeism in the autumn is another question. Professional politicians tend to blame the apathy of the public. Some of the commentators however have drawn attention to the fact that the parties appear to give disproportionate attention to their own peculiar problems.

Not even a fortnight had passed when the public provided a spectacular denial of any notions of indifference which some might entertain. At the end of October, the huge and sudden rise in petrol prices prompted tens of thousands to occupy bridges and traffic junctions. The country came to a standstill for three days. The government gave way; lengthy and embarrassing negotiations and a demonstration unprecedented in Hungary finally ended in a compromise.

The new political system which is taking shape in 1990 still displays numerous deficiencies. The differentiated participation of structured social and economic forces in political life has not come true yet, and doubts must be entertained concerning the conflict-management skills of the new system.

Should that happen, only the power structure would change and not the political system: the one-party dictatorship would be replaced by a multi-party one. All possibilities are still open; the dangers indicated here can be avoided, but finishing up in a dead end is just as likely.

There is still too much we do not know about the factors that will basically determine the immediate future of the country. We do not know what kinds of political structures will come into being in the neighbouring countries, nor do we see clearly whether what happens there will further or hinder democratization in Hungary. We do not know what difficulties, emerging from the possible imminent collapse of the Soviet Union, may burden Hungary's economy and everyday life. It is not clear how much Hungary will receive from Western countries to help her back on her feet, even though it is quite obvious that neither Hungary nor the other East European countries will be able to form functioning market economies on their own. The question of what political alliances, over and above economic links, will determine the place of this country in the integration of Europe has not yet been answered either.

The party structures cannot be considered as final yet, as large sections of society, representing millions, are not really represented by any of the parties.

Finally, the murkiest problem is that of domestic political tensions accompanying the expected major economic and social changes in the near future. We do not know what will happen. Hundreds of thousands will be affected by unemployment. We cannot predict the cost of stopping runaway inflation, nor how it will be done or when. We have no way of knowing how property reform will restructure the basic conditions of Hungary's economy, nor who will be the beneficiaries and losers in that process. Today we cannot even guess the amount and source of the capital the country can expect, nor the depth to which it will plough up the traditional economic order and social relations.

Now, in the early autumn of 1990, the problem of property is going to be the one whose solution may, even in the long run, determine the final outcome of all other economic problems. The politically most sensitive issue, land ownership, has not yet been settled. That issue in itself is more than a property debate, as the future of the governing coalition also hangs in the balance, in view of the declared policy of the Smallholders' Party. On the other hand, the undecided problem of privatization or re-privatization not only keeps the identity of future owners in the dark but also the share and scope of foreign capital. It is no exaggeration to say that most conflicts are brewing around the problems of ownership.

The real problems are still ahead and one can hardly hope to overcome them in the early 1990s. A new political institutional environment seems to be taking shape. It is still young and fragile, but the problems are enormous. It may be more accurate to say that a start has been made on laying the foundations of a new system of political institutions, and that nothing has happened as yet to turn this process in an undesirable or irreversible direction. This is what we can see in early autumn, made wiser by the experience of two elections.

Tibor Fényi

The Hungarian Minority in Slovakia. Part II

Pressure on the national minorities diminished, paradoxically, in consequence of the Communist *coup d'état.* In 1948 power was seized by the Communists both in Czechoslovakia and in Hungary. Stalin was preparing for a third world war and thus opposed open conflict between two satellites. This is why he instructed the party bosses to deal with problems in the spirit of "proletarian internationalism." This more or less meant that Czechoslovakia had to stop the assimilation of Hungarians in the country areas, and completely. On the other hand, Hungary had to cease criticizing, even to the slightest degree, Czechoslovak treatment of the Hungarian minority. True, at the start there was no cause for this, since Stalinist domination somewhat improved relations, which had earlier been extremely strained. On 5 March 1949, the Hungarians' first and only "organization of cultural transmission" under Communist guidance, the Cultural Union of the Hungarian Working People of Czechoslovakia (CSEMADOK) was founded. A few days later *Új Szó,* the first Hungarian-language daily (the only one until 1989), began publication. In the beginning it was merely a literal translation of the daily paper of the Slovak Communist Party. But the greatest change was that, after a gap of five years, teaching started in Hungarian schools on 1 September 1949. As a consequence of the preceding evictions, altogether 110 Hungarian teachers (5 per cent of the earlier staff) were recruited. Teachers had to be given crash-course training lasting a few weeks. That of course showed in the years to come. It should be noted that a quarter of those trained in this way were still teaching twenty years later, many of them without ever being in a position to obtain higher qualifications.

In 1973/74 teaching in Hungarian was provided in 22 secondary schools, in 1979 only ten of them were functioning, nine others were under Hungarian-Slovak common direction. None of these operated a students' hostel, and the children had to commute 50 to 100 kilometers a day or attend a Slovak school.

After forty years, graduates of universities or diploma holders of other institutions of higher learning make up only 1.8 per cent of the Hungarians in Slovakia, the corresponding figure for Slovaks is 3.6 per cent. Vocational training in Hungarian takes place only in bricklaying and farming. Training in all other trades is only in Czech or Slovak. This indicates a policy of directing the members of minorities towards the worst-paid occupations.

The first post-war census took place on 31 March 1950. At that time the population of Slovakia was stated to be 3,442,317—including 354,532 (10 per cent) who declared themselves to be Hungarians. This

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figure suggests that at least 150,000 re-Slovakized Magyars still declared themselves Slovaks out of fear. (The term "re-Slovakize" refers to Slovaks who are claimed to have been Magyarized in the past.) The re-Slovakized were still discriminated against; "those who are not fully aware of their national affiliation" could not join CSEMADOK and could not enrol their children in Hungarian-language schools. Re-Slovakization was invalidated by the Central Committee of the Slovak Communist Party as late as 8 April 1954, at the time of the trial of "Slovak bourgeois nationalists," a typically Stalinist show trial in which Gustav Husak and four others were given long sentences. "Bourgeois nationalism" implied not only anti-Hungarian but anti-Czech prejudice. The central Czech bureaucracy aimed to weaken the moderate political autonomy which the "Slovak National Uprising" had won for Slovakia in the closing days of the war. The desire to establish monocentric Communist power could not be reconciled with the moderate efforts at Slovak autonomy.

The Magyars of Slovakia were then oppressed as others living in subjection to the Stalinist dictatorship were oppressed. They were specially afflicted by recurring regional reorganizations. Areas with a Hungarian majority were broken up by changes in administrative boundaries. But this period—in comparison with the post-war years—was one of quiet oppression. That the fears of the minorities gradually abated was also reflected by the census of 1 March 1961: at that time Slovakia's total population was 4,174,046, and of the total, 518,782 (12.4 per cent) declared themselves to be Hungarians. This fact was perhaps the first to give rise to a nervous reaction on the part of Slovak nationalists. These were unable to accept that the number of Hungarians was growing both in absolute figures and as a percentage. They did not take into account that the greater part of the growth of 2.1 per cent and some 160,000 was due to the fact that those who had been re-Slovakized by coercion dared to declare their original ethnic allegiance. Instead, specious explanations were devised to show that the number of Hungarians could not have increased in such proportions for the past ten years, and that the Slovaks in the villages of Southern Slovakia had been forcibly assimilated by the Hungarians. All this, however, was at the time only an emotional undertone, since Prague did not think it important that Hungarians on the border, far from the capital, should be more forcefully assimilated. In December 1963 the Czechoslovak Communist Party even denounced the population transfer as re-Slovakization, then, after the removal of Prime Minister Viliam Siroky, who himself had taken part in the eviction drive, reasonable discussion, open for the period, could take place about the years when Benes persecuted the Magyars. All this hardly aroused enthusiasm amongst members of the Slovak nationalist Matica Slovenska. They argued that the Hungarians should be dealt with more harshly, that Prague was not willing to support Slovak national interests, that democratization was "impardonably partial" towards the ethnic minorities.

Already in 1965, at the time of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Ludovit Stur's birth, feelers were made in support of the Slovak policy of confederation. The campaign at the time was overtly directed both against Czechs and Hungarians, and was also anti-Semitic. Not long afterwards the newspaper *Predvoj* carried an article by Andre Repka "Denationalization?" Soon letters to the editor and articles in the Slovak press maintained that Slovaks living in a Hungarian environment in Southern Slovakia were exposed to the danger of losing their national character. Jan Sindelka wrote a book on denationalization (under the title *The Nationality Problem and Socialism)* arguing that, as the social-

ist revolution became universal, the whole world would speak one language. The first step in this direction would be the disappearance of antagonism between the nations, then the nations would come to know each other, and finally they would merge, more precisely, smaller nations would acquire the culture of greater ones. As part of the process, Hungarians would be assimilated by the Slovak nation. But it fails to explain why it is necessary to take this intermediate step, why the Hungarian minority could not wait until that coming universal language will assimilate them together with the Slovaks. Unfortunately, this book is not the work of a philosopher with a somewhat odd interpretation of the classics of Marxism, but one commissioned by Slovak nationalists, a work expounding chauvinist policy in a Marxist language, a portent of the historical continuity of the demand for the elimination of the Hungarian minority.

The Hungarian minority at the time of the Prague Spring

In January 1968 the plenary meeting of the Czechoslovak Communist Party adopted a resolution on the need for democratization, on freedom of speech and freedom of the press. At the Party's invitation, CSEMADOK on 12 March submitted proposals for setting up a minorities committee or secretariat in the Slovak legislative and executive bodies. It was proposed that the 1960 regional reorganization should be rectified with the view of improving standards of education, making it possible to pursue studies in Hungary. All this added up to a modest proposal, which made no mention of regional autonomy for the minority, and contained a few elements of cultural autonomy only. The Action Programme issued by the Czechoslovak Communist Party barely a month later, on 10 April, went much further. True, the main objective was the normalization of relations between Czechs and Slovaks, but it suggested also the drafting of a "nationality statute" for the Hungarian, Ukrainian, German and Polish minorities. A declaration that non-Slovaks also "have the right to decide independently in matters involving them," aroused indignation among Slovak nationalists.

The Slovak nationalists refused to recognize any sort of democratization which would grant the Hungarians more rights and greater opportunities. That is why orthodox Marxists, opposing Prague's democratic leadership, combined with chauvinist groups disapproving of the extension of minority rights in the course of democratization (these latter included Matica Slovenska, the Slovak Writers' Federation and a few departments of Komensky University) to organize resistance to Prague. Matica forwarded demands to party and government leaders, calling on them to make the use of the Slovak language obligatory, "to inform public opinion of the heroic and arduous struggle waged by the inhabitants of Southern Slovakia against Magyarization" and, since the Slovaks of Hungary were assimilating, to take measures, by way of reciprocity, to promote the assimilation of the Hungarians of Slovakia.

Beginning in May 1968, Matica asked Slovaks in villages with a mixed populations to sign "declarations of complaint" printed in advance, and organized national marches through Hungarian-inhabited areas with the aim of provocation and intimidation. Newspapers were filled with proclamations and articles as well as with letters to the editor, written in identical terms, showing anti-Hungarian prejudice. The goal of all this was to insist that the rights to be granted to Hungarians must be curtailed, since in some (alleged and unidentified) places there had even been attempted lynchings merely because Slovaks wanted to speak in Slovak in Slovakia. Nevertheless, the Action Programme published by the Slovak Communist Party on 24 May went even

further than the Prague programme. It envisaged the appointment of national commissions of wide authority on both legislative and executive levels, but these bodies could be made effective only sporadically. The invasion on 21 August 1968 by troops of the Warsaw Pact made it impossible for the democratic experiment in the country to continue. What had a particularly negative impact on the situation of the Hungarian minority was the participation of the Hungarian Communist government in the invasion. Because of Hungary's participation (insisted on by Moscow), the long-standing distrust of that Hungarian minority of Slovakia became even greater. The Hungarians were then regarded as a sort of Fifth Column and viewed as a menace to the territorial integrity of the country.

It is a strange irony of fate that when the Hungarian Parliament and thereafter the government (the first of the countries which had taken part in the aggression to do so) apologized to the peoples of Czechoslovakia for what had happened in 1968, the country, then headed by Jakes, again declared the Hungarians there to be a Fifth Column. At that time, however, they were said to be citizens undermined and confused by the "revisionist and reformist" Hungarian Television. The dogmatic Czechoslovak leadership could express its anger at the Hungarian Republic only by vilifying the Hungarians living there.

Husak's two decades

To counteract Prague's efforts at democratization, the Soviet Union, relying on the principle of "divide and rule," placed Slovak nationalists at the head of Czechoslovakia. As early as the 27 October 1968, the new leardership asked the National Assembly to vote for Constitutional Act No. 143, which transformed the republic into a federal state. This limited the voice which the Prague leaders had regarding Slovakia and made the minorities the local affair of Slovakia. At the time Constitutional Act No. 144, regulating the status of the minorities, was passed. It was an evil omen that, with an earlier version, more favourable to the minorities, already printed on the official presses as the definitive text, Husak altered it on the night of the vote, leaving out cultural and economic autonomy as well as the establishment of the promised central agencies.

In the course of 1969, Husak and his cohorts consolidated their power, and from that time on they gradually curtailed the rights of Hungarians. In March 1969 they refused to allow Hungarians to establish an independent youth organization on the lines of those of the Germans and Poles of Bohemia and Moravia. The next spring the chief ideologue of the minority question, Juray Zvara, wrote articles on the incompatibility of cultural autonomy and Lenin's views. Thereafter politicians of Hungarian ethnicity were removed from office. On 29 April 1970, Minister László Dobos was relieved of his functions, then Rezső Szabó, Vice-President of the Slovak National Council, was dismissed, and the office of "Minister without portfolio for Minorities Affairs" was abolished. It should be noted that this purge applied not only to Hungarians. Czechs who had played a leading role at the time of the Prague Spring, or who had not afterwards applauded the occupation, were also removed from their posts. The aim was to oust those who endorsed the Spring of 1968, to force them into internal exile, so as to make it possible to replace them by Slovaks who backed the policy of restoration. The Czech voice in matters of the Slovak half of the country was practically silenced by means of reorganization into a federal state; yet the Czech regions of the country were also governed by a large number of Slovak politicians, so that Slovak predominance became oppressive, particularly in Federal Government.

Starting with the early seventies, it was made clear that the main object of action against the Hungarian minority was

to restrict their education. Thus, from 1973 onwards, teacher training in Hungarian was cut down bit by bit at the Nyitra Teachers' College, and the number of scholarship-holders sent to Hungary was radically reduced. On the pretext of centralization, village schools teaching in Hungarian began to be amalgamated and closed down, while those with Slovak as the language of instruction, continued. Hungarian and Slovak secondary schools were merged; to begin with, they were put under a joint head, then the number of Hungarian classes and of the pupils to be admitted were reduced. In the academic year 1973/74, teaching in Hungarian was provided in 22 secondary schools, in 1979 only ten of them were functioning, nine others were under Hungarian-Slovak common direction. None of these operated a students' hostel and the children had to commute 50 to 100 kilometers a day—or they chose a Slovak school. In 1977, at the order of Slovak party leaders, a plan was formulated for the total suppression of Hungarian education. It first came over the wires of the CTK press agency on 25 March 1978. In response thereto the Hungarians formed the Legal Aid Committee of the Hungarian Minority of Czechoslovakia, headed by the geologist Miklós Duray, a signatory of Charta 77. The aim of the Committee was to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act concerning human rights, which are applicable to national minorities, and in fact to ensure education in Hungarian.

The Czechoslovak government did not look favorably on this organization either, and several times laid charges against its leader, Miklós Duray, who was arrested at his place of employment on 29 July 1979. By September more than fifty Hungarian intellectuals had been charged, and there were at least a hundred house searches, interrogations and passport withdrawals. Duray was arrested for the second time when the Committee arranged for the mailing of more than ten thousand letters in 1982, protesting against the rehashed plan for closing down Hungarian schools. Court proceedings lasted until 22 February 1983. He was charged with organizing a plot to overthrow the republic. Following vigorous international protests, however, this unprovable charge was adjourned *sine die*. For the third time the political police arrested Duray, and three of his associates, on 10 May 1984, on account of the legal aid activity of the Committee. He was held in custody, without a charge being laid, and naturally, without a sentence passed; he was only released under a presidential amnesty a year later, on 10 May 1985.

According to information leaked by people close to the Hungarian Politbureau of the time, but never confirmed by documents, Husak obtained the personal endorsement of Leonid Brezhnev for Duray's arrest. Brezhnev had also informed János Kádár. All this seems likely owing to the fact that at the time of Duray's arrest, a prominent Hungarian Communist journalist and later Hungarian ambassador to Switzerland, published an article approving of Duray's imprisonment, restating the official Slovak nationalist accusations. It illustrates the Orwellian functioning of Communist courts of law that the Czechoslovak authorities later used this article as proof of Duray's anti-Slovak attitude. It should be noted that this was the only proof they had.

International protest was instrumental in prompting world organizations to turn their attention to the Czechoslovak government's violations of law, and to keep on reminding it of its obligations under the Helsinki Final Act. And since Charta 77 also declared that it supported respect for minority rights, international public opinion understood that Hungarians in Slovakia were waging a struggle for their rights against the nationalist, Communist government intent on Slovakizing them. In Husak's days Hungarians from Slovakia

Slovaks in Hungary

It was about two hundred years ago, after the expulsion of the Turks from Hungary, that Slovaks migrated south from the northern parts of the country. They established themselves in large numbers in the southeastern corner of the Hungarian Plain, in the environment of Békéscsaba, and in scattered settlements elsewhere; everywhere they live in Hungarian surroundings.

Their assimilation has become faster in this century. Those wandering away from the main body of the nation usually assimilate faster than those who live in regions contiguous with the main area, where the language is spoken, albeit a state border may separate them. People having a strong sense of national identity could and did move voluntarily to their country at the time of the population transfer—which resulted in faster assimilation in the case of those remaining behind.

The figures published by the two countries widely differ. Hungarians speak of census returns showing fewer than twenty thousand Slovaks in Hungary, but Slovaks claim that 100 to 110,000 Slovaks live in Hungary. Formerly they objected with good reason to the Hungarian Communist government allowing them only optional education in Slovak.

were not free to visit Hungary; they were in practice prevented from taking out subscriptions to Hungarian newspapers and magazines; ten to twelve persons a year were allowed to attend school in Hungary, and at least half of these were Slovaks; public worship and the practice of religion in general were hindered; obstacles were raised in the way of Hungarians who wanted to study at Czechslovak universities; Hungarian-language kindergardens were almost completely eliminated; Hungarian associations were prohibited, Hungarian newspapers were subjected to censorship, the publication of new periodicals and newspapers was made impossible; a systematic regional policy carved up territories which still had a compact Hungarian population; the regions inhabited by Hungarians were deliberately impoverished (thus, during the five years between 1975 and 1980 public allocation of investment funds in the Hungarian-inhabited parts of Southern Slovakia was only a quarter of the amount granted to Slovak-inhabited regions).

Chauvinist regulations for the most part had an effect on private lives as well. Thus, for example, the use—even in everyday speech—of the original Hungarian names of 26 towns and villages was forbidden. (The basis of this prohibition was that the villages and towns in question had been named after the revivers of the Slovak nation, e.g., Hurban, Safarik, etc., and "Slovak national dignity would be impaired if somebody were to disregard this fact.") But a law also forbade the use of Pozsony in Hungarian or Pressburg in German for the city of Bratislava. The Czechoslovak government addressed a note of protest to the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs when a journalist on Hungarian Radio gave his by-line as Pozsony and not Bratislava. Another protest note objected to the fact that a book of illustrations of medieval Hungarian architecture contained a picture of Pozsony

National minorities in Hungary

In the more than thirty years that it lasted, Kádárism permitted no more than reform-Communism, drawing the line at pluralism. Freedom of assembly and association or freedom of the press existed only on paper, and citizens could only occasionally exercize these rights. Primary schooling was a state monopoly exercised in an increasingly centralized manner, in accordance with the logic of Communist state organization. Of course, all this made things still worse, rendering it less possible for the ethnic minorities to create and maintain independent schools, cultural organizations and societies, newspapers or even churches of their own. Thus, although the Kádár régime was certainly not imbued by the spirit of Hungarian nationalism, its opposition to pluralism, and its mistrust of independent initiative, ultimately accelerated the assimilation of the minorities in Hungary, who live only in small dispersed groups. In vain did every ethnic group have a national association of its own, its leaders' authority derived from their loyalty to the Communist Party, and not from their representation of their membership.

As the first rifts appeared on the surface of the monolithic Communist system, the scope of action for national minorities grew. Hungarians, unlike Rumanians or Slovaks, were not shocked by new ethnic organizations that were no longer under Communist influence, by an ethnic press or schools. In recent years no Hungarian has objected to the non-Hungarian parentage of any politician. Károly Grósz is perhaps one of the least popular Hungarian politicians, but no one ever mentions his Slovak mother. What people objected to was his leadership of the anti-reformist wing of the Communist Party.

Democratic Hungary has declared that it intends to guarantee the national minorities particular collective rights, in addition to the civil rights which are due to one and all. The first sign of this has been the opening by Parliament of an office for the ombudsman of each minority. This official is freely elected by members of the given national minority. The expenses of his office are paid out of central state funds. The ombudsman has the right of veto on legislation concerning the given minority, is free to attend Parliamentary sessions and committee meetings, etc.

An Ethnic Department attached to the government has been established. Thanks to the greater possibilities under democracy of establishing schools and guaranteeing freedom of eduation, as well as to the promulgation of a law on association and a press law of European standards, the minorities can freely exercise such rights. The Hungarian government freely allows individuals to study in neighbouring countries and, by virtue of existing agreements, accepts qualifications obtained there. It has endorsed appeals asking for teachers to be seconded from Slovakia, Germany and Yugoslavia. It grants residence and labour permits to such persons immediately on the basis of credentials issued by home authorities. In spite of the present serious economic difficulties, it has increased above the average the allocations in aid of the schools where teaching is in a minority language. A new secondary school, teaching in Slovak and German with a students' hostel, as well as a secular Jewish school (the first to function in the East Central European region; there is already a school for the Jewish religious community) enrolled pupils in September 1990. A committee of the European Parliament has recently examined whether Hungary fulfils, in respect of minority rights, the conditions for membership, and it has found both the legal regulations and the present-day practice to be acceptable.

T. F.

Castle (where for some centuries the kings of Hungary had been crowned.) According to the Slovaks, castles built by Hungarians on territory they had unlawfully occupied for 1000 years were not part of Hungarian history, since that territory *today* belongs to Slovakia. And one could continue citing examples.

Kádár's Hungary did not want a confrontation with the Slovak nationalists. Kádár's basic principle was that the Soviet leadership only tolerated the more liberal internal conditions in Hungary as long as it could be sure that the country, in its foreign policy, fully supported Moscow. The Kádár régime also expected that, if it closed its eyes to the grievances of the Magyars of Czechoslovakia, Husak would, in exchange, not object in Moscow to the Hungarian economic and social reforms. Later, however, it became clear that this expectation was mistaken. Hungary's liberalization strenghtened the anti-Husak reformist forces in Czechoslovakia, who thought that this proved that Moscow might be still more tolerant of the Prague leadership. For that very reason it was in Husak's basic interest to foil Hungarian reforms, and to complain to Moscow against Hungary all the time. In order to suppress his own subjects' sympathy with the way Hungary was going, he pledged support to traditionally anti-Hungarian Slovak nationalism, especially at the lower levels of local goverment. Thus the Husak era was a period of twofold oppression of Hungarians: they suffered from both the oppressive measures of the Communist dictatorship and anti-Hungarian nationalism.

After the gentle revolution

The Hungarian minority of Czechoslovakia was among the first to actively support the revolution that brushed aside the Communist régime. Of some help to them in this respect was perhaps the fact that they had witnessed Hungary's successful long march out of dictatorship. Even before the Pozsony actions they brought into being the Independent Hungarian Initiative, a companion organization of the liberal leading force of the Slovak revolution, the Movement of Publicity against Violence. In the euphoric days of the revolution, the conflicts between nations vanished. A Hungarian Deputy Prime Minister, Sándor Varga, was appointed in the new government; freedom of teaching was proclaimed, and the schools closed down because of the division into regions were reopened; new, independent and unattached newspapers were licenced; freedom of travel was restored, and it was to be expected that prejudices would gradually disappear under Vaclav Havel's presidency. A few weeks later, however, Slovak nationalist forces closed ranks and showed irritation because of the minorities' demand for fulfilment of the promises made at the time of the revolution. They persistently opposed a Hungarian university at Komárom and the restoration of the traditional districts in the country before parliamentary elections because, if the Communist overcentralized system that deliberately repressed the minority population was upheld, the Hungarians, Ukrainians, Germans and Poles would have no real chance to send representatives of their own to Parliament.

Later, during discussion of the new constitution, it appeared that the democratic Czech leadership had little chance of effectively influencing Slovak nationalism. In March 1990 the tide of Slovak separatism rose high, large masses clamoured for an independent Slovak state. This has sometimes found expression in apparently hair-splitting debates, for example, concerning the new name of the state; in reality, however, grievances and prejudices welled up more and more insistently. Though it may well be directed against the Czech majority, it makes its effect felt all the more on the Hungarian minority.

It has become increasingly obvious that (as in Bulgaria and Rumania) larger freedom can be exploited by nationalist forces in Slovakia, too. In the beginning, it still seemed to be a sporadic occurence that extremist views found expression in anti-Semitic and anti-Hungarian grafitti. Later, however, it became clear that this time Slovak nationalism had an unprecedented desire for confrontation but not with the Hungarians. The separatist notions of the ultra-nationalist Slovak National Party became popular, and today the fight for Slovak independence enjoys broad popular support.

The main complaint of Slovakia is that the Czechs oppress the Slovak people, deplete their part of the country, have not allowed Slovak scientific and scholarly life to develop, and have prevented the Slovaks in all fields from living as a sovereign nation. Observers hold these complaints to be exaggerated, and reliable statistics demonstrate that, during the Slovak nationalist Husak years of dictatorship, the Slovak element was considerably over-represented both in the government and in the party leardership. At the same time, data show that the per capita investment ratio in the Slovak regions of the country was too high. Although this does not concern Hungarian-Slovak relations, it throws some light on Slovak separatism.

Slovak grievances concern the Czechs, but anti-Hungarian prejudices have also stengthened considerably. Just one example: the newspaper *Zmena,* with a circulation of 75,000, clamoured (see No. 39 for 1990) for the eviction of Hungarians. Later it was only due to energetic action by President Havel that a plaque was eventually removed from the house where Monsignor Tiso, the Slovak fascist leader, was born. There is a popular movement for his beatification. The new Slovak government has revived the notion of introducing the obligatory use of Slovak for all official purposes. Newspapers are again writing that "in Southern Slovakia the Magyarization of the population is proceeding apace"—although just the opposite is true. *Slovensky dennik* in its issue of June 20, 1990 quoted figures that show that the Hungarian population has increased by only 2.3 per cent, which was half of the 6.2 per cent Slovak population growth, so Magyarization was out of the question. Several members of the Slovak Writers' Association have signed an open letter describing as "the most ignominious sort of genocide in Europe" the allegedly brutal assimilation of Slovaks in Hungary. This could be used as a justification for their treatment of Hungarians. The arguments begin to remind one of the atmosphere prior to the postwar expulsion of Hungarians.

In the meantime, the minorities in Slovakia have asked the Federal Government and President Havel to help them, but the President's freedom of action is restricted, and, in addition, Havel is also subject to criticism by Slovak nationalists.

A chronicler recording these events cannot help feeling despair. Moments in recent centuries have been rare when nations living together have had such favourable opportunities for reconciliation. At the time of writing, neither the nations nor their leader, would appear to be able to exploit the opportunity.

We have all long cherished the hope that the nationalisms generated by the Communist régimes will disappear with the dictatorships. But not even a year has gone by since the collapse of the East European dictatorships, and we can already see that nationalism has regained strength faster than democracy has. Nationalists do not oppose democracy in principle but they mouth sophisticated arguments that the national question must be dealt with first. This is why it can happen that a legitimate and democratically elected parliament, which almost unanimously passed an act concerning freedom of teaching, at the same time prevents a discussion by the

House of the establishment of a Hungarian-language institution of higher learning in Komárom. There is nothing unique about this. The same has happened in Rumania. University teaching in minority languages has been made impossible there as well as in Slovakia.

The former Communist countries have inherited economic and moral bankruptcy. Citizens can still think more easily in terms of oppression than in democratic categories. Tolerance and pluralism are still only the privilege of a few in these parts, and it is to be feared that, at a time when unavoidable acts of modernization pose serious problems, governments will try to divert attention from troubles at home by exploiting nationalism. If this happens, the eastern Central European region will miss a great opportunity for reconciliation. The question, not only for the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, but for the whole region is: what will prove more important in the years to come, democracy for all, or national privileges?

The eighteen years old Attila József as a student at the University of Szeged. *See the article on p. 17.*

George Szirtes

Annus Mirabilis

From January to August 1989 I spent eight months working in Hungary. In that time there were many changes. For an outsider there is something inevitably exotic, perhaps even romantic, in the prospect of revolution, however quiet. The view from the inside may be more exciting still but different. In my peculiar position, neither completely outside nor inside (though rather less inside) it was a breathless and confusing experience. The much underrated English poet Arthur Hugh Clough spent 1849 in Rome while it was being besieged by the French. He knew quite well where his sympathies lay but he wrote in one of the verses of his *Amours de Voyages:* "What can I do? I cannot / Fight, you know; and to talk I am wholly ashamed." I did not talk much either. I asked questions but gave only evasive answers (on the rare occasions when I was asked) but even these made me feel ashamed. The effect of this was to drive the experience—my own personal experience—underground into poetry (Clough too wrote poems about his experiences in Rome), and when the poems themselves emerged and groped about they could do nothing more than record lights, moods and scraps of physical detail. My attitude or opinions, such as they were, dissolved in the ambience.

Of course, like any other human being I come with my own ready supply of opinions, principles and prejudices (moral, political, any sort you like.) I am not always sure where I got them. Principles are consciously adopted but opinions are found where they are least expected. I find I can put my hand into my pocket and pull out an opinion. It may remind me of something someone once said, it may even slightly shock me in so far as I would not consciously wish to have held that precise opinion. Indeed I may hold others in direct opposition to it. This can be a nuisance. Principles are notoriously flexible: opinions are not. Once they start to swell or bend they cease to exist by definition: they become different opinions. But they have a certain weight and it is not good to be relieved of them entirely. Who wants to become weightless? Seamus Heaney in his Oxford address, *The Redress of Poetry,* adapting Simone Weil, says of poetry that it tries to tilt the "scales of reality towards some transcendent equilibrium." It is a hard task for a poet, who would prefer not to devote his energies to producing propaganda or advertising jingles, however sincerely he believes in the product.

George Szirtes'*s latest volume of poems,* Metro, *was published by Oxford University Press in 1988. See also his essays, book reviews and translations from Hungarian poetry in recent issues of* NHQ.

Either he or she succumbs to the force of gravity or takes on what Kundera called the "unbearable lightness of being", a condition of life Kundera actually ascribed to the socialist societies he knew. I recognize in myself a tendency to try to tilt the scales of reality towards some transcendent personal equilibrium, and know too well that this can never amount to a defined programme of action; or, rather, that whatever action I choose is likely to be related less to the equilibrium of art than to the specific balance of my opinions.

Of course a synthesis is desirable and occasionally, for a short time, perhaps even achievable. This is supposed to be the perk available to politically committed poets. In the present time, under present circumstances, I would have to have all my senses stopped up not to see, hear, smell, taste and touch fragments of the body politic. Politics is the very medium in which everything appears to swim, filling the senses like water. In fact it overflows until it is no longer politics but psychology. One can drown in it. I cannot, at present, see it forming a synthesis.

Change is both liberating and terrifying. The balance between the two is merely a matter of anticipation. It is difficult to see anything from within the dynamic of change. During my eight months, we lived in central Pest, overlooking a courtyard which had a life and calendar of its own. The scrawny plants that hung down between the railings on one of the upper floors had grown luxuriant by summer. The people who in winter quickly disappeared behind doors or curtains stayed to sunbathe along the galleries. Eleven men were working on the roof of a house in Kecskeméti utca. In the yard below there was a random heap of old sinks and partly dismembered cookers. The repeated cycle of the urban yard swims in a medium of its own. Sometime in June a saxophonist wandered in and played a slow airy version of the national anthem. Children gathered and threw packets of money or food down to him.

The winter had been quite mild, and spring came early. Weeks of thick suffocating smog in February gave way to sunlight. I can retrace every step of my walk to work in the city centre. Up Szerb utca, past the garage in the basement (a garage that contained a table tennis table in almost continuous use), a little café that seemed permanently deserted, an equally small clock and watch repair shop, the old Convent of the Poor Clares with its barred windows, the grandiose portico of the Faculty of Law, the Károlyi palace opposite, the Erzsébet Hotel with the *konditorei* next door, the travel agency nearby, the Eötvös Club, and so on, past the black and empty block opposite the university library, which in its turn was covered in a permanent green body stocking that billowed in the wind, descending into the underpass at Felszabadulás tér with its increasing store of books and magazines and emerging beyond it into the heart of town.

I rarely walked down Váci utca. I don't know anyone who likes it and I can quite see why. It is a distinctly unpleasant street—not because of the buildings, not because it is pedestrianized, not even particularly because it is crowded with visitors, but because of its thin veneer of wealth. There is something ghastly about it. I don't suppose it is any worse than Oxford Street but the context is less sympathetic. Elsewhere in Budapest the pressure of recent history has turned the

buildings into some sort of living membrane. In Váci utca there is just a little too much golden age ostentation in the fittings, a little too much aggression in the fashions of its visitors. I remember once seeing a photograph of Bob Guccione (I think that was his name), the owner of *Penthouse* magazine. Black shirt, gold pendant and bracelet, a tanned tough empty face. A thousand versions of that face pass down Váci utca every hour in season. It is the life style of soft porn.

And soft porn did appear of course, in the underpasses and the railway stations. We have it in England, and I tend to think that it fulfils a function as a rather mean and minor part of the erotic brew. Surely it is hypocritical and prudish to complain. On the other hand we imagine liberty to be something ennobling, something like the great scene of the Tennis Court Oath in the French Revolution as depicted by David; we like to think that it is our better natures that are being freed from constraint. Of course it is ridiculous. Just look at that picture. Have you ever seen a bigger collection of idealized melodramatic gestures? And look what happened afterwards. (Look what happened to David!) Nevertheless, we envy the age of sensibility, its vehemence and purity. We suspect people—to some degree— may actually have felt as they are made to look. Why do we not feel that way? They get the tennis court oath. What do we get? *Playboy.*

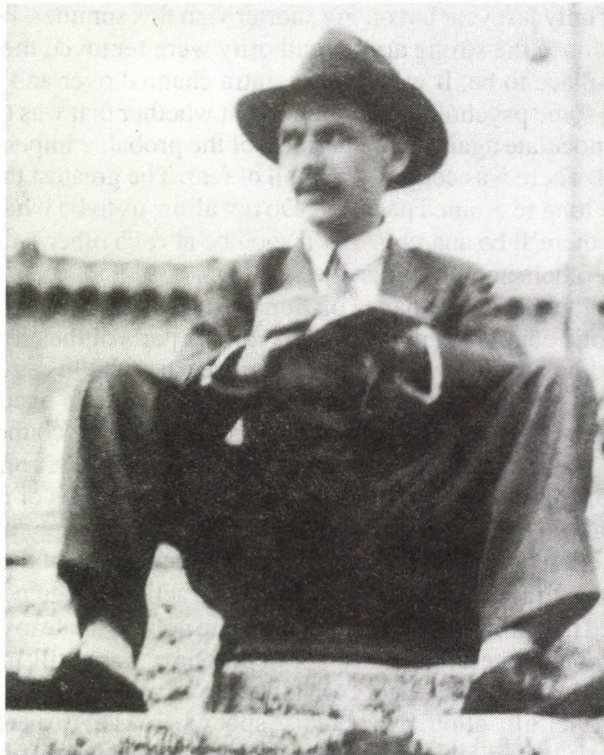
And not only *Playboy,* but gutter press, gutter politics, gutter economics. Where are we going? Down the gutter. How often did I hear variants of this sentiment, not only last year but on my shorter visit this summer. People seemed to assume that once the strong arm of authority were removed the gutter would be the natural place to be. It was like a mantra chanted over and over again. It obviously had some psychological function but whether that was to bring about, prevent or to inoculate against worst effects of the probable impending disaster, I could not tell. There was certainly a smell of fear. The greatest threat appeared to be posed by long restrained passions. Do not allow us to be what we naturally want to be, or there'll be anarchy. We'll soon be at each other's throats. People were afraid of others and of themselves.

There are a few desolate images of Budapest 1989 that I carry with me: the vagrant alcoholic couple I kept meeting in various parts of the city, she with her blank eyes and lips shining with spittle or bruises, he with his aggressive walk, his high-pitched stream of abuse; the rude officious middle aged woman who patronized and bullied the young Rumanian refugees at the council desk in the Fifth District; the savagery of the young man in Batthyány-tér underpass as he shoved the latest pornographic centre-spread under the noses of older men and women. I think o these as small explosions of malevolence, of some metaphysical evil. I don't mind them as such: there is just enough of the *poète maudit* in me to find them fascinating, even morbidly attractive. When people talked of fear, I localized it in images like these. But they do not dominate my stay, far from it. My eight months were distinctly not depressing. I am still impressed with people's warmth and intelligence. I am still in love with the city itself, so much so that I have fancifully allotted the precise spot where I am to die. Romantic and naive? Nostalgic? I don't think so. There is little comfort in any of this. If I think about it carefully, this love appears at worst a sort of vain and melancholy

egotism: vain because it knows it cannot embrace the object of its affection, melancholy because it knows its very pleasure is linked to a sense of melancholy in the object, and egotistical because the object becomes an extension of the self which admires it. All right. This may be true. My instincts as a poet nevertheless still urge me to try to tilt the scales of reality towards some transcendent equilibrium.

In my eight months I built up a three layer picture of the Hungarian national psyche—or at least as much of the psyche as seemed evident to my own admittedly narrow experience: it consisted of a brittle top surface easily agitated; a deep middle layer of bleak, flaccid, blankness; and a base of obstinate resourcefulness and energy. Under the words there was often evidence of an admirable understated buoyancy or doggedness that smelled of hope, of survival, that was distinctly moving.

"The Hungarians are a noble race of men," so Townson ended his account of his travels in Hungary, published in 1797, "and of the variety of nations amongst which I have travelled, the one I esteem the most." It is a broad compliment as compliments go. He had gathered data topographical, geological, botanical, political, legal. We compliment those from whom we learn.



Attila József on the steps of the Danube Embankment in Budapest, cca 1935.

József Barát

Letter from Moscow

I have seen *Rambo,* and not just anywhere, or at any time, on just any occasion, or in the company of just anybody. I saw it at its first showing in the Soviet Union, at its all-Union première, in the Oktiabr cinema on Kalinin Prospekt, in the company of friends working as Moscow correspondents of Radio Liberty. I'd thought I'd go once more to a cinema in the Soviet Union before finishing my posting as a correspondent there. And could there be a better movie with which to say good-bye to a crumbling, perestroika-ridden Communist regime than a Russian-dubbed *Rambo?* I doubt it.

During my assignment as correspondent I saw my first movie here five years ago. This also happened at the Oktiabr cinema where *Roadblocks* had its first run, a film that was allowed to be shown after gathering dust on the shelves for fifteen years. It was a decently enough made film about partisans, not the run of the mill type we'd seen a good many of its kind before. People were wondering why it had been banned by Romanov, the Leningrad party secretary. There was a measure of hypocrisy in that as everybody knew that Romanov had it banned because he didn't like a Jew being the leader of the partisans, a man prone to soul-searching. Anyway, five years ago we were using a different calendar, living in a different historical period, when nobody would have believed it possible that socialism would simply disappear from Eastern Europe like a bad rash; that the shops would be even emptier than they were at the time, and that people would ransack the stores and shops for the junk that had been produced for the warehouses in the Brezhnev era, recalling that shabby selection of commodities as abundance. Five years ago people were imprisoned for showing a copy of *Rambo* in their homes. Five years ago Radio Liberty had no accredited correspondents in Moscow, and if it had had, we certainly could not have fraternized with them—we would have held back through a sheer practical fear of the consequences. And if we had still for some reason struck up a friendship, we would never have gone to see *Rambo* together, for that would have counted as running our heads against the wall, anti-Soviet subversion, or what's worse, anti-state conspiracy.

But everything has changed. Soviet film distributors, who five years ago imported nothing but corn, and the worse kind at that, are today buying good contemporary films and blockbusters alike. Soviet screens are flooded with bedroom-scenes, bare breasts, blood and guts. But five years ago people went to see the films intended for their edification, whereas today they refuse to see the movies made for their entertainment and the bolstering up of their sense of reality.

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For Soviet people do not go to the cinema now that there are films worth seeing—they don't want any of them. This is hard to explain, or if it can be, it is more than odd. People don't want to see *Rambo* either. You can buy tickets five minutes before the show. The auditoria are half empty.

The last good year for Soviet films was 1986. At that time the cinema was a going concern, not as much as in the States, but, as in, say, India or China. Then a sea-change occurred, almost of a mystical kind. Within one year, attendances dropped to two-thirds, with only 640 million tickets sold, instead of the earlier 950 million and today even that is but a dream. This year attendance is said to have dwindled to 10 per cent of that figure. Out of ten movies only one breaks even, and seven are seen by practically nobody. Again, film production has failed to take note of this trend and goes on turning out footage. With increasing intensity. But then that is what one might call opulence. However, the vanishing of the cinema-going public is a puzzle for social psychology. All right, people refuse to see art films delving into the serious problems of existence, because they are fed up to the back teeth with serious problems in their own lives too. All right, they refuse to see Soviet films, because they were bored by them no less than we were. But why don't they go and see the good old American trigger-happy stuff? Because they are overworked and overstressed? It may well be so—they are overworked, they are full of complaints about price rises, they do stand in queues for hours for cigarettes, they are founding parties, organizing themselves, and in the Caucasus they are even shooting each other. And what about the youngsters? Yes, they do go to video clubs, but if we are to believe the sociologists, what they do most of all is sit in the staircases of housing estates, mess around, drink and go in for a bit of vandalism, biding their time. They sit and wait, no one can say exactly for what, but one day they will get up and go, perhaps to the cinema, but more likely somewhere else.

So, bidding my farewell to Soviet cinemas, I am sitting in the Oktiabr and all around me respectable pensioners and young girls are shedding tears for that good guy Rambo whom the Communists have tortured—almost as much as they have been, but they have not been received into America. They have good reason to like Rambo, thinking of the boy next door who was killed in Afghanistan or has returned from there and has since become a misfit. And I am thinking of this, that one day there is going to be a flourishing cultural life here. The Russians have always liked drawn-out and slow-moving films, beautiful, profound sentiments. Here there is going to be street dancing and a feverish commercial life. The dream of the crazy confectioner's, Stalinist Baroque architecture, will recall some submerged Atlantis one day. *Chto bud'et?* What will be? There will be everything, though there is nothing yet. But until everything comes, something else is brewing, something that will shake the walls so that the mouldering ones might fall.

József Saád

'Undesirable Elements'

Forced relocations 1950–3

The years between 1945 and 1953 are a chronicle of acts of massive retaliation, collective punishment and forcible population transfers. So soon after the ideological and political taboos have been lifted and the fears have been dispelled, one can only formulate hypotheses concerning the full dimensions of the breaches of law. Many people were sentenced by courts in violation of the law. But the majority were condemned by military or police proceedings or mere administrative action—"without violation of the law."[1] Those 2,500 to 2,700 families, about 10,000 to 12,000 persons (my estimate) who, between 1950 and 1953 were transferred from villages on the Yugoslav border to sparsely populated areas of the Great Hungarian Plain, east of the Tisza river, fall into the latter category.

Pasturing declined, the stock of sheep largely perished and literally yielded its place (its pens) to thousands of "undesirable elements": to those who would have formed the basis of the still non-existent, strong middle class.

Mass forced relocation in Hungary during the 1950s took place as a periodically recurring action for three years in succession. Evacuation of people from the western and southern frontier zones, and their internment, occurred mostly between 1950 and 1952, and compulsory relocation from Budapest to country areas in the summer of 1951. In the summer of 1952 several hundred families from Miskolc, Szeged and Nagykanizsa were resettled in enclosed camps. Major actions of this type included waves of deportation and internment of particular social categories ("kulaks," "reactionaries") classified as *déclassé* elements, and the internment of PoWs returning from the Soviet Union in December 1950.[2] Figures concerning the number of deportees vary. According to the most plausible estimates, the total of deportees and internees of that time can be put at 80,000 to 85,000, including about 50,000 confined in the relocation and internment camps.[3]

What was called the "cleansing of the southern frontier zone" concerned at least 300 villages within a 15 to 30 km wide zone near the border. Closely related to the political background of the drive was the need to carry out a commitment as part of an alliance, making concrete preparations for a new world war thought to be imminent. The requirement of total nationalization, acceleration of the homogenization of society ("liquidation of hostile classes"), and the rapid development of heavy industry were all preparations for war.[4] The invasion of Yugoslavia was one of the priority operational moves in the war plans of the Soviet bloc.[5]

Communist strategy—beginning with the consolidation of the Soviet system in the 1920s to the Spanish Civil War and to

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the Soviet Union of the Second World War years—had always been two-pronged: the fight against the external enemy was accompanied by bloody internecine struggles and preventive purges at home. Acting against the internal enemy—the presumptive Fifth Columnists, factions jeopardizing unity, people who, because of their class, were likely to support the external enemy—was an inseparable part of war and preparation for war. The Rajk trial between June and September 1949—in which the "Tito line" (the Yugoslav connections of the accused) was made the dominant motive of the frame-up—was meant to intimidate. A November 1949 Cominform resolution provided for stepping up the struggle against "warmongers and their toadies." The spring and summer of 1950 saw an organized punitive campaign against the "internal enemy", headed by Ernő Gerő, the number two of the Party. Gerő had an international reputation as an organizer of subversive action abroad and of police terror "at home".[6]

The anti-kulak campaign was intensifying. The "kulak lists" were made public[7], not only economic sanctions (farming methods, prescribed by the authorities, unrealistic produce delivery obligations) and psychological pressure (public denunciation and humiliation of "kulaks"), but physical violence as well (beating, internment) were part of everday village life. In the summer of 1950, growing pressure found expression in the multiplication of arson cases and various provocations all over the country. After a number of show trials, which were given great publicity—e.g., the trial of Sándor Molnár, a Köröstarcsa peasant condemned to death in July 1950 for setting fire to a field of stubble—thousands of kulak trials and criminal proceedings were conducted without satisfying the minimum requirements of legality and openness.

At the same time a tide of purges swept through the country towns. The aim was to purge workplaces and factories of right-wing Social Democrats.[8] In 1948–49 a series of economic show trials were a portent of the growing pressure to which the business and administrative élite of the prewar régime, including executives, engineers and foremen, would be subjected.[9] Making *déclassés* out of the office-holders of the old régime, called the reactionaries, was a steady process that started in 1945 and resorted to officially applied methods, such as internment, expulsion, dismissal, sentences passed by the People's Courts, etc. In 1950 this process was intensified. Prisons and internment camps were crowded by large numbers of people taken into custody in connection with the Rajk trial, such as "Social Democrats," "traitors to the working class," "saboteurs," or "reactionaries." The long established internment centres of Mosonyi utca in the south of Buda, and Kistarcsa (for "reactionaries," "Social Democrats," "spies" and other prisoners of state), proved inadequate. In the summer of 1950 some of the Kistarcsa inmates were transferred to Recsk in the Mátra hills. The camp at Recsk became the best-known of all, a sinister by-word for brutality. (See *NHQ*' 115. *Ed.'s note*.)

In the summer of 1950 a vociferous press campaign—inspired by the chief ideologue József Révai—was conducted against "clerical reactionaries." Less publicized actions accompanied the propaganda campaign. In two nights in June-July, more than 3,000 members of religious orders were driven out of their convents.[10] Following the liquidation of the teaching orders and the secularization of denominational schools, a tide of actions that provoked the public, and as a rule ended in mass internment, swept the country.[11]

The cleansing of the southern frontier zone in the hot summer of 1950 was part of the general offensive against the internal enemy. The night from 22 to 23 June turned out to be a night of horror for the inhabitants of the border country. After midnight, men of the State Security Authority (ÁVH), in cooperation with local police, occupied

the border zone, and by daybreak nearly a thousand families had been removed from their homes, and taken off, in sealed railway wagons, to the region east of the Tisza.

The deportation drive

The people of the frontier zone had experienced a terrible decade of collective punishment. The ethnically mixed population had suffered much from prewar and wartime rabble rousing, from bloody acts of vengeance that varied with the fortunes of war, and from population transfers. The Soviet advance was accompanied by the rounding up of prisoners—in an especially ruthless manner where ethnic Germans were concerned—and the postwar expulsion of Germans, some German only in name. Other population exchanges took place as well. On top of all this came the virtual state of war with Yugoslavia, the anti-Tito hysteria and the cleansing of the border-zone.

Several factors contributed to the deportation drive. The main purpose was to intimidate people, particularly South Slavs suspected of collaboration with the enemy. Preventive retaliation was also related to economic and class-struggle considerations: the anti-kulak campaign (stepped up

The Round-Up

[...] **Mrs S.:** And then they packed us up. My mother lived two houses away, my two brothers too, and could do nothing about it. Turn it off, please. *(Bursts into tears.)*

Interviewer: When you're ready.

Mrs S.: Turn it off. Turn it off. Please!

Interviewer: All right. We'll stop now for a moment.

Mrs S.: *(After a short pause.)* And then came a hailstorm, and they told me (they really liked me at the Railways). "Nusi, something's going to happen." And I somehow managed to run home and told Mother that I'd bring the child over. She says, "What for? You never bring her over." "Never mind," I say. And I said to my brother, who was then still alive: "Gyuszi, don't tell Mother anything about this but I sense something bad coming."

And then my daughter, who is now a teacher, says: "Mummy, give me some coffee." And that was the last coffee I gave her.

And then they took me away. Together with my husband. They gave us ten minutes' notice. Why, what could I have packed in ten minutes? The odd shoes and a little bag, that was all. And we travelled for two days. They stopped at Balatonboglár. The holidaymakers were getting ready for the beach to sunbathe and had no idea that we were locked up in the railway carriage.

I thought then to myself that when those other people had been taken away, we too did nothing... but there I was then twenty-four years old, in a light summer dress or something... locked up in the carriage, and a soldier, a conscript, comes and hands in a bucket of water so we should have water till the next day. [...]

From the dialogue of the documentary film Törvénysértés nélkül *(Without Violation of the Law), made in 1988 by Gyula and János Gulyás.*

to speed collectivization) and the increased pressure brought to bear on members of the pre-war administration (the "reactionaries"). Local animosities, chances to settle old scores, added an extra arbitrary element. At that time the category of "kulaks" already included all those who rated as "enemies of the people".[12] Peasants possessing a couple of acres of land, even Communist Party members, owners of small village businesses (shopkeepers, innkeepers), were at that time confined to internment camps, in addition to the "kulaks" and a large number of "reactionary elements" (ex-gendarmes, village notaries, former army officers). Many ethnic Germans and South Slavs were dragged away who had escaped earlier ethnic persecution, such as forced labour in the Soviet Union, or expulsion from the country. This time, since on the whole they were amongst the better off, they were included on a class basis—as kulaks.

Unlike in Budapest, the deportation warrants issued as "Inappealable Decisions" by the district police offices—differently from relevant cases in Budapest—were not served in advance. They were handed over by State Security men carrying out the order, with local police assistance, as about 2 a.m. on the 23rd of June. The decision, to ensure vacant possession, ordered the "expulsion" of cohabiting family members (including infants and the aged), and their transfer to a "compulsory place of residence." The decision referred to a 1939 Act, which had instituted the frontier zone and provided for deportation, police surveillance and custody in time of war.[14] The order stated "the expulsion of the above-named from his former place of residence and his taking up a new place of residence have become necessary in the public interest," and "there is no appeal against the Final Decision." The 1929 (!) Act on the Organization of Public Administration was also mentioned. It contains provisions in connection with appeals. It mentions acts by the authorities, of course, not deportation and confiscation of property—which "must be implemented forthwith, irrespective of an appeal lodged."[15] (But this does not exclude the possibility of a later appeal.) There was thus an attempt to provide a legal foundation. This well illustrates the fact that the legal approach was based on the same "conceptual logic," relying on *ad hoc* elements, as the procedure of the show trials going on concurrently. Some refused to sign the decision, but this did not matter. At dawn next morning special freight trains were waiting at railway sidings.

For weeks on end the Hungarian press kept silent on the deportation. It would probably have continued to keep silent if there had been no protest meetings in Yugoslavia. In reply, in order to refute the "slanders," the South Slav organizations in Hungary were ordered to arrange "peace meetings" in the villages of Zala, Baranya and Bács-Kiskun counties. These meetings were reported also by *Szabad Nép,* the central daily of the Party. Emphasizing ethnic impartiality, the resolution was read out at one of the meetings indirectly aimed to justify the legality of the action, claiming that the deportations were carried out strictly according to law, bearing in mind the requirements of the class struggle. Ethnic discrimination did not occur. "...Not a single South Slav worker has been taken away from our village or from neighbouring villages. We approve of the fact that the Hungarian government has deported fascists, former gendarmes and criminals, exploiters, kulaks, imperialist spies and agents, regardless of their ethnic origin."[16]

The locality

In addition to the legal motivation, the decree of deportation contained an important warning: "An expelled person shall not leave the town or village designated as his compulsory place of residence. Violation of this prohibition will be promptly punished

On the Plain

János Takács: Then the heroism of the women. Because it was they who had the job of keeping up spirits in the family and to feed everyone. It was a tremendous responsibility. And perhaps also to provide a little warmth by the family hearth for the kids and for the husbands too. On one occasion these women brought back reeds, the roofing of a demolished house, which was no good for anything, from about a distance of four kilometres from the homestead where we had our camp. Each of them brought a handful with which they thought they might be able to cook supper more easily, they had to cook something to keep us from starving and dying when we came back from work at about 8, 9, 10 at night. It was a miracle how they managed but they were always able to rustle something up. Things like pancakes with a carrot filling, you know, things like that. The long and the short of it is that a policeman spotted them and he made them put down the reeds, calling to them.

"Who d'you think you are, stealing the people's wealth?"

"These can't be used for anything," they said, "they'll be burnt in one heap. They are much better for us than the little bit of straw we get to make a little warmth in the huts, or in the furnace or the hearth on which we can cook a bit of corn-meal or gruel."

Then the cop said to them:

"Now you'll take them back reed by reed, all the four kilometres back!"

The women started to take them back reed by reed.

In the meantime it began to rain. About half past eleven at night one of the policemen had the heart to say:

"All right, women, now you go to bed!"

That vision is still with me: the women, absolutely exhausted and in pain, quietly taking back the useless reeds, reed by reed. [...]

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by police surveillance (internment)." This warning was really irrelevant, since the expelled persons—usually arriving after a two days' journey—were confined to enclosed camps under police supervision.

Those expelled from Budapest in the summer of 1951 were (with few exceptions) lodged with private persons, thereby punishing also the—mostly kulak—families compelled to take them in. On the other hand, those dragged away from country towns or the frontier zone were, in 1950 and even later, placed in internment camps located on state farms. The reception area for people from either Budapest or the country covered the whole of the Trans-Tisza region, the Jászság and a part of Northern Hungary (Heves and Borsod counties). The internment camps were established in a far smaller, contiguous area: in a section along the middle reaches of the Tisza river between Tiszapalkonya and Törökszentmiklós, in the sodic pusztas of the Hortobágy and in the homestead areas of the *hajdú* towns (Debrecen, Hajdúszoboszló, Hajdúböszörmény, Hajdúnánás). The almost uninhabited Puszta of Hortobágy and the depopulated homestead region on the fringes of the puszta had, by 1953, been populated by transports of internees—"settlers" in the language of the

time—from the frontier zone and country towns. Simultaneously with the establishment of camps, liquidation of traditional farming methods continued. The larger pasture leases were expropriated, a large proportion of the peasants were ousted from property which was incorporated in the huge fields of state farms, and the "settlers" were made to demolish the homesteads.

The area, owing to its natural features and structural changes, proved to be ideal for Hungary's Gulag. It was isolated from the world, not least by the muddy sodic soil practically impassable from autumn to spring, and by the absence of roads. What was added by socialist farming experiments (rice, cotton and sugar-beet growing), strengthened the closed subcultural character of the area, and made room for the new arrivals and gave them jobs. Traditional pursuits withered away. Pasturing declined, sheep-raising came to an end, the stock of sheep largely perished and literally yielded its place (its pens) to thousands of "undesirable elements": to a major part of the Hungarian middle class, to those who would have formed the basis of the still non-existent strong middle class. (The reminiscences of those taken to the Hortobágy usually begin with the occupation of emptied sheep-pens or—more precisely—of sheep-pens still covered in dung—See *NHQ* 115. *Ed.'s note*).

Stables, byres, granaries, homesteads and workmen's quarters emptied as a result of changes in the structure of farming, could be transformed into enclosed camps relatively quickly. The camps were in the charge of the appropriate State Security centre and the district police. Guards were provided by the latter. Local state farms offered employment. A system of interrelated prison-farms was established. Inside the system there was an intensive exchange of labour between different state farms. Work was controlled by the respective state farm and the competent ministry, and by a national public works agency (KÖMI), which was in charge of forced labour (prison labour, corrective labour, labour services, etc).[17] The internees did their work under a militarized régime of labour force management, organized as gangs available for work anywhere, under police escort and, if possible, isolated from ordinary agricultural labourers. The state farms were not obliged to employ them. These people were as a rule ordered out to do the hardest kind of seasonal work: navvying on irrigation projects, sugar-beet lifting in winter, cotton picking, rice harvesting, etc., for miserly wages. Their employment—though that had not been prescribed by a court—was essentially identical with the situation of those condemned to corrective labour.[18]

The camps

From June 1950 onwards, those who lived along the southern border were in a state of anxiety and terror. The deportations continued; on two or three occasions every year till 1953, "settler trains" travelled from a given frontier-zone area, designed for cleansing, to a destination east of the Tisza. The camps have left no visible remains. The only evidence of their location is the memory of the victims, their still available documents and the printed forms of petitions for their rehabilitation. The foundations of the system of prison-farms were laid by the deportations that started on the 23rd of June 1950. A list of the larger camps established at that time follows (the counties from wich the majority of inmates came are in parenthesis): Lovassy Homestead, Tiszafüred–Kócs (Zala county); Lenin Homestead, Polgár (Baranya and Somogy counties); Árkus Homestead, Szásztelek (Baranya and Somogy counties); Borzas Homestead, Nagyiván (Baranya county); Kónya Homestead, Balmazújváros (Vas and Zala counties); Kormó Puszta, Tiszagyenda (Bács-Kiskun county). The reprisals that followed the "antidemocratic

demonstration" in Hatvan (see note 12), coincided with evacuations of the frontier zone. The women and children, removed on account of the "demonstration," were taken to the camps of Kónya and Borzas Homesteads.

The internees had to ensure that the stables, granaries, deserted homesteads and staff quarters in the stock-breeding yards of state farms were fit for occupation. The first few days or weeks were spent mostly in the open. Police patrols kept order in camp. The designated areas could be left only under police escort. Policemen armed with submachine-guns were on guard night and day on four-hour watches.

Weeks and months went by before the occupation of the lodgings was finally settled. People were accommodated along the walls, on paillasses placed on two-tier bunks, 40–50 cm wide per person, made by the inmates themselves. As many as two to three hundred were crowded into a sheep-pen or byre. This facilitated the frequent roll-calls, repeated in a number of camps twice a day, at dawn and in the evening or at night. In the larger camps the "settlers" had an appointed leader, who was used by the state farm to assign work, and by police authorities to assist them (mostly as informers) in maintaining order.

Internees fit to work started out every morning, under police escort, on a job in some section of the state farm or—when "on loan"—for seasonal labour in another farm. They had to work— as far as possible—in isolation from ordinary labour. They received a workbook, and although old-age pension contributions were deducted from their reduced wages, the Social Insurance was not notified. Their incomes were subjected to other charges too. On the pretext that they would later be settled family by family (hence their name "settlers"), they were obliged to pay ground-plot fees. The places of work—in spite of efforts to keep them isolated—were important links of communication with the outside world.

The principal source of food were parcels sent by relatives and friends—especially for families with children and old people unfit for work. Parcels and letters, contents carefully checked, were forwarded through the police, which continually provided an opportunity for abuse, punishment and blackmail. In camps under stricter discipline, parcels and correspondence were simply prohibited after a time.

At the time of seasonal labour, only the unfit old and children remained in the camps. After a few months' camp life, families were allowed to place children under six with relatives outside. School-age children were no longer free to leave camp, and their education was gappy and inefficient. From the age of twelve, children went out to work with adults from spring to autumn.

Corporeal punishment and police brutality were common everywhere. Internees can remember "good" and "bad" camps. There were places (Elep, Árkus) where, in spite of conditions unfit for human beings, life was more endurable, and there were others (Kócs, Kormó Puszta, Ebes) where, after the painful process of accomodation, police brutality was rampant. Beatings and molestation of women were common. Making inmates stand in line for hours at night and their humiliation were part of a policeman's daily lot.

After release

The camps were gradually liquidated (and the internees released) during Imre Nagy's first tenure as Prime Minister, between July and October 1953. The police writ of release failed to refer to the fact of internment: it simply left out the decision on a "compulsory place of residence", and at the same time called attention to the general rules of residence. By doing so it actually confirmed the internee's status as a deportee: the law prohibited a move to

Going Home

[...] **Interviewer:** What were you told when the camp was disbanded?

Mrs S.: They told us to get the hell out of there. I couldn't go home because somebody was living in my home by then. I went to my mother's, where my little daughter was waiting for me, and then for two weeks... No, no, please, don't...

Interviewer: Who were the people who were living in your home?

Mrs S.: Well, the people who occupied it, I don't know ... the security people, the AVO.

Mrs M.: They called us in one by one to the station, handed us the police registration forms and said that we were never to say anything about our being kept in the labour-camp on the Hortobágy Plains for eighteen months and about the existence of such a camp because if we did, we would be re-deported.

István Lugos: We were never given any kind of rehabilitation, and this is the first time a word can be spoken about the deportations. When the camps were wound up, we were herded together and told this: "You were victims of a mistake. You should forget the mistake." And they did forget to give us anything back they'd taken from us, and they forgot to rehabilitate us. [...]

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the frontier zone (a return home) and to Budapest.

This rule could be made more severe by other punitive restrictions: banning from certain cities (usually the larger country towns), or police surveillance[19], the measures of moderate Stalinism, and incentives to keep silent. It was not infrequent that an internee, though being allowed to move more freely, suffered more punitive sanctions while at liberty than in camp.

The internees—and all those who had been condemned "in the public interest," under administrative proceedings—had every reason to let sleeping dogs lie. Where on earth could they have applied for a revision of the sentences? In court—in the absence of a sentence from the court? At the Ministry of the Interior, whose police authorities at the time of their release had assured them that they (the police) had not committed any breach of the law? Not to mention that people in their right senses kept clear of men from the Ministry of the Interior. Contacts between citizens and the Ministry of Interior were "sought" usually by the Ministry, and not vice versa.

Those in power were also interested in not stirring things up, not only because of the possible financial implications (damages to be paid), but for reasons of principle as well. Reparation made for offences against the law by those within the power sphere, that is the Party leadership (mutual rehabilitation became a practice after 1953) was felt not to damage the foundations of the régime. Coping with the damage done to ordinary people, on the other hand, would have been a matter not only of the rehabilitation of the persons concerned, it would have questioned the legitimacy of the régime.

Even if mass deportations and internment were not put on the agenda, the cleansing of the southern frontier zone was nevertheless taken up separately—as a result of

outside political pressure. In an effort to improve Yugoslav–Hungarian relations, the southern frontier zone was abolished, and in September 1956—a few weeks before the raising of the Hungarian legation in Belgrade to embassy status, and the Hungarian Party leaders' memorable trip to Yugoslavia—the government issued a decree on a settlement of the property rights of persons evicted from the frontier zone.[20] The decree was worded so as to promise much and give little. It made it possible to obtain a couple of thousand forints. Formulating this regulation, they wanted to rehabilitate themselves, not the internees, in the eyes of the leaders of Yugoslavia. The decree evaded the issue of the criminal nature of what had been done.[21] What was offered was a grant of up to Ft 5,000 and the chance to return home. If there was a place to go to. The decree did not mention any payment of damages, and provided that demands for the return of nationalized immovable property (land and dwellings) should be submitted to local authorites for consideration. A rejection by the local councils could not be appealed against.

During the years of the Kádár régime, there was a sort of embarrassed silence concerning the legal aspects of what had happened between 1950 and 1953. It remained unclear whether or not internees had a "criminal record" or who had ultimately offended against the law, and what law he had violated. Whether the deportee, the internee, was entitled to the effective payment of damages, to continuity of pension contributions; or whether he had better be satisfied with small ex gratia payments, the "generosity" of the authorities, the beneficial decrees of "socialist legality."

Earlier sanctions that had accompanied release—restrictions on residence and freedom of movement—were gradually removed. But a certain attitude of mind remained valid until most recent times: an aggressive terror implicitly conveying the message: "forget it, but we know." It served to keep the former internee anxious and guilt-ridden concerning his own status. He had better not even try and seek justice for himself by legal means. That would have been a demand for much more than what was personally due to him. Under the Kádár régime, which was based on the corruption of a sense of justice or of solidarity, deportees and internees were in a position to obtain something or other for themselves. They could obtain at least nominal reparation for the loss of their land—this was likely to happen at the time when the farmers' agricultural cooperatives were under reorganization—but their deportation was left out of account when their professional advancement, or the higher education of their children, was the issue.

The question of rehabilitation—together with the legal review of post-1945 judgements and administrative proceedings, with the consideration of possible financial reparation—was placed on the agenda immediately after the fall of the Kádár régime. Besides the admission of offences committed against the law, and the apologies offered in public to the victims and their relatives, those interned in the Hortobágy, together with others who had been offended against, had the years in confinement counted as years of service for pensions, and their pensions were supplemented by Ft 500 a month. In July 1990 the government decided to set up a Reparation Office. This started functioning in September 1990 and will first register the compensation cases of all those (deportees, internees, those who did forced labour in the Soviet Union, or were sentenced after 1956 in violation of the law, etc.) whose personal freedom had been unlawfully restricted for political reasons. All this is just a beginning when it comes to the payment of damages; many questions have been left open and are unlikely to be ever answered satisfactorily. Various organizations, representing a number of interests, as well as the political parties, have expressed different points of view regarding

reparation, the financial limits of which are likely to be very tight in a crisis-ridden economy. The extremely problematic questions of offences against the law and of what is called "political justice by fiat of successor regimes"[22] will probably be among the much debated subjects for a long time to come.

NOTES

[1] In 1988, the last year of the Kádár régime, an outstanding documentary film (*Törvénysértés nélkül* (Without Violation of the Law), was shown. It is about the deportees confined in internment camps in the region east of the Tisza during the 1950s. (Directors: Gyula and János Gulyás.) The title refers to a standard expression used in Ministry of the Interior decrees, issued in the summer and autumn of 1953 lifting compulsory restrictions on residence.

[2] The people wo returned from PoW camps in December 1950 were taken into custody, at the Soviet–Hungarian border, by guards of the State Security Authority. For a few months the prisoners were kept in Budapest transit prisons, later they were allotted to internment camps near Kecskemét, Kazincbarcika and Tiszalök, and finally released in the autumn of 1953. See also: Tamás Stark: "Two hundred thousand missing." *NHQ* 117.

[3] The figures are based on estimates and the records of organizations representing the interests of aggrieved persons (members of the Recsk Union and the Association of Prisoners of State). Institutionalization of reparation and free access to petitions for rehabilitation (from 1990 onwards) have put me in a position to hope that, in the near future, a precise picture of the whole business of deportations and interments will be available.

[4] For Cominform resolutions, see *Történelmi Szemle*, 1986/No. 1.

[5] Cf. the reminiscences of ex-Prime Minister András Hegedüs, a member of the Party leadership at the time of the deportations, in *Without Violation of the Law*.

[6] During the Spanish Civil War, Ernő Gerő, as a Comintern agent was largely responsible for the Barcelona massacres of members of the Trotskyite POUM and of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Militia by the Stalinists. Cf. Johnson, Paul: *Modern Times :A History of the Modern World from 1917 to the 1980s*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983, pp. 333–334. After the dissolution of the Comintern, Gerő, as adviser to Manuilsky in the Red Army, dealt with agitprop behind the enemy lines and among prisoners of war. In: *Segédkönyv a Politikai Bizottság tanulmányozásához* (Handbook for Studies Concerning the Political Bureau). Ed. Nyirő, András. Interart Studió, Budapest, 1989, p. 276.

[7] Under a decree of 1949, peasants were declared kulaks if their land exceeded approx. 10 hectares. After 1950 this threshold was no longer of importance. The term "kulak" merely denoted the rural class enemy. For the anti-kulak campaign in Hungary, see Závada, Pál: *Kulákprés* (Squeezing the Kulak). Művelődéskutató Intézet, Budapest, 1986.

[8] At the 12th of June 1948 Congress, the Communists forced through a merger of their Party with the long established Hungarian Social Democrats. The periodic purges, which started right after the Congress, served to strengthen the unity of the Party.

[9] The best known of them were the Nitrokémia, the Ministry of Agriculture, the MAORT and the Standard trials.

[10] See *NHQ* 115.

[11] The campaign was initiated eighteen months after the imprisonment of the Prince Primate József Mindszenty, Archbishop of Esztergom. Resistance by the Catholic Church was broken. In August 1950, the government and the bishops reached an agreement; in practice this put an end to the traditional functioning of the Catholic Church. In June 1951 the Archbishop of Kalocsa, József Grősz, who had been forced to capitulate in August 1950, was in turn the accused at a show trial.

[12] One of the major actions were the reprisals following the "antidemocratic demonstration" of the 19th of June 1950 in Hatvan. Within a week of the "demonstration", held because of the eviction of the Franciscans of the town, thirty-five—mostly railwaymen's—families were removed from their homes. The men were taken to Recsk, the women and children were interned in the Hortobágy.

[13] See note 7.

[14] Implementation decree NO. 8130/1939 on Art. 150 Act II of 1939.

[15] Art. 56 of Act XXX of 1929.

[16] *Szabad Nép*, 29th of July 1950.

[17] The fulfilment of specific economic plan directives was made obligatory on the forced-labour settlements established on the Soviet model. The creation of the system of prison-farms was largely the reponsibility of Rudolf Garasin, a Hungarian Communist who had returned from the Soviet Union in 1949. Supervision was exercised by Ernő Gerő.

[18] For a specification of the types of punishment taken over from Soviet criminal law, see Act II of 1950. In: *Törvények, törvényerejű rendeletek és minisztertanácsi rendeletek* (Laws, law-decrees and orders-in-council). Budapest 1950.

[19] One of the forms—maintained until very recently—of police jurisdiction has been police restriction on freedom of movement and compulsory regular reporting to local and regional police stations.

[20] Order-in-Council No. 29/1956 (IX. 8.)

[21] A neat euphemism refers to the internees as "persons compelled to leave their places of residence owing to the establishment of the former southern frontier zone."

[22] See *NHQ* 119.

Hungarian-Yugoslav Negotiations, November 1956. Documents 3-6

László Varga's Introduction, "Kádár's Safe Conduct to Imre Nagy" and Documents 1-2 (Deputy Prime Minister Edward Kardelj's letter to Prime Minister János Kádár of 18 November 1956; Aide mémoire of the talks held in Budapest on 19 November 1956 between Deputy Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Dobrivoje Vidic and Prime Minister János Kádár) appeared in NHQ 119, the previous issue.

3

Aide mémoire
on a conversation between Comrade Dobrivoje Vidic, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and János Kádár, Chairman of the Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government, on 21 November 1956.

Also present were D. Soldatic, Ambassador to Hungary of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, and Secretary M. Zigmund, interpreter, as well as Deputy Foreign Minister István Sebes of Hungary.

By way of introduction, Chairman Kádár described the current situation in Hungary, he spoke of the start of production, related objective handicaps arising from transport troubles and problems of supply, about the difficulties of obtaining fuel, the situation in the provinces and a visit by the G.D.R. government delegation the day before.

Thereafter he apologized for having been unable to receive Comrade Vidic the day before, all of his time being taken up by the German delegation. As to the note of the Yugoslav Government, Kádár indicated that a reply would be made in writing.

Comrade Vidic approved, and indeed personally asked for a written reply.

Chairman Kádár mentioned that the reply would be comprehensive and would fully argue the Hungarian position. He added that it would be better to settle all this without an exchange of notes.

Comrade Vidic said that the Yugoslav Government intended to dispel all possible doubts and to explain how Imre Nagy and his associates had been granted the right of asylum. In his explanation he (Vidic) also endeavoured to explain the circumstances as he had done during their recent talk, as Kádár must no doubt remember.

Chairman Kádár, with reference to certain issues raised in the Yugoslav Government's note, explained that, before the written reply, he wished to add some thoughts.

Many interrelated facts were stated in the Yugoslav Government's note, and he (Kádár) would respond to them. One of these facts was the positive attitude of the Yugoslav Government towards the present Hungarian Government. The Hungarians much appreciated this attitude. They are of the opinion that this is a highly important fact in the relations of the two countries, which are constantly improving and continue to develop. Of particular importance among these positive facts is Comrade Tito's Pula speech. Tito's judgement on the Imre Nagy Government's activity is very significant, being in keeping with the real facts. This is good and decisive.

Somewhat running counter to this is, however, the Yugoslav position on the Imre Nagy group. The Yugoslav comrades felt compelled to discuss a few matters with the Hungarians because they interpret a number of issues differently. For example, their explanation of the reasons why the Imre Nagy group asked for asylum. On November 2 the group had claimed that counter-revolutionary terrorist gangs had endangered the lives of its members. This was true on the 2nd and the 3rd of November, and is well known to Ambassador Soldatic. Interestingly enough, on the 2nd and the 3rd of November, when this danger was really great, Imre Nagy and his associates did not claim asylum; they did so when the danger they had pointed out, and which they had referred to, no longer existed. Consequently they (Kádár and his colleagues) cannot interpret the Imre Nagy group's action taken 4th of November, in the morning, otherwise than as a feeble excuse, for 4th of November the group made use of asylum asked for on the 2nd, merely in order to escape the authority of the Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government of Hungary. Thus their excuse has been feeble from the very beginning of the case.

Furthermore, Chairman Kádár continued, the Yugoslav Government emphasized in its note that in this matter it is guided exclusively by its word given in connection with asylum, and that it had no contact with the Imre Nagy group and the events in Hungary. In other words—the letter makes no mention of this—the Yugoslav Government and the Yugoslav Embassy pursued no particular aim in this matter. This is important to the Hungarian side, which is convinced that this is really so. The same cannot be said of the Imre Nagy group, because they had a definite political goal to achieve by asking for asylum in the Yugoslav Embassy. Comrade Kádár stated that he had wished to say that much about the question of asylum.

Kádár then pointed out that, as regards the granting of asylum, Comrade Soldatic has underlined several times that they (Imre Nagy and his associates) had sought and been granted asylum as private persons. The situation that had arisen, however, was that, when asylum was accepted, the group included Nagy and Losonczy, who were at that time political figures exercising government functions. They did not resign, they were not relieved of their office. Kádár emphasized that he was not talking about the current situation but the state of affairs at the time when those persons made use of the right of asylum. Then they could not be regarded as private persons and asylum could not be denied to them.

As regards the rest of the questions, Kádár's argument continued, that is whether or not those persons will make any statements and, if they will, what kind of statements they will make, there is agreement on what the Yugoslav Government's note also contains, namely that it is the internal affair of Hungary. The Yugoslav comrades would have liked to help in spite of all that and, indeed, have made great efforts to deal with the problem. Kádár said he understood that Yugoslavia was unable to influence the persons concerned (Imre Nagy and associates).

Switching to the solution of the issue, Kádár related that they meditated upon this case and took the view—considering the ambiguities surrounding the right of asylum—that it would be most expedient if the Yugoslav comrades considered the precedent established by Szántó, Lukács and Vas, and influenced Imre Nagy and associates in this direction, pointing out that the original motivation of their request for asylum, and the use they made of it, did not tally with the facts of the case, and that they must refrain from exploiting the Ambassador's given word, thus extricating both Governments from this predicament.

Kádár made a personal remark by declaring, that, on the basis of a thorough analysis of the question, he could describe the step taken by Imre Nagy and associates 4th November only as an act by which they profited from the Yugoslav Government's

readiness to help, so that—and now Kádár excused himself for the undiplomatic phrasing—in a sense they had deceived the Yugoslav comrades by abusing their goodwill. Kádár then repeated that the talks they had earlier made it clear that his proposals would point towards the right solution.

But, he went on, if the Yugoslav comrades feel that was necessary, it may be possible for the note expressing their opinion to include what has been talked about here, namely that Hungary had no intention to take any reprisals whatever on those people (Nagy and associates) for their past errors. It must be said also—considering that the issue of asylum was open to question—that the Hungarians will commit themselves in this sense only if the Yugoslav Government specially requests Hungary to do so. Kádár explained the reasons, too: they had already decided earlier not to employ reprisals against actions taken in the past.

This was their firm resolution even if they did not put it down on paper, since they also had other reasons in this connection. The position of the Hungarians is entirely unrelated to the fact that Imre Nagy and his associates have sought and been granted asylum at the Yugoslav Embassy. In this question—which in their view as well as in the opinion of the Yugoslav comrades and the Yugoslav Government—is essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of Hungary, such an assurance can hardly be reconciled with the principle of sovereignty. Kádár said he thought that his opinion was clear to Comrades Vidic and Soldatic, namely that they must accept obligations to a country which, although a fraternal country, is nevertheless not Hungary, and this in connection with something that is exclusively the internal business of Hungary.

In addition, Chairman Kádár apologized in advance, but without any malice and unofficially (sic!). Two days before in the evening, after their conversation, it had occurred to him to wonder what will happen about Mindszenty. Would he spend the remaining years of his life at the U.S. Embassy in Budapest? The U.S. Ambassador might also come forward with a similar argument and ask for a written guarantee for Mindszenty, because he also took refuge there, fleeing before the White Terror. Kádár again asked the Yugoslav negotiators not to regard this as part of the official talks, he then went on and explained that the trouble with Mindszenty was something different. Mindszenty had asked the Pope's permission to leave the country, because strict discipline applies also to them, and until he has been granted permission, he cannot move. The Pope answered that Mindszenty must stay in Hungary, because he is worth more to the Vatican staying there, even if he is in prison, than if he were in Rome.

Comrade Vidic spoke next and said that Yugoslavia's reasons and motives for granting asylum to Imre Nagy and his associates were independent of the Hungarian events and of the agreement reached with the Comrades on the night between the 2nd to the 3rd of November, thus the Yugoslav position then cannot be disputed. He had already tried to explain this to Comrade Chairman Kádár during their previous meeting. Even if they, on the part of Yugoslavia, supposed that Imre Nagy might have had different motives as well, it is clear in any case what those motives were (Kádár confirmed that it is clear), thus they were working on the whole in order to help, as far as they could, Imre Nagy to extricate himself from the reactionary government that bears his name, in which he, and some of his associates, increasingly became captives of the forces of reaction. It is beyond question that the negotiations conducted with the Soviet comrades about this matter on 2 and 3 November aimed at facilitating the rooting out of such a government, at clearing the way for the new Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government. It is essential to both sides that Comrade Kádár should

The Stations of the Gallows

"Having been a member of the Imre Nagy Government, I must say openly that my personal conviction is that neither Imre Nagy nor his political associates deliberately wished to aid the counter-revolutionary regime." (János Kádár' s speech in the daily, *Népszabadság,* 12 November 1956)

"János Kádár, the head of the government, declared to the delegation that he did not look on Imre Nagy as the sort of man who would deliberately aid the counter-revolution. The tide of events swept him along. Imre Nagy is not under arrest. He left Parliament House of his own volition, and neither the Government, nor the Soviet Army, have any intention of restricting his movements. It is entirely up to him whether he wants to engage in politics." ("Delegations of workers call on János Kádár." *Népszabadság,* 14 November 1956)

"... the diplomatic aspects related to Yugoslavia being settled, we made it possible, bearing in mind Imre Nagy's and his associates' own original desires, that they should leave for the territory of Rumania on November 23rd. We made a promise that no criminal proceedings would be taken against them because of their grave misconduct in the past—which they restrospectively admitted to. We will hold ourselves to that. Their departure is not forever, as far as we are concerned." (János Kádár's speech. *Népszabadság,* 27 November 1956)

On 27 February 1957 the spokesman of the Foreign Ministry declared; "... his government has no intention of handing over Imre Nagy to the court." (This declaration did not appear in the Hungarian papers.) *Az igazság a Nagy Imre ügyben* (The truth about the Imre Nagy case). Budapest, 1989. p. 22.

On the 4th of April 1957, János Kádár declared in the presence of foreign press correspondents: "There will be no Imre Nagy trial, though it is true his position is touchy." (This did not appear in the Hungarian media). *The Truth about the Imre Nagy Case.* Budapest, 1989. p. 16.

"The People's Court Division of the Supreme Court, bearing in mind the seriousness of the offences, the aggravating and mitigating circumstances, on the basis of the proceedings, declared the accused guilty of the deeds they were charged with, and therefore sentenced Imre Nagy to death, Ferenc Donáth to 12 years imprisonment, Miklós Gimes to death, Zoltán Tildy to 12 years imprisonment, Pál Maléter to death, Sándor Kopácsi to life imprisonment, Dr József Szilágyi to death, Ferenc Jánosi to 8 years imprisonment, Miklós Vásárhelyi to 5 years imprisonment. The sentences are final. The sentences of death have been carried out." (*Népszabadság,* June 17 1958.)

believe what he (Vidic) said on behalf of his Government (Kádár declared that he believed it). The rest is a mere formality. The most essential thing is that the two sides are mutually aware of the real motives. That is why they have to clear up the question as friends do. In connection with the issues raised by Comrade Chairman Kádár the Yugoslav comrades were asked whether they insisted that the note should lay down the stipulation that Imre Nagy and associates, who enjoy the right of asylum, will not be punished for their past acts; this is the personal request of Comrade Vidic, who thought it would be desirable for the note to contain this provision.

Comrade Vidic then went on: "In practice, starting from such endeavours of the Kádár Government, we can simply remove the whole matter from the agenda, since Comrade Kádár has clearly expounded the Hungarian intentions and views regarding the past activities of those persons. In this case, we, as the Government that has granted asylum, can be content with a written communication that these people are free to leave the Yugoslav Embassy and return to their respective homes with a guarantee of their personal safety. We know of course that we can in no way ask the Kádár Government for a guarantee in advance that they will not take any measures concerning the possible future activities of Imre Nagy and his associates, because this is a matter within Hungary's domestic jurisdiction. If we were in possession of such a statement, we could tell Imre Nagy, Losonczy and the others in all conscience that we can see no reason for their making use of asylum, since they are not in danger any longer, that, accordingly, and relying on Comrade Kádár's words, they can freely leave the Embassy and return home. This would be sufficient for us. We are of the view that the question is practical and very simple, considering the facts referred to by Comrade Kádár with regard to the past activities of Imre Nagy and associates, more precisely regarding his Government's position that no punishment whatever be meted out to them."

Consequently Comrade Vidic gave as his opinion that this matter can and even must be separated from the question of sovereignty, because they in Yugoslavia understand and approve of Comrade Kádár's position. He said: "In no respect do we mean to question the Hungarian Government's sovereign right to decide. What we want is that the Hungarian Government should issue a guarantee by means of which we can reliably tell Imre Nagy and his associates that the reasons given for their asylum have become invalid. That is all; on this basis we might turn to them and say that we can no longer see any reason for granting asylum, since the underlying causes have doubly ceased to exist: no pogrom threatens them, furthermore there is a guarantee on the part of the Hungarian Government for them freely to leave the Embassy and return to their homes; that is all that poses a problem to us. The rest is Hungary's internal affair, and the personal business of Imre Nagy and his associates". What they will do, they will do on their own responsibility. They live in their own country, and its laws apply to them. Yugoslavia has nothing to do with that. The Yugoslav Government comprehends this and suggests that the matter should be closed on this basis if possible right away.

Chairman Kádár said that the talks can thus be concluded; and they will draw up the letter.

Comrade Vidic asked Comrade Kádár whether he could say that the matter would be closed in the near future, because he would like to know when he could expect to return to Belgrade.

Chairman Kádár replied that the circumstances referred to by him have been elucidated, so that if the Yugoslav comrades explicitly request so, the Hungarians will detail in their reply their position regarding reprisals. But they have not yet drafted it, the wording will be agreed upon

and finalised that day or the next. He thought the text would be available during the day, but he could not tell the precise time.

Comrade Vidic thanked Chairman Kádár for having been so kind in the first part of the conversation as to give a description of the general situation in Hungary which he found very useful, and he would accordingly inform the leading comrades in Belgrade (Kádár agreed). As regards the second part, he hoped everything would soon be plain sailing.

Thereupon Comrade Vidic asked Chairman Kádár to give permission for a doctor to look at the children in the Embassy, since some of them were already ill; Kádár promised to carry out that request.

Finally Comrade Vidic said it would be well and useful, if possible, to have a Hungarian ambassador in Belgrade, for through him both Governments could work even more actively in the usual manner in order to deal with daily routine work more promptly.

Chairman Kádár agreed and called attention to the fact that at present it was difficult for them to find a person for the post, because everybody was needed at home. He declared that he hopes the question could be dealt with soon.

(The conversation lasted 1 hour 30 minutes.)

4

Aide mémoire
of a conversation between Comrade Dobrivoje Vidic, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and János Kádár, Chairman of the Government of the Hungarian People's Republic, in Budapest on 21 November (from 20.30 to 0.30)

Also present: Ferenc Münnich, Minister of Defence, as well as Deputy Foreign Minister Sebes (Hungary), and D. Soldatic, Ambassador to Hungary of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, and Secretary M. Zigmund, interpreter (Yugoslavia).

Chairman Kádár first presented the Hungarian Government's written reply to the Federal Executive Council's note of 18 November of this year relating to the request for asylum by Imre Nagy and his group.

Considering that the ways of dealing with this matter are covered by the paragraph of the Hungarian note which implies that Yugoslavia should deny the right of asylum to the Imre Nagy group, and that the paragraph guaranteeing their personal safety follows later, which is at variance with the Yugoslav proposal, Comrade Vidic opened a discussion on modifying this latter paragraph. After a protracted argument the negotiating parties agreed on ways to deal with this problem (see the text of the note). They wholly accept the proposal contained in the Yugoslav Government's note of 17 November of this year.

Comrade Vidic made a number of observations on the part of the note which contains the Hungarian Government's point of view regarding the story of the whole case. Comrade Vidic stressed that these remarks of his were unrelated to his suggestions for modification of the text, since he was in no position to question the Hungarian Government's right to expound its view in connection with the problem. At the same time he reserved the Yugoslav Government's right to a reply in writing at a later date. In answer to the Hungarian arguments that—(a) the right of asylum granted to Imre Nagy and his group is not in agreement with the norms of international law and violates the sovereignty of Hungary; (b) asylum ought not to have been granted to them since it had been guaranteed on grounds that were non-existent at the time, on the 4th of November, when no pogrom threatened any longer; (c) asylum ought not to have been granted to them also

because they could not be regarded as private persons, which they really were not, by virtue of the office they held—Comrade Vidic said that the Yugoslav Government could not accept them and was surprised to see them included in the Hungarian note, considering the Federal Executive Council's note and all the verbal explanations expounded by himself, especially concerning the night between the 2nd and 3rd of November, facts which during the talks Kádár had fully accepted while doubting only the motive for Imre Nagy's right of asylum. The above-mentioned points, as explained in the note, created an impression that certain doubts were entertained in relation to the Yugoslav Government, concerning the motives why it granted asylum.

Commenting on Comrade Vidic's remarks, Chairman Kádár stated that his Government was in an extremely difficult position and needed the assistance of all the socialist countries, but he was confident that it would get out of this predicament and would be able to look straight in the eye of all fraternal governments; he was convinced that the sovereignty of the Hungarian People's Republic would also be completely restored. The Governments of the H.P.R. and the F.P.R.Y. have developed a sincere and friendly relationship and would cooperate on a number of questions in the future. Frankness was a central issue. Kádár said he was not thinking of himself since terrorists might well kill him, but the Communist Party would remain and govern the country. He had no doubts about the intentions of the Government of the F. P. R. Y., but there are matters which must be discussed frankly. They in Hungary have been wrestling with these problems for two weeks now. In the beginning they debated international law a great deal, starting out from the fact that the Imre Nagy group had run away in fear of their lives before the terror, and on this ground the Yugoslav Government was entitled to grant them the right of asylum; however, it was not the terror but the Revolutionary Government that they had run away from.

Comrade Vidic advanced arguments which were not included in the note, since Yugoslavia has had to take a stand on a matter of international law, something raised as of decisive importance. Had the note contained Comrade Vidic's verbal comments, then the question would have been dealt with differently already the day before.

Kádár likewise remarked that in this connection the Yugoslav Government first turned to the Soviet Government instead of the Government of Hungary. The fact that the Yugoslavs did not talk with the Hungarians suggests that they did not regard the latter as serious enough, so they turned to a serious authority, the Soviet Government. He, however, felt offended by this step: if Yugoslavia does not in future wish to offend Hungarian feelings, it should turn direct to them. It must be understood that he (Kádár) would prefer being a precision mechanic instead of being Chairman of the Government, but there are a number of reasons why he exercized the latter function now.

Speaking of the new Government, Kádár said that he did not think he divulged any secrets by telling that he had talked to the Government of the Soviet Union. He then had no opportunity to talk to the Yugoslav Government. What he did he would have done, even if there were nobody to support him in this respect. The knowledge that he and his Government had the support of countries like the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China and the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was a decisive point which effectively influenced his personal decision to assume his office. The Government of the F.P.R.Y. had assured him of its support, which they considered to be significant; he had even made efforts through Soldatic to explain his position on the errors committed by Imre Nagy and his associates. Since these failed to admit their errors, he (i.e., Kádár) was compelled to

declare when broadcasting that he would not allow the White Terror to stick on a Communist label. The fact that Imre Nagy and Losonczy have not resigned their office constantly hampered the Government in its work. People in Hungary minister pret this. Kádár asked to be understood in his position, because the clarification of the legal situation concerning the Imre Nagy affair occupied, half his time. The circumstances were also complicated by the Federal Executive Council's note of November 18 (it would appear that Yugoslavia has good lawyers who are fond of putting things in legal terms.)

Comrade Vidic expounded in his reply that he had come to Budapest with a mandate to discuss and deal with this business in a friendly way and not by legal manoeuvres, so as to make it most convenient for both sides; he was pleased to state that the business had been handled in a friendly spirit and could be removed from the agenda; he was confident that everything would be settled the next day. In connection with the remark that Yugoslavia should not in future by-pass the Hungarian Government on delicate issues (such as the present one), Vidic stated that in this concrete case the situation on the night between the 2nd and the 3rd of November was exceptional, for the Government of Comrade Kádár had not yet been formed, but in future he (Kádár) could be certain that—considering the principles which determine the Yugoslav Governments' relations to all countries—his Goverment will negotiate and come to an agreement on matters of Hungarian-Yugoslav relations exclusively with the Hungarian Government.

Finally Comrade Vidic expressed his thanks to Comrade Kádár and other members of his Government who had been working hard on the solution of this question.

As regards technical details, it was agreed that they must be settled by Comrades Münnich and Soldatic in a manner allowing Imre Nagy and his associates to leave the Embassy and return home in the afternoon of the 22nd inst.

The friendly conversation lasted 4 hours.

5

Yugoslav Ambassador Dalibor Soldatic, a Communist politician and member of the Resistance Movement, was one of Prime Minister Rankovic's men. Soon after the abduction of Imre Nagy and his associates he was recalled to Belgrade.

Budapest, 21 November 1956

Federal Executive Council o.' the
Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia,
for Comrade Vice-President
Edvard Kardelj

Belgrade

Comrade Vice-President,

On 19 November Comrade Dobrivoje Vidic, Deputy Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, handed us your letter dated 18 November, pertinent to the question of asylum granted to Imre Nagy

and his group who are staying at the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest and to a few other related questions—explaining the position of the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia.

In reply to your letter we wish to explain the position of the Hungarian Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government concerning the question at issue.

Our Government has welcomed with satisfaction the earlier positive position taken up by the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, and the relevant declaration made by Comrade President Tito in his Pula speech, as well as your position reiterated in the letter on your positive appraisal of our Government's activity which serves the purpose of eliminating the Counter-Revolutionary danger, ensuring protection for the socialist achievements of the working people, as well as the cause of the defence of peace in this region of Europe.

It is all the more deplorable that an embarrasing situation has arisen on account of the right of asylum granted to Imre Nagy and his group. We are in agreement on the point that it would be most convenient for the further improvement of relations between our countries if we dealt with this question as soon as possible in a friendly manner and in the spirit of mutual understanding.

We express our satisfaction with the fact stated by you repeatedly and unequivocally that the Yugoslav Government is not involved in the activity of the Imre Nagy group, that all that concerns this group is entirely the internal affair of Hungary, in your judgement as well, and that the Yugoslav Government is interested in settling this matter only to the degree that it is bound by its word given in connection with the right of asylum, as well as by its related obligations under international law.

We are of the opinion that the granting of asylum in the case of Imre Nagy and his group is, in several respects, contrary to international law and violates the sovereignty of the Hungarian People's Republic. As we have pointed out on several occasions, the right of asylum granted to Imre Nagy and his group is not something like refuge offered to private individuals, because the persons concerned as a whole constitute a political group whose activities and aspirations are diametrically opposed to those of the Hungarian Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government. Still less was it possible to regard as private persons, at the time of the granting of asylum, former Ministers Imre Nagy and Losonczy, who had not yet been relieved of their ministerial office, had not resigned their positions of their own accord, and in fact represented a policy opposed to the policy of the already established Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government.

This group was not entitled to asylum also because this was resorted to, and is still enjoyed today, by Imre Nagy and his associates, on irrelevant grounds. As is known, on November 2 this group asked for asylum through Zoltán Szántó on the grounds that their lives were endangered by Counter-Revolutionary terrorist gangs. Indeed this was a real threat on November 2 and 3. But, in a singular way, this group made use of the right of asylum not at the time when real danger existed, but only on November 4, at an hour when this danger had passed as a result of Soviet troop movements. Furthermore, they still make use of that right today, although it is plainly evident that for two weeks now there has been no question of their lives being thre atened by counter-revolutionary terrorists, the point being that they evade the jurisdiction of the Hungarian Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Govenment by using the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest as a refuge.

It must be pointed out that inasmuch as we understand clearly the Yugoslav Government's communication that it regards the asylum offered to Imre Nagy and his group as a refuge granted to private indi-

viduals, and that it has no other concerns in this respect, it is just as clear to us also that Imre Nagy and his associates had asked for asylum at the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest with a political purpose.

After these preliminary remarks we wish to inform you that in our view the best possible settlement of the matter would be—since in the opinion of the Hungarian Government there is no reason to maintain political asylum under the present-day circumstances—if the Yugoslav Government placed itself, in the case of the persons still making use of asylum, in the same position that it had done in the case of György Lukács, Zoltán Szántó and Zoltán Vas. It is desired that these persons should inform the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest in writing that in future they do not wish to avail themselves of the opportunities offered by political asylum and that they intend to return to their respective homes.

It is commonly known that the political activities of Imre Nagy and his group—during the term of office the Imre Nagy Government—caused serious damage to the Hungarian People and violated, over and above the interests of the Hungarian People's Republic, also those of the neighbouring socialist countries and the entire international working-class movement. This has been expounded by Comrade Tito as well in his speech at Pula dealing with Hungary; more over, as we are aware, thanks to an official communication by Comrade Ambassador Soldatic, Imre Nagy and Géza Losonczy themselves have also admitted having professed damaging views regarding matters of fundamental importance like, e.g., neutrality, with drawal at once from the Warsaw Pact, immediate withdrawal of the Soviet troops, introduction of a multiparty system, etc.

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 November 18—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 go home freely.

Finally, as regards the statements we expect Imre Nagy and Losonczy to make, we understand that the persons in question have full discretion to make or not to make such statements. You have made known that you had used your influence on Imre Nagy and his group to this effect, but that you are no longer in a position to influence them, and the whole matter is to be regarded as entirely the internal affair of Hungary.

Considering that the Hungarian Government accepts the methods of solution proposed by the Yugoslav Government in its note—which Deputy Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Dobrivoje Vidic has expounded verbally as well—we are convinced that the question of the asylum granted to Imre Nagy and his group that was open between our two Governments has thus been closed in accordance with the interests of both countries.

On behalf of the Hungarian Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government,
(signed): János Kádár

The Coach Ride—Another Witness

We just waited to see how the negotiations with Vidic would end. But we all said we did not want to go anywhere, we did not want to go into exile, we did not want to go to Yugoslavia, we wanted to go home. At long last Vidic turned up with the piece of paper on which the leaders of the Hungarian Party and state guaranteed that our group could return home safely.

"Who signed it?"

János Kádár and Ferenc Münnich did. Everyone could return to his own home. We were all there with our families, our children, with luggage, and there was no public transport, so they'd help us to get home by providing a coach. The Vidic negotiations, the chance to go home, what more could we desire—and now Vidic turned up with the agreement that everyone could return home in safety. We were all extraordinarily happy that we were not going to any strange land, into insecurity, that we were going home.

I can clearly remember that Imre Nagy stopped in the lobby while we were carrying out the luggage and Soldatic begged him not to go. "Please stay. The women can go, and the children. No one will hurt them, but you stay," Soldatic said in Hungarian, he could speak Hungarian, "you must certainly stay, however long the time. Don't be troubled by the Pula speech. According to international law the right to asylum cannot be suspended. Whoever granted it, must maintain it to the end of time. You can stay here for years if you like, but don't go out." Imre Nagy said it was out of the question, and he went. I can remember the scene clearly, I heard it all with my own ears. And then we dragged ourselves onto the coach and said a tearful good-bye to Maria and the embassy driver's old wife.

We went out and got onto the coach and the Yugoslav journalists came with us. They said they wanted to know what would happen to us. An agreement was a fine thing, but they wanted to see if we really got home. They too got onto the back of the coach, and we were off.

At the corner of Benczúr utca my mother-in-law asked them to stop, that's where she lived. But the coach did not stop. Then my mother-in-law observed: "What a way to treat grown people!" That became a catch-phrase amongst us. I remember too that Maca sat behind me, Imre Nagy's wife. "They're sure to let you go," she said to me, "you being so heavily pregnant. And then you tell the whole world what they are doing to us." And I whispered back, "My dear Maca, for that very reason they won't let me go. If they let me go, I'd tell the whole world what happened to you, and they know that too."

We just rushed along, it was night. Dark. Pitch dark. The most frightening thing was that some way out, I don't know where, the coach stopped, and men in police uniform, I don't know of what nationality, who were on the coach, roughly shoved the Yugoslav journalists off the coach. They made a big row in every possible language, they shouted that this could not be done, it was against international law, and goodness knows what else. Not a word was said in answer, but they were removed, and the coach rolled on.

Mrs Ferenc Donáth *in Judit Ember's documentary* Menedékjog — 1956 *(The Right to Asylum—1956). See also Ella Szilágyi's version of the same episode in* NHQ *119.*

6

Two replies to Kardelj's letter have been found among the documents of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One was drafted by Ferenc Münnich; it is undoubtedly stronger in tone than the letter which was ultimately signed and presented by Kádár. But both contained an assurance to be given to Imre Nagy and his group, a guarantee stating that they would not be punished for their earlier activities.

Budapest, 23 November 1956

János Kádár,
Chairman of the Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government of the Hungarian People's Republic

Mr Chairman,

On behalf of the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia I protest against the fact that Imre Nagy and the other persons who had sought asylum at the Embassy in Budapest of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia have not been able freely to leave the Embassy and to go to their homes, under the terms of the agreement arrived at between the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and the Government of the Hungarian People's Republic on the 21st and 22nd inst. Contrary to the above-mentioned agreement reached between the two Governments, the said persons were taken to the office of the Soviet military command of the city, from where they departed in an unknown direction escorted by Soviet police and armoured cars.

This was observed by the Military Attaché of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, Milan Drobac, and the First Secretary of the Embassy, Milan Georgiovic, who were in the coach together with Imre Nagy and the other persons given asylum, and who—ordered by a Soviet officer—were forced to leave the coach in front of the building of the Soviet Military Command of the city.

I bring to your notice, Mr Chairman, that the moment that I obtained news of the event, I rang up and informed Ferenc Münnich, Minister of the Armed Forces of the Hungarian People's Republic, who promised to look into what happened but who has not since advised me of what happened.

I request you, Mr Chairman, to give me an explanation why no steps were taken in keeping with the agreement of the 21st and 22nd inst. between the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and the Government of the Hungarian People's Republic, and to inform me about the present whereabouts of Imre Nagy and the other persons who had enjoyed asylum at the Embassy in Budapest of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, in order that I might report on this business to my Government.

On behalf of my Government I demand that steps be taken with a view to the implementation of the agreement reached between our Governments with regard to Imre Nagy and the other persons.

Allow me to inform you, Mr Chairman, that my Government will give publicity to this case.

(signed:) Dalibor Soldatic
Ambassador in Budapest of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia

Ernő Kunt

The Three Hats of Death

For many years I have regularly spent several weeks in the country in the autumn to study Hungarian peasant customs related to death. In the 1980s I repeatedly visited a village in North Eastern Hungary where I put up in an old peasant house. Situated in the centre of the village, near the church and the council-headquarters, the house in its essentials followed local architectural traditions, and its size and arrangement showed that it had been built by a well-to-do smallholder. Now, however, the circumstances of the occupants have undergone a drastic change. Many tiles were missing on the sagging roof, the plaster was peeling and the rising damp had reached the windows in the walls. The large farmyard was even more revealing of the poverty of the inhabitants.

Three women were living in the house. Their carefully mended black clothes and reticent, quiet manner betrayed that they must have seen better days; now they rubbed along on a portion of the smallest co-op farm pension. This was why I had chosen their house for lodgings. I thought they must badly need the rent I paid them. I was also attracted by the quietness of the household. My landladies never came into my room, and they led their lives in such a natural and imperturbable reticence that, even though we were separated by a single door, I could scarcely hear the slightest rustle from their quarters, nor could I make out the words of their rare conversation. When I had selected these lodgings, I was also hoping to be able to learn from them something of my subject, since it had always been the duty of old women to attend to the dying.

They always eluded my questions. After a couple of polite sentences they withdrew into their silence. I saw I had no hope of getting closer to the three women, and even less of becoming acquainted with the causes of their present circumstances. I understood their reserve as a warning to keep my distance. And so I did.

Early in November, on the eve of All Souls, the evening bell found me wandering through the cemeteries in the neighbourhood. I took pictures of the families, lighting candles at the graves as dusk rapidly closed in, arranging asters and pine-twigs in remembrance of their dead, and I recorded their prayers, songs and conversations. When the bells stopped ringing, they returned

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to their homes. In the soft drizzle, the artificial flowers reflected wetly the fizzling candle light. The descending mist enveloped the few lights in the village. In the hillside graveyard not stars but candles gleamed.

Returning to my room I was surprised to find a fire going in the stove. To my still greater surprise, the door to my landladies' room, which had always been closed, was now open. In the spacious room a chest of drawers stood between the two windows facing the street, under a crucifix and a mirror, and—and this was rather strange—three candles were flickering on the floor under the crossbeam. The light coming from below threw a strange radiance on the folded hands of the three women, gave a mask-like character to their faces and threw their enlarged shadows up onto the ceiling. I would have liked to take a photograph but did not want to disturb them. The three women were praying by candlelight, and their hands, usually clasped around their sticks, seemed to have found a surer support when folded in devotion, as if their aged, decrepit bodies were imbued with an inner force. But why the candles on the floor? And why exactly under the crossbeam? Looking up, I caught sight of a cross in the lower surface of the beam and the date of construction, 1924. As I was making out the name of the builder, I thought I saw something hanging from the other side of the crossbeam. Instinctively, I took another step to see better. Their brims pressed against the boards of the ceiling, there hung hats, side by side. The light of the three candles flickered away on the three dusty, shabby, cobwebbed hats, and the three women praying below them on the eve of All Souls. The candles burnt themselves out with a last blaze and left three black patches on the earthen floor.

The following day, All Souls' Day, I asked my landladies to explain what I had seen the previous evening. They started to speak willingly, taking turns in their narration.

The story

In 1919 a young man had arrived in the village. He came from a true Székely family in the Székely Country, in Transylvania. During the Great War he had fought in all the main theatres of war the Austro-Hungarian army had been engaged in and, when he was wounded, he was taken from hospital to hospital and thus came to know the whole of Hungary. When the Peace Treaty of Trianon took away two thirds of old Hungary, the lost territories included Transylvania, the birthplace of the young man. He did not want to become a citizen in a foreign country; he took his hat and bidding his parents and the paternal house farewell, tried his luck in his diminished country. That was how he arrived in this village, whose hilly fields reminded him of his childhood surroundings.

The young man was of a proud and wilful disposition. His character was best expressed by the way he wore his hat. He married into one of the wealthiest families of the village, one in which a hard-working man was badly needed since the farmer and his son had been killed in the war. At the same time there was also a growth in the family. After the war, Hungary's new northern border was drawn

along the second village from them and the young bride's sister, who had married there, had come back with her husband, seeking shelter with them. The young husband was lucky in his farming. He had a new house built in place of the old one on the land that had long been in his dead father-in-law's family. He had a metal cross placed on the roof, and also had the masons shape crosses on the gable and between the two windows overlooking the street. "There are as many crosses on this house as on a coffin," the villagers said. Onto the crossbeam he himself carved a cross and added his name, as the head of the family and of the household, and the date.

When his father lost his wife, the size of the house made it possible for him too to be invited to come and live with them, as alone he felt even more homeless in his own native land. The old man still did not want to leave the soil which had nurtured his parents and grandparents and all his ancestors. He did not think it was he who should leave. But when the third invitation arrived from his son, he made up his mind to cross over to them. He thought he could still be of some use to his farmer son.

But even staying with his son he could not forget. Even though it was a fine house and a flourishing farm. The village had taken his son into its midst and he was held to be among the best of farmers. Half the village raised their hats to him. The son too did his best to be useful to the community that had received him. He provided work for the have-nots and the needy; he and his wife contributed much to the renovation of the church, presenting a new bell, and, an unprecedented thing in the village, they made donations to the local elementary school. So the father felt he could stay on without inconveniencing his son. He soon found ways of making himself useful around the house: he supervised the building of the stable behind the house, and himself groomed the three pairs of horses in it.

Nonetheless, he could not strike root. The people here use different names for horses of different colours than the people over there. Even the tools have different names here. Indeed, different words are used to drive and urge on the animals from those he had known since childhood. He turned even more silent than he used to be. Evenings he drank his wine with his son, but later he drew apart and drank it by himself. He was very happy, as was the whole family, when his grandson was born. When he was shown the baby he said: "What a tiny little child. It may even fit into my hat!" The child was given the name of his father and grandfather; he did not live long and soon had to be buried. But even the graveyard was alien for the old man, graves were marked in different ways. He could no longer go back home, nor could he settle down in his new home. He even lost patience with the horses. One evening his daughter-in-law, entering the front room, found the old man's hat on the chest of drawers between the two windows, under the mirror and the crucifix. Her father-in-law never left his hat lying around, the hat which he had brought from home, nor had he bought a new one. The young woman had her misgivings and hurried to her husband. He started to look for his father. They found him in the stable, hanging from the very beam he had had lifted over the box when he arrived.

They had him laid out decently and put the hat beside him. The priest was unwilling to bury him. The farmer went to see him at the presbytery.

"Take off your hat, my son, when you are speaking to me!"

"I'll take it off when I know to whom I do so."

"You know me well enough."

"No, I don't. I don't know whether you are a priest or a man!"

"Well, I am a man who is a priest."

"Then I cannot pay my respects to you. If you were a man, I would lift my hat to you, but here and now I don't. I will have my bell taken down and my father buried beneath it."

Finally the priest gave way, and the old man was buried to the toll of the bell.

One year later, the Vienna Award returned part of Transylvania, including the boy's birthplace, to Hungary. The farmer no longer wanted to return, but he had his father buried next to his mother, as is meet. "If only you could have waited another year, father," he said over the grave.

Next year a boy was born to the couple, a strong, healthy boy, whom they named after his father and grandfather.

"So there's one who could have worn his grandfather's hat", the father said; he and the family were very happy. And he went on to work with even greater drive, putting all his strength into it. The war was still being fought in distant lands. Yet its breath could already be felt there too. His wife's sister's husband was among the first to die on the eastern front. So they took his sister-in-law in. The bell was taken from the tower and melted down to make guns. His strong horses could barely draw the cart in the autumn mud to the railway station. Then he himself had to join the army. He was not at home to see his fine horses, reared under his father's eye, requisitioned.

The two women were left alone with the child. "If the man is not at home, I'll wear the hat!" the wife asserted; she held her own bravely in the hard times. The war came to an end, but peace brought no relief. The man returned after four years of captivity and took over the farm from his wife. He did not hire a day-labourer but went to work on the fields with his son. And he had much joy in his son. The boy knew how to work and, like his grandfather, was tongue-tied.

Peace brought no ease. Grave news reached the village. And then there came strangers, wearing town clothes, trousers and peaked caps, and berets. They established themselves in the building converted from the village notary's office into the council chambers and took stock of the possessions of the people. They watched to find out who went drinking with whom, who fraternized with whom and who went to church. They started organizing a co-operative farm.

The Transylvanian farmer's house was right over the street and caught their eye. The more so since he did not raise his hat to them as more and more people in the village did. One morning the party secretary summoned him to the council hall. He sent word he would come in the evening after finishing his day's work. He turned up at nightfall. All the agitators were gathered together in the office, their blue caps lying among the glasses on the table. They offered him a seat; he

did not take it. They offered him a drink; he did not take it. They pointed to the clothes stand for him to put his hat on; he did not take it off. They prompted him to join the co-op farm, advising him, asking him, finally ordering him. Each time he declined.

"If you sign up, we shall tell the others who have already joined that you were the first to sign up. You are a large farmer, you are a good farmer. You will be the chairman. The others will go after you."

"I won't collectivize."

"No?"

"No. And I won't give you any more of my time. I have to go and see to the animals."

"You're not going anywhere! And who's jammed your hat onto your head? Can't you take it off!?"

"There is no one here who I would want to take it off to."

"Isn't there? Believe me you'll shit into your own some day! Let him stand next to the stove. Get the fire going. You step over to his wife and tell her to send over his best fur-coat if she wants to help her husband. And get her to send some wine too. We'll make you shit into your hat all right."

They had him stand at the red-hot stove in his warmest fur-coat. He was sweating freely, with drops falling from the brim of his hat, from the tip of his nose, leaving black patches on the earthen floor. The men were sitting stripped to the waist, drinking, planning and organizing, cursing at him to sign up, otherwise he would not get away.

The woman was pacing the room between the two street windows, watching to see when they would let her husband go. She was praying before the crucifix. Early at dawn two shirt-sleeved men came over and took her along:

"Speak to your husband! Perhaps he will listen to you. He will understand that the village will bend with him, and if not, will break with him!"

The woman kept silent. She stared at the men. She looked at her husband, wrapped and bound up in the fur-coat at the red-hot stove. There was no longer any light left in his white face, only his eyes were glowing in the shadow of the brim of his hat. If he were to faint he would be burned on the fiery iron. And she looked at the men, drinking her husband's wine and tumbling over with fatigue.

She knew there was no escape. She started pleading with her husband. He was listening to her and looking at her. He also knew there was no escape. And when the sun rose he sent her, with a hollow voice, to see to the animals and continue the ploughing with the boy. They let the woman go. The agitators were tired but they knew they could not leave without finishing the job. There was no escape: neither for them nor for this man, nor for the village. And in the morning, when the loudspeaker on top of the council hall started to blare out marches to damp the sound of the bell, the man staggered forward and, supporting himself against the table, put down his name at the bottom of the enrollment form.

The woman returned from the field at nightfall. She was looking for her husband. His bed was unmade. His hat was lying there in front of the mirror, under the crucifix, where once she had found the hat of her father-in-law. And in

the mirror she saw her husband's booted legs. He was hanging from the forged hook driven in beside his name in the crossbeam.

The old priest came over to cut him off the rope. And he was given a quiet burial. Few people attended the funeral, which coincided with the meeting to establish the co-op farm. The wake was held in the back-room; the first room had been seized for the co-op office. The horses, cows, the cart and seed-corn were taken by the co-op during the week of the funeral. The newly widowed woman and her sister, herself a widow for years, watched their animals driven off from the window of their bed-chamber and their farmyard—and the whole village—ravaged from morning till night.

Two years later they moved the office. The front room was returned to them and they put the furniture back into place. They scrubbed down the chest of drawers, which during those two years had had a bust of Lenin placed on it. They put back the broken mirror and the crucifix on the wall between the two windows, in place of the pictures of party dignitaries. The widow put a stool under the crossbeam, stepped up on it and hung her husband's hat on the forged hook.

From that time on, it was there the family commemorated their dead. To visit the old man's grave would have called for a passport and they could not mourn at the grave of his son, since it was forbidden to celebrate All Souls' Day.

The years slipped by. The two women were working by day in the co-op farm, and the boy was attending school. He was hard working and the teacher encouraged him to continue with his studies. He did not say anything when the boy kept his hat on his head during classes. Which amazed the chairman who came from the Young Pioneers' County Committee to attend the end-of-term festival. "Get that lad to take that hideous thing off his head! You cannot see his red pioneer's kerchief properly because of it". The festival commenced. The boy remained obstinate, but then he threw his hat down. "Fuck your school!" he shouted, snatched up the hat and ran away.

There was no way to continue with his studies. He was taken on by the near-by mine, where he worked first as a hauler and later underground. In vain did they warn him, he would not wear the compulsory hard leather hat, he did his work in his own hat, always pulled down over his eyes, his father's hat in his bachelor days. His mates called him "Hat". Once on Miners' Day, the party secretary offered to fill the hat with beer for him if he took it off. The sun was shining upon the clearing, the goulash was simmering in the cauldron, and the miners at the keg urged him on. He did not take it off, he went home.

He was seventeen when he heard on the radio that there was a revolution in Budapest. Revolution! And they needed help. The boy threw up his hat high in the little square before the changing-room and shouted "Let's go!" A few of them loaded the bus which used to take them home to their villages with dynamite, paxite, fuses and pickaxes. They piled into the bus, some forty of them, and headed for Budapest. The boy hung out of the window and shouted back to his mates from his village: "Tell my mother I've gone!" And they could see him waving with his hat.

By All Souls' Day the two women were left alone. And they had no news from the boy even by the following All Souls' Day. They were not able to offer any words of comfort to the girl whom the boy had been courting and who dropped in to help the two women, first in the evening, and later by day too. Without a man's hand they were finding it more and more difficult to cope with all the work. On All Souls' Eve the three of them stood together over the two candles in the front room.

In December the postman brought a parcel. On the tattered paper they spelled out the seal of the National Penal Headquarters. The mother removed from the parcel the hat in which the boy had started out to work on that day. A slip with an inventory number fell out from it. The mother brought a hammer and nail, her sister put a chair under the crossbeam and she and the girl held on to it firmly while the mother drove the nail into the beam and hung the boy's hat beside those of his father and grandfather.

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The story that I heard in the mid-eighties in the border village in North Eastern Hungary contained in a condensed form everything I had intended to learn on Hungarian peasant society—indeed its way of life and speech, its acts and wear, its positions and symbols, its ethos and values, its tragedies and its handling of these tragedies.

In my anthropological work over the last ten years, I have been examining the use of the material environment by individuals and families. I mostly employed the methods of ethnology; my data generally concerned the changing way in which objects have been used by particular groups over three generations from the beginning of the century to the present. Alongside observations based on participatory studies, I could turn to two important sources for data: the experiences and assumptions concerning death and mortality, and family photographs. Particularly instructive has been the observation of the mutual relationship between interviews with the aged and the sick looking back on their lives, and private photographs illustrating the same family or personal life stories.

I understood that the material environment as a whole can be similarly interpreted. The personal material world assumes its specific importance through individual use. The same group of objects can assume different meanings through the different ways they are used by the same person(s). It struck me in connection with the interviews involving the interviewees' life that not only souvenirs exercise the function of recalling memories but, in certain contexts, other objects do so as well. The material environment to those using it and, to the observer, trying to understand it, continuously expresses the struggle and reciprocity of remembrance and oblivion. The prime mover of this personal interplay of remembrance and oblivion is a ceaseless search for identity, for its expression, affirmation and restoration. The objects keep changing and forming, together with their users, they conform to challenges; they actively express this process and show the imprint of their users. Man remembering and forgetting

through objects realizes and expresses his own self. In doing this, objects inevitably become linked with ego-ontological explanations which become mythologies for an individual, a family or a small group. These family mythologies allow identity to be nurtured and expressed at the level of individuals, relatives and small groups. A growing need for this on the part of fragmented societies has appeared in the last ninety years, when global social myths have been relegated to the background, split, deprived of their meaning, commercialized or forced into the subconscious.

The story of three hats sums up all that Hungarian peasants can remember and what they could forget or should have forgotten of the last ninety years.

As in many cultures, remembrance and the fostering of memories falls to the women rather than to the men. In most cases wives outlive their husbands, and infant mortality is higher among boys; mourning and the remembrance of the dead have thus become part of the traditional tasks of women. Tradition has also made it their duty to deal directly with the dying and the dead. In the same way, the remembrance of events concerning the family and the local community also forms part of the strict expectations imposed on women. Knowingly or instinctively, it is for the women to nurture the axis of the past in the dimensions of time, and on given occasions, to properly relate the past.

The three women not only had to endure the tragic events, they also had to find—in a form best conforming to tradition and in a way the community could control and tolerate—a worthy manner of commemoration. They also had to find the way in which they could meet this expectation by setting up adequate symbols and cherishing them. The weight of these demanding expectations is eased by deep-rooted traditions, which help them not to break down or to shun their past—not even if an integrating society would act against these traditional principles. This stern expectation can lose force and validity only with the disintegration of the local culture.

The three women could not visit the burial places because the grave of the grandfather was separated from them by a new border. The tending of the father's grave was made difficult by authorities hostile to religion. All Souls' Day was an ordinary working day. The son, as a political prisoner, was buried in an unknown, unmarked, possibly mass, grave. Since they had no way of engaging in public commemoration, they sought and found a worthy way of doing so in private. But the closed and reticent manner of their very behaviour and clothing also publicy expressed their remembrance, and indeed, even the shabby state of the house and farmyard served as a reminder of their loss.

The fact that they could find, presumably instinctively, an appropriate method of remembrance, may also spring from the very naturalness with which they treated symbols: in this case the symbolic meaning of the hat, a typically masculine article of clothing.

Throughout Europe, and especially in Italy and Hungarian-speaking territories the hat is a typical masculine symbol. In the village of Szék, in the

Mezőség, for instance, teenage boys are given a hat by their godfathers, and by the time they reach the age of a young bachelor, they have learned how to wear it in a proper, rakish way. In married life the hat becomes the accomplishment and crowning of the husband's dignity as a man, and with its trimmings and the individual way of wearing it, it not only indicates the clan he belongs to but also shows, for instance in a fair, the region he has come from, and the ethnic group he belongs to. In old age the hat is worn with proper dignity and after its owner's death it is buried with him. In the case of the three women it was right, even though unusual, for them to mark death with a hat.

Regarding hats, one can clearly observe an integral unity between wearing and conduct—traditional, yet allowing for individual varieties; a man's way of wearing his hat can express his temperament, his mood, and even his respect or contempt for those he meets. Headwear in typical form served as a device for important non-verbal signals between people of the same or different sexes. In and around the village where I did my field-work, it was strictly forbidden for a lad or young married man to take off his hat in the company of girls and young married women and play with it by turning it round his finger, as this was considered the most indecent of invitations.

But the hat has other symbolic meanings as well. In the villages whose inhabitants are of several religious denominations in North Eastern Hungary, all the men of the house have had strictly assigned places for their hats on the rack. Strangers, even the inhabitants of the house, never took their hats into the room; the exception was the priest, who usually entered the house hat in hand and placed it on the bed—but only if he wanted to stress he was about to settle some problem or tension in the family. Apart from him, only lads courting the daughters of the house and already accepted as suitors could put their hats on the bed. In this sense, the hats hung on the crossbeam meant that there could be no more important or dearer guest of the house than the deceased men. And that they had always remained present to the women. For the widows to place their husbands' hats at the holiest, central place was tantamount to a renewed oath of allegiance.

The master of the house, by hanging his hat in its customary place on the rack at the end of the day, indicated to family and visitors alike that the day's work was done, something had been closed. In this sense, the hats hung on the crossbeam meant: It is finished.

The story as told by the three women employed phrases and expressions concerning the hat in a varied and consistent manner. Several local women, when recalling the newly married husband, the lad who had come from Transylvania, expressed independently of one another, how much the fine strapping newcomer had been to their liking by saying "And how well he knew how to wear his hat! O God, how well he knew!" Such linguistic stereotypes play a major part in lifting this folk narrative out of its non-recurring, occasional form, lay special emphasis on it, and indeed, through the references to the object at the centre, elevate it to the level of tragedy and the text of a family myth.

It is not easy to remember and forget in a worthy manner.
Particularly if the integrating society desires with all the power at its disposal to obliterate and to govern the memory of its citizens. Nonetheless, it is very difficult to take enforceable measures against the dead and against traditions concerning the dead. The leaders of society at that time had re-arranged the holidays of the year. The only public commemoration was on All Souls' Eve (although that too was restricted), an occasion when the nation could confront itself as reflected in the memory of its dead. The significance of this confrontation was further enhanced by the fact that Hungarians living beyond the borders of present-day Hungary were subject to various forms of discrimination and oppression directed against them as an ethnic minority. For them this occasion, limited to the cemetery, was all they had to commemorate: not just their own relatives but, through their ancestors, the historical roots of their national identity. By spelling out the inscriptions on the graves, they could keep their mother tongue alive and pass it on to their children; it was all they had, to remind themselves and their kin of what happened to their ancestors and themselves, and to mourn for their present and immediate future with their songs and prayers. When the authorities somewhat eased their pressure, there was a silent but irresistible strengthening of the festive power of All Souls' Day which has remained a normal working day. No reason could be found to set any effective ban on this. Death is a democratic institution and everybody has his own deceased. And they call to be remembered.

So the three women, under the hats, lit their candles for the three men on All Souls' Eve, becoming part of a nation-wide circle of celebrants. This is how the dead vitalized the living. The elemental tension between the official and the popular mass commemorations lent a specific invigorating strength to All Souls' Day and to the living remembering the dead.

There has been a profound difference between official history and private, family history in the judgement of the dates and periods of national history that should be forgotten and those to be preserved in living memory. The wearers of the hats—together with millions of the country's population—considered conditions before the Great War to be unambiguously worthy of remembrance, and they referred to them in everyday parlance as "the good old days of peace."

The Great War led to national, family and individual tragedies. Hungary lost the war and with it two thirds of her territory and more than half of her population; some became citizens of foreign states, some fled back to the new, truncated Hungary, others still emigrated to the New World. The majority, however, stayed in their place of birth and tried to find the most suitable way of maintaining their disturbed identity. The chaotic post-war era included, in 1918, an attempt at a bourgeois democratic regime which, in 1919, was followed by a brief but extreme Communist dictatorship. Coming just after the war, it once again generated identity crises, mainly among the country people. The peasantry rejected the Soviet Republic which they linked with the war and which, modelling itself on Soviet Russia, had also intended a kolkhoz system. At the

time I visited these widows, the official view of history still used the phrase "the glorious 133 days" for that brief interval. For the wearers of the hat it was a bitter period that had then started, even if the son had been able to expand his farm. Neither he nor his father could get over the trauma of being driven out of their birthplace. Their turn of mind more or less coincided with the revisionism of the Horthy era, which Marxist historians have treated in a negative light, blaming it for its chauvinism and a policy that paved the way for fascism and helped German expansion. One year after the old man's death, the 1940 Vienna Award reannexed part of his native land to the mother country. It brought hope to many split families and was considered something bordering on a miracle, and not only by the wearers of the hats.

The Second World War brought personal and national perils and tragedies. Communist historiography of course has placed the country's liberation and the role Soviet troops played in it, in an unambiguously positive light; the day on which all of the territory of Hungary was controlled and occupied by Soviet troops was made into a national holiday. The Independent Smallholders' Party, the leading party of the short coalition period (1945-48), represented the interests of the countryside and the peasantry. They could govern with a huge majority and a power that sprang from a fairly unequivocal national confidence. In 1949, the "year of change," the Communist Party achieved total power and began the final liquidation of private property; land that had been shared out in 1945-47 was now forced into co-operative farms, something that was considered the triumphal progress of collective ownership; the peasantry and the middle-class saw in this the liquidation or radical transformation of their traditional way of life and of the pillars of their indentity. For the family in the present story, personal tragedy made the process even more excessive.

The popular uprising in 1956 gave rise to a short-lived hope. Everybody felt confident, and the country people trusted in being able to return to their former natural way of life. But Soviet troops re-established the Communists in power, those who took part in the rising were ruthlessly persecuted, executed, or imprisoned for years, even young lads who had taken part in the fighting in large numbers. From 1960 onwards, during a period of "consolidation", the collectivization of the peasantry was carried on with renewed vigour and completed on a national scale. With the loss of the son and the farm, the lives of the three defenceless women mourning under the three hats, became totally hopeless.

A tension as explosive as this between the authorities and the nation in their remembrance and forgetting could not and cannot last for long. There is no culture that could bear a situation in which several generations of people remember in their private life, and within the family, things that are different from what they are officially expected to remember.

Gergely Hajdú

Desire, Dogma and Death

György Spíró: *A jövevény* (The Stranger). Árkádia-Szépirodalmi, 1990, 757 pp.; András Pályi: *Kövek és nosztalgia* (Stones and Nostalgy). Szépirodalmi, 1989, 308 pp.; István Eörsi: *Emlékezés a régi szép időkre* (Remembrance of the Good Old Times). Napra-forgó, 1989, 228 pp.; András Lukácsy: *Felismerem-e Angyal Istvánt?* (Do I Recognize István Angyal?) Magvető, 1990, 268 pp.

A historical novel, a volume of short stories, in part autobiographical, and two subjective memoirs, of their nature, use totally different approaches. What is common to the four works is their subject: the 20th century European's yearning for fixed points, acceptance of the bars of dogmatic ideologies. Small wonder that the success of Marxist theory and the Communist movement is here and now of the greatest interest. How could even the most gifted members of several generations be charmed by them? After the first extensive spread of the movement in the early twenties came the Spanish Civil War and the great disillusionment of the late thirties. This was the generation of Orwell and Koestler (the best-known of their Hungarian equivalents was the painter and writer Lajos Kassák, 1887-1967). Some found their way back to "bourgeois humanism," while others (like Kassák) tried to develop an anti-Stalinist Communist position. Despite these examples, after the war "existing socialism" found many supporters among a new young generation; it achieved surprising popularity in the 1960s among young people born around 1940.

Generations with a similar orientation emerged in practically every country on the continent, but the position of those in Eastern Europe is uniquely contradictory, since a dictatorial state did everything to compromise leftism. Its failure to do so, the fact that the Marxist quasi-religion remained viable at least up until 1968, shows what profound psychic needs it satisfied.

Much is said about the revival of Christianity, liberalism, or nationalism in Eastern Europe, yet all these are surface phenomena. All the controversies are on expressly practical problems and rarely concern theoretical issues. The sense of the twilight of ideologies and a constantly growing indifference are much closer to reality. Whether this situation lasts or not, it offers the opportunity for retrospection to the authors (who themselves more or less had felt the attraction a closed system can have) to examine the psychic map of that craving dogma, to examine the links between spontaneous faith and institutions, and to look at how they lived through the tragic clash between theory and practice during the retributions that followed the 1956 revolution.

A part from being a prolific writer and literary translator, György Spíró is also a teacher of Slav literature, who has

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written books on Miroslav Krleza and East European drama. His academic interest has left its mark on his chef-d'oeuvre, *Ikszek* (The X-es, 1981). That novel takes a period and events from 19th-century Polish history which are easy to transfer to the present and in a tone fairly rare in Hungarian. Like the followers of Gogol, he achieves satirical effect through the very precision of portrayal. (See *NHQ* 85); the novel has been published in French as *Les Anonymes*.

The Stranger is also a longish work, halfway between novel and essay. The author has studied a great many documents, and the gaps in the sources are filled by a daring imagination. The story is set among Poles who, after the failure of the uprising in 1830, fled to Paris. The life of the exiles unfolds from the journal of a Lieutenant P.—their misery, the sense of having lost their way, alternating distress and hope, and the wrangles between the factions. Lieutenant P., an honest though somewhat dull individual, has kept to the traditional values, but there are many who, under the influence of the works of Adam Mickiewicz, are ready to assign a religious significance to the fate of Poland.

"The Messiah of the Second Coming," Towianski by his real name, arrives with some of his followers from Vilna. He organizes a movement, mainly of Poles, though his followers include Jews and, thanks to his Bonapartism, Frenchmen. He has compiled his teaching out of elements of Christian and Jewish mysticism (Joachimism, Swedenborg, the Kabbala), and has arrived at a synthesis of the two religions. Gershom Ram, one of the protagonists of the novel, has been brought along to convert the Jews, and the title refers to his first name.

All that Towianski knows is that desires are more important than facts. With real psychological insight, he "redeems everybody in a somewhat different manner." Against free will he recommends fanaticism as a panacea—in fact he heals depression with a paranoid idea. He promises his disciples that their life is to write the Newest Testament; he offers a "Great Leap" to those whom history has damned. To those who have the greatest need—the intellectuals—he recommends "the sheltering, protecting cave of early man." Mickiewicz takes on the leadership of the Movement, which Slowacki, his rival, also joins. They have been released of a particularly great responsibility, as up till then they thought they themselves would have to take the role of the Polish Madonna. They have come to a crisis as artists as well, and with their best work already behind them, Towianism has come in handy for them as a pretext: now they can proclaim that poetry has lost its importance, this is the time for action.

Given the location and date, readers in Eastern Europe will immediately think of the birth of Communism: the author himself calls attention to the parallel in comparing the activity of the Master and Mickiewicz (alongside the cult of Liszt and the Mahdi) with that of Fourier and Saint-Simon as well, he speaks of their relationship with Bakunin, and Eduard Bernstein's famous "the Purpose is virtually nothing, the Movement itself is everything" is also to be found. Ram argues with Marx himself in the library of the British Museum. But even without all the many references, it is clear that he speaks in general about "nationalism" in the broadest sense, as Orwell uses the term.

Members are given new names, they wear uniforms, form small groups and confess to each other. The hope of privileg ensures the coherence of the Movement, so does the promise of sexual freedom (provided by one of the Master's first adherents, the nymphomaniac Xavera), so does its hierarchical organization which, according to Spíró, primarily means the ability to withhold information. Clannishness is reinforced by their dead, and by the—slight—persecution they suffer, and

even more so by the persecution of heresy within the Movement. Mainly because of Mickiewicz's jealousy, Slowacki is barred, and he becomes the Trotsky of Towianism. In the long run, he profits from injustice, as his poetry begins to improve again, although up to his imminent death it never reaches its previous standards.

Gershom Ram gains the support of the financier Rothschild and is even received by the Pope. He does not succeed in converting him, but Gregory XVI realizes that the masses require the most basic possible demagogy. Accordingly, he prepares the dogma of papal infallibility because "in the face of heresy, the Church has to be the greatest heretic." The somewhat naive scene leads the reader to surmise that the author's knowledge of Catholicism stems from the epigrams of G. K. Chesterton. The next stop-over is, however, all the better: Ram is put under house arrest in Jerusalem, and he carries on a religious dispute with an anonymous community, that of the Quizzers (Chapter IX/4). This section comes up to *The X-es*; Spíró makes use of one of his specialities, showing how the motive of prestige within, a body, and the motive of mutual fear, push the original subject of an inquest into the background.

More powerful interests do not allow Ram to carry his point; but he only comes to realize the senselessness of the whole struggle in London, where he finds a completely new way of thinking. The English Jews are interested only in practical issues, in profit and not truth. They know that freedom is related to individuality and not to a herd instinct. This time the speaker does not hit upon the secret desires of his listeners, as no such desires exist. Ram loses faith in his master—how could he be omnipotent if he entrusts him with impossible tasks?—and yields to the lure of freedom. His commercial career makes him rich but he cannot shake off a sense of emptiness.

Rivalry gains growing ground within the sect; Mickiewicz finally breaks with the Master, but not with faith. The "man of mission" is no longer able to form normal human relations even should he lose his faith. ... "his goal becomes an inclusion within himself."

By the time the death of the poet closes the story, Spíró has convinced us of the very opposite of everything he has professed. He seriously asserts the value of fanatical faith: "Those who have overcome extremity know more about nothingness than those who have been living in nothingness throughout" however, he so well portrays the loathsome, deceptive life of the movement, fatal to any talent, that the reader assesses the soberness of Lieutenant P. more and more highly, and by the time the "downfall" of Ram occurs, the reader hardly feels a sense of loss.

Not only the narrator's reflections clash with what is presented in the novel, the person of the *narratee* is also uncertain. Many of the references are only interesting to a Hungarian or Polish reader, yet are given lengthy explanations which will seem superfluous. (Spíró's previous novel received a rough reception from the Poles, some of whom find it hard to tolerate an unheroic portrayal of their great historic figures.)

As in *The X-es,* here too Spíró creates only one character in the round: Mickiewicz. There are too many one-dimensional figures. That *The Stranger* is expressly boring is not even denied by the author. With his own kind of wit he notes on page 665 that "... I sincerely hope the reader will not get so far anyway." (In fact, the last third is more readable, perhaps because it has occurred to the writer—as he seems to intimate—that, having got to 1848, he would be inviting comparison with *Education sentimentale.*)

Spíró's is an extremely dry style. Colloquial expresssions alternate with archaic tenses (some of which have never existed). Alongside cheap quibbles (e.g., "sitpoint") there are witty observations, but one very rarely encounters fine sentences. Apart

from those deliberately provoked from Catholic, Jewish or Polish sensitivity, the novel can scarcely count on passionate reactions.

András Pályi's third volume brings short stories in an arrangement which in their totality offer a miniature *Bildungsroman.* In most stories the hero comes from the Catholic lower middle class, and feels a calling to the priesthood. On reaching adolescence, he has to rebel against his domestic environment, respectable d ecency and (at least seemingly) rigid morals; he turns to a left-wing ideology, which is backed by the state—a nonconformist turned temporizer. In "Motionless," he proudly joins the Young Pioneers, an organization generally despised; he goes to church in his red kerchief and not kneeling down on the old stones gives him a sexual thrill. In "Counter-Revolution," he conceives a singular initiatory ceremony into manhood: on the day of his first shave he disowns his father, and even a friend who died in the uprising two years previously. He goes to the cemetery and chooses a father for himself: a Communist martyr, to whom he swears that from now on he, too, would call 1956 a counter-revolution. "Class struggle, by all means. It liberates you, if you are on the right side." This "liberation" again brings an erotic experience: in the way of thinking of the generations mentioned, the two have become inseparable, even though official ideologists never promised any such a thing. (Like other heretics, Wilhelm Reich was a rigorously prohibited author.) "Men," as Spíró writes, "desire Xavera in all movements." What is even more disillusioning than the unintentional lie is that Pályi's protagonist is humiliated on both occasions by his new comrades.

The motifs keep growing richer, the characters escape from the tradition of religion, from the "stones", and live for the here and now, but the desire for redemption, for the "fullness of times" also remains ineradicable. This nostalgia surfaces whenever a colour or a smell conjures up a series of memories, pointing out a relationship between distant events. The unprincipled publicist in one of the best pieces, "Adoration of the Western World", the son-in-law of a "hyena in public life", escapes from the rut on his first journey abroad, when he encounters the rich choice of teas and the "secret universal order of aromas" opens up to him. The whole work resembles the experiments of the *nouveau roman* or of Jacques Brosse *(L'éphemere ordre des choses)*, but the manner in which Pályi uses impressions is particularly dreamlike. Most characteristic in this respect is "Shift," a way back into a strange yet familiar building, full of childhood memories, a mixture of tenement house, palace and cloister. It is its atmosphere that makes it individual, it does not even have a style of its own, recalling, as it does, the styles of various authors, chiefly the most popular of the 1960s. In his fantastic stories, Pályi often uses redoubled consciousness and shifts in time ("Baby", "Love Story"), these are mainly reminiscent of Julio Cortazar. The romanticizing of space, in "The White Cross Expedition", rather follows Ray Bradbury. His often untamed yet devout eroticism exploits splendid biblical expressions to overcome a relative scarcity in the Hungarian lexis.

The reader slowly realizes that these motifs form a profane gospel: the disowned family, a scandal in church, the false wife stoned. "Beyond" is the story of resurrection: a love story of the amoral priest and the actress, but this cliché of Mills and Boon is narrated by the spirit of the priest, who has committed suicide, and at his own funeral he is trying to continue and rectify the plot.

"A Farewell to Stones," at the end of the volume, is partly a confession: present and stationary time come to a syntheis in a flash of light, before Chartres Cathedral, in the religion of the "etherial stone," the Sun. The ideology of the state and its servers

deserve mild irony: "Sun thou art and into sun thou shalt return. You senior cultural clerk upper grade."

István Eörsi is a successful playwright and writer of short-stories; his true field is, however, journalism, in which his ease and wit raises him high above the average. These merits are often a disadvantage to a journalist if he wants to express himself in a longer work. Detours and repetitions in the structure, anecdotes not entirely suitable, appear in Eörsi's memoirs about his years of imprisonment. Although not as cathartic as it could have been, it still makes enjoyable and edifying reading.

The young poet was among the favourites of those who ran Stalinist cultural policies but, as a pupil of György Lukács, himself pushed into the background after 1949, Eörsi became gradually alienated from the practice of socialism. He welcomed the 1956 uprising both as a private individual and as writer: at the time many artists still accepted the romantic role of the intellectual leader, the prophet. (Suffice to think of the position held by Camus or Huxley. A similar expectancy still lives on in Central Europe; in Hungary, for example, it is directed at the poet Sándor Csoóri, but he, like most writers, declines to live up to it.) The left-wing writers who accepted the myth of the inherently infallible, assigned far too great a significance to the literary opinion of the workers. However, it is true that the direct relationship between the two groups was never stronger than during the days of revolution.

In those days Eörsi worked for the free Hungarian radio; he did not take part in the armed fighting but collaborated with a group of idealistic Communist insurgents led by his friend, István Angyal. When the fighting ceased, they printed handbills and organized a general strike. He himself was writing for two illegal periodicals: *Élünk* (We Live) and *Igazság* (Justice). (The latter was restarted in 1990 by its former editor, Gyula Obersovszky, who escaped the death sentence only through the intervention of Bertrand Russell.) Eörsi became one of the 24,000 dragged off into camps and prisons. He was sentenced to eight years and released after four in a partial amnesty.

Eörsi wrote his poems, which even in his own words "can rarely be evaluated aesthetically", on toilet paper and had them smuggled out by discharged prisoners. These poems have now helped him reconstruct his state of mind of the time. Today it seems strange how gladly he accepted to suffer together with the working class. "The Communist citizen felt he had walked into the trap of Stalinism because he had been unfamiliar with the life of the people." Later, after the execution of Imre Nagy and István Angyal, the voice of impotent rage becomes stronger. But he maintains the rhetoric of Communist conviction throughout, and also an ironical gaiety, joking about prison conditions.

Is this perhaps a pose? Eörsi denies the duality of man and role: his optimism, according to himself, is biological. The other possibility is alluded to by a story. Seeing his smile, the Jehovah's Witnesses take him for one of them. In vain does he argue heatedly, even rudely, with his religious fellow prisoners, he is not left far behind them in fanaticism. "He was right," he writes of one of them, "one either believes in something according to the letter or does better to throw one's faith out of the window."

That this *something* happens to be Communism, makes the position of the poet extremely delicate: even his fellow prisoners expect him to show solidarity with the jailers, particularly when he is transferred to the cell of war criminals, where eve n the workers are more reactionary than he would have thought. He may still consider their political concepts *objectively* socialist (only the phraseology is anti-Marxist), but he cannot find a similar excuse for the antisemitism he finds there.

The prisoner became isolated not only

from workers and intellectuals who took the side of Kádár, but from society as a whole which, under the constraint of *primum vivere,* accepted the series of bad compromises that has come to be called consolidation. "I felt it was precisely hatred that protected me from the most dreadful distortion, disloyalty"—disloyalty to the dead.

Although by now Eörsi has become more understanding of the man in the street, he has drawn much energy from the memory of that hatred—he has gained prestige within the democratic opposition. To the present day he forms, practically by himself, the left wing of this liberal movement. Even though he considers it to be anachronistic, he still has not fully renounced the human ideal of the revolutionary: "...I keep on hitting my head into my social and personal limits."

The title page of Eörsi's book carries a photograph taken during his trial. To his right sits the man who most closely approached his ideal of the revolutionary: István Angyal (1928-58). Angyal's life story has been written by one of his other friends, András Lukácsy, in the form of letters. The addressee is Péter Angyal, the hero's son, who now lives in Germany and no longer feels at home in Budapest. Lukácsy tries to counteract this aversion and what he had to suffer as a child without reverting to any pious lies, using only the strength of facts.

The author, whose background is comfortably middle-class, was never a fanatical follower of any ideology, as was the case with Mrs Angyal, whom he so often quotes in the book: "We only coquetted with this attraction from the assumed security of our inherited culture and family environment." In their case the necessary perspective is ensured not only by the passage of time but also by their aversion.

István Angyal was born into a poor Jewish family in the Southern part of the Hungarian plain. He was sixteen when he was deported to Auschwitz, where he had to look on as his sister was hanged after an attempted escape. After the war he was admitted to the Budapest college maintained by JOINT. "He is immediately carried away by the building of a new world which knows of no racial and class distinctions." He studied literature and history at university until 1949. He was sent down in the year of the Stalinist turn, because at the time of the anti-Lukács campaign he spoke up for the philosopher. He worked in factories and on construction sites (doing the work of a chief engineer without any technical qualification); even his worst experiences and the unbelievably low standard of living disillusioned him only with the leadership of Rákosi and his associates and not with the idea of Communism. In the same way as the medieval peasants rebelling against their bishop found their arguments in the Bible, he found them in Lenin's *State and Revolution,* and became the advocate of decentralized power and of what later became the Yugoslav type of workers' self-government. "They have hijacked the revolution, my friend," he told Lukácsy. "We must make the real one."

The most interesting chapters present the private individual: the warmth of his friendship, which "made one shiver", and his short-lived marriage. Angyal acted with an inadequate, militant seriousness even in the most trifling affairs. He accepted no arbitrary judgements, and assessed his acquaintances from moral and practical points of view, setting out tasks for them. His dedication to the common good had an almost comic pathos to it. He criticized Lukácsy in a severe letter for his attraction for *l'art pour l'art* (in style, the letter could have easily been written by Kassák in the 1920s). His wife was unable to stand his seriousness and superiority, and their marriage ended in divorce.

In October 1956, these very qualities caused Angyal to emerge as the leader of a spontaneously assembled group of insurgents. There were several similar squads

active in working class districts, and so Angyal was in a position to accept only those who held similar principles. This and his adherence to legality explain that Kádár, who at the time still sided with the revolution, came to an arrangement with him, thus legalizing his group—a fact which became highly awkward to the First Secretary after his treachery.

Angyal was naive enough still to believe the attack by the Soviets was an ideological coflict, indeed a misunderstanding. They continued resistance under red flags until, upon the appeal of the women of the battered district, they surrendered their position. Later he printed calls for a general strike in the cellar of a hospital, where he was arrested early in November.

Angyal, suffering from pneumonia and long lack of sleep, wrote a sincere memorial in prison, in which he gave exact details of the events of the revolutionary days, even the most damning ones. Before his trial he asked for Kádár—who meanwhile had changed sides—to act as his witness, adding that he was not willing to suppress his information. In so doing he himself sealed his death sentence. His moral purity allowed for no compromise, and he opted for being hanged, which, according to his fellow prisoners, he was looking forward to in the most cheerful mood. His remains were finally taken to a mass grave, with his face down, in the ill-famed Plot 301 in the central cemetery of Budapest. Early in 1990, his former wife, and Lukácsy, his friend, identified his skull.

Lukácsy uses long quotations from documents and memoirs published last year (apart from Angyal's, for instance, those of the Budapest Chief of Police, and of Eörsi), which a well-informed reader may find boring, though invitably a clear and rounded story is presented. The author is mainly known as a literary historian, a scholar of literary rarities. This volume exhibits noteworthy skills as a writer.

Thomas Mann in Budapest, 13 January 1937.
Attila József shows him his poem, "Welcome to Thomas Mann".

Tamás Koltai

Fresh Voices

András Nagy: *Anna Karenina Station;* László Márton: *Carmen;*
Ákos Németh: *Lili Hofberg;* Péter Kárpáti: *The Unknown Soldier;*
Andor Szilágyi: *The Terrible Mother*

A young generation of playwrights has been entering the Hungarian theatre. Most are still under thirty and they share certain literary features as well. For one thing, the start of their careers shows a welcome change from the past—they do not have to fight for years for the opportunity to have their plays premièred but have been able to reach the stage relatively quickly.

Another common feature, again in contrast to earlier generations, is that young playwrights now feel averse to being directly involved in politics, averse to historical questions of life and death, and to parables. Nor are they interested in the details of daily life that can be photographed. They do not write naturalistic plays or social satires, and they reject all forms of didacticism. All the more willingly they turn to their classic predecessors. They write adaptations or paraphrases based on popular works, they enjoy stylistic play and have a propensity for linguistic games, juggling with words and forms of expression—all in all, they are proud of a literary technique they seem to have acquired at a very early age and which is less a dramaturgical technique that a mature style.

Tamás Koltai, *editor of* Színház, *a theatre monthly, is* NHQ*'s regular theatre reviewer.*

András Nagy is no longer counted as a novice; he has published several novels and has had one play performed. His latest adaptation bears the title *Anna Karenina Station*. The railway station provides the actual setting and the symbol of the play. In the first scene somebody falls under the wheels before Anna's eyes, and in the last scene "a more powerful force" (Tolstoy's term) plunges Anna onto the rails. The characters also keep travelling between these two extreme points, to various destinations, and some of the scenes are set in the station. The author has the glass-roofed "slim structure, this light span" remain on stage throughout; at times it takes on the role of the hall which Vronsky has raised and in which, according to Anna, their love is about to take shape: "The Anna Karenina Station... which is eternal, which will survive us, which is more than the two of us, but which still has grown out of us..."

From behind the meandering literary sentences and the locomotive smoke of the author's hypothesis, emerge the outlines of a play fired by real sentiments and emotions. There is nothing passé in this play: the fact that the exclusion from society of the woman living apart from her husband is anachronistic and that a present-day Anna in similar conditions would come up against a totally different life becomes immaterial. What is more important is what has remained unchanged: that the wife

has developed overnight a repulsion for her husband's ears; that an unexpected love affair drives the three characters into searching their minds. Two of them—the two men—are unable to leave behind their own individual tracks. Their stubborn male sense of vocation mercilessly runs over the woman, the only one of the three who steps out of the channel which was apportioned as her life, to build a station that would even count as a cathedral, out of her only, final emotion.

The play is not as cerebral as would seem from the above sentence. Karenin's passionless, security prone possessory instinct and Vronsky's bursts of passion are confronted with Anna's profound love which, as she herself puts it, is not her passion but her destiny. Karenin has thrown in his lot with Russia and the reforms and Vronsky is unable to get over the demise of his military career. Only Anna is able to give up everything, to renounce society, her middle-class reputation, and even her child, in exchange for sole possession of Vronsky. And when she fails, her life becomes senseless.

András Nagy has reduced the number of characters to a minimum, and the production has made even further cuts in order to study the model of the eternal triangle in an emotional laboratory, under isolated conditions. Péter Valló, the director, narrowed down the author's interpretation of Tolstoy (intended for a large stage), so that it fits within the confines of the small Radnóti Theatre. He has scaled down the spacious railway station into an intimate, tiny hall interior, which acts evocatively as both realistic locale and symbol. We are passengers in life, and end it on the rails, we dream of a glass-roofed construction above our heads, but it breaks down. The metaphor is somewhat crammed, like a station during the rush hour, but it is not baffling. And it offers excellent parts, as borne out by the critics' prize for the actress of the year, which went to Katalin Takács for her rendition of Anna.

László Márton is one of the top-flight young writers, with many plays and publications to his name. He is also known as a translator, his latest translation being a linguistically inventive *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. To adapt Prosper Mérimée's short story, *Carmen,* to the stage seems at first sight a bizarre idea, and even after giving close scrutiny to the script, the author's intention does not become fully clear. What is clear is that it aims to be more than a school exercise—paradoxically by closely following the structure of the original story. In Mérimée, the story of Carmen is recalled by a travelling archaeologist. The stage version raises this figure somewhat into a symbol by opening with his monologue on the meaning of existence, and directly before the murder, he is even confronted with José. In the stage version, the traveller awakens the corporal, given to philosophizing anyway, to the futility of life. The drama between Carmen and José seems to be the clash of natural, raw, utilitarian vital strength with decadent reverie. But it does not become clear whether László Márton wants to elevate the originally down-to-earth, realistic story into lyrical surrealism—as certain Felliniesque visions, poetic-grotesque images seem to indicate—or is simply having fun and would like to give it an air of parody.

The first supposition seems more likely, but János Szikora, the director at the Szigligeti Theatre in Szolnok, possibly unintentionally, tilts the balance in favour of the latter. Bizarre elements predominate in the play; in the first scene the traveller is sitting on a grassy hemisphere, presumably a symbolic globe, which from time to time opens up and then closes again, each time displaying a different scene in keeping with the plot. The acting is not uniform. The girls in the cigarette factory romp about in the tub wetting the tobacco, splashing away—which gives the scene an unequivocally erotic content. At other instances one feels to be presented with a

parody of grand guignol, particularly in the portrayal of the events in the smugglers' lair. From time to time demons appear in mystic visions, in a witches' sabbath or a Hieronymus Bosch painting. Then again there comes clownery between two soldiers. All in all, the stylistic game obscures the essence and shows the play as more unsubstantial than it actually is. And particularly, as it could be, if the traveller, (presumably the intellectual alter ego of the playwright), were to dig somewhat deeper down in the human soul.

Like other members of his generation, Ákos Németh is an exquisite stylist. You can sense his ecstasy in creating dialogue while writing *Lili Hofberg*. In fact the work consists of two plays, but they have been staged as a single full-length production in Budapest's Madách Theatre: the first première of the 25-year-old playwright.

The scene is set in the Heidler Theatre in the Vienna of the 1930s and '40s. Lili Hofberg is a celebrated actress but she cannot be taken as the central character. Indeed, after the first few scenes the public is forced to recognize that they are not being treated to a connected plot, there is no story in the traditional sense. What one expriences are moods of the political intrigues of the time and of its *ronde* of love. Politics gradually gain the upper hand over love. The dressing rooms and offices are slowly filled with the climate of Hitlerism. At first the screaming of the soap-box orator is only faintly heard through the window, later the Reich Minister, Goebbels, gives the performances his personal attendance, and while he is courting backstage, he throws a sinister scene to frighten the Jewish doctor. Finally he orders the theatre to be closed down—obviously upon the consideration that in grave historical times there is no need for such frivolous, decadent institutions. This is the malicious conclusion of the play.

The author must have been taken up by experimenting with blending the smell of mastic with the national-socialist idea. He must have been interested in a mixture of Bohemian affectation and healthily narrow-minded bureaucracy. But even that is not certain. Character sketches (including some of the eponymous heroine) keep emerging and disappearing for no particular reason in a series of alluring scenes. The viewer can recognize the antecedents of the play: Klaus Mann's *Mephisto*, Fassbinder above all, Isherwood's *Cabaret,* (the production even helps the association by including some of the tunes), or Ödön von Horváth. It is not sure whether they have occurred to Németh—but they definitely do to the audience. Words bubble with a stylistic force in the play but they are no substitute for a dramatic structure and individualized characters. All that remains is a smart packaging technique.

The production has tied up the package with a beautiful, frothy ribbon. One director was not enough to tie it, two were needed, Imre Kerényi and István Kolos. The stage is turned into a miniature jewelcase, with everything in permanent motion, the designer extending and narrowing down the space, and even squeezing in a mass scene. The costumes are poems of style, with a cinematic verisimilitude covering the tiniest details. So much energy has been put into the visual composition that hardly anything is left for the acting. But the only chance to galvanize life into the characters would have been for the actors to fill in the outlines with their own personality. What the author has merely felt (next time he may perhaps commit his feelings to paper as well) might have been instilled into the roles by the actors and producers. And then Ákos Németh, a promising talent as he is, could have learned at the beginning of his career what—beyond an easy treatment of words—makes a real playwright.

Young authors seem to have made a fashion of a new way of treating dramatic material which gives the

semblance of lacking any construction. Péter Kárpáti, who already has an interesting play to his name, has now, in his latest play, *The Unknown Soldier,* deliberately eschewed any relationship between cause and effect. He begins a new play practically in every scene, and by the time the viewer, who has been waiting for some plot to emerge, realizes that this is the very structure itself, he loses the tension which keeps interest alive in the dénouement.

In one scene, for instance, all the characters except the eponymous hero speak in Slovak. A small girl recites a poem in broken Hungarian to welcome the unknown soldier. The unknown soldier is a Hungarian. He has come to bring the family a small chess-board he has found in the pocket of the unknown Slovak soldier. The unknown Slovak soldier was killed by the unknown Hungarian soldier. The family does not understand what he wants. They welcome him, they want to treat him to a dinner, they speak to him. At long last they get it that their son has died.

It is a natural and yet poetically, almost surrealistically, unreal scene. It has something of the genre invented by István Örkény, a dramatic "one-minute story". The actors behave naturally and they make the audience believe that they have full command of Slovak. But since the viewer knows that this is not the case, a grotesque tone is lent to the situation. The conceptual content prevails through a stage metacommunication, and this is more than enough in this case. The author, one might say, is wandering in dramaturgy without any control. The play opens with an exchange between a malingerer on hunger strike and an army surgeon, and it is only the scenery of a squalid wall—abstract even in its hyper-realism— and the female surgeon that make one surmise that the situation should not be given a naturalistic interpretation. It then continues in a style that recalls a kind of a hospital cabaret. An excellent walk-on lady pours out the general orders of a tired sister in a gradually rising voice. Another actress rarely seen on stage is sitting at the sick-bed motionless, with flinching eyes, as if sitting on the brink of existence. The patient is lying for a time like a shrivelled body, and then, leaving his bed behind, steps out of himself and of space, and to the accompaniment of a monologue, dematerializes into death. The process is repeated several times, covering the motif of poetic death with many characters.

Not only space becomes disintegrated, the dimensions of time also expand. From the present, our hero wanders back into the First, and into the Second World War, and even to the 1848 Hungarian Revolution, indicating that for the relevant unknown soldier the alternative to kill or being killed has always been the same. The author garbs his pacifism in easy-flowing lyrical sentences, and out of his message the director István Verebes conjures up a forceful stage vision in the Budapest Játékszín. For the time being Kárpáti's is a boundless talent, at least in the sense that his play could be started at any point and it could be ended at any point. This literary manner would allow for an endless dialogue. The characters move like chess-pieces positioned by unknown hands: some of them being taken off the board from time to time, and when too few of them are left, the game ends and the public can go home.

The plays reviewed so far have, in the order I have discussed them, more and more departed from everyday realism and more and more approached a metastatic, poetic, metaphoric interpretation of reality. Andor Szilágyi's grotesque, *The Terrible Mother,* goes farthest along this road. This strange tragicomedy set among birds—or let's say bird-men—could even be considered a political parable. But it is so utterly different from the plays for which I have been using this term ever since the 1960s that I would prefer not to apply it here. The plot turns around a protagonist who never appears on stage. The "terrible mother" is

already dead when the play opens, and the characters surround her bier sobbing, lamenting over her one by one. But no sooner has the funeral ended, and the funeral speeches made by the members of the family, than the mood turns to the opposite. The people who up till now have mourned in desperate grief start to abuse her with burning hatred. It turns out that each member of the family has his or her good reason for hating Elma, the mother, who had done dreadful things (for instance, she kept her own child shut up in a clamp for three years), and had done frightening things all in all, as the artist of the shambles. Her list of crimes includes various forms of violence, only the nature of this violence being somewhat questionable, because Elma, the terrible mother, is of a dubious sex. According to one of the characters, once she had her beard singed. Later three pheasant-like ladies appear, whom she was supposed to have raped. As one of the critics put it, Elma was the paternalistic mother of the past terrible decades—the symbol of a "sexless" age.

The dramatic end, in its bizarre absurdity, is worthy of what goes before. Elma's former bodyguard, Romwalter, is gaining in power, and ravishes the puny son of the dead idol, and this act gives rise to a new terrible mother. This, however, cannot be tolerated any longer: the freak must perish.

Even if some what overwritten, Szilágyi's play is understood by everyone in Eastern Europe without having to spell out who the terrible mother was. This makes it hard to understand why Tamás Fodor, the director of the Szigligeti Theatre at Szolnok, who created a dramaturgical order in the play and brought forth a good production, had the wall of the ramp leading up to the stage made into a columbarium showing the names of the "terrible mothers" of the past, from Brezhnev to Kádár and from Ceausescu to Honecker. He must have been uncertain whether the impulse of the play would be strong enough by itself to make the viewer recognize his own position.

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Gergely Bikácsy

A Justice of Sorts

János Vészi: *A halál villamosa* (A Streetcar Named Death)

Gathering increasing respect from the early 1970s, the Budapest school of documentary has attracted interest for a style blending feature, fiction and documentary. The directors (István Dárday, Béla Tarr and others) sometimes have had amateurs play out fictional stories in their own words and gestures, sometimes pro actors do a lean docu-drama. By the 1980s the school had practically ceased to exist; the directors were directing genuine feature films. Yet its inventions and attitudes had permeated Hungary's documentary filmmaking. In the eighties, however, a different style was becoming dominant: fact-finding interview films in the talking head style, with the interviewee gazing into the camera while relating a tale of unrelieved suffering. It was oral history by movie cameras. The movie part of the affair was secondary here and for a good reason: the camera was handled by an attentive technician, and all the rest was up to the speaker (and, perhaps, audience).

János Vészi's second work, titled *A Streetcar Named Death,* provides, even beyond its high values, a lesson to be drawn concerning the possibilities of the whole genre. Breaking with the documentary style of the Budapest School as well as with the interview films of the talking heads method of unveiling reality, Vészi's film reaches back to more traditional methods of documentation. The director regards his subject only as a kind of raw material whose form is to be chiselled by careful cutting, dissolving, slowing, and certain laboratory techniques. The film is a criminal court report, with the direct excitement of immediacy coming through well; yet the director regards this rough piece of reality only as a silent boulder which will radiate a deeper truth if tackled by cinematic craft rather than by means of television reportage techniques.

Some years ago in Budapest an off-duty policeman in civilian clothes was pushed off a night tram and shot dead with his own pistol by some rowdy youngsters after he had tried to scare them off with a warning shot. The film follows their trial. The pictures of the trial are interrupted by shots of the night tram, the corpse lying by the rails, and interwoven by a conversation with the principal defendant, a boy of seventeen.

Vészi was helped along by life itself. Because of the judge who presided over the trial, *A Streetcar Named Death* is filled with the tension and excitement of a feature film from the very first seconds. The courtroom is an old and clichéd setting: we may recall memorable courtroom lawyer roles, fainting witnesses and defendants as well as all those extras screaming in excitement. Yet, never have I seen a powerful actor of such talent on the screen as the presiding judge here. He might be overdoing it a bit for the camera and the court audience but his acting gift is not there, nor is it just an itch for the limelight. He is going to pass sentence on teenage boys, and most of the witnesses are also adolescents. So the judge employs a paternal style, behaving all along as a benevolent

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father. It is a pose, of course—but his airs show his essence: he is not simply an expert in ferreting out the truth and passing the fitting punishment. He is more, for he considers something else to be the essence of his duty, to represent a fatherly paternalistic, calm, severe but just power and social order. Indeed, he behaves as if he were the possessor of this power, the inventor of this style of using it. Pose and role, expert penal justice and omniscient god protecting the good order of society are blended into one. He is no longer a representative of this power, he is Power itself.

Like all valuable documentary films, this one will reflect in a few years the very essence of the particular society and political situation more authentically than any contemporary newspaper article or day to day politics would. The judge here does not rant; he speaks in a soft, slow, musing voice, at times he actually mutters. He forces himself to adopt a reassuring attitude. He is faced with adolescents, so he makes fatherly quips, gives advice on rearing and lifestyle in a hearty, humourous way. The time is early 1989, the year the senile dictatorship lost its self-confidence. The judge's face and attitude explain most creditably what the term "soft dictatorship" means. It can be assumed that, should an actor be sought to play the role of János Kádár one day, it will be hard to find one more capable of such total identification.

As the trial (and the film) draws towards its conclusion, everything becomes increasingly uncertain. The off duty policeman trying to quieten down the youngsters on the night tram turns out to have been dead drunk. The prosecutor cannot prove that the victim identified himself as a policeman. It seems probable that an unsteady, drunken man threateningly pulled his gun and intervened in the boys' tumult; in fact, he may have shot at the teenagers he confronted, rather than squeezing off a warning shot. It is also increasingly difficult to prove that the lethal shot was really fired by the principal defendant, Attila S. The judge (and the viewer) strongly suspects that, being the youngest of them, the boy took the crime upon himself in order to protect his older friends, who would be subject to more severe punishment.

"Can't understand. I can't understand anything," the judge mutters and buries his head in his hands, either falling out of his role or reinforcing his fatherly, grandfatherly playacting, either honestly or deviously. But he really cannot understand it. He cannot see whether he is supposed to pass a deterringly severe sentence or a permissively forgiving one. He loudly orders some noisy latecomers to leave. He loudly orders some gum chewers to desist as they "shed a negative light" on their "defendant friends." Yet his confident Father-image has been shaken. In a scene straight out of the best surrealistic tragicomedies, he questions Attila S. in a honeyed voice about whether he is an operagoer. "You should certainly go one day..." he says, only to recover himself in stunned, bitter surprise: "Certainly, but when?" He looks heavenward for help but Heaven leaves him helpless. Whoever is above, gods or the authorities, are shrouded in silence. The dictatorship is not what it used to be, it cannot bite any more. Lawyers can openly talk about their clients being beaten up at the police station and witnesses having been held and worked over. Our hero, the judge, listens, head drooping. Then he summarizes the case as "manslaughter committed for a criminal purpose", even though nothing remotely resembling this has emerged during the trial. True, on the other hand, he wraps up the whole case into paragraphs suitable for handing out relatively light sentences. That is a matter for the law, not for filmmaking.

Actually, the sentences can be appealed against. The dictatorship itself can also be appealed against. And everybody, judges, policemen, adolescents, fathers and sons are ignorant in the new situation. *A Streetcar Named Death* is a film with a message that will last.

Paul Griffiths

Drive and Conviction

New releases from Hungaroton

There are bound to be fears for the future of Hungaroton if, as seems possible, the company is no longer to have first claim on all of the many excellent Hungarian musicians currently gracing its catalogue. Just what is at stake is well demonstrated in a mixed handful of recent releases.

Iván Fischer's account with the Budapest Festival Orchestra of Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and *Firebird* suite (HCD 31095) must claim priority, since what we have here is the record of one of those rare occasions when conductor, musicians and music are in full accord. The colouring is intense, even though Fischer uses the later and slightly less colourful versions of both scores; but just as remarkable is the immediacy and completeness with which Fischer is able to grasp the players into single gestures, or else balance them in textures of perfect transparency. These are exciting, energetic performances, but there is no wasted force: instead a strong, clear direction. I have heard more in these scores than ever before (for instance, the importance of the piano in *The Firebird* and the extraordinariness of the colours in the middle parts of *Petrushka*); but more important, because these performances are not just chains of pretty moments, is the determining drive and conviction. The record also has the advantage of a fine essay by Viktor Togobitsky, which makes what is, as far as I am aware, an original contribution to Stravinsky scholarship in plausibly suggesting a link between *Petrushka* and Serov's opera *The Power of Evil*. One hopes Hungaroton will continue to keep up its reputation for care over documentation.

After this astonishing Stravinsky record, though, the same conductor and orchestra sound disappointingly ordinary in accompanying Miklós Perényi in the Dvorák Cello Concerto and Tchaikovsky's Rococo Variations (HCD 12868). But this is not too much of a problem when the solo playing is so full of interest. Hungarians often complain that Perényi ought to be better known internationally, and one can hear why: his tone is individual, with an abraded, buzzing quality that maintains intensity and draws the listener into the sound; he also has the resources of nuance and mind to extend his playing in long phrases. He is not a singing cellist; rarer, he is a cellist who can make the instrument speak, though his talents and aptitudes are probably better shown in the Tchaikovsky than in the Dvorák; also his virtuosity.

The Keller Quartet, all of whom were under thirty when they made their début recording of works by Schubert (HCD 31195), belong to the next generation of Hungarian string players. Here they capitalize on their youth in a ferocious, high-pressure performance of the D minor "Death and the Maiden" quartet, attacking the dotted rhythms with passion, generating enormous tension in the slow variations, and bringing something carnal and immediate, almost a yelp, into their tone at

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moments of desperation. This is, commendably, not a performance done for the archives. It has plenty of danger, plenty of ideas that do not quite come off. Very possibly in five years' time it will surprise and embarrass the players. But it is powerful and persuasive, and it reminds one that Schubert too was in his mid-twenties when he composed the work. There is the bonus of an atmospheric and dramatic account of the first movement from the unfinished quartet in C minor.

Chamber music from a century before is offered by Júlia Hamari and the Hungarian Baroque Trio on a record of Handel's nine German arias, coupled with his A minor recorder sonata (HCD 31280). The arias are settings of pieties by Barthold Heinrich Brockes, better known as the author of a Passion text Handel had set earlier. Hamari sings them feelingly, and though her vibrato is sometimes a worry in slow music, the big contemplative, "Süsser Blumen Ambraflocken," which she wisely makes the centrepiece, comes across with quiet majesty. She also has the agility required for the faster songs as well as for cadenzas and decorations. Very probably that agility, and her expressive powers, would have been better displayed if the accompaniment had not been so rhythmically constricting. The playing is disappointingly, wearyingly foursquare, in the sonata as much as in the arias.

Finally a brilliant and instructive anthology of American percussion music from Amadinda (HCD 12991): a record which is bound to enhance their reputation as one of the outstanding percussion groups. But it is hard to know what to say of them other than that they are exhilarating: percussion music goes beyond the boundaries of criticism as it goes beyond the boundaries of what had been considered material for art. Here the exhilaration begins with the great classic of the genre, Varése's *Ionization,* and continues, after a couple of hiccoughs, in three rare examples of Cage's activities with percussion orchestras in the 1940s: the *Double Music* he wrote with Lou Harrison; his *Amores,* folding percussion trios between pieces for prepared piano; and his *Third Construction.* The hiccoughs are Chávez's *Toccata,* an empty piece rather surprisingly but not unfairly dismissed in András Wilheim's note, and Cage's *4'33",* of which, of course, no record is needed: we can all perform it, by listening, at any moment of our lives. It does not consist of unplanned sounds recorded in the Börzsöny Hills and brought to you on CD. It consists of the sounds around you now. I mean now.

László Vikárius

Bartók Libretti in English Translation

Maintaining what was specific to a given culture was central to Béla Bartók's work. He believed that the peoples of Eastern Central Europe live, and should live, in a polyglot cultural community in speech and song that embraces the different nations. His attitude, what he had to say, his scholarly and composing activity, all bear witness to this conviction. It can be presumed that this was also the idea behind a monumental cycle of which *Cantata Profana* was to be a part. The piece, composed of Rumanian *kolindas*, was to have been one of a series of works based on folk texts in different languages. This suggests that Bartók's vocal works should perhaps only be performed in the original language. The inherent structure of a musical setting of a text can hardly remain intact in translation. This is particularly true when the linguistic and musical texture of a work is held together by colourful national and folk, and not merely personal, elements. But then comprehension is part of the effect of a piece of music set to a text, not only in general but also as regards the meaning of individual words and turns of speech. Bartók considered it important to have translations of the texts he worked with. He insisted that the Slovak text for *In the Village* should appear with a Hungarian translation. Composing the *Cantata*, he used both a Rumanian and a Hungarian text at about the same time. Of course he could not very well reject the notion that the country involved should get to know a work in its own language. He, however, accepted that the use of a major language was a condition of joining the European mainstream. His education had been basically German, with a certain French emphasis; his compositions published abroad by Universal Edition in Vienna appeared with a German, French or English translation. Bartók really cared about the quality of these translations. He first prepared literal, *wortgetreue* versions and continued to revise them. One is therefore entitled to conclude that it accords with Bartók's intentions to obtain and make accessible the best possible translation of the two major works set to a text, his only opera, *Bluebeard's Castle*, and his *Cantata Profana* for double mixed chorus, tenor and baritone soloists, and orchestra.

Bluebeard's Castle (composed in 1911, first performed in Budapest in 1918) was not translated into English in Bartók's lifetime. It was first performed in English-speaking countries in the late 1940s. Antal Doráti first conducted it in the U.S. in the 1948/49 season. A piano arrangement, originally published by Universal Edition (UE 1028, c. 1925), was then reissued with a translation by Christopher Hassal. The publishers's archives show that M. D. Calvocoressi, the French translator, had earlier also offered an English version. The latter's whereabouts are unknown. It would appear that Universal Edition was somewhat appre-

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hensive about the work of the Greek-born writer. Besides Hassal's, a translation by Chester Kallman is also known. It was used in the recorded performance conducted by Eugene Ormandy (sung by Jerome Hiness and Rosalind Elias with the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1963).

English translations are usually more flexible than German ones, thanks to a realtively free word order in verse. Stresses and long and short syllables adjust more readily to the regular accented prosody of Hungarian verse and to a rhythmic structure that follows speech stresses. With the exception of a few lines, mainly Bluebeard's characteristic interjections, the entire mystery play consists of accented octosyllabic verse. This can be suitably rendered in trochaic verse. The librettist Béla Balázs's stylized language — the art nouveau atmosphere, allusions to folk tales — makes special demands on the translator. Hassal with his use of "thou" and "thy", gives his language an archaic tinge.

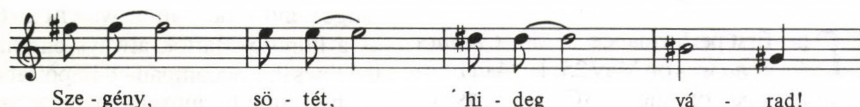
Kallman's text is sometimes too liberal in wording and syllable count. Formally, Thomas Land's translation, now used as a performing version by Sir Georg Solti, is no doubt the most faithful. Not only do his lines keep to the Hungarian text, often the words even maintain their proper place. In a psychologically sensitive setting the latter is especially desirable. Land keeps the characteristic repetitions which translators generally render by different poetic images. They are vital to the atmosphere, just like the repeated motifs and melodic phrases in Bartók's music. The line *"Milyen sötét a te várad!"* Kallman translates in the first instance as "Darkness rules within your castle." Later, when Judit says it repeatedly, it reads like this:

> *Milyen sötét a te várad!*
> *Milyen sötét a te várad!*
> *Milyen sötét...*
> But your castle reeks with darkness
> Darkness and the air of exile.
> Stale and heavy.

Example 1 is a perfect illustration of the way the three translations differ.

The earlier translations do not precisely convey the exact identity of repeated lines. Though Hassall goes on to expound the first line's words, "light" and "air", he does change the grammatical structure. Kallman merely suggests the identity of the second and third line. In both versions the closing line is a rephrasing of a previous one. Thus the three attributes present in the Hungarian are lost, yet it is that triad which indicates the folk-tale character, a co-ordinate structure, which Bartók brought out in the music.

Hassal:	Light and air will	cheer your castle.	Hap-py sun - shine	laughing breezes,
Kallman:	All your castle	must be o-pened,	light must drive the	dark be-fore it,
Land:	Let the sun - shine	flood your castle!	Let the sun-shine	flood your castle



Hassal:	they will	cheer your	joy - less	dwelling.
Kallman:	light must	end the	reign of	darkness.
Land:	wretched,	gloomy,	chilly	castle!

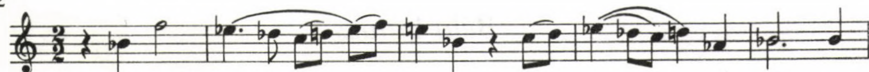
The genesis of the text of the *Cantata Profana* was much more problematic than of the libretto of the opera. The first, Rumanian, version Bartók compiled from two *kolindas*, making a few additions and modifications. This continuity draft, so far unpublished, is based on the Rumanian original text as indicated in the first Universal Edition of the full score and the date—September 8, 1930—is likely to refer to this version since generally Bartók regarded his "Konzepte" as the completion of the composition. Later he prepared a temporary Hungarian version, which then replaced the Rumanian as his primary reference. It is doubtful the Hungarian text can be considered a translation. The composer, at any rate, treated it as if it were an independent work. Its language and versification make it a work of poetry, and Bartók considered it as such when he read it for a recording made by Hungarian Radio about 1936. For translation into other languages, however, Bartók apparently (to the end of his life) used the earlier, shorter and somewhat different Rumanian version. There is a German translation by Bence Szabolcsi who most probably worked from the Hungarian text. But in producing a literal German version, which Bartók insisted on publishing together with the score to be used as the basis for further translations, he used the Rumanian original. It was also the text which he translated into English after he had moved to the States. He sent a copy of the latter, with a letter dated September 29, 1944, to a friend in Hungary, Pál Kecskeméti, and his wife. There is no indication regarding the purpose of this translation, and unhappily, as far as I am aware, it was never performed.

The first performance of the *Cantata Profana* was on May 25, 1934 in London at one of the BBC concerts of contemporary music. Thus the *Cantata* was perfomed in English, more than a decade before *Bluebeard*, in a translation made for the concert by M.D. Calvocoressi. That was also the version published with a piano arrangement in 1951. The Boosey & Hawkes score of 1955, however, uses a more recent translation by Robert Shaw. This is the version performed on record by the New Symphony Orchestra & Chorus, conducted by Walter Susskind (Richard Lewis and Marko Rothmuller were the soloists). Calvocoressi based his work on Bartók's literal German translation and Shaw worked from the Hungarian with an assistant. A peculiar situation is created by the fact that Bartók's text is based on the first, unpublished Rumanian draft; on the other hand only the 1934 publication of the score offered a German and Hungarian text which could be coordinated with the music. I will now examine the relationship between the poem and the music based on the Hungarian text. It is also the version that Land worked with.

The ballad-like *Cantata* consists of six-syllable accented lines. There are also lines with a different syllable-count, mainly five or seven, whose function is to provide a variation of form. Elsewhere a sucession of 3x2 syllable-lines is followed by a line with 2x3 syllables, e.g. right at the opening of the work: "volt néki, volt néki," which Shaw renders as "Whose treasure, whose treasure". *Bluebeard's Castle* contains free parlandos, but the *Cantata* solos are rubato, and often giusto. That makes for a frequent occurence of rigid rhythms, see mingly independent of the text, a characteristic of folk-music.

A further difference is that in the *Cantata* the text is sung mostly by a chorus. Words and sets of words must be repeated, which permits some liberty in placing the text. That, however, makes it difficult to judge Land's translation, which exists only as a libretto. Bartók always emphasized the lines that accompanied important parts of the action by introducing new musical material. That was to aid the listener in grasping the storyline carried by the complicated contrapuntal double chorus. In Calvocoressi's translation the storyline

Ex. 2



Continuity draft:	Pân co - drii vâ-na - ră nouă fi --- u - seri
	Az er - dő ---- ket jár-ta* A va -- dat va - (dász) - ta**
Final version:	Az er - dő - ket jár - ta, sej, haj! És vad - ra va-dá-szott, hej!
Calvocoressi:	The forest a - rov - ing heigh hoy! They followed their quarry, hoy!
Shaw:	Through forest a - rov - ing, hey-yah! They bounded a hunting, hey!
Land:	And roaming through mountains and valleys, they spent their time hunting,

* Originally: járták
** Originally: va(dász)ták

does not always follow the ever new musical themes. In places where new themes are introduced there are interesting variations in the text even in the various versions by Bartók. A good example is the fugue at the begining of the hunt. (Example 2—a palimpsest of various text versions, quoted on the basis of the draft).

The interjections *"sej, haj"* and *"hej"* were obviously added subsequently to the closing notes of the lines in the final Hungarian version. Earlier translations followed this text. Land modified it only by adding words to lines with more than the usual number of syllables, thereby achieving a more natural and smoother text. This way is nevertheless problematical, since it does away with the characteristic interjections that serve to prepare the passionate stag hunt.

It would appear that the aims of translation can be better achieved by relying on the Hungarian version, as Land did, rather than on Bartók's literal German version. In certain details, for example, the delaying of some aspects of the hunt, this is better worked out. Since no final version of the Rumanian text set to music exists, the Hungarian one must be regarded as definite. All the same it cannot be excluded that the publication of the continuity draft will raise new issues relevant to a translation.

Béla Balázs

Prince Bluebeard's Castle

An English performing script for Béla Bartók's opera.

MINSTREL: Good evening,
Judith, Bluebeard and all,
seeking an evening's musical rest
from the only drama that you know best,
that matters the most till the curtains fall—
good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

Lonely faces. Intently, you
watch me—and I watch you too.
Where's the stage? Can you be certain?
Our eyelashes are the curtain,
the curtain, ladies and gentlemen.

Behind the curtain lies the stage,
one man's castle, one man's cage.
The world seeks destruction, but you and I might
die of something else tonight,
tonight, ladies and gentlemen.

We live—and watch each other—and
we tell our tales. But understand:
you may sit next to a spouse or a friend
but each soul is free and alone in the end,
alone, ladies and gentlemen.
(The curtain rises. The stage is in total darkness.)

The stage lies naked without and within.
Let Bluebeard's performance begin!
(The music starts.)

The curtain has risen on Bluebeard's hall—
please applaud when it must fall,
naked, ladies and gentlemen.

Ancient castle steeped in old
rumours about one lonely man;
listen as the tale is told.

(The Minstrel disappears in darkness which eventually turns to twilight in a vast, round, Gothic hall. To the left, steep stairs lead to a small iron door above. Seven immense doors, all closed, surround the stage, one to the right of the stairs, two to the left and four facing the audience. The hall is empty, dark and gloomy, like a tall cave. The total darkness is first broken when the iron door above suddenly opens exposing the black silhouettes of Bluebeard and Judith in dazzling white light framed by the doorway.)

BLUEBEARD: See the castle.
—Look about you:
here at last is Bluebeard's castle.
Doesn't glitter like your father's.
Will you follow me here, Judith?

JUDITH: I am coming, coming Bluebeard.
(Bluebeard slowly descends several steps.)

BLUEBEARD: Can you hear the tocsin tolling?
Clad in black, your mother mourns you
while your father takes to armour
and your brothers saddle horses.
Will you follow me here, Judith?

JUDITH: I am coming, coming Bluebeard.

(Bluebeard descends to the foot of the stairs and turns back towards Judith who has followed him but stopped half way

down. The light from the doorway above falls on the stairs and the two figures.)

BLUEBEARD: Fearful, Judith?
Would you go back?

JUDITH:*(with hands on bosom)*
No, it's just my skirts that hold me,
just my silken skirts are tangled.

BLUEBEARD: Look, the portal still is open.

JUDITH: Bluebeard, listen!
(She descends several steps.)
I have left my father, mother,
I have left my noble brothers,
(She reaches the foot of the stairs.)
I have left, too, my intended
just to come here to your castle.
(She snuggles up to Bluebeard.)
Bluebeard! If you should dismiss me,
I would never leave your portal—
I would rest upon your threshold.

BLUEBEARD: *(embracing Judith)*
Let the doors up there be closed then.

(The small door above closes. The hall remains gloomy, with only the seven large doors and the two human figures visible.)

JUDITH: *(holding Bluebeard's hand, she fumbles forward along the left hand side wall)* Here at last is Bluebeard's castle!
Neither balconies, nor yet windows?

BLUEBEARD: Neither.

JUDITH: Does the sun shine all for nothing?

BLUEBEARD: All in vain.

JUDITH: Ever chilly? Ever gloomy?

BLUEBEARD: Chilly, gloomy.

JUDITH: What would people say about it?
This would freeze all idle gossip.

BLUEBEARD: Heard a rumour?

JUDITH: Oh, how gloomy is your castle!
(She fumbles forward and shudders.)
Walls with moisture—Bluebeard, tell me,
is it water on my fingers?
Tears! Your castle...weeps the castle!
(Judith covers her eyes.)

BLUEBEARD: Would it not be cosier in your intended's castle, Judith?
Cheerful roses, whitewashed brick walls,
dancing sunshine, glowing tiles...

JUDITH: Do not, do not wound me, Bluebeard!
I do not want sunshine, roses,
neither roses nor the sunshine!
Neither... neither...
neither...
Oh, how gloomy is your castle!
Oh, how gloomy is your castle!
Oh, how gloomy...
Wretched, wretched, wretched Bluebeard!
(Judith collapses in tears before Bluebeard, kissing his hand.)

BLUEBEARD: Why did you come to me, Judith?

JUDITH: *(rises)* I shall dry up all the dampness;
with my own warmth, I shall dry it!
I shall warm the chilly stone walls;
with my body, I shall warm them!
Won't you let me, won't you let me,
let me, Bluebeard!
Let the light into your castle!
Let's tear down the walls together!
Let the winds come, and the sunshine,
and the sunshine.
We shall make your castle glitter!

BLUEBEARD: No, my castle doesn't glitter.
(Judith turns right, towards mid-stage.)

JUDITH: Won't you lead me, lead me Bluebeard,
you must show me every corner.
(She moves further towards mid-stage.)
Huge—and shut—doors I am facing,
seven black doors, all shut firmly.
Tell me, why are all the doors shut?

BLUEBEARD: So that they can keep my secrets.

JUDITH: Open! Open for me! Open!
All the doors, they must be opened!
Let the winds come, and the sunshine.

BLUEBEARD: Just remember all the rumours!

JUDITH: Let the sunshine flood your castle!

Let the sunshine flood your castle,
wretched, gloomy, chilly castle!
Open! Open! Open!

(Judith slams her fist against the first door, and her gesture is answered by a long sigh.)

Oh!

(She backs away to Bluebeard.)

Oh! What was that? What was sighing?
Who was sighing? Tell me, Bluebeard!
T'was your castle! It was sighing!
It was sighing!

BLUEBEARD: Fearful?

JUDITH:*(softly weeping)* Oh, it was your castle sighing!

BLUEBEARD: Scared?

JUDITH: Oh, it was your castle sighing!
Come and open, come on with me.
I—I want to open them, I!
Sweetly, softly I shall do it,
softly, gently, softly.
Bluebeard, let me have the doorkeys,
let me have them for I love you.

(Judith leans against Bluebeard's shoulder.)

BLUEBEARD: Blessed are you, blessed Judith.

(The keys clink.)

JUDITH: I thank you.—I thank you.

(She returns to the first door.)

JUDITH: I—I want to open it, I!

(At the sound of the turning lock, the castle's deep sigh is repeated.)

Hear that? Hear that?

(The door opens, revealing a glowing crimson rectangle in the wall, like an open wound, throwing a long, narrow streak of light across the stage.)

Oh!

BLUEBEARD: Judith! Judith!

JUDITH:*(with hands on bosom)*
Chains and... knives and...bloody stakes and
crimson embers...

BLUEBEARD: That's my torture chamber, Judith.

JUDITH: Dreadful is your torture chamber,
dreadful, Bluebeard!, Dreadful! Dreadful!

BLUEBEARD: Fearful?

JUDITH:*(recovers)* All the castle walls are bloody!
All the walls are bleeding...
red and bleeding!

BLUEBEARD: Fearful?

(Judith turns from the first door to Bluebeard in front of the crimson rectangle—her black silhouette stark against the glowing background. She is calm and determined.)

JUDITH: No. Not fearful. Now there is light.
It is growing. Look at the light.

(Judith cautiously returns to Bluebeard, walking along the stream of light thrown across the floor from the open door.)

See that? Stream of radiance.

(She kneels, dipping her cupped hands into the light.)

BLUEBEARD: Crimson waters, bloody waters—

JUDITH:*(rises)* See there, see there, all that radiance?
See there! See there!
All the doors, they must be opened!
Let the winds come, and the sunshine,
all the doors, they must be opened!

BLUEBEARD: You don't know what lies behind them.

JUDITH: Give me, give me all the doorkeys!
Give me, give me all the doorkeys!
All the doors, they must be opened,
must be opened!

BLUEBEARD: Judith, Judith, why demand that?

JUDITH: For true love's sake.

BLUEBEARD: From its base, my castle trembles.

You shall walk through every doorway.
(Bluebeard gives Judith the second key. their hands meet in the crimson light.)
Take care, take care of my castle, take care, take care of us, Judith!
JUDITH:*(approaching the second door)* Sweetly, softly I shall do it, sweetly, softly.
(The lock snaps as Judith opens the second door. The light behind it is a disturbing mixture of red and yellow, throwing a second beam across the stage alongside the first.)
BLUEBEARD: Judith—
JUDITH: Heaps of dreadful, cruel weapons, many dreadful tools of warfare.
BLUEBEARD: That's my armoury there, Judith!
JUDITH: Oh, how very mighty are you, oh, how very cruel are you!
BLUEBEARD: Fearful?
JUDITH: Blood has stained your many weapons, blood has stained your tools of warfare.
BLUEBEARD: Fearful?
JUDITH:*(turns back towards Bluebeard)* Give me, give me all the doorkeys!
BLUEBEARD: Judith! Judith!
(Judith slowly returns to Bluebeard. She walks along the second beam of light thrown across the floor.)
JUDITH: There's the second river. Stream of radiance. See that? See that?
Give me, give me all the doorkeys!
BLUEBEARD: Take care, take care of us, Judith!
JUDITH: Give me, give me all the doorkeys!
BLUEBEARD: You don't know the castle's secrets!
JUDITH: I have come here for my true love.
Here I am, belonging to you.
Your must show me every corner, you must open all the doorlocks!

BLUEBEARD: From its base, my castle trembles.
Pleasure quakes in stones of sorrow.
Judith! Judith! Sweet and cooling when blood gushes from the wounded...
JUDITH: I have come here for my true love, you most open all the doorlocks!
BLUEBEARD: I shall give your three more doorkeys.
You shall see, but never question.
Whatever you see, don't question!
JUDITH: Give me then the keys you promised!
(Judith snatches the keys impatiently from Bluebeard's hand, rushes to the third door—and hesitates.)
BLUEBEARD: Why did you stop? Why did you stop?
JUDITH: Oh, I cannot find the keyhole.
BLUEBEARD: Fear not Judith, we're beyond fear.
(Judith opens the third door. The light behind it is golden, throwing a beam of light across the floor alongside the other two.)
JUDITH: Oh, the treasure! All that treasure!
(She kneels, delves into the treasure and places the jewels, a crown and a mantle on the threshold.)
Piles of gold and sparkling diamonds, precious pearls, adorning jewels, noble crowns and splendid mantles!
BLUEBEARD: That's my treasury there, Judith.
JUDITH: Oh, how very wealthy are you!
BLUEBEARD: Now you own this, all the treasure, yours the gold and pearls and diamonds.
JUDITH:*(suddenly rises)* All your treasures marked with bloodstains!
Your most noble crown is bloody!
(Her impatience and anxiety grows.)
BLUEBEARD: Judith, open up the fourth door, let the light in—open, open!

(Judith, with a sudden movement, turns to the fourth door and opens it. Branches rich with flowers swing in; the light is bluish-green, stretching across the stage alongside the others.)

JUDITH: Oh, the flowers! Fragrant garden
hidden under massive rock walls.
BLUEBEARD: It's my castle's secret garden.
JUDITH: Oh! The flowers...
Lovely lilies, tall as men,
fluttering, virgin-white roses,
red carnations sparkling in dew—
Never have I seen such gardens.
BLUEBEARD: All my flowers bow to greet you.
All my flowers bow to greet you!
You shall tend them, you shall cut them,
and with time you shall revive them.
JUDITH:*(bends down in dismay)*
But the stems beneath are bloody.
Blood has drenched your garden's soil!
BLUEBEARD: At your gaze, their petals open—
They shall sing your praise at day-break—
JUDITH:*(rises to confront Bluebeard)*
Who has tended all these flowers?
BLUEBEARD: Judith, love me, never question.
See the radiance of my castle?
Judith, open up the fifth door!

(Judith rushes to the fifth door and throws it open, revealing a high balcony and a distant landscape behind it. Bright light floods the stage. Judith shields her eyes.)

JUDITH: Oh!
BLUEBEARD: This is my domain, behold it,
stretching past the far horizon.
Is my land not vast and noble?
JUDITH:*(distracted)* Vast and noble is your country.
BLUEBEARD: Velvet woods and silken grasslands,
endless silver rivers winding,
misty peaks blue in the distance...
JUDITH: Vast and noble is your country.
BLUEBEARD: All I own I give you, Judith,
home of dawn and home of sunset,
home of sun and moon and starlight—
they shall be your playmates, Judith.
JUDITH: But the clouds throw bloody shadows.
Why are all these clouds around us?
BLUEBEARD: See the castle's sparkling radiance,
blessed woman, you have done this,
blessed are you woman, blessed.
(Bluebeard opens his arms.)
Come here, come here, come, caress me!
JUDITH: But two doors are still not open.
BLUEBEARD: Let those doors remain unopened,
let my castle ring with music.
come to me, I yearn to hold you.
JUDITH: First, these two doors should be opened.
BLUEBEARD: Judith, Judith, let me hold you.
Come, I'm waiting, Judith, waiting!
JUDITH: First, the two doors should be opened.
BLUEBEARD:*(his arms drop)*
It was you who asked for glitter;
see my castle's sparkling radiance.
JUDITH: I do not want you to have
a single door held shut against me!
BLUEBEARD: Take care, take care of my castle;
mind, it shall not shine more brightly!
JUDITH: I am coming at my peril!
I must, Bluebeard!
BLUEBEARD: Judith! Judith!
JUDITH: Now the two doors must be opened.
Open, Bluebeard! Open, open!

BLUEBEARD: Why demand that?
Why demand that?
Judith! Judith!
JUDITH: Open! Open!
BLUEBEARD: I shall give you one more doorkey.

(Judith reaches out in silent demand. Bluebeard hands over the key. Judith goes to the sixth door... At the turn of the key, there is a deep moan. Judith recoils.)

BLUEBEARD: Judith, Judith, please don't do it...

(Judith resolutely opens the door. The hall becomes darker as though a shadow had passed through it.)

JUDITH: I behold a sheet of water,
silent, tranquil stretch of water—
what kind of lake is it, Bluebeard?
BLUEBEARD: Tear drops, Judith, tear drops, tear drops.
JUDITH:*(shudders)* Oh, how tranquil on the surface—
(Judith inquiringly bends down to examine the water.)
JUDITH: Oh how silent, oh how tranquil.
(She turns to face Bluebeard.)
BLUEBEARD: Tear drops, Judith,
tear drops, tear drops.
(He slowly opens his arms.)
Come here, Judith, come here, Judith,
let me hold you.
(But Judith remains motionless.)
Come, I'm waiting, Judith, waiting.
(But Judith remains motionless.)
No, the last door shall not open—
shall not open.

(Her head bowed, Judith approaches Bluebeard and sadly caresses him.)

JUDITH: Bluebeard, you must...you must love me.

(Bluebeard embraces her. Long kiss. She rests her head on his shoulder.)

JUDITH: Do you love me passionately?
BLUEBEARD: You're the radiance of my castle,
kiss me, kiss me, never question.
JUDITH: Tell me, Bluebeard, tell me, Bluebeard
of the loves who came before me...
BLUEBEARD: You're the radiance of my castle.
Kiss me, kiss me, never question.
JUDITH: Tell me how you loved them;
were they fairer than I? Better than I?
Tell me of them, tell me, Bluebeard.
BLUEBEARD: Judith, love me, never question.
JUDITH: Tell me of them, tell me Bluebeard.
BLUEBEARD: Judith, love me, never question.
JUDITH:*(leaves Bluebeard's caress)*
Open up the seventh door too!
(Bluebeard does not respond.)
I know, I know, I know Bluebeard,
I have guessed your seventh secret.
Blood has stained your many weapons,
your most noble crown is bloody,
blood has drenched your garden's soil
and the clouds throw bloody shadows!
I know, I know, I know Bluebeard,
know the source of all those teardrops.
All your former women lie there
in their own blood spilled in murder.
Oh, the rumours! Truthful rumours!
BLUEBEARD: Judith!
JUDITH: Truthful! Truthful!
For myself, I want to see them.
Open up the seventh door too!
BLUEBEARD: Take it...take it...
take the seventh doorkey.
(But Judith gazes rigidly and does not reach for the key.)
Open, Judith. You may see them.
There are all my former women.

(Judith remains motionless. Then with slow and uncertain movements, she takes the key, goes to the seventh door and opens it. At the sound of the turning lock, the sixth and fifth doors close with a sigh. The stage darkens considerably. The hall is now lit only by the coloured beams of light from the four opposite doors.

Then the seventh door opens, shedding silver moonlight on the couple.)

BLUEBEARD: You may see my former women,
see them, they were my beloved.

JUDITH:*(shrinks back in astonishment)*
Living! Living! Here they're living!

(Three pale women come through the seventh door wearing crowns, jewels and mantles. They walk with dignity, coming one after another and stand before Bluebeard and Judith.)

BLUEBEARD:*(kneels before the three women; then, as in a dream, he stretches his arms open)* Lovely, lovely, lovely visions.
They are always, always with me.
They have gathered all my treasures,
they have tended all my flowers,
filled my land, stretched my horizon—
They own, they own all that I have.

JUDITH:*(anxious and overwhelmed, she involuntarily joins the women)*
They are lovely, they are wealthy;
I am shabby as a beggar.

BLUEBEARD:*(rises and whispers to Judith)* With the dawn I found the first one—
crimson, fragrant, lovely daybreak.
since then, she owns every daybreak,
owns its crimson, cooling mantle
and its graceful crown of silver—
Since then, she owns every daybreak.

JUDITH: Oh, I cannot match her beauty—

(The first woman withdraws.)

BLUEBEARD: Noon blazed when I found the second—
silent, flaming, golden noonday.
since then, she owns every noonday,
owns its heavy blazing mantle
and its golden crown of glory—
Since then, she owns every noonday.

JUDITH: Oh, I cannot match her beauty—

(The second woman withdraws.)

BLUEBEARD: Evening time, I found the third one—
peaceful, weary, dusky, evening.
Since then, she owns every evening,
owns its dusky, gloomy mantle—
Since then, she owns every evening.

JUDITH: Oh, I cannot match her beauty—

(The third woman withdraws. Bluebeard confronts Judith in silence for some time. The fourth door closes.)

BLUEBEARD: Night fell when I found the fourth one.

JUDITH: Bluebeard, stop it! Bluebeard, stop it!

BLUEBEARD: Darkness loomed beneath the starlight.

JUDITH: No more! No more! Still, I'm with you.

BLUEBEARD: Your pale features bathed in starlight,
your hair lashed away the night clouds.
All the nights are your own since then.

(Bluebeard goes to the third door and takes the crown, mantle and jewels from the threshold where Judith had left them. The third door now closes. Bluebeard places the mantle on Judith's shoulders.)

BLUEBEARD: Your pale features bathed in starlight—

JUDITH: Bluebeard, spare me!
Bluebeard, spare me!

BLUEBEARD:*(places the crown on Judith's head)*
Yours the crown of night with diamonds.

JUDITH: No! No! Bluebeard! Take them all back!

BLUEBEARD:*(places the jewels on Judith's neck)* You have my most precious treasure.

JUDITH: No! No! Bluebeard! Take them all back!

BLUEBEARD: You are lovely, you are lovely,
you were my most special woman,
most special woman!

(Judith and Bluebeard stare at each other. Weighed down by the mantle and bowing her crowned head, Judith walks along the beam of silver light following the other women through the serenth door. It closes.)

BLUEBEARD:Now it shall be night forever.

Always... Always...

(The stage is covered in complete darkness in which Bluebeard disappears.)

Cantata Profana

An English performing script

I

CHORUS: There was once an old man
treasuring, treasuring
nine sons, splendid offspring,
blooms of his proud manhood,
splendid offspring, nine sons.
And he failed to teach them
skills to earn a living
ploughing land, sowing, reeping,
horse and cattle breeding.
He brought up his children
for the savage mountains,
trained them in hunting skills.

And roaming through mountains and valleys,
they spent their time hunting,
nine sons, splendid offspring,
they spent their time hunting—
So long did they wander,
wander and hunt the deer,
so far, so long, till they,
they found a graceful bridge
showing magic deer tracks.
They pursued the magic
till they lost their bearings;
now the splendid hunters
thus became the hunted:
turned to stags, the splendid offspring
in the forest thicket.

II

CHORUS: But their father grew impatient
waiting, waiting, waiting,
and he loaded his old rifle
and set out on a search for his splendid offspring.
Thus he found the
graceful footbridge,
on the bridge he found the deertracks,
magic tracks that led the old man
to a cool spring in the forest
where the splendid stags were grazing.

Carefully kneeling, silent.
(Hey!) the man raised his rifle.
But a splendid stag, the largest,
oh, the very dearest offspring,
gravely spoke to his old parent:

TENOR: Our beloved father,
do not raise your rifle!
Our antlers will prick you,
our antlers impale you
and throw you and hurl you
hurl you past the clearings,
hurl you past the valleys,
hurl you past the mountains—
We shall smash your body
on a dreadful rockface,
treat you with no mercy,
our beloved father!

CHORUS: And their loving father
thus addressed his offspring
and thus he called them
with sweet words begging them to go
back:

BARITONE: Oh, my sweet, beloved,
my beloved offspring,
come home, come home with me,
come back from the forest
to your loving mother!
Come with me, come with me,
come back to your mother!
Eagerly, your mother
waits for you, cries for you.
All is ready for you,
torches, cups and table
ready for your welcome.
Goblets on the table
ready for your welcome.
Goblets on the table,
your mother suffering—
goblets full of wine but
grief has filled her household.
All is ready for you,
torches, cups and table,
ready for your welcome…

CHORUS: But the stag, the largest,
dearest of the offspring,
gravely gave his father
this address in answer.

TENOR: Our beloved father,
go home from the forest,
go back to our loving mother—
but we shall remain!
But we shall remain:
look at our antlers,
wider than your doorway,
they must travel through the sky;
our slender bodies
cannot hide in clothing,
they must hide among the leaves;
we must make our tracks not
in your hearth's warm ashes
but on forest floor;
we must drink our fill not
from your silver goblets
but from cool mountain springs.

III

CHORUS: There was once an old man
treasuring, treasuring
nine sons, splendid offspring.
And he failed to teach them
skills to earn a living,
instead he brought them up,
trained them in hunting skills.
And hunting, searching
in the forest thicket
one day the splendid sons
turned into splendid stags.
Look at their antlers,
wider than your doorway,
they must travel through the sky;
their slender bodies
cannot hide in clothing,
they must hide among the leaves;
they make their tracks not
in your hearth's warm ashes
but along the forest floor;
they drink their fill not
from your silver goblets
but from cool mountain springs,
mountain springs.

Translated by Thomas Land

Once upon a time there
Was an aged man, he
Had nine handsome boys.
Never has he taught them
Any handicraft, he
Taught them only how to
Hunt in forests dark.
There they roamed, hunted
All the year around, and
Changed into stags in
Forests dark and wild.
Never will their antlers
Enter gates and doors, but
Only woods and shrubs;
Never will their bodies
Wear a shirt and coat but
Only foliage;
Nevermore their feet will
Walk on houses' floors but
Only on the sward;
Nevermore their mouth will
Drink from cups and jugs but
From the ~~purest~~ springs.
clearest

A facsimile of some lines of Bartók's own English version.

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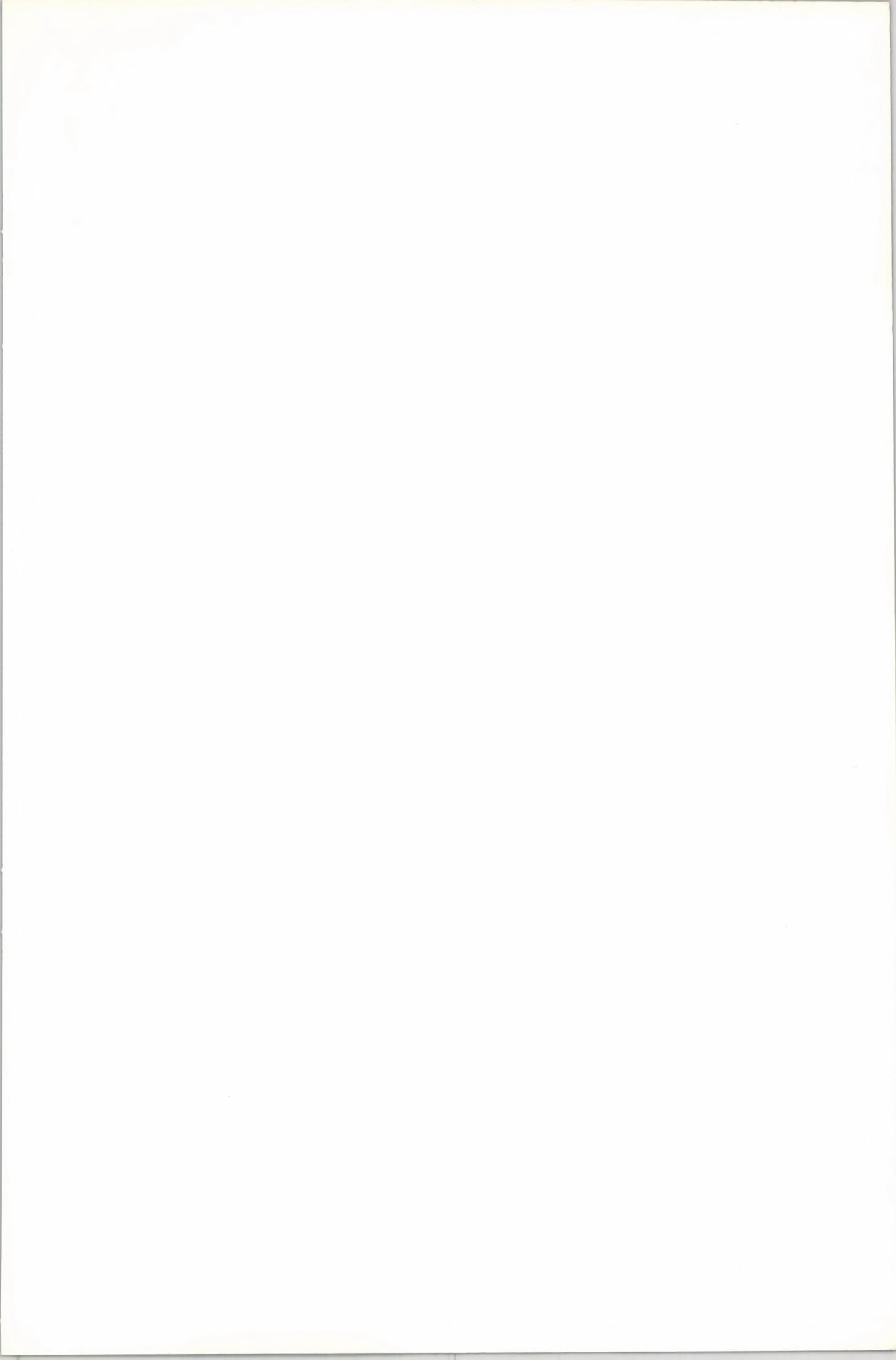

Ft 200.–

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The Bős (Gabcikovo)—Nagymaros River Barrage System embodies everything that led to the social, moral and economic crisis in Hungary. In its monumental dimensions it embodies everything that requires urgent change. It was born out of years of mistaken decisions, irresponsible decisions taken to justify each other. It stands as an example of a type of forced and unequal collaboration in the region; instead of creating links that would lead to a better understanding, it has laid tracks that can only lead to recrimination and hostility.

From: *A Monster Born of Politics: The Danube Remade, p. 68.*