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VOL. XXXII
No. 122
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The Condition of Post–Communism • *George Schöpflin* ——3
Oszkár Jászi (1875-1957) • *György Litván* ——16
Federalism in Danubia • *Oszkár Jászi* ——30
A Literary Voyeur • *Gergely Hajdú* ——37
Exact Tales on the Way • *Miklós Mészöly* ——43

CLOSE-UP
For the Greater Glory of God • *Mihály Godó S. J.* ——58

THE POLITICAL CLOCK
The Discreet Charm of the Free Press • *Gábor Murányi* ——68
Publish and Be Damned: Privatization and Publishing • *István Bart* ——75
The Posters of Change • *Ildikó Nagy* ——79

HISTORY
Slovak and Hungarian Historians Meet • *Géza Buzinkay - László Szarka* ——86
New Sources on Trianon • *Magda Ádám* ——91
Hungarian and Slovak History: A Distorting Mirror • *Július Mésáros* ——98

ENCOUNTERS
My Statue in Poona • *Ottó Orbán* ——103

PERSONAL
Letter from Budapest • *Linda Leith* ——116

ECONOMY
The Pitfalls of Monetary Policy • *Éva Várhegyi* ——124

BOOKS & AUTHORS
Their Men in Budapest • *János M. Rainer* ——— 131
The Man Who Found Samuel • *János Makkay* ——— 136
Honouring Clio • *Michael Hurst* ——— 140
In the Sights of Time • *Balázs Lengyel* ——— 142
Cultivating the Garden • *József Sisa* ——— 148

ART
Artists, Dealers, Museums • *Éva Forgács* ——— 151

MUSIC
Liszt's Weimar Library • *Mária Eckhardt* ——— 156

THEATRE & FILM
Playback • *Tamás Koltai* ——— 165
Turkish March with a Cake • *Gergely Bikácsy* ——— 170

DRAWINGS
by *Ágnes Háy*

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WITH A VIEW
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George Schöpflin

The Condition of Post-Communism

One of the major difficulties about discussing the nature of political systems that have come into being in Central and Eastern Europe is that they have not been there long enough for any analysis to be fully convincing. If the events of 1989, the collapse of communism, deserve to be called a revolution, which they do, the post-revolutionary system or systems are taking a very long time to establish themselves. This is not surprising. Communist rule was a kind of desertification. It swept away ideas, values, institutions, solidarities and people, preserving only a few of these, often in a distorted form, from the previous state of affairs, so that not much of the pre-communist past remains. The task of creating new systems is obviously going to be a long term undertaking and these are its earliest months. The situation is, as a result, very fluid and it would be precipitate to suggest that things have reached even their interim, let alone their final shapes. What one can do, however, is to look at the legacy of the past and ask a number of questions in the light of the left-overs of communism in order to illuminate the constraints that exist in the condition of post-communism, and to chart the difficulties facing the new political actors in their avowed aim of establishing liberal democratic systems.

Constitutional forms

The constitutional forms that have been, or are in the process of being, adopted are firmly anchored in the traditions of liberal democracy. After living through four decades of dismissing the techniques of political control that have debouched into liberal democracy as class oppressions the post-communists are now hastening to introduce systems based on the separation of powers, the rule of law, multi-party democracy, market economy and so on. However, as has been repeatedly remarked, the destruction of a social and political system is far easier than replacing it by something else. In particular, the post-communist reformers face a major dilemma. In introducing the institutions of Western democracy, they are bringing in forms that do not match socio-political realities. Hence, their aim is gradually to transform those realities until the mismatch diminishes.

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This is not necessarily an ignoble aim, but it does raise the problem of how far these policies are to be guided by élites, enlightened or otherwise, and how far they are to respond to what the citizens demand now. Indeed, as will be argued later, there are currents in the post-communist world that are not in every respect friendly to representative democracy, but look to the immediate implementation of their desires as the definition of a democratic order. The central problem of post-communism, then, is the gap between democratic form and real substance. Democracy demands a set of values, from both rulers and ruled, that involve self-limitation, compromise, bargaining and the like that post-communist states and societies cannot be expected to acquire overnight, for they can only result from many years of practice.

For a start, the types of parties that have come into being in the post-communist world are very different from those in the West.[1] On the whole, the most characteristic political formation in the former is the conglomerate party or political movement that includes a wide variety of different or even contradictory political currents and which are held together by considerations like tradition or morality, rather than material interests. The representation of economic interests remains weak, predictably, given that the identification of interests by social groups is similarly weak. Although these conglomerate parties are widely defined as "left-wing" and "right-wing", left and right in Central and Eastern Europe have rather different connotations from what obtains in the West.

The essence of the problem is that the modernization of these societies under communism was partial and distorted and the complexity and mutability characteristic of Western societies was blocked by communist power. Consequently, the Soviet-type system preserved a variety of pre-modern values and ideas, which are out of tune with the true shape of these societies, but which engender a variety of belief and values which may be at variance with social realities. The nascent party system mirrors this.

Thus the split in Solidarity in Poland was as much about the different styles of government favoured by Walesa (as against Mazowiecki) as it was about the ostensible cause of the split, the speed of the changes. The populism espoused by Walesa is a classic appeal to non-material values and an offer of an easy solution to problems that simply do not have easy solutions. The reverberations of a statement by the Hungarian foreign minister in the autumn, that the governing coalition represented the most authentic European values in parliament, was another illustration of much the same phenomenon. Ultimately, this was a rhetorical declaration without much relevance, but it was taken with deadly seriousness by the opposition, which chose to make a major issue out of it. Examples could be found in all the post-communist states. What is missing from the debates on these policies is any sense of the urgency of economic reform, the introduction of privatization and the modernization of the legal system to make investment smoother.

Another aspect of this difficulty is that the impossibility of modernization under communism has had the result that both left and right are woefully

unprepared for rule. The left has, in any case, suffered a massive defeat with the collapse of communism and its place has been taken, in Hungary at least, by parties professing liberalism. More serious is the dilemma of the right. Because there was no opportunity to modernize conservatism under communist rule, the conservative traditions to which right-wing or "moderate" parties harken back to are those appropriate to a pre-modern polity and society, that of the 1930s. The trouble is that in the meanwhile, major changes have taken place in these societies and the ideas of the 1930s are barely appropriate to the situation.

The desert left by communism, therefore, consists of ideas and values that make the smooth functioning of democracy problematical. Concepts of honour, glory, morality have little role to play in the daily politics of a functioning democracy, though they do indeed have a role in constitutional politics, the definition and redefinition of the broad framework of values and institutions within which the allocation of resources takes place. But once this has been settled, then politics is about compromise, bargaining, impersonal interactions all mediated by a large number of institutions.

The role of intellectuals

A key role in the construction of democracy is being played and will be played by intellectuals. In many ways, this was predictable, given the traditionally important position that intellectuals and intellectual ideas have held in Central and Eastern Europe. However, the full ramifications of a revolution in which intellectuals have been so salient as in the overthrow of communism requires particular attention and I have looked at some of these elsewhere.[2]

Since my earlier article was published, some tentative answers have become available to the questions implicitly posed there about the relationship between intellectuals and society. Three events offer illustrations and not one of them is particularly encouraging. The events of last June in Bucharest, when the Jiu valley miners were encouraged to "restore order" in the Rumanian capital, were the most extreme. Although some of the miners now claim that they were misled and tricked into beating up anyone who looked like an intellectual, this misses the point. The issue is that they could be "misled", that they could be easily moved to come to regard anyone who dissents as a threat to democracy. In other words, from their point of view, democracy is to be understood as a highly homogeneous concept with no room for alternative views—hardly a definition of democracy that will commend itself. The situation in Rumania is, of course, particularly acute, because the intellectuals have not accumulated moral capital as opponents of the Ceausescu régime and are seen as parasites. Nor is the Iliescu régime concerned; it can dispense with intellectual legitimation for democracy, because it is not really interested in introducing a system that is, in fact, democratic.

In Poland, the massive vote against Mazowiecki in the first round of the presidential elections was clearly motivated by a kind of anti-intellectualism, an

impatience with complex solutions and a particular style of governing that the bulk of the population disliked. The split in Solidarity into a populist and an intellectual wing resulted in the defeat of the latter and the rise of a populist alternative, which is likely to have far-reaching consequences both for the style and the substance of Polish politics. The taxi drivers' blockade in Hungary likewise falls into this category, in that it represented a turning away from the issues raised by the government coalition and the opposition, which were abstract and intellectual rather than practical and empirical. Still, in the Hungarian case, the outcome was nothing like as devastating, though it should certainly have served as a warning that the themes of the intellectual-dominated public discourse are of limited interest to the bulk of the population.

Civil society

This brings me to the most thorny and most problematic aspect of the post-communist condition, the state of civil society. For the best part of a decade, this has been one of the more fashionable concepts in the context of Central and Eastern Europe; indeed, it was highly effective in bringing about the demise of communism. Civil society could reasonably be regarded as public enemy number one by a system that required social atomization as a necessary condition for its survival and reproduction and did virtually everything in its power to prevent the types of social-political-economic interactions that could promote individual and group autonomy. Civil society, therefore, is to be seen as the articulation of its interests by society, independently of the totalizing state.

This has had a number of consequences, the most striking of which has been that, in a paradoxical way, the definition of civil society was easier and clearer as long as it could measure itself against totalizing power, while the process became increasingly more complex, as is appropriate, once that power had disappeared. Thus self-definitions and the articulation of interests must undergo a painful process of indentification and reidentification in societies which, in some cases, have no traditions or only weak traditions of this. In any case, very few people now have direct experience of the inter-war or immediate post-war period, when civil societies of a sort did exist. Besides, the key point of the problematic of post-communism is that it is still entirely unclear as to what kinds of societies did come into being as a result of Stalinist modernization. This is the sense in which these societies still define and identify themselves, in all the various spheres of social consciousness, for they have changed thoroughly over the last 40 years and the pre-communist experience is hardly an effective guide to the contemporary period.

Nevertheless, in one vital respect, the pre-communist period must be examined. Despite everything claimed by communist propagandists and their Western supporters, the politics of Central and Eastern Europe were ruled by authoritarian and not by totalizing legitimating ideologies. The old élites relied on a mixture of traditional and charismatic legitimation and they never sought

to encompass all the spheres of social activity. Nor did they profess any overarching ideology, except nationalism, and nationalism left some space for social initiatives. This made it possible for a range of activities, like oppositional newspapers, non-state education, nascent trade unions and opposition political parties to exist, albeit often under pressure from an expanding state.

The significance of all this for the communist period was that for at least sections of society, the totalizing ideology and practices of the communist state were alien and worked against the grain of the cultural tradition. That tradition itself may have been repressed and distorted, but the sense that the Soviet-type system was imposed and/or unassimilable prevented it from becoming rooted. Thus in this form, the cultural tradition existed as an off-stage set of alternative ideas to which reference could be made. This became even more important after the communist systems of Central and Eastern Europe were exposed to the images and culture of the West, where—so it was thought—Central and Eastern Europe's own traditions were being continued with far greater success.

In this comparison, the role of Austria, Finland, Greece and eventually Spain were especially noteworthy. These were in no way countries that had been a part of the developed West; on the contrary, they were seen as backward as the Central and Eastern European countries themselves had been before communism. The level of dissatisfaction, leading to a conviction that the communist experiment in constructing an alternative version of modernity had failed, undoubtedly contributed to a sense that society could and should organize itself, in as much as the hyper-étatist state had broken its side of the bargain and had not created a superior civilization.

During the communist period itself, one can distinguish two different types of social-political expression that should be seen as the articulation of civil society. In the first place, these were the major upheavals causing and caused by moments of weakened party control—East Germany in 1953, Poland and Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Poland in 1980-81 are the most obvious instances. The characteristic of all these expressions of social aspirations was that they were predicated on an assumption of homogeneity and that they were, to an extent, energized by nationalism.

Any scrutiny of the programmes of these upheavals will readily show that they were based on the assumption of a minimum of differentiation and complexity, that there were in reality only two actors, the "evil" state and the "good" society, this being the unavoidable consequence of taking action against a totalizing power; equally there is more than a relic here of peasant value systems, with their suspicion of complexity and their corresponding approval of simplicity.

The bulk of those who made up the working class were either first generation off the land or were not that far removed from peasant values, above all because they had not been integrated into any alternative value system that emphasized complexity, interrelatedness and the counterproductive nature of simple solutions. In this sense, the myth of society acquired considerable

strength as a source of resistance to the state; it is far from having been dispelled under post-communism.

The other flexing of civil social muscles in the communist period came with the various forms of pluralism that evolved particularly in the final period of Soviet-type decay, in the 1980s, when the state was still strong enough to prevent society from controlling and limiting political power and the totalizing ideology, but withdrew from certain areas, whereby society gained space for degrees of self-organization.

Although the state probably intended this as a concession that could later be retracted, a concession exercised over a period of time gradually acquires the force of custom and comes to be perceived as a right by those concerned. This could and did start a process of rooting pluralisms in society except that, unfortunately the maintenance of the totalizing ideology and the exercise of arbitrary power had a negative impact on the security with which these "customary rights" could be practised. The effect of this discretionary régime was to weaken the autonomous exercise of power by society, to create a mind-set that looked to short term solutions and to encourage a form of negative dependence on the state, even where positive dependence did not exist. Even as people were involving themselves in the secondary economy or printing samizdat or going on pilgrimages, they were forever looking over their shoulders and calculating the political significance of what they were doing; in other words, there was a negative dependence. At the end of the day, of course, rights cannot exist in systems where the legal sphere has no autonomy.

The halting emergence of pluralism can equally be seen as a quest for representation in whatever sphere the system permitted—legal, religious, economic, political, aesthetic etc. Representations of one sphere through the medium of another, however, are bound to be imperfect and to distort both to some extent. The fact that Roman Catholicism became one of the principal expressions of the aspirations of Polish society in the 1980s meant that both religion and the political aspirations expressed through it were given an awkward, intermediated expression. Neither the political nor the religious aims could be genuinely articulated. While the Roman Catholic Church may have declared itself satisfied at achieving what appeared to be a "recatholicization" of Polish society, with a rise in adult baptisms, church attendance, vocations etc., it was Roman Catholicism that was ultimately diluted, in as much as the Roman Catholic Church was not, and could not be, a political institution.

The construction of an alternative cultural sphere under the aegis of the Church may at first sight be less susceptible to analysis of this kind, except for the proposition that not everything that is in the aesthetic sphere can or should be politicized, not every expression of opposition to the system was necessarily political, though it was frequently so interpreted. The legacy of the Polish experience of the 1980s was somewhat ambiguous for the construction of liberal democracy, because over-politicization of a large part of the space available to Polish society meant that it could not be depoliticized once the totalizing power disappeared.

In Hungary the situation was a shade easier, though this was a matter of chance rather than policy. In the context of social autonomy, the Kádár régime stumbled on a very particular stabilizing device, the secondary economy, which did in fact do something to encourage economic inititiative, albeit with the severe limitations that this activity could not extend beyond the framework of the family and that, in order for individuals to maintain their standard of living, they were obliged to exploit themselves.

This signified that, in reality, they were offered much less of a freedom of choice than appeared originally, in that Hungarians really had no option but to participate in a controlled secondary economy, the legal limits and tolerance of which were blurred. Nevertheless, the secondary economy has given a considerable number of people the experience of operating under something resembling market conditions, making the ideas of a market and of economic independence less alien. The secondary economy also produced a stratum of entrepreneurs, who could, in fact, constitute a bourgeoisie if they were given the encouragement in the form of know-how, capital, and access to technology.

In Czechoslovakia, the carving out of any major social space was much more difficult, because the régime had renewed itself after 1968 through a variety of devices and was able to construct limited but genuine social bases for itself. It satisfied Slovak nationalism by retaining the federal structure. It exercised patronage over the half million jobs of those who were purged as supporters of the Prague spring to promote a generation of working class activists, it offered the population a range of economic concessions and it invoked the threat of Soviet invasion far more directly than elsewhere in the region. Consequently, the amount of space that could be established was smaller and reached out in different directions.

It was aimed at the private sphere, the possibility of individuals living relatively atomized lives untouched by the régime, to some extent through religion, through the use of state resources for private ends and the creation of an alternative culture, of which the activities of the Jazz Section were the best known example, but extended way beyond it.[3]

Finally, civil society also received a major boost from the determination of an initially small group of intellectuals to launch themselves independently into the political sphere and to establish what became the democratic opposition. The impact of the democratic opposition varied substantially in all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, depending on local conditions. In Poland, it was successful in encouraging the birth of Solidarity and in helping to maintain a large section of Polish society in a state of politicized readiness throughout the 1980s. There was an explosion of samizdat and underground organizations and much of Polish society was touched by the political experience that resulted. This has left its mark on post-communist Poland and made it possible for the transfer of power to pass fairly smoothly from the communists to the post-communist order.

In Hungary, the democratic opposition was overwhelmingly concerned with the creation of an alternative public opinion in the intelligentsia; there was little

attempt to mobilize the wider public, although towards the end there was some interaction between the democratic opposition and the secondary economy. The legacy of this was that the transfer of power was largely restricted to negotiations within and among the élite and the emergence of political cleavages (that have their origins as much in the history of the opposition as in social realities and interests).

The Czechoslovak experience was different again, in that the democratic opposition was under severe pressure throughout its existence, it had limited contact with the bulk of the population, but its resolute stand earned it much moral capital. In consequence, it had no difficulty in placing itself at the head of the revolutionary movement and to take over from the communists at the end of 1989. The East German opposition was weakened, throughout its existence, by its insistence that it supported the "socialist" character of the East German state and it was very slow in coming to the conclusion that the problems it was addressing derived from the nature of the system, which had to be rejected as such. The result was that when the Soviet-type system collapsed, the opposition was badly placed to assume any leadership and was effectively swept away.

Personalities and institutions

The role of personalities as against institutions also militates against the smooth functioning of democracy. One of the central legacies of the Soviet-type system was the atomization of society into individuals and the consequent destruction of the basic bonds of community through distrust. In particular, the relationship between the individual and the state was badly distorted in this way. Not surprisingly, the state has come to be regarded as remote and abstract, beyond the will and control of the individual, and the institutions of the state as not much more than façades. The elimination of communist systems has not, in itself, changed this.

As a result, there is a far greater inclination to trust persons rather than institutions and to accept the former as the true target of political attitudes. It may be that the individual holding office has a status enhanced by that office, but for many the authenticity of the relationship is the personal one. This leaves institutions locked in a cycle of relative weakness, because they find it difficult to acquire their own legitimacy in competition with the real or supposed charisma of personalities.

What seems to have happened in the early months of post-communism is that as the communists faded away or were expelled from power, societies found themselves without a political focus with which they could feel comfortable. New parties were the relatively remote constructs of the intellectuals and the symbols of the nation were no strong guides in the circumstances. Almost hypnotically, people turned to personalities, virtually without regard to their political programmes, as a repository for society's hopes and desires; in particular, persons were felt to be more reliable, more authentic and thus more

likely to embody what the individual wanted, and thus personalities were invested with what amounted to a supra-political status.

The pattern has been replicated throughout the area. The November-December 1990 presidential elections in Poland have confirmed the ascendancy of Walesa, almost without regard to his strategy or ideas. In a sense, the quarter of the vote that went to Tyminski confirmed this. Here was another personality, with the simple message "I'm rich, vote for me and you too will be rich", providing evidence of the same attitude, that personalities were more significant than institutions.

Vaclav Havel had enormous moral authority which propelled him to the Hrad in a very short space of time. Once there, he added to his authority and built up his charisma by a series of initiatives, but also through his personal charm and abilities as a communicator, so that he was effectively above criticism. In Hungary, until the end of November 1989, popular aspirations were vested in Imre Pozsgay and it was only by a tiny margin of 6,000 votes that, in effect, his candidacy for the presidency was torpedoed in a referendum. There then ensued a period where no personality dominated the political scene. But after the general elections, almost with a sense of relief, the population entrusted itself to the care of József Antall, the prime minister, who as a result has established an ascendancy over politics that goes well beyond his office. Indeed, political observers in Hungary are now concerned not that there is an over-powerful president, one of the fears about Pozsgay's candidacy, but that there is an over-powerful prime minister, whose removal is virtually impossible. The enormous vote amassed by Iliescu in Rumania speaks for itself, and so does Slobodan Milosevic's success in the December 1990 elections in Serbia. Milosevic, indeed, should be seen as the archetypal demagogue, who uses national slogans and populist simplification to project himself. Arguably, Helmut Kohl played an analogous role in the former GDR.

By way of comparison, the removal of Mrs Thatcher from office in November 1990 illustrates vividly the distinction between personality and institutions. Despite being one of the most powerful persons ever to hold the post of prime minister in Britain, she was swept away when her tenure was felt to be counterproductive. It is hard to imagine anything analogous in the post-communist world.

The difficulty with investing persons with so much authority is that it tends to weaken the effective functioning of institutions, it allows individuals to be above criticism, to pursue personalized rather than popularly sanctioned policies and ultimately to ensure that representation is personal rather than grounded in the system. On the positive side, especially in the short term, however, charismatic or semi-charismatic figures can be useful as a way of channelling accumulated frustrations and uncertainties in immature political communities. The problem arises when these persons are called upon to leave the political scene. In general they are reluctant to do so and their successors will invariably be weaker, leaving a gap in the system.

Social homogeneity

A particularly intractable problem with serious consequences for a wide range of issues is that of blocked social mobility and homogenization imposed by communism on these societies. The argument is straightforward and has been frequently put forward.[4] Soviet-type systems went through a single experience of large-scale upward mobility with the seizure of power and the resulting one-off promotion of a generation of individuals of working class and peasant backgrounds on the basis of political loyalty. This was paralleled by the demotion of the old élite; alternatively, the old élite was destroyed during the war and its place would in any case be taken by persons promoted from a lower social status.

All in all, this constituted the new class of political appointees and the new intelligentsia which filled positions in the new bureaucracies. However, upward mobility effectively ceased on a large scale with this single act, with exceptions noted below, and thereafter there was an increasing trend towards the hereditary transmission of class status. The exceptions were connected with political change. Thus in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s, as noted above, a second promotion of low status individuals took place. In East Germany, the positions of the 3 million who left for the West likewise had to be filled and to some extent social mobility in the GDR was never quite as clogged as it was elsewhere. In Poland, with every leadership change, large numbers of individuals were newly promoted into the bureaucracy. But the phenomenon that was noteworthy about this last change was that many of those appointed were not so much from worker or peasant backgrounds but from a younger generation of professionals.

The problem for Soviet-type systems was that upward mobility had become restricted to too few channels. Political loyalty was always a possibility, but comperatively few people could, in reality, take advantage of it in normal circumstances by joining the party. Further, the instruments of coercion provided another channel, though at a high cost in terms of social ostracism. Education, the most obvious channel, was blocked in another way. In the deal made with the "new classes" in the 1960s, the rulers accepted that the children of the intelligentsia could maintain their parents' status and tolerated the erosion of systems of preferential access for others (through "class points") for universitiy admission. The classic channel of upward mobility through economic achievement simply did not exist, except towards the end of the system in Hungary and Yugoslavia, where the secondary economy offered individuals the economic freedom to give their children the extra coaching needed to pass university entrance requirements, but this was probably rare.

The outcome of all this was, for the most part, that the natural leaders of the working class were not creamed off, but remained workers. The difficulty in this connection is that the status of "worker" is a contradictory one. On the one hand, workers were the nominal ruling class and this message was reinforced in a variety of symbolic ways; on the other, they were as far from power as possible, except in moments of party enfeeblement. Thus in a backhanded way, they were

encouraged to think of themselves as special, to see themselves as separate, even while the system continuously frustrated their aspirations. Only in Poland was a section of the working class able to maintain itself with some semblance of an organization and a clear consciousness of being separate from the state in status and values.

A further complication here was the very type of working class created by communism. Communism proved to be, inter alia, a method for building up a 19th century industry, with super-large enterprises using relatively straightforward technology. The ideal worker was always the male manual worker using simple technology as portrayed under Stalinism; this did not change symbolically in any major way later.[5] In this sense, the working class that emerged from communism was relatively homogenized, confused and economically increasingly threatened by the collapse of these economies. It disliked differentiation, whether in material or in status terms, and was characterized by a kind of negative egalitarianism. Equally, it was, with some exceptions, strongly anti-intellectual, impatient with the complex solutions offered by the new governments and politically inexperienced, making it vulnerable to demagogic manipulation.

A particularly difficult problem has arisen in connection with the antagonism exhibited by the Soviet-type system to social integration. With the elimination of mobility, the satisfaction of individual and group aspirations and the acquisition of other, wider value systems were blocked too. There was nowhere for talented individuals in the working class to go, but to remain within the class. The potential result, which became actual in Poland, was that the working class acquired a dynamism, an internal coherence, a set of values and a strong identity, which either set it apart from other social groups or caused it to seek to integrate the rest of society into itself.

Various kinds of integration can be conceptualized. Integration into the intelligentsia, the one reference group which the communist system did permit, was too difficult and was in any case impeded, as argued, by the narrowing of educational opportunity. Under post-communism, if integration into a democratic system of values were to prove unsuccessful, only nationhood could offer the wider set of goals that could provide the intellectual instruments for the working class to construct the culture by which it could encompass politics and economics. However, nationhood is ultimately incapable of providing this because that is not its function.

Again, it was the absence of economic integration that explained this gulf between intellectuals and workers and, when the former sought to establish democratic systems, political communication became notably difficult. The failed relationship between the Mazowiecki government, the nearest to a government of philosopher-kings that Europe has witnessed since the war, and the highly politicized consciousness of Polish workers is a clear illustration of this problem. The near impossibility of Poland's existing entrepreneurs performing this integrative function is shown by the bitter hostility towards the emergence of a bourgeoisie based on the nomenklatura. Despite evidence that

the nomenklatura, and those who previously constituted the state-dependent private sector, are virtually alone in having the know-how, the technology and the capital to launch a private enterprise based economy, for many Poles this is quite unacceptable. Members of the former ruling élite cannot become the new ruling élite, exchanging political for economic power, which in turn would again give rise to political power, or at least influence. Yet the extraordinary vote for Tyminiski in the presidential elections suggests that there is no hostility to wealth as such. The contradiction here implies that there is a good deal of confusion in much of Polish opinion. The confusion seems to be made up of wish-fulfilment, impatience, intolerance and strong unwillingness to accept that the reconstruction of Poland will involve years of complex effort, as a result of which there will be major winners and losers.

An added complication in this connection is the existence of relatively large youthful age cohorts in Poland, for which Solidarity and martial law were dominant, constitutive experiences and from which they drew a set of values deeply antagonistic to existing institutions. These cohorts have been large enough to attain a critical mass in the generation of values, to reject socialization into official value systems and it will be difficult to integrate them into alternative ways of viewing the world.

One observer, writing of the Czech working class, has described it as being egalitarian in the sense that it accepts meritocratic achievement only verbally and regards too great a social diference as amoral; that it believes all work as having the same value but actually arrogates a higher status to manual labour than to intellectual; that it is anti-intellectual and anti-élititist; that it overestimates the value of manual labour, that it attaches a high value to welfarism and social security; that it believes in the étatist provider state; that social life is almost exclusively determined by economic rather than cultural considerations; and that it prefers economic rights.[6] Analogous currents may be found elsewhere in the post-communist world, notably Rumania.

In Hungary, it could be that this problem of a self-contained working class, resistant to integration, is not so acute. If so, then this must be ascribed in the first place to the secondary economy that evolved during the Kádár years and which offered some experience of the market to the great majority of the population. This helped to reestablish social hierarchies that society felt could be scaled and to provide a degree of openness of opportunity that is missing elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe.

It is evident from the argument in the foregoing that the most effective integration into a single, more or less cohesive political community is best achieved around economics and that, in turn, demands opportunities for money making and an acceptance of a social status to accompany economic success. The experience of the West is clear that economic integration, whatever its shortcomings, is the most effective motor of social stability, because it has proved to be surprisingly evenhanded in offering life chances from which the majority, though not everyone, can benefit. If the post-communist countries fail

to establish channels of economic integration, they may well be faced with a rather sterile class politics that will severely weaken their democratic prospects.

Conclusion

The tasks of creating democracy out of communism are daunting. In this complex of difficulties, there is one further problem that demands a brief mention. The current approach by post-communist governments is a rather étatist one. The idea that the state can construct a modern society and political community, however, is fraught with dangers. After all, this was the project attempted in the 19th and 20th centuries before communism. On the whole, the record of the state in calling civil society into existence is not a good one, for in order to achieve this, the state would have to accept degrees of self-limitation that seem implausible. The state seldom likes to limit its power, on the contrary, the record of the modern state has been in the opposite direction. Yet without clear and intensifying self-limitation that extends to all spheres, the chances of establishing stable democracies are slim.

NOTES

1 I have analysed this problem in greater detail in my article, "A kommunizmus vége" (The End of Communism), *Világosság*, February 1990.

2 I have explored some of these themes in greater detail in "A demokrácia esélye Közép- és Kelet-Európában" (The Prospects for Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe), *2000*, June, 1990.

3 H. Gordon Skilling: *Samizdat and an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1990) provides an account.

4 Walter D. Connor: *Socialism, Politics and Equality: Hierarchy and Change in Eastern Europe and the USSR*. New York, Columbia, 1979.

5 Gombár, Csaba: *A politika parttalan világa* (The Boundless World of Politics). Budapest, Kozmosz, 1986.

6 Miroslav Petrusek: "A posztkommunizmus mint szociopolitikai fogalom és probléma" (Post-Communism as a Socio-Political Notion and Problem). *Politikai kultúra és állam Magyarországon és Cseh-Szlovákiában* (Political Culture and the State in Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia) Budapest, Giovanni Agnelli Foundation, 1990. pp. 87-105. See also Jacques Rupnik, "The Roots of Czech Stalinism", Raphael Samuel and Gareth Steadman Jones, (eds) *Culture, Ideology and Politics*, London, Routledge, 1982, pp. 302-319.

György Litván

Oszkár Jászi (1875-1957)

In January 1900 a small group of young progressive Hungarian intellectuals launched a periodical which bore the programmatic title *Huszadik Század* (Twentieth Century). This first scholarly review of sociology and political science in Hungary was founded to deal with the problems of the new century, above all with the questions of modernization and democracy in the kingdom of Hungary. Oszkár Jászi remained to the very end faithful to the journal, to its programme, and to its ideals: he was editor of *Huszadik század* for two decades and devoted his entire life to the problems of the century for which the journal was named. His life and work over the subsequent fifty-odd years, while reflecting great upheavals and historic ruptures, were distinguished by a unique continuity in a century of unprecedented change. While the century lurched between extremes, Jászi was able to formulate a balanced view of all these issues from a position of ethical politics, weighing both sides of the problems and often rejecting all the usual solutions. In this continuous conflict Jászi seemed again and again to be a loser, only to be subsequently—and often tragically—proven right.

Jászi as statesman

In the first decades of the century Jászi played a prominent part in introducing modern social thought to Hungary. Besides editing *Huszadik Század,* he was effectively the leader of the Sociological Society and its "extension programme", the Free School for Social Sciences for workers and students. He initiated and edited the Library of Sociology, a series in which some twenty volumes were published before 1916.

He wrote and lectured in all these enterprises, and kept a constant watch for new trends and publications in Western social thought, of which he selected and analyzed, as a cosmopolitan intellectual as well as a student of Hungary's problems, the most important contributions, such as the works of Marx, Darwin, Spencer, and Durkheim. The circle of *Huszadik század* vigorously debated the merits of these various doctrines. Jászi wrote the first scholarly work in Hungarian on historical materialism, from which he himself learned and borrowed much; but subsequently he turned away from not

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only Marxist materialism but all forms of determinism. In a later note he called the endeavours of those times "adventures", not studies or readings, in sociology, "because I was struggling for the solution of real problems". There are, he wrote "two types of sociological and political scholars: contemplators and sufferers". The former exclaim: "How interesting! How curious!"; the latter: "How horrible! How can I help?"[1] Jászi clearly sided with the latter.

His motto from his youth was "Scholarship and Humanism". This device, as well as the conditions of early twentieth-century Hungary, where innovative academic endeavours were closely connected with public affairs, explains why his initially scholarly projects were transformed into action. Under the attacks of the arch-conservative establishment, all serious struggle for freedom of thought and of inquiry inevitably led to political opposition. Initially Jászi's goals were universal suffrage, a secret ballot, and basic civil rights. Soon, however, he could not help advocating a radical change of the entire system, infested, as he termed it, by the *morbus latifundii*, the stifling domination of state and society by semi-feudal landowners and their political agents.[2]

Jászi became a daring pioneer of modern democracy in Hungary. As his poet-friend Ady put it: "His genius was like that of great generals, who [...] barely gather their army when they begin to cut a road through the impassable Alps."[3] The road in Hungary toward Europe, modern civilization, and political culture was staked out by Jászi and his friends. It was they who formulated the norms and expectations of a progressive democratic economy, culture, and politics, and applied these in almost all walks of life. This implied much more than scholarly and political ground breaking. It permeated the arts, literature, the "ways of life"; one might say that an entire counterculture was built by their small but influential group.

Jászi's most widely read political forum was the daily *Világ*, a liberal democratic paper with a Masonic background. He and a number of his friends had joined the Freemasons and, in 1908, founded the radical Martinovics Lodge. In innumerable editorials, from 1910 to 1919, he formulated the position of the left-wing bourgeoisie and intelligentsia on matters foreign and domestic alike. In the turbulent prewar years and during the Great War, many new political and moral problems had to be tackled, with no precedents to refer to. In retrospect, Jászi's perspicacity and astuteness appear the more remarkable: he was rarely wrong in his analysis and foresight.

The secret of his rise in public life was the force of his convictions, his perseverance, his talent as an organizer, and above all, his exceptional moral courage. By raising the most serious issues, disregarded not only by officials but also by the parliamentary opposition, Jászi and his friends stirred up the backwaters of early twentieth-century Hungarian public life. These issues included agrarian reform, the rights of non-Hungarian national minorities, the challenge of growing anti-Semitism, and many others. The polarization thus generated proved that their questions struck the most sensitive points of national awareness.

In the process of mobilizing forces in the struggle for democracy, Jászi made three quite unorthodox and, for his time, shocking alliances which proved his

unique political courage and originality. First, he built a bridge to the Social Democrats, at that time still a strictly proletarian movement. In doing so he successfully overcame mutual suspicions between ordinary working men and the middle class intelligentsia. Jászi's friends and colleagues volunteered to teach the Socialist workers. The Social Democratic Party, habitually anti-intellectual, in turn endorsed Jászi's political programme. However, while in the neighbouring countries, such as Austria and Bohemia, intellectuals of Jászi's type tended to belong to the Socialist parties, he remained an "independent socialist"—just as Masaryk had done. In retrospect, he justified his stance mainly by his dislike for both the Hungarian Social Democrats' dogmatic Marxism and their unbecomingly compromising tendencies. On the other hand, he was well aware of the fact that in Hungary, a country without a strong middle class, the organized proletariat was needed to fight for democracy.

Jászi's second alliance was seemingly with the exact opposite of the internationalist socialists: with the anti-Habsburg Hungarian nationalists. He was the first on the country's political left who recognized the significance of the national issue. Most of his progressive contemporaries were convinced that nationalism was a reactionary and vanishing idea. Jászi, however, believed that "the history of the coming decades will be defined by the mutual relationship between two mighty social forces: nationalism and socialism". (1905) And he warned young dogmatic socialists: "Mankind is made so that the road to internationalism leads through nationalism, and that is reached by the vernacular of the masses".[4] He offered his hand to those "Kossuthist-Independentist" supporters with a peasant and gentry background, whom the rest of the left regarded as conservative and considered repulsive. History vindicated him. During the last years of the Great War, this alliance proved to be capable of generating an anti-German and anti-Habsburg pacifist parliamentary party, that was to lead the democratic revolution of November 1918 and end the rule of the Habsburg dynasty. It was from this camp that the Red Count, Michael Károlyi, arose as a leader with the charismatic personality needed for a new, a democratic departure.[5]

Jászi's third alliance was with the oppressed nationalities in the Dual Monarchy—a friendship apparently diametrically opposed to both the first and the second one. In fact, the nationalities issue was the very core of the solution of Hungary's problems. Jászi became one of the most knowledgeable and widely respected experts on the complex ethnic problems of the Danubian region. His aim was "not mere scholarly inquiry but the liberation of eight million people from horrible servitude".[6] Jászi knew that democracy could not be restricted to the Magyar-speaking half of Hungary's population. Moreover, he also realized that the national movements of the non-Magyar nationalities could not be suppressed for long. His friend and colleague, R. W. Seton-Watson, spelled this out openly for him in a letter of 6 February 1911: "I foresee for your country a very gloomy future, if the efforts of men like yourself should by any unhappy chance *(absit omen!)* end in failure".[7] To the

last minute Jászi remained an optimist, who thought that Hungary's nationalities problem could be solved through federation; yet he was fully aware of the threat of Hungary's dismemberment.

Following Hungary's defeat in the Great War, Jászi was the logical candidate for minister in charge of nationality affairs in the Károlyi government that was formed in the democratic revolution of 1918. As the one man who could count on the confidence of the nationalities, he attempted to preserve the entity of historic Hungary. But the task was too much even for him. In Belgrade General Franchet d'Esperey, commander of the Eastern Armies of the Allies, told him and Károlyi that Hungary would be treated simply as a defeated enemy. And a few days later, Iuliu Maniu of Rumania made it clear to Jászi that the fate of Transylvania would not be decided by democratic principles but by the prevailing balance of forces.[8] Historic Hungary fell apart, together with the entire Habsburg Monarchy. The intellectual and political edifice, which Jászi had built for many years, crumbled. His concepts and programmes for solving Central Europe's problems by the establishment of a United States of Danubia were abandoned by friend and foe alike. The leaders of nationalities, who had demanded equality for so long, found Jászi's federalist concept of an eastern Switzerland too little, too late. They chose separation from Hungary and union with Prague, Belgrade, and Bucharest, taking with them not only two-thirds of the kingdom's territory but also one-third of the Hungarians (over three million of them), to become the national minorities in Austria-Hungary's so-called successor states.

The western Allies supported this process and sanctioned it in the Treaty of Trianon. Jászi's scholarly colleague, Seton-Watson, the influential patron of the formerly oppressed nationalities, did not raise objections either. The fact that Károlyi and Jászi were abandoned by those in the West in whom they had placed their hopes, not only spelt defeat for the democratic experiment of the Károlyi government but also discredited democracy for decades in Hungarian eyes, linking the republican episode to the country's national disaster.[9]

The republican government, based to a large extent on Jászi's democratic-national alliance, could not stand up to the stress of domestic opposition and international isolation. Jászi, unable to pursue his programme of federalism, left the cabinet even before it collapsed. In March 1919, in a deepening national and international crisis, the Károlyi government was forced to resign. At that point the Social Democrats, the last of Jászi's former democratic allies, also failed him: they did not dare attempt to establish a government by themselves, and joined hands with the Communists in proclaiming Hungary a Soviet Republic under Béla Kun. Jászi had reacted already in the autumn of 1918 to the first appearance in Hungary of the catchword of proletarian dictatorship: "In principle I am against any dictatorship because every dictatorship implies the negation of both moral autonomy and the spirit of genuine democracy. No one individual and no one class of society is entitled to exercise dictatorship over the others."[10] It was only logical that, a few weeks after the declaration of "the dictatorship of the proletariat", Jászi, who had no illusions about the chances of

the Communist regime's survival or the inevitability of a bloody counter-revolution, left for Vienna.

The new Central Europe was the exact opposite of what Jászi had dreamt of, hoped for, and worked for. Instead of a democratic Danubian federation, in the postwar decade more or less authoritarian small nation states with ethnically heterogeneous populations were not resolved. Instead, the claims of a new Magyar irredenta were taking the place of those of the former oppressed nationalities. And in Hungary the revisionist and anti-Semitic Horthy regime came to power, following the defeat of Soviet Hungary with the help of a Rumanian army of intervention.

The "widening stream" of Jászi's career seemed now to turn into an ever narrower creek. All three of his innovative political alliances of the pre-1914 years had collapsed. His former friends in the successor states displayed merely pragmatic and limited interest, if any, in cooperating with the democratic exiles from Hungary and working for a Danubian federation by truly democratic domestic and international policies.

Between 1919 and 1925 Jászi was the virtual leader of the democratic exiles in Austria and the neighbouring countries. As editor-in-chief of the *Bécsi Magyar Újság* (Vienna Hungarian News), he devoted all his energy to attacking Hungary's counter-revolutionary regime. He tried to do the same in America during a lecture tour in 1923-24. However, with the consolidation of the Horthy regime—bailed out by a League of Nations loan without the democratic guarantees demanded by Károlyi and Jászi—the cause of the democratic exiles was doomed. Károlyi in exile moved closer to the Communists. Jászi, unable and unwilling to follow him, found it futile and hopeless to continue his full-time role in exile politics, and in 1925 accepted an offer to become professor of political science at Oberlin College, where he had lectured during his visit to the United States.

The Oberlin years

In January 1926, a few months after his arrival in America, Jászi rose to speak to an Hungarian community in Ohio about "how to reconcile the loyalty to new fatherland with fidelity to the old one? Americanization or an artificial seclusion cherishing the memories of the old country?" He believed that this dilemma was superficial, because the two kinds of loyalty were in no way contradictory.

> On the contrary, I am of the opinion that the more thorough your Americanization will be, the more active and powerful supporters you can be of the Hungarian people. By a morbid backward-looking sentimentalism you would lose touch with both American and Hungarian reality.[11]

In the same year, in an Armistice Day address to the students of Oberlin College, Jászi pointed to the obverse situation, to the importance of utilizing the tragic lessons taught by Central and Eastern European history for the formulation of a

better American foreign policy "in outlawing war and in the building up of a peaceful worldwide commonwealth."[12]

This was to be the keynote of Jászi's entire academic and political activity in America. While he kept in touch through correspondence with old friends and comrades-in-arms as a spiritual leader of democratic exiles and of the small group of his followers in Hungary, he saw it as his chief mission to inform the American public of European and especially Danubian conditions. He hoped to inspire American social scientists and politicians to learn from the Hungarian experience, to abandon the tradition of isolationism and use their influence on the European scene in favour of democracy and federalism. In pursuing these ends Jászi violated one of the leading commands of patriotism, especially of the official Hungarian type. He was well aware and proud of his conscious disregard for the widely accepted norms on not washing dirty linen in public:

> It is an old feudal doctrine in Europe which prohibits entire sincerity for a patriot in discussing domestic matters before a foreign audience. I regard this dogma as one of the most pernicious ones from the point of view of true international solidarity. I am of the opinion that 'don't lie' is not only the first command of private morality, but it must also become the chief rule of all true international morality.[13]

Throughout his life Jászi consciously fought against all pious lies uttered in defense of some supposed interest of one's country. For this he was called a traitor before and during the Great War, was officially charged with treason under the counter–revolutionary Horthy regime, and was regarded an enemy of the people in post Second World War Hungary. *Plus ça change ...*

In America, however, Jászi was eventually able to win a fairly sympathetic audience among sociologists, political scientists, and liberal intellectuals. He published in journals of different political shade from *Foreign Affairs* to *The Nation* and *The New Republic,* although he did not always agree with their editorial position. His ideas, suggestions, and warnings reached the public at large through his occasional letters published in *The New York Times.* He became part of the American intellectual elite, in which immigrants have enjoyed such prominence. His name was well known to the great universities and leading periodicals; he was often asked to give lectures and write articles. In academic circles he was rated a leading authority on Central European matters. The editor of the *Journal of Central European Affairs,* S. Harrison Thomson, wrote after Jászi's death:

> The figure of Oscar Jászi has always and everywhere commanded respect and admiration, and, from those who knew him, deep affection. He seemed a rock of courage and conviction in a day when these were rare qualities. He had been with us so long, had lived through and reflected upon so many crises in international affairs, that we had come to regard him as a living symbol of the gospel of temporal optimism.[14]

Jászi would have liked to influence American national and international politics in a more practical and concrete way as well. At that time, however, professors of politics had little chance to address the United States government. Moreover, Jászi acquired a national and international reputation only quite late in life.[15]

The linguistic problem might also have been a contributing factor: his English remained highly idiosyncratic. That might even have limited the success of his best-known work. *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy,* although it received favourable reviews and remained standard reading on the subject for decades. But on a more essential level "the times were against him," as he noted in 1932. He wrote: "Sometimes I painfully feel my loneliness in this world going Bolshevik and Fascist."[16] This comment is not surprising. It comes from a man who had many years before denounced all kinds of dictatorship,[17] and who abided by this position to the very end. Jászi had no doubts that war was imminent, and warned his readers of it. In four articles entitled "War Germs in the Danube Basin", he summed up the results of a study tour he had undertaken during his sabbatical year in 1934:

> Travelling through Central Europe, I had a ghastly feeling that the long forgotten ages of servitude, tyranny, and massacres have returned. Political rights confiscated, liberty of press and speech ignored, the co-operative life of centuries crushed, even religious liberty invaded again, no possibility for criticism and discussion.[18]

Different and more complex are Jászi's attitudes to communism and the Soviet system, to which he had been opposed in principle from the outset, but the evolution of which he followed with great interest. In his memoirs on the fatal spring of 1919 in Hungary, Jászi wrote:

> I was aghast at the hold which Lenin's extreme application of the mechanical, fatalistic communism of the Marxists had obtained over the masses, with its extraordinary surface simplicity and lucidity, and at the completeness with which it excluded all possibility of a footing from any other, and in my view more fruitful, conception of socialism. The cause of the liberation of humanity has come to a cul-de-sac from which there is no way out except practical experience.[19]

To these observations he added a theoretical analysis:

> My studies in recent years led me to the deduction that a number of the fundamental theses of Marxism will not stand criticism. Economic life without markets, price regulation by government dictation instead of the free play of supply and demand, the state regulation of production and distribution—all this in an economic system of any degree of development and differentiation, is either altogether impossible or only possible with the aid of such a development of state omnipotence, militarism and bureaucracy, that in comparison with it, the corresponding evils under capitalism are but infantile ailments. I came, therefore, to the conclusion that the mechanical state

communism of the Marxists cannot be a higher stage of development, as it would completely absorb the freedom of self-direction of the individual. Finally it became clear to me that some other method of abolishing unearned incomes must be found.[20]

This diagnosis might be subscribed today by reform-minded communists or libertarian socialists, but in 1920, when Jászi first wrote them in the Hungarian version of his book on 1918-19, these were prophetic words and fairly rare on the left. In the last months of 1919 Jászi wrote a 200-page Hungarian manuscript, designed to be his "anti-Marx" book. He was probably dissatisfied with this work, hence it remained unpublished until recently. When it was printed a few years ago in Paris,[21] many economists and sociologists of East Central Europe were surprised to encounter some of their current ideas in this sixty-odd-year-old text.

In spite of all these insights from the first years of communism, Jászi saw in the Soviet Union the great experiment of the century. Even though he neither believed in the Russian project nor trusted its promises, as a sociologist and as a progressive politician he felt it most important to study its problems. In a memorandum he sent in 1925 to a number of American sociological societies and institutions, he pleaded for a dispassionate scholarly inquiry:

> The ascent of Mt Everest in its social and economic consequences would be without a doubt a trifling episode compared with the almost incalculable significance of the eruption of the Russian volcano. And yet the heroic explorers of the Asiatic mountain range have found repeatedly the necessary financial and moral support in their undertaking, but a really scientific investigation into the causes, the conditions, and the consequences of the Russian upheaval has no supporters and explorers. ... The younger generation stands without any serious guide concerning these startling events which stir its imagination and make its conscience tremble.[22]

In the following decade Jászi was very much alarmed by the strong attraction Soviet communism exerted on the left-wing intelligentsia of Europe and America, particularly on the younger generation. He knew that the dangerous thrust of fascism made the claim of the communists that they offered the only effective antidote even more appealing. Jászi was filled with despair when he saw that even "the best brains", including many of his old friends and students, were deserting democracy and giving up the values of liberalism, rationalism, and humanism in favour of Leninism and even Stalinism.

This made him rage against György Lukács, with whom he had been able to cooperate until 1919, but whom he now considered to be one of the chief culprits in the political seduction of many a young intellectual. He argued even with his old friends Karl Mannheim and Karl Polányi, because he saw in their ideas an element of dangerous relativism. Moreover, this polarization was essentially responsible for Jászi's painful political parting of ways with Károlyi in 1930.[23]

Jászi, embedded in the traditions of the nineteenth century, had serious difficulties handling the unprecedented disasters of the thirties, such as officially

sanctioned violence, hysterical mass movements, anti-democratic popular majorities, and the triumph of irrationalism. He perceived these phenomena concretely and emotionally but had trouble grasping them intellectually. He was, therefore, delighted to come upon thoughts and anxieties similar to his own in Walter Lippmann's series of articles in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1936. He at once congratulated the author and told him: "It was my hope when I came into this country to be able to publish my views (about Marxian communism, and non-Marxian socialism) in a comprehensive form. Yet Fate ordered it differently. ...It is a great satisfaction for me to see that somebody will accomplish the work better than I could have ever done." Jászi also found it necessary to warn him: "I feel you could make your tactical position much stronger by differentiating yourself more sharply from the capitalistic System."[24]

A staunch defender of liberal democracy and social justice, Jászi found himself in a beleaguered camp. In his mature years he recognized ever more clearly the shortcomings of the existing systems of his times: unbridled capitalism, totalitarian fascism, dogmatic social democracy, and dictatorial Soviet communism. But he had no hesitation to keep warning of the dangers coming from the principal enemy: the totalitarian state. He never ceased cautioning against intellectual submission to totalitarianism or upholding the seemingly devalued moral and democratic principles. In 1930 he wrote to the young intellectuals of his mother country: "It may be that your generation laughs at me, yet you will wail in tears for the 'old-fashioned' basic freedoms while suffering under the clubs of both fascist dictators and Bolshevik potentates, if you don't stop rushing in this direction."[25]

When war broke out, he interrupted his retirement from political activity. He did his best to rescue old friends and colleagues from danger in Europe and lobbied for opening the gates of the United States to more refugees. When the Hungarian exiles in America established their anti-fascist organization, Jászi was elected chairman of the American Federation of Democratic Hungarians. In this capacity he was given, in 1943, an opportunity to speak to the Hungarian people by radio, calling on them to break with, and turn against, Hitler: "The zero hour is at hand; take your choice!"[26]

Once again an active politician, Jászi was now confronted with the haunting ghost of alliances. This time an anti-fascist United Front was on the agenda, which would have included both communists and disappointed Horthyites. Jászi could not help being distrustful of men and groups whose past positions he had fought for decades, even if he was aware of the need for the widest possible cooperation against the Axis and its allies. He summed up his position in an article in Hungarian: "Complete unity on the front of war and civilized discussion on the matter of peace — *que messieurs les assassins commencent*"! [27] In a declaration for which he hoped to obtain the cooperation of distinguished European anti-fascists in America (but did not succeed, despite Einstein's support),[28] Jászi wrote in 1943:

> The United Front should not be interpreted in such a way as to make the discussion of the war aims taboo among the nationality or exile groups. [...]

> What kind of real enthusiasm may be expected from people who do not know for what aims they are fighting? [...] It is our deep conviction that the real democratization of Europe and the radical extirpation of all Fascist-Nazi systems, or their possible substitutes, is of a fundamental interest for the United States. Without achieving this supreme war aim, the old story will repeat itself and again hundreds of thousands of Americans will die on account of a tension created by absolutist dictatorial or plutocratic powers.[29]

In these years Jászi did in fact expect that the abruptly enhanced role of the Soviet Union under Stalin might lend support to those who wanted to remove the vestiges of feudalism and fascism from the countries of the region. Concerned for the future of the countries lying between the victorious great powers, Jászi realized that "Russian influence in that territory, whether we like it or not, will be preponderant. Russia will come out of this war as the greatest continental power of Europe."[30] However, he hoped for the democratization of Soviet society, and for increasingly Socialist tendencies in the West. It was in this kind of mutual rapprochement that he saw the only chance for enduring peace—not in great power politics, division of countries and continents into spheres of interest, and military or territorial concessions.[31] He could imagine the future of "Danubia only in a continental unity progressing toward a democratic confederation, open to all of Europe, East and West", provided, as he wrote in 1945, that these countries "can get rid of certain nationalistic and class prejudices".[32]

Permanent exile

When, at the end of the war, conditions in the old country had changed drastically, Jászi faced the problem of his relationship to the new Hungary. In 1922 a well-known Hungarian communist journalist in exile predicted that even in the event of a triumphant socialist regime, Jászi and his democratic fellows would never be able to return, as they would be rejected by the "revolution" just as they had been by the counter-revolution. "What a funny tragedy"—this exile added with unconcealed *Schadenfreude*.[33] Precisely that malicious prophecy, seemingly ridiculous and improbable at the time, came true a quarter of a centrury later. Only, the tragedy—that of Jászi and that of Hungary—was anything but funny.

In the beginning, it is true, Jászi was ready to suspend his usual pessimism and considered a return, however temporary, without abandoning his U.S. citizenship and complete independence. "I, as a free American"—he wrote to his friends in Hungary—"shall acknowledge neither György Lukács nor [Cardinal József] Mindszenty as factors to influence my judgment."[34] While accepting that a new Hungary had to be built by a new generation, he took it as self-evident that he should assist, at the side of Károlyi, in laying its foundations. But no official invitation arrived. Károlyi, Bartók, and a few others were elected honorary members of the National Assembly—not Jászi.

Jászi was concerned—as usual—about two possible extremes: he feared that too much might survive from the Horthy era, but was no less worried about excessive Soviet influence. The events of the post-war years confirmed his pessimism on the latter count. Although he had, already in 1946, most fittingly characterized the main trend in Hungary as a "revolution in an incubator".[35] It was the destruction of the opposition and the forced exile of Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy and other non-communist politicians in 1947 that made him discard his "cautious hopes". Outraged by the liquidation of parliamentary democracy, he decided that he "cannot shut up even if that may jeopardize my not received entry visa."[36] Jászi sent a letter to *The New York Times* on 14 July 1947:

> The dangers of a dictatorial development in Hungary seem to me very great. [...] In the absence of a conscious middle class and an independent intelligentsia the chances of a western type democracy appear poor [...] especially now when the hope of all conciliation between the big powers has been annihilated by Mr Molotov.[36/a]

His last visit to Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia in autumn 1947 convinced him that he could not bear the atmosphere of the "new" Danubia even for a short while. The disquieting memories, meetings, and discussions in Hungary and elsewhere triggered his plan to write a book that would have summed up his postwar experience: "The Exile Cannot Return".[37] Moreover, the development, and approval by the Allies, of a new nationalism in Central Europe, involving, for instance, the expulsion of minorities from the restored Czechoslovak Republic, seemed to prove that the new Danubian states were, once more, unable to solve the old problem of liberty and national coexistence. "I have only one more duty left," wrote Jászi, "to record my observations of today and draw my consequences".[38] He did so, describing the closing of a vicious circle, in a paper written after his 1947 research trip:

> Just forty years ago R. W. Seton-Watson, the eminent English historian, published his book on Racial Problems in Hungary, in which he denounced the sins of Hungarian feudalism against the national minorities of the country. This book became one of the strongest arguments for the dismemberment of Hungary in 1918. And one must acknowledge that Seton-Watson was right in condemning the mistakes and abuses. ... I publicly declared my solid agreement with his arguments. But what happens now in Czechoslovakia and several other countries are not mistakes or abuses of chauvinism, but a policy which intends the final annihilation for minorities which are regarded as hindrances in the building of new national states. But today one hears only the feeble voice of the persecuted which is easily silenced. No book is written today by an influential foreign authority on "Racial Problems in Czechoslovakia".[39]

In two sorrowful Hungarian articles in 1953 he once more returned to the problems of Danubia. In "Why Did the Danubian Federation Fail?" Jászi surveyed the reasons for "the concept of an eastern Switzerland's having

remained but a mournful dream". He summed up the analysis of the historical, social, and cultural reasons in these words:

> If Renan was right in defining the essence of a nation in the fact that all of its members have many things in common and forget many things, then it is obvious that the (Habsburg) Monarchy was the opposite of this. Its people neither did anything together nor forgot anything. The empire, and within it Hungary, collapsed, because the historical tradition of each of its peoples was deeply hostile and hateful to the experiences of the others, or knew nothing of those.[40]

In the second piece, written on the Czech catastrophe and its lessons, Jászi explored the puzzling parallels in the fate of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The fall in 1948 of the most advanced democratic polity in the Danubian region seemed to point to a deep-lying common malaise, to nationalism, even if of a different character.[41]

These articles, together with a number of others, were published in the Hungarian journal *Látóhatár* (Horizon), issued first in Paris, later in Munich, by a group of young democratic exiles after 1948. These poets, writers, sociologists, and other intellectuals, expelled from their country by the Stalinist policies of the Hungarian Communist Party under Mátyás Rákosi, looked for a new point of orientation in the West. They found it in Oszkár Jászi, the doyen of Hungarian democratic exiles, whom they asked for spiritual guidance. Jászi was sought out by all the different liberal anti-communist exiles, politicians and scholars alike, as they left Hungary and arrived in the West. Ironically, at the end of his life, just as before 1918, Jászi once again became a centre, this time of Hungarian public life in exile.

In the last decade of his life he addressed the issue of the century on a higher, more general, one might say planetary, level. Following up his studies on "peacemaking", he delineated worldwide strategies for democracy and federalism,[42] and in his posthumously published work on tyrannicide,[43] he offered theoretical and practical teachings about the defense of freedom. The closing words of this book—"Freedom will inevitably reappear"—may be safely read as a proof of his unbroken optimism.

Jászi was already too ill to understand that in October 1956 the postwar generation of Hungary tragically confirmed the truth of many of his predictions by both fighting and losing the battle for a democratic and national revival. At least his semi-conscious mind was spared the tragedy of one more epochal defeat of liberty in his fatherland. After a long illness Oszkár Jászi died in Oberlin, Ohio, on 13 February 1957.

It took another quarter-century before his work and his message began to be newly appreciated, especially in Hungary. Of course, Jászi's books remained on American college reading lists—*The Dissolution* was reprinted in paperback in 1961, and the *Revolution* was reissued in 1969. But in the years of cold and hot wars the position of an open-minded, level-headed democrat with socialist ideas was once again overshadowed by extremism. In Hungary Jászi's

name remained unmentioned and unmentionable—save in crude denunciations of the "class limitations of bourgeois radicalism"—for more than a decade. After 1956, in 1960, however, a whole book was published on Jászi and his thoughts, granting him the ambivalent title of a "spiritual ancestor" of the "instigators of the counterrevolution of 1956".[43]

However, in the meantime, an entirely new generation grew up, acquainted only with the realities of a one-party state, but looking for guidance in solving the new problems of Hungary, once again in a turmoil of modernization, and of fresh survival struggles of Hungarian minorities in the neighbouring states. Searching for democratic and progressive models of thought, Jászi was "discovered" by many young students, together with another unusually clearsighted Hungarian political scientist and also short-time minister in a revolutionary cabinet, István Bibó.[44] Some of Jászi's articles began to be republished, a selection of his Hungarian political writings came out, the book on the Habsburg Monarchy was translated (almost fifty years after its appearance in English in America), and several studies were printed on his life and work. In 1969 the original Hungarian version of *Revolution* was republished in Munich, a collection of his critical writings came out in Paris, and some Jászi texts were circulating as unofficial publications in Hungary's "second sphere of publicity".

Since the end of the Communist regime, his political works and his magnificent correspondence could be published freely. Thus, after seventy-odd years, Jászi becomes again a crucial point of reference in the Hungarian political debate.

NOTES

1 "My Adventures in Sociology", unpublished manuscript, Jászi Papers, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Butler Library, Columbia University in the City of New York (henceforth J.P.).

2 On the political and cultural scene of Hungary around 1900, see, among others, Jászi's *Dissolution,* esp. pp. 133-260; Z. Horváth, *Die Jahrhundertwende in Ungarn: Geschichte der zweiten Reformgeneration* 1896-1914, trans. G. Engl (Budapest-Neuwied, 1966); P. Hanák, "Pathfinders of a Revolution", *New Hungarian Quarterly* 6 (1962): 204-17.

3 E. Ady: "Jászi Oszkár könyve" (The Book of Oscar Jászi"), (1912), *Összes Prózai Művei (Collected Prose Works) 10* (Budapest, 1973), pp. 191-94.

4 "Szocializmus és hazafiság" (Socialism and Patriotism), *Huszadik Század* 6:1 (1905):1-11.

5 On Károlyi's and Jászi's lifelong relationship, see Gy. Litván, "Documents of a Friendship: From the Correspondence of M. Károlyi and O. Jászi," *East Central Europe/ l'Europe du centre-est* 4:2 (1977): 116-46

6 Letter to B. Somló, 20 July 1907, Széchényi National Library, Budapest, Manuscript Collection (henceforth OSZKK), "Levelestár" (Correspondence).

7 G. Jeszenszky: "The Correspondence of Oscar Jászi and R. W. Seton-Watson before World War I", *Acta Historica Acad. Sc. Hung.* 26 (1980): 446.

8 See O. Jászi: *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary* (London, 1924; repr. New York, 1969).

9 Ibid., passim; see also P. Pastor: *Hungary between Wilson and Lenin: The Revolution and the Big Three* (Boulder, Colorado: *East European Quarterly,* 1976), B. K. Király, P. Pastor I. Sanders, eds.: *Essays on World War I: Total War and Peacemaking: A Case Study of Trianon in War*

and Society in East Central Europe 6 (New York: 1982).

10 "Proletárdiktatúra" (Dictatorship of the Proletariat), *Szabadgondolat* 5 (1918): 225.

11 J. P.: Speech at Lorain, Ohio, Hungarian Civic Club, 24 January 1926.

12 Idem, Armistice Day talk, 1926.

13 Idem, "Red and White Bolshevism in Hungary", undated MS (c. 1923).

14 "Oscar Jászi, 1875-February 13, 1957", *Journal of Central European Affairs* (1957): 74-75.

15 The difficulties European exiled intellectuals had to face are well described in L. A. Coser: *Refugee Scholars in America: Their Impact and Their Experiences* (New Haven and London, 1984). Jászi had the "bad luck" of having arrived many years before the mass influx of exiles from Germany and elsewhere, and had even greater difficulties to find a niche for himself in American academia. Neither a member of a school nor a founder of one, he had little chance to be remembered by others than his colleagues and pupils at Oberlin. (Coser, who treats essentially the post-1933 refugees, does not mention his name.)

16 Jászi to M. Károlyi, 17 August 1932, Károlyi Papers. fond 704.

17 See above, n. 10.

18 J. P.: "The Value of Freedom", assembly lecture, 31 October 1934, p. 3, *Nation,* 14 November, 21 November, 12 December, and 26 December 1934.

19 Jászi, *Revolution,* pp. 111-12.

20 Ibid., p. 113.

21 *Marxizmus vagy liberális szocializmus,* P. Kende, ed. (Paris: Dialogues Européens, 1983 (Magyar Füzetek könyvei 6): 3-140

22 J. P.: Jászi to Robert S. Brookings (Vienna, 27 November 1924).

23 "Communication Concerning Count Michael Károlyi", *New Republic* 23 (April 1930); on the context, cf. Litván, "Documents".

24 J. P.: Jászi to W. Lippmann, 15 and 25 December 1936.

25 *Századunk* 5 (1930): 503.

26 J. P.: "Radio Message to Hungary. Delivered in Hungarian, 7 October 1943".

27 "A magyar egységfront kérdéséhez" (On the Problem of the Hungarian United Front), *Magyar Fórum,* New York, 1942/3): 2-4.

28 Cf. the letter of A. Einstein to Jászi of 26 February 1946 (J. P.).

29 J. P.: "The failure of a declaration", n. d.

30 "Central Europe and Russia" *Journal of Central European Affairs,* April, 1945.

31 "Our Government's Plan" *Austrian Labor News,* April, 1943.

32 See "Central Europe and Russia".

33 A. Gábor: "Harakiri", *Előre* (New York), 7 October 1922.

34 These words feature in a letter of Jászi to I. Csécsy (13 January 1946, J. P.) Replying to some old Hungarian friends' reactions to his editorial for the resurrected *Huszadik Század* in which Jászi had expressly renounced all kinds of materialism in favour of a deist moralism.

35 "Choices in Hungary", *Foreign Affairs* 24 (1946): 453-65; the quotation is from p. 457.

36 J. P.: Jászi to A. Lesznai, 10 July 1947.

36/a Ibid.

37 J. P.: "The Exile Cannot Return"; the MS contains some thirty-odd headings for a planned book which, however, Jászi did not seem to have begun writing.

38 J. P.: Jászi to I. Csécsy, 9 March 1948.

39 See "Danubia Old and New". *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* 1949.

40 Ibid., pp. 13-19, 91-97; the quotation is from p. 97.

41 Ibid., pp. 329-36

42 Oscar Jászi and John D. Lewis: "Against the Tyrant. The Traditions and Theory of Tyrannicide". Glencoe, Illinois, Free Press 1957.

43 Gy. Fukász: *A magyarországi polgári radikalizmus történetéhez: Jászi Oszkár ideológiájának bírálata* (Contribution to the History of Bourgeois Radicalism in Hungary: The Critique of Oszkár Jászi's Ideology), Budapest, 1960. However, only a few years later József Varga treated Jászi with respect and understanding. Cf. also L. Szűcs: "A magyar polgári radikalizmus kialakulásának történetéhez". (Contributions to the History of the Origins of Hungarian Bourgeois Radicalism: The Ideological Development of Oszkár Jászi, 1900-1906), *Századunk* 97 (1963): 1205-37.

44 See I. Borsody: "Jászi, Bibó és a magyar nemzeti kérdés" (Jászi, Bibó, and the Hungarian National Question"), *Bibó István, a harmadik út és a következő nemzedék* (István Bibó, the Third Road and the New Generation), Geneva, 1981, pp. 7-21.

Oszkár Jászi

Federalism in Danubia

Many competent observers with whom I discussed this problem agree that after the collapse of the Teutonic New Order, when liberation came, widespread public opinion existed in favour of federalistic cooperation among the Danubian countries. People realized that chaos and disaster would follow again if the various national units of the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy should continue their old policy of nationalistic rivalries. The past, remote and recent, has shown them that continued mutual hostility of these small states would again make them mere tools in the hands of the imperialistic powers.

Already during the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries some of the best minds of the monarchy were convinced of the historical necessity to transform the centralized, militarized, and bureaucratic Habsburg empire into a federation of free and equal national units. The idea of federation was not an artificially excogitated plan but arose inevitably from the common liberal thought of the century. The idea of popular sovereignity led inevitably toward the claim of national autonomy. The liberated serfs fought not only for their legal equality but also for the free development of their language, tradition, and way of life.

After the July revolution in Paris, Grillparzer, the great poet of Austria, wrote these visionary lines:

> The whole world will be strengthened by the unexpected change, only Austria will go to pieces under it. The shameless Machiavellianism of the leaders who (...) fomented and nourished reciprocal national antipathies, is responsible for it. The Hungarian hates the Bohemian, the Bohemian hates the German, and the Italian hates them all. As horses absurdly harnessed together, they will scatter in all directions as soon as the advancing spirit of the times will weaken and break the bonds.

The revolution of 1848 became the only incentive in Austrian history for rebuilding the state into a popular federation. In the parliament of Kremsier a consistent attempt was made to reconstitute a large empire on the basis of a supra-national unity and to codify the principle of national equality in all walks of public life. Unity in the essential things and free local governments, based on a reasonable decentralization, were the leading ideas of the peoples of Austria.

Manuscript, 1948. Butler Library, Columbia University

*Author's note: The writer of this article recently revisited some of the Danubian countries with the help of the Social Research Council and the American Philosophical Society in order to study recent social and political changes.

And though the counter-revolution of 1849 swept away these hopeful beginnings, the ideas of national equality and federal cooperation continued to live in the soul of the peoples. The privileges of the German, Hungarian, and Polish upper classes, in the framework of the dualistic constitution of 1867, became more and more odious. At the end of his life Palacky, the great Czech historian, already disillusioned over Austria, whose unity he defended against pan-Germanism, wrote: "If we should once have to cease to be Czechs, it would be quite indifferent to us whether we became Germans, Italians, Magyars, or Russians." In the same trend of thought another Czech fighter against Austrian absolutism, Havlicek, declared: "If Russia were a free and constitutional country, we western Slavs might be able to long for union with it. But Russia is a despotism; and unfortunately we other Slavs must shun our own brother as our greatest foe..."

At the beginning of the dualistic compromise, seeing the growing revolt of second-rank nations against the privileges of Germans and Magyars, Adolf Fischof, a keen political thinker, warned the monarchy that she should not play the role of a nation state, but accept her natural mission of becoming a *nationality state*. "It is ... a vital interest for a state of nationalities to spare the feelings of its peoples, and to keep away from them everything which would give the impression of a domination by strangers..." And he added: "... centralization only makes nations centrifugal; let us decentralize and they will become centripetal..."

These natural ideas of the liberal spirit became increasingly accentuated in Austria, and even in feudal Hungary. The two great liberal leaders, Francis Deák and Baron Eötvös tried in their Nationality Law to give broad local autonomy and cultural self-determination to the different ethnic groups of Hungary.

However, these ideas and plans could not be put into action. The privileges of the ruling nations, especially those of the Magyar upper classes, frustrated the remolding of the monarchy on federal lines. The dissatisfaction of the national irredentas grew, and even some leaders of the Austrian government, following suggestions of the Social Democrats, realized at the beginning of the twentieth century that, without democratization of the monarchy and progress toward national autonomies, the future of the empire would become precarious. In this spirit under Francis Joseph a belated effort was made with universal suffrage. Unfortunately, the centrifugal forces were already so developed that this democratic reform did not end the obstructionism which paralyzed the parliament in Vienna. At the same time, Hungary resisted stubbornly any serious reform of its antiquated suffrage. The heir presumptive, Francis Ferdinand, became perfectly aware that the Habsburg monarchy stood before the fatal alternative: federalize her peoples or perish. He elaborated a most comprehensive plan of federal structure based on nationality units and was determined to carry out his plan, if necessary, with the help of the imperial army. Unfortunately, he was assassinated by disgruntled Serb students in Sarajevo, and the first World War started.

After the defeat of the Central Powers the victorious Allies tried to solve the fatal problem of the defunct monarchy on the basis of the Wilsonian principles of national self-determination. They were the world's last attempt to settle the problem of nationality struggles with liberal principles. However, the real essence of this philosophy was falsified by the swelling current of greedy nationalism in the newly created states. This led to national insecurity, growing militarism, economic protectionism, and the formation of rival groups dominated partly by France, partly by the Italian and later the German superdictators. The national minorities which arose after the dismemberment of the Habsburg monarchy and the curtailment of Germany became even more dissatisfied and vociferous than were the former ones. The unsolved nationality problem caused a new explosion on the comparatively unimportant issue of Danzig in 1939. For a time German fascism seemed to be successful in integrating Europe under the domination of the German "super-race" through its military preponderance and economic efficiency.

When the German colossus collapsed at the end of World War II with the help of the United States, the peoples greeted their liberation as a promise of a new world order. The Atlantic Charter was felt as a final solemn declaration of the great hopes of the past: of national self-determination and the defense of minorities on the basis of personal freedom. It was a growing conviction that this spirit would inevitably lead to a free federation of free peoples. One can study these new hopes most clearly in the life of a country which remained independent after liberation, which was supported by the solidarity of the Slav peoples, and which had the strongest liberal and democratic traditions among the liberated countries: Czechoslovakia. I want to quote from the book of a really representative Czech writer who was at that time acting minister of foreign affairs and minister of state in the exiled London government of President Benes, from Hubert Ripka's *East and West* (first published in London, 1944). Ripka's book must be considered not only as the conception of a highly qualified author but almost as an official document of the exiled government, for the basis of his opinions and expectations was the discussions which President Benes had with Marshal Stalin and Foreign Affairs Minister Molotov during his visit to Moscow in December 1943.

The underlying idea of Ripka's book is this:

> We have seen that Bolshevism triumphed and maintained itself in Russia precisely because it corresponds to the social conditions and historical traditions of the Russian State and Russian society. For the same reason, Bolshevism in its Russian form cannot be transplanted into a different social milieu; such an experiment, wherever it were essayed, could only be upheld by military force and systematic violence. (p. 20)

In this conviction Mr Ripka adopted a thoroughly optimistic point of view concerning the future. He was convinced that Soviet foreign policy departed in one fundamental respect from czarist tradition: "Unfailing recognition of the equal right of all nations, great and small, respect for the liberty and independ-

ence of all nations, however small, these principles, proclaimed in the November Revolution, became the permanent heritage of Soviet policy" (p. 51). With this happy anticipation in his mind, the Czech leader did not doubt that the new international atmosphere would be propitious for confederation plans in Central Europe, in spite of the Soviet attitude of "extreme, almost negative reserve" which became very soon manifest toward those plans.

> I do nor doubt (so Mr Ripka continued his argument) that the Soviets will regard these plans favorably once there are guarantees that they are not directed against the Soviet Union, that they cannot become an instrument in the hand of any other Great Power, and especially of Germany, and that the nations of central Europe wish to live in friendly accord with the Soviet Union.

And he added as a support of his argument: "President Benes has pointed out on several occasions, and with particular emphasis after Munich, ... that our alliance can only be European, i.e. both the West and Russia. Only within this framework, and on this general European basis, can new forms of collaboration between the smaller Central European nations be realized." (pp. 57-58.)

And following this noble liberal dream the Czech statesman came to this conclusion:

> The radical international democratization of all the countries of central and southeastern Europe will not only be an inescapable consequence of the War but at the same time the prerequisite [...] for a gradual realization of closer collaboration among them [...] We believe that efforts to bring it about will receive the sincere support of the Soviet Union also. For, we repeat, the Soviets are not anxious to "Bolshevise" central and southeastern Europe, but only to prevent this region from being used as a springboard for hostile advance against the Soviet Union. (p. 61.)

I have no doubt that many liberal, peasant, and socialist leaders in other countries also entertained the same hopes at the beginning of the "liberation", and had the victorious powers not divided them among themselves but encouraged them economically and politically to build their own federal structure, such a plan and such advice would have been followed with enthusiasm. Unfortunately, Mr Ripka and those of the same conviction attributed to the Soviets, somewhat naively, faith in certain fundamental values of democratic liberalism and nationalism. Soon it became evident that the aims of the Soviets were quite different, and Mr Ripka and those who nourished the same illusions have paid dearly for them with the loss of democracy, with exile or death.

Now it became perfectly clear that the true meaning of Soviet ideology and policy had been antagonistic to the idea of federalism. Without individual freedom and respect of national minorities, peoples cannot build up a federal structure. The Soviet doctrine accentuated the principle of national sovereignty. For the empty nutshell of this sovereignty the satellite states were expected to tolerate the tight grasp of the Soviets. It has been estimated that, as a consequence

of the second World War, about 20 million people were uprooted in Europe. Minorities which the new states did not like were simply expelled from their native lands. This became the fate of Germans, Hungarians, Baltics, Poles, and Jews. Though the Atlantic Charter had paid lip service to the principle of national self-determination, even the western allies acquiesced in those "historical necessities". In all the so-called eastern democracies the individual has been sacrificed to the almighty state, and their whole economic life subordinated to the dominant interest of Russia.

In spite of this trend of Soviet expansion and centralization, one can hear opinions that the real essence of this process will be the growth of federalism in the Soviet orbit. Many communists and fellow travellers assert that the annihilation of capitalism and feudalism will lead automatically toward the elimination of national rivalries and to cooperation among equals. Even some naive liberals proclaim hopefully that the federative spirit is already working, and they quote diligently from the nineteen pacts which have been concluded since 1943 for friendship and mutual assistance among the satellites. They jubilantly quote some speeches of the dictators in which they emphasize the new spirit of fraternity, of economic and military cooperation between former enemy countries. They are elated to hear that centuries-old hostilities between Magyars and Rumanians are eliminated, that such a man of liberty as Premier Groza gives by a single declaration equal rights to the Hungarian minority and favours the entrance of the Hungarians (that is, Hungarian communists) into the Bucharest parliament. After having destroyed the Peasant Party (the fate of its gallant leader, Iuliu Maniu, is still unknown), and after having driven the former Social Democrats into union with the communists, Mr Groza thinks that Rumania has reached the point "where a complete break with the past is both necessary and inevitable". Our strange liberals are convinced that the friendly handshaking of Groza and Rákosi and a noisy public meeting organized with effective police help will be enough to eradicate the loss of Transylvania's Hungarian population in the memories of the Magyars. Through similar methods other dictators hope to efface the Teschen controversy between Czechs and Poles, the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans and the Magyars, the annihilation of the autonomy of Slovakia, and the bloody exploits of the Hungarian army in the Serb territory against which Count Paul Teleki protested with suicide. These and many other tragic memories of the past—these naive liberals believe—will be "cured" by the determination of the dictators cheered on by their communist followers and fellow travellers. Are these not the hopeful signs of a coming federalism under the leadership of Russia? (Never mind that only recently Premier Gottwald exhilarated his Czech comrades by the prospect that now 220 million Slavs will make the will of the Czechs irresistible.)

What is then the real will of the Soviets, domination or federalism? The answer cannot be doubted. In connection with a recent incident, Moscow has made its intentions perfectly clear. On 17 January Georgi Dimitrov, the communist premier of Bulgaria and the staunchest supporter of the Soviets, at the occasion of his visit to Bucharest, came out with, not even a plan, but rather a

vision of a future "federation of confederation" among Bulgaria, Albania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and even a "liberated" Greece. (Of course, Austria was not mentioned.) This federation would cooperate with Russia on a large scale and "if possible" with the United States, Britain, and France, "on the principle of complete equality". Moscow's reaction to the plan as publicly expressed in *Pravda* was outspokenly hostile, so hostile in fact that the Bulgarian official news agency immediately issued a statement (29 January) to the effect that Dimitrov and his cabinet ministers have never considered the creation of an eastern European bloc, nor has Mr Dimitrov planned a customs union for that area. (By the way, it is interesting in passing to recall how near the vision of the most enthusiastic Soviet champion came to the essence of Mr Ripka's conception at a time when the Czech leaders still believed their independence would not be touched by the Soviets!)

Regarding these facts realistically, we cannot doubt that what the Soviet dictators want is not a real federation, but that "monolithic unity" under which the whole economic, military, and diplomatic life of the satellites is strictly subordinated to the super-dictator. This aim can be easily explained. In spite of the totalitarian domination of the whole territory, the Soviet leaders know very well that their rule is based primarily on military supremacy. They know that the overwhelming majority of the population is anti-communist: the Catholic majorities of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Slavonia, and Poland are hostile to Soviet domination; most of the intellectuals in the satellite countries have always had a strong western orientation; the peasantry is afraid that their individual property will be formed into kolkhozes, as after the New Economic Policy in Russia. But even a more menacing danger exists for the Soviets: the exuberant nationalism of the small states is not dead, it is only dormant; and the purely linguistic nationalism of the Soviet system will not appease them, because they have been longing for an idependent statehood for many centuries. And this independence could be given only in the framework of a federal structure based on the freedom of the individual and the dignity of man, an institution which Mother Russia is unwilling to give not only to her satellites but even to her own people. The historical consciousness of all these small nations may become a cause of future rebellions. The *Economist* expresses this with its usual clarity: "...these men, with their back to the wall, fear that they will be degraded to the level of Udmurts and Yakuts", (or other primitive peoples enjoying linguistic autonomy).

Looking over the picture again, one cannot see any real move to federalism in spite of the noisy manifestations of the dictators and the controlled press for union and cooperation. I know, for instance, from a scholar returning from Transylvania, that the antagonism between Rumanians and Magyars is unabated; it has become even stronger because Hungarian communists are helping Groza in maintaining the present dictatorship which puts hundreds of Rumanians and Hungarians into prison. The hidden animosity between the states is so strong that crossing frontiers is still an almost superhuman task for ordinary mortals.

However, this does not mean that the present state of the new "federalism" is unstable. On the contrary: the present Soviet domination seems to be stronger than the previous one of the Nazis. The Russian system works with a more effective and better trained personel and may raise the standard of living for a larger minority than the Nazis were able to do.

And one can even expect that the new system may in the long run develop a more favourable atmosphere for the future federalization of the small nations, because of the influence of two factors: one is that tight cooperation in the Soviet orbit may enhance the intensity of individual relations, in both the economic and cultural field. People may become conscious as participants in a larger unity. The second factor is that all the small nations will resent more intensely the pressure of an alien power and civilization. Already this pressure begins to outweigh the romanticism of Slav solidarity. Should the rule of tyranny be shaken inside and outside of Russia, and should the union of the West become a reality, the revolutionary spirit of 1848 may reawaken. Individual liberty, democratic constitutionalism might be proclaimed again, and the road toward a free and independent federation of peasants and worker democracies under the guidance of a really creative intelligentsia would be opened. A unified west and a democratized Russia would be equally anxious to help these small nations into a genuine federation.

Gergely Hajdú

A Literary Voyeur

The Prose of Miklós Mészöly

The versatility of Miklós Mészöly virtually invites paradoxes. He is a solitary figure, but embodies literary continuity; he is esoteric, yet a user of popular myths; he searches for special Central European moods, yet is always abreast of what is happening in world literature.

He was born on the 19th of January 1921, in Szekszárd, a town that takes great pride in its Roman past, in the days of Pannonia. The social life of small towns such as this has been a favourite theme in realist fiction. Writers such as Mihály Babits (1883-1941), another son of Szekszárd, depicted local middle class decadence with a bitter nostalgia. This was a class that had education and copious tradition. Yet their controlled and still somewhat patriarchal life could not hold out against the menaces of the era. Had Mészöly written out his experience in the traditional way, he could have easily gained the favour of the public, but he (as always and in everything) chose the hard way. He was interested in ontological and epistemological questions rather than in social questions: he lived the life of his class, on which he had his own views but which he never used as an explicit theme.

He studied law (especially legal history), was an articled clerk for a time, and went hunting in his free time; all this is perfectly in accord with his age and social standing. It required exceptional sensitivity to feel how precarious this order of things was and how unreasonable the satisfaction of his acquaintances. Country life was to be the background to many of Mészöly's later works—an idyllic background, but always a sinful, or at least remorseful, one. (The novella *Megbocsátás*—Forgiveness, 1983, is perhaps the finest example of this.) There is sin and murder here but, being unprovable, they fade into legend. (The title is probably not a reference to the actual "crime", but to the narrator's attitude to his subject.) Whatever the characters do is simply a substitute for real action—with one exception. The single action is a kind of aggression, one akin to the artist's curiosity: voyeurism. The motive most frequently found in Mészöly is that of being an agent or object of secret observation. This is what Mészöly experienced when, hunting alone, he came upon animals, plants and fields unknown to others

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and obtained a knowledge of the nondiscursive kind. "What impelled me to write most of all was the suggestive force of nature and the land and not the social sphere in which I moved." (*Félbemaradt interju*—Unfinished Interview). It was to experiences of this kind that he attributed his later interest in the idea of the act of watching being deformed by the watcher. Mészöly, one of the most erudite of writers, is deeply read in Wittgenstein, Heisenberg and Teilhard de Chardin, the latter influencing Mészöly's view of history as geological catastrophe.

In addition to the spying mentioned above, chases, confessions and the passing of judgement recur in Mészöly's work. A schizophrenic state: a lawyer who does not believe in objective fact. He still has a passion for investigation but no longer feels capable of passing moral judgement.

Due to the outbreak of the war, Mészöly's connection with the legal profession did not last long. He served on the Eastern front and was taken prisoner in Serbia. His war pieces do not have much of a plot. They describe aimless journeys, the endless, nerve-wrecking waiting and the sense of being turned into an object. (*Képek egy utazás történetéből*—Pictures from the Story of a Journey—is a characteristic title.)

The fact that he did not hit upon the most suitable form right away is apparent from his first short stories (*Vadvizek*—Marshy Tracts, 1948). The stories are marked by their vague symbols and radiate a gloomy pantheism that at times remind one of Giono. *Sötét jelek* (Dark Signs, 1957), his second collection, still contains stories of this type. (*Balkon és jegenyék*—Balkony and Poplars, is probably the best.) But a new type of story appears here: the puritan parable. These parables occasionally have social or historical relevance but always a relevance which defies easy interpretation and rarely lacks a philosophical perspective.

This innovation may have been brought about by certain eventful changes in the author's life. The post-war years found him close to the literary circle which had formed around the *Újhold* magazine. After the communist takeover, all independent magazines were banned, among them *Újhold,* which was particularly detested by György Lukács.

"Bourgeois writers" could only publish translations or tales for children, and Mészöly was no exception. After working for some time as a dramaturge at a puppet theatre, he found a job with the publishing house for children's books and had several volumes of beast fables published. This might have given him the idea of employing the methods of parable and allegory in his serious writing as well. *Magasiskola* (Falcons), the most successful piece of the Dark Signs collection, shows freedom and restriction through a collection of falcons kept somewhere on the Hungarian puszta for hunting, (*NHQ* 40). Their conditioning is very sophisticated. Everything is planned to the last detail, including the length of the leashes (associated with trains taking people away). The colony naturally represents security for the birds; on the other hand, the boss is paranoiac and the purpose of the whole institution is a vague Kafkaesque Great Parade. (István Gaál's 1970 film, *Falcons,* which has won several international prizes, is based on this short story.)

In *Jelentés öt egérről* (Report on Five Mice, 1959), considered by some as one of the best Hungarian short stories of the century, the extermination of a family of mice turns into a study of anonymous death, the most inhuman experience of the war and the revolution (*NHQ* 31). Mészöly has published some other parables since then. *Bolond utazás* (Crazy Journey, 1977) is an exceptionally good one. It examines the gradual debilitation of a railway carriage, probably a symbol of Hungary, to the point of its head-on collision with a Soviet military train and its consequent destruction. This, however, is not the main direction of Mészöly's development. He has moved rather towards a growing objectivity, a reduction of emotions, personality and narration, which had become increasingly radical by the mid-1970s. At first sight, his writing in this period gave an impression of greater precision—in fact, the pieces were more ambiguous than ever. Mészöly's alleged aim was to "put the obscure into clear words". His ideal was Flaubertian *impassibilité,* but with the constant presence of transcendental search, choice and anxiety. (His first two novels clearly show the influence of Camus.)

The story of the novel *Az atléta halála* (The Death of the Athlete, 1966—finished by 1961) is told by the woman who lived with the athlete and is now working on his biography. Bálint grew up in a small town (not unlike Szekszárd) among young people inconspicuously coming under the spell of fascism. Although the prize for which they compete so ferociously is a sexual one, a demon girl called Pici, competition only fosters the herd instinct. Bálint breaks from this group and manages to become a first class runner through the help of an old coach (who still measures distances in yards). The novel is an analysis of the secret connection between Bálint's guilt, his desire to flee, and his performance (any human performance). For him the world is a system of distances. This sense of security is shattered when he must change to metric distances—and he cannot rid himself of Pici either. This insecurity urges him on to reckless speed and eventually drives him to his death.

The description of banal everyday, inconspicuous fascism, is one of the things Mészöly excels in. Youths resembling Bálint, with their own cruel emotional experiments, are to be found in other writings of his.

In his novel *Saulus* (Saul, 1968), the famous conversion of the persecutor of Christians is observed from an outside point of view, even though the narration is in the first person. Instants build up into a process until no change seems to be taking place on the road to Damascus. Saul—as the author comments—"finds new objects for giving vent to all his old vitality". The Law is unreal—only the search, the pursuit of Truth is real.

After the success of these two novels, even official criticism, state-controlled as it was, had to acknowledge Mészöly's unquestionable talent. On the other hand, his philosophy, his "antirealistic" style and the unambiguous dissidence expressed in his rare political statements, could not be accepted. Therefore, he had to be classified as one of the "young writers". Just as one could become a "bourgeois writer" with a working class background, one could be a "young

writer" irrespective of one's age. Mészöly, for instance, up to the age of 50. The label was put on irresponsible and rash writers who were still only experimenting, who did not have to be taken seriously, and therefore could be forgiven for their non-Marxist utterances. Mészöly's next piece, however, was an ideologically intangible work of art.

Pontos történetek, útközben (Exact Tales on the Way, 1970, enlarged 1989) is another step towards quasi-documentary literature. An unsentimental journey: the woman narrator visits relatives in Transylvania and Pannonia. On the way, she notes all objects with hyperrealistic precision. Even glances and touches are turned into objects by this method. The mosaic of picture and fate is arranged from these details, without laying any stress on one at the expense of another. A result of the work and wars of generations, the "stories" are coded into the land. History, as catastrophe, oppresses the plants and the animals (thus the unnaturally fecund acacias and pigeons) and drives people to eccentricity bordering on madness. People live at the mercy of the powers that be (it is said, for example, in both places, that whoever has more than one room to live in can be evicted any time), but it is the past that is what ultimately they are unable to digest.

The book is dedicated to A. who "preserved these stories", which may well be the writer's wife, the thanatologist Alaine Polcz. The most striking of all the abnormal symptoms mentioned above is the overdriven mourning (an activity so appreciated by thanatology), the cult of the dead and the visions of spirits (see the chapter entitled *Öregek, halottak* (The Old and the Dead). Even an observation apparently unbiassed depends on the observer—its hyperrealism is not naiveté, but a conscious choice made in full awareness of fictitiousness. In *Alakulások* (Alternations, 1973) the process whereby facts build up into a work of art becomes an explicit theme. This is again the intermediary state of a search without an aim: "There is only an authentic answer, the ultimate answer does not exist."

Exact Tales would perhaps have been less appreciated, had it not been followed by a novel tackling the same problems even more deeply. *Film* (1976) is an almost sadistically cold masterpiece; the most important writing of not only Mészöly, but of the whole decade. The title brings to mind Bergman's black-and-white period, Antonioni's *Blow-up,* the French cinema-verité experiments and, of course, Godard. In certain respects Mészöly is closer to them than to any writer. The protagonist of the shooting script is the camera, which follows an old couple all the way to their house while they are taking their daily walk. It takes an inventory of their decaying bodies and possessions and of their senile gestures, which still express a moving solidarity. The inventory is then continued to include their furniture and documents. Since the old couple die, partly because of what the crew is doing, the text ends with the records of an autopsy. Camera movements and cuts are amply commented on; by the end of the story it is much more the method of observation that we have found out about rather than the old couple, who remain a mystery. In addition, we are provided with

information on the story of the street. The details include the retributions and the consolidation following the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 (no doubt reminding the readers of 1956), a fascist massacre in 1944, and the observation and eventual murder of a sex criminal and animal torturer by a peasant along with the subsequent lawsuit in 1912. There are lengthy quotations from the jovially Victorian reports of contemporaries. The various chronological layers are connected by parallel motifs and figures, but no causal relation is established. We can only wonder whether the old couple had anything to do with one of the old stories. One thing is sure, they were victims, but by no means innocent. Like Borges, Mészöly plays with time and, like Beckett, he plays with causality. (Imprecise memory is the starting point for both.) We feel the determination of fates, but cannot explain it—this is how Mészöly persuades us that each place has a mythology of its own: a stock of roles and acts ever recurring and therefore outside time.

This recognition has determined Mészöly's later career. He has been assimilating Latin-American magical realism and the impressionism of certain Hungarian forerunners such as Gyula Krúdy (1878-1933). To the surprise of his readers, he was not afraid to touch on traditional forms of literary populism (that of the anecdote, for instance). He has been able to use these without ever being tempted by political populism, anachronistic isolation in the national tradition, or shallowness of thought. In what he wrote at this time, there is more storytelling but it is broken down into small details, a musically composed sequence of short stories. This period, called his "map period" by a critic, displays a growing extension without any loss of intensity.

Mészöly is not limited by his own mythology. On the contrary, he connects it to the common narrative stock, the inexhaustible archetypal sensations of love, jealousy and death (see the archaically wild tale of *Szárnyas lovak* (Winged Horses, 1977). He uses religious symbols as well, showing, for instance, the suffering of Jesus through the fate of animals (*Ló-regény,* Horse Novel, 1982). He rejects, in contrast, the teleological view of history, both the Second Coming and the Hegelian-Marxist version. The falsification of history in Central Europe after every single war, or change of regime, is one of his favourite subjects, as it seems to be a distorted picture of his own method. This is the source of the new metaphor of the artist in *Magyar Novella* (Hungarian Story, 1979, *NHQ* 78), a photographer obsessively collecting and rearranging photographs. The strory also contains a miniature family chronicle, and of all of Mészöly's work, this is the one which, in spite of its title, most markedly resembles the work of García Márquez.

Historical myths are not confined to Hungary either. Their domain is the whole territory once caught between the Frankish and the Byzantine empires. The hero of *Sutting ezredes tündöklése* (The Splendour of Colonel Sutting, 1986) is a romantic traveller, an agent of mysterious revolutionary organizations, an archetypal figure, embodying the suppressed desires of generations of Central Europeans.

Mészöly is playing with time in *Wimbledoni jácint* (Wimbledon Hyacinth) as well, an important piece in his latest volume. The intentional anachronisms

condense forty years into a single night. (See my review in *NHQ* 119.)

If it used to be the French (from Gide to Robbe-Grillet), then the Latin-Americans who had the greatest influence on his work, now it is the English whose names he mentions most often: Swift and Virginia Woolf, for example. It may be due to the latter that he has started to study the memoirs of "the nameless", and that he lets his thoughts wander so freely in his lyrical essays. His three volumes of essays and aphorisms were greeted with perplexity. Outstanding fiction is no guarantee that the author is equally talented in all other genres. Mészöly's philosophical poems and absurd dramas do not measure up to his other works. His essays are a different matter, though: in those he displays a superior knowledge and imagination and a fine intuition when analysing works of art (paintings in particular). The relations between the artists, their geographical circumstances, the background, the others and the Zeitgeist all combine into an exceptionally sensitive analysis. The problem, however, is also caused by his intuition: he often fails to transform his recognitions into logical tracks of thought, or to make them comprehensible for those who are less familiar with Hellenistic philosophy or the theory of music. Because of the condensation, and the missing links, the reader faces an exciting but extremely exhausting task.

Mészöly's willingness to experiment has always attracted young writers. (Those young in age and not in politics.) It was the precise style of his "period of reduction" which attracted the greatest number of followers. The analysis of gestures and the motif of investigation can be found, for instance, in the works of Péter Nádas, probably the most talented Hungarian novelist writing. This is particularly true of his *Emlékiratok Könyve* (Book of Memoirs), a novel which, it seems, was the outstanding work of the 1980s. At the same time, Mészöly has also been assimilating certain attitudes of the younger generations: there have been several parallel experiments in his works and those of young writers. *Film,* for instance, was the first mature example of the postmodern quotation technique.

"Your age is always determined by your present company", he was once told by a friend. He is 70 years old now—according to his birth certificate.

Miklós Mészöly

Exact Tales on the Way

(Fiction)

The yellowed notebook that I brought along to read on the way turned up after a funeral and was sent on to me some days ago from Kolozsvár. Outside it is still raining. Authentic October rain, almost final. The water seeps beneath the compartment window, forming puddles on the narrow ledge. In the notebook entries made in green and blue ink alternate. The green letters are less faded. For years I believed that this uncle was called Gábor and it is only now, from his diary, that I find his name was Ernő. I read a little, then stop. A young man is sitting opposite me. His shoes are double-soled, his fingers stubby, with bulging pinkish cuticles. There is a red stamp stuck on the window-pane, from the transport series. A red Parliament Square, a sightseeing bus. Uncle Ernő went on a trip around the world in 1911, and visited a brothel in Cairo. "The girls are very handsome", he writes, "but they use couches carved of stone for the purposes of love". We are delayed at a station. At the corner of a wooden warehouse hangs a wire guard globe and a five hundred Watt bulb in it, shimmering through the rain in an arc several yards wide. Beneath the eaves, a fire-house, buckets, a ladder. The young man sits huddled. He is wearing a well-cut dark blue suit and a bow tie. Seems his feet are smelly. The smell does not go with his fashionable clothes, rather with his cuticles. A motor train hoots in the distance but does not pass us. We rattle on. The young man plucks up his courage and in a rush begins to speak.

"Excuse me... do you know where we are?"

"No ... I've never travelled along this line before."

"You haven't? Neither have I," he says, his eyes lighting up. Then he turns cautious again. "I am afraid I'll miss my stop."

"So am I ... We'll ask, when the time comes."

Later, he addresses me again. He still seems a little awkward. He picks at a spot on his trousers, licks his handkerchief and goes on rubbing at it with that. He works at some enterprise headquarters or other, he doesn't tell me which or where. He spends a couple of days in the country every week, checking orders, doing quality control—whatever that means, it is not quite clear to me. For this he gets a basic salary of three thousand two hundred forints.

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"And when I'm travelling, my accommodation is always taken care of beforehand. There's never any trouble over lodgings. There's always a room."

He laughs.

"And then there's the per diem. But that always gets spent, somehow. It's only that I'm sick and tired of it all, it's wearying... No food for the imagination."

He spins his lighter absentmindedly.

"Where do you live?", I ask.

"I have a flat in Budapest."

"Do you live with your parents?"

"That wouldn't do at all!"

"Are you married?"

He laughs again.

"That's all I need!"

He kicks my foot by accident, glances down, brushes a little ash off his trousers.

"Smoke?"

I shake my head. The notebook begins to slide off my knees; he pushes it back.

"It's nicer to sit at home at this time of the year than travel... I knew where I'd be allotted at the beginning of the week."

"And is it better to know beforehand?"

"Much better. If I arrive on Friday, say, all I have to do on Saturday is prepare the conference, then there's time for fun. Sundays sleep and a man's fit by Monday. Unless there was a headshot."

"A headshot?"

A woman has a couple of hens beneath her seat; with wild clucking, the covered basket overturns.

"This isn't a smoking compartment!" she shouts indignantly.

The young man goes out into the corridor to smoke beside the toilets, turns and smiles back at me. I'm not going to do much reading. I'll continue at the hotel. On one of the pages I find a detailed drawing, a hansom-cab with large wheels and a hood, bedecked with flowers. Beneath it, the printed characters read: "Ilka's carriage, after the memorable opening night in December." The young man comes back, sits down.

"You really haven't heard that before? Headshot ... I thought you knew it."

"I didn't. But I worked out meanwhile what it means."

"Or Grand Maxi... that's another way of saying it. It's just a fad." He stares at my hands for some time. "I did my military service in these parts ... two years. I know all the girls. When I meet up with my mates we always have a good time. I wrote them that I was coming this way."

"You said you were a stranger here."

He looks at me embarrassedly.

"Well, it isn't Paris, that's for sure. Of course it's different if you've got a car... I could save up for one, but I'd rather not. In the train I can sleep at least, watch the scenery. Nice scenery, worth more than having to concentrate on driving. And the breathalizing. That's an extra mortal danger."

"What are you saving up for then?"

"Nothing. The money just goes. Under four thousand it does not make sense. For a flat, maybe ... but I've already got one. Two rooms and all mod. cons." He laughs again. "I don't let the wife work. She isn't too happy about these trips either ... Women aren't, as a rule, but there's no other way to earn a bit on the side. Five thousand all in all, say, which means she can sit at home without worrying. But she'd really prefer to have me home nights, dinner together, play with the kids and so to bed, with her. But you can't have it both ways. And military service isn't as bad as they say either. The mates... they count an awful lot. No woman could mean the same to a man."

He turns around, glances back with a cynical expression.

"Those hens stink."

"Do they? I haven't noticed."

"You've got to be kidding."

As he crosses his legs, he nudges my knees, brushes a speck of dust off his trousers.

"Won't you have a smoke? It's alright to smoke outside."

I shake my head. I get up instead and look out of the window. The pane of glass reflects the scene behind me: the compartment, the basket of hens. The young man looks me over assiduously, from my legs up. When I sit back down again there is still something of that persistent gaze left in his eyes. Then he is all helpless ungainliness again. A good ten minutes and the train begins to slow down.

"There'll be someone meeting you, won't there?"

"I think so."

"I'll walk you to your hotel, if you like."

"Thank you, but I don't know where I'll be ..."

He turns at the sound of clucking. Almost everybody in the compartment gets off.

"Can you really not smell them? They're terribly smelly, those hens..."

"It could be something else you're smelling?"

"Could be," he smiles.

My suitcase is small and light, I tell him I can manage by myself. He picks it up and puts it down immediately.

"You're right, it really isn't heavy."

His voice is matter-of-fact, not at all impertinent. He does not help me on with my coat either, pushes politely ahead with his briefcase, calls back from the doorway:

"Follow me... I always go to the best places."

The station is quite dark, the rain has stopped but there is a wind blowing. For some minutes I lose sight of the young man, and cannot see the person supposedly sent to meet me. The station empties quickly. I begin to walk hesitatingly after the crowd. We turn into a winding, deserted street. The young man reappears, takes the suitcase from my hand.

"Let's have a glass of wine together."

"Thank you, but I have to get up early in the morning."

"Albanian cognac isn't so bad... it's all the rage now."

On the other side of the street a woman hugs her coat tighter around her, chilly, obviously, looking for someone.

"I think she's waiting for me," I say, pointing towards her.

He shrugs his shoulders, puts the suitcase down beside a puddle.

"If that's the way you want it," he says, and holds out his hand.

I automatically tell him my name and hold out my hand. He stares at me, a little surprised. He wants to be rid of me as soon as possible, knocks over the suitcase in his haste but does not pick it up. After a couple of steps he turns back.

"We might run into each other in the street you know, even though you're glad to see the back of me!"

I find some sheets of toilet paper in my pocket, wipe the suitcase clean and cross the street.

"You're not waiting for a lecturer from Budapest, are you?"

The woman does not reply. Her eyes are set close to each other, which somehow makes her nose look pointed, sharp.

"No... I'm waiting for my husband."

"Well, that's not me then," I say, laughing.

"Where do you want to go?"

"To either of the hotels... Perhaps the Sió?"

She takes hold of my coat, eyeing the cloth. She seems a little friendlier.

"I'll walk you there."

"Is it far?", I ask.

"No ... No, it isn't. A half-hour's walk."

The banks of the Seine, the Eiffel Tower on her printed scarf. She tries to fall in step with me, taking now shorter, now longer strides.

"I've been waiting for my husband for two days," she says. "And it's been raining all the while. It only stopped an hour ago."

"It was pouring when we left Budapest."

"That's different. I always listen to the weather forecast; they tell you what the weather's like in Budapest but they never say what the weather's like here. My husband sometimes asks and I can't tell him. And my daughter wants to be a meteorologist."

"How old is she?"

"Eleven. She likes that new kind of dance music... She has a Polish penfriend, a boy. They exchange scores. We always know what the weather's like in Cracow. The child likes to know."

A car approaches from the opposite direction, its headlights catching us, and immediately she falls silent. She does not speak until it is dark again.

"He comes home for the weekend... He says he stays in lodgings, but I haven't seen the room yet."

"Where do you work?"

"Here, in the factory... We couldn't get along, on his income. Luckily I've got a good job, one thousand four hundred forints. There's the child, and the flat to keep up... She has lunch in school. How do I know how he lives, up in the city!"

"It can't be easy. There are great distances... a lot of rushing around."

"There are great distances here too."

"One's glad to get home, in the evenings."

"Not alone, though."

"What are you going to do now, then?"

"Go home. I can't stand the waiting, even if it isn't raining. I can't stand stations. Does your husband travel too?"

"No... Not much."

"That's good. Or isn't it?"

As she waits for me to answer we come to a little square. She takes hold of my arm.

"Do meteorologists travel a lot?"

"I don't know... I don't think so."

I'd like to say something, like there's weather everywhere, you don't have to travel for the weather, but I know it would sound silly, a little forced. She points out the hotel to me.

"Why, it was quite close."

"There are distances here too," she says. "This town's big enough, for us."

I thank her for accompanying me but she does not reply. I am alone in the empty square. Opposite the hotel is a church, with a painted statue before it, one of the apostles, if I'm not mistaken. I'm too tired to go over to it and check. The hotel is a modern building which seems a little ostentatious with its neon lighting. At the reception desk I begin by giving the name of the colleague I am standing in for but they cannot find it on the reservation list.

"It doesn't matter... go on up," says the reception clerk, and hands me a key. "There are two ladies in occupation already."

"Is there no single room available?"

"Single bed's what you should have said... But you'll find a spare bed will do just as well."

And he exchanges a significant glance with another young man in uniform. Somehow they seem to remain silent a shade too long. There are just the three of us in the lobby. There is still a strong smell of new plastic, textiles and fresh paint.

"Will you take the room, then?" he asks.

There is a sudden noise. A miniature black dog is coming down the stairs, freezes, stares, then rushes out through the half-open door. I cannot suppress my laughter.

"Is it yours?"

He can barely suppress an oath and all at once you can hear the dialect in his voice.

"Of course not! One of our high-and-mighty guests must have sneaked it in!"

He marches off angrily after the dog while the young man and I start up the stairs. He tries to take my handbag as well as suitcase and blushes when I do not let go of it. Otherwise all his movements are well-rehearsed; his inexperience is in keeping with the smell of fresh paint, textiles and plastic.

"I see there is a lift..."

"Yes. It is being repaired at the moment," he replies.

There are potted palms, flowers, modern curtains, smoking lounges all along the corridors; the carpets are flush with the walls. I slow down.

"I wonder which room the dog came from."

"I have no idea," he says, surprised.

"Did it make you angry too, just now?"

"Yes... we only opened three days ago."

He hurries ahead, opens the door. Does not accept a tip.

"I like dogs," he says, and hurries away.

The room is pleasantly warm; I find myself suddenly sleepy. The beds of my room-mates are still unoccupied. The room has a balcony opening out onto the square. I step out for a look around. The square is still deserted. I do not see the dog either. The church stands out in bold relief against the sky like on a gaudy postcard; beside it stands the presbytery or whatever and a tall plane-tree with a few accented leaves. Then the painted statue. From the balcony I can see the neon installations above the entrance. A gravelled, narrow awning with a jumble of pipes, wires and metal boxes. All open and uncovered: a precise and naked tangle. From the strong light down below only vague, tinted half-light reaches up here. One of the boxes hums softly; there is lemon peel and paper bags amidst the wires. I go back into the room and go to bed without looking around much. I can ask my room-mates where the lecture is to take place when they get in; it is usually people who have come for the same conference that are made to share a room. But for a long time no one comes. I fall asleep. Around two o'clock someone tiptoes in, glances around cautiously, absentmindedly throws the blanket I have kicked off back on. Walks to the door, opens it a crack so as to have a little light to see by. Tactfully does not switch on the overhead lights. Undresses and slips into the bed next to mine. The beds are placed in such a way that our heads are not more than ten centimetres apart. A little later I fall asleep again, and an hour later the scene is repeated. Someone tiptoes in, looks around, leaves the door open, undresses. Holds her panties up to the light, chewing on her nails all the while.

In the morning I am first to awake. I turn over cautiously but not too considerately. They have to wake up too. My neighbour is fat, with very porous skin. She crawls out of bed puffy-faced, looks at me:

"You the new room-mate?" She has a mannish deep voice.

"Come for the conference?"

At that, the other woman turns her head; she is at least ten years younger than either of us. She sits up in her lace nylon nightgown, pretty by provincial standards, and rubs her armpit.

"Why did you get up so early?" she asks.

"I'm the lecturer."

"The lecturer...?"

The younger woman lies down again, goes on rubbing her armpit.

"You just go on back to sleep, we were up until two o'clock last night. There was an announcement that we'd be starting an hour later today."

"That's good, I want to buy some peppers this morning," says the other.

"This morning?"

"When else? Where I come from, there's been a shortage of them, these last six weeks. And we're a mining district, mind you, with our own supermarket. But when I wanted peppers, they looked at me as though I were a foreigner."

The younger one appreciates the joke, jumps up and down on the bed, laughing.

"Can you get yellow peppers in Budapest, Mrs ...?"

I tell them I'd much rather we called each other by our first names. The one in the nylon nightgown is Vera, the deep-voiced one is Irma.

"There are plenty, and cheap..."

Irma sits back on the bed, takes the chamber-pot out of the dressing-table, and puts it back.

"What area you looking for?" I ask.

"Good thing you can pickle them," she says. "I'll get at least five kilos. If someone comes in late, it'll be me with the peppers. Don't look my way, will you?"

"Alright, I won't. But five kilos... that'll make quite a package..."

"I'm going to shop around for shoes," says Vera. "You can get much better shoes here."

Irma makes a disconsolate gesture.

"Shoes! You don't know what you're talking about." She has her hands under the sheet now, looking for something. "I have to get back tonight. My husband went on a two-day shoot, he'll be bringing back pheasants. That's all they ever shoot, pheasants, and I don't even like them."

"But they're good. How do you cook them?"

"In a paprika sauce."

"Try roasting them for a change, larded with bacon... And boar?"

She shrugs again.

"I hate it. My husband hates it too. But when he brings back a boar, I roast it."

"I braise it in red wine... with mustard and pepper."

Vera gets up, pulls off her nightgown, ties it around her waist.

"Where are my panties?" she asks aloud, but it is more of a rhetorical question.

Irma looks at Vera attentively. There is a cross-shaped scar on her bottom.

"I hate the taste of wine in food," she announces. "I hate cooking."

"Cooking game is fine. I love it."

"It's easy for you... but try cooking on a brushwood stove! Not that it matters now, we're moving to Kőszeg soon."

"How come?"

I get up, Irma follows suit. Now there are three of us coming and going in the room. Vera shows us her shoes.

"How do you like these heels?"

"Nice... but don't these shoes pinch your feet?"

"Not much... a little."

Her nightgown is slipping down, she pulls it back in place. Keeps looking at the shoes. Irma is standing by the balcony door. Fresh, moist air is streaming in. There is a loud crash from the corridor, something must have broken. She walks over to the wash-basin.

"Two more years and we'll be moving to Kőszeg. Retiring. And I'll have a gas cooker."

"Why don't you get one now?"

"For two years?"

The wash-basin is placed so high it is impossible to wash feet or any other parts in it. Irma gives up on washing. Vera stands up on a chair, squats over the basin, and leaves the chair in place for me. She pats the basin.

"Can you imagine how many times this is going to be broken? There's sure to be some who'll try and sit in it."

"Why did they put it so high?"

There is a pipe running diagonally across the ceiling, thick as a chimney, plastered over, but it really is a pipe, I heard it gurgle in the night. It is probably a drain-pipe. It has already begun to leak. We look at the wall, searching for damp spots, Vera finds some fresh ones. There is a modern writing-desk beside the wash-stand, it keeps getting splashed, it is already covered with spots. Vera is furious.

"Couldn't they have put in a shower? Or a little vestibule?"

"Kid, they've only just built the place," says Irma.

The furnishings really aren't too comfortable, though the effect is pleasant. The wardrobe, the floor-lamp and the walls are all in tone, and the curtain was chosen to harmonize with them. But the room is over-heated, stupefyingly so. We open the balcony door a little wider. Irma and Vera sit down to write postcards.

"Are you staying?" I ask.

"We promised Márta we'd wait for her here," says Vera.

"Alright. I'm going down to have breakfast."

The corridor is empty. A tall woman comes walking towards me with a folder and some notebooks in her hands. Her legs are conspicuously thick, swollen out of shape, appearing to be squashed into the high-laced boots. I guess that she must be Márta, but do not speak to her, just turn back for a second look as she passes. It so happens that she too picks that moment to turn around.

"Are you in Room 27?" she asks.

"Yes. Vera and Irma are waiting for you."

Her face breaks into a smile.

"Did Vera find her panties?" she asks.

"I think she's got them on," I reply, laughing.

"Good... Last night she got a little fuddled and was going to spend the night in our room."

In the lobby I find the day clerk. He hasn't heard about the dog. I am surprised and a little annoyed that his colleague has not told him about it. I try to go into the restaurant but the doors are closed. In the end I go to the café next door. I learn that it too opened only a couple of days ago. I come upon an acquaintance from Sopron, Erzsi; she is here for the conference too. She jumps up when she catches sight of me. She is plump, but not as fat as Irma. Her hair is freshly done, she spent yesterday morning at the hairdresser's.

"It bores me to go, at home," she says, "but when you're away, it's different. When you're away you can afford to indulge yourself. For once in my life I'll be taken for a lady."

They have only just switched on the espresso machine; there are only a few customers in the café, it is still early. The furnishings are pathetically over-bright, glossy, there are flowers on the tables. At this time of the day, in the morning, even the waitresses seem friendlier, less impersonal. We smile at each other; Erzsi and I have not met for over a year.

"How are you all?"

She pushes the flowers aside, takes my hand.

"My mother broke her arm—you can't have heard about that. Something always happens. I do admire my mother—she's always cooking, but they don't want me to move out. The only time I spent apart from them was the six weeks I was married for. My flat is standing empty, central heating, electric cooker, you know, I let that deaf colleague of mine stay there for a while. And those incessant phone-calls—where was I, what was I doing? Should I say no to them now? They're used to having me around, and I'll be forty soon. I think that's what broke up my marriage."

She falls silent.

"God knows. Perhaps it would have broken up anyway."

I want to fix my hair, at last she lets go of my hand.

"I have to watch my weight," she says, "but in the mornings I allow myself a roll. Come on, let's share something. If I eat a pair of frankfurters I put on about half a pound but if I have just one, it'll be just a treat and perhaps not so fattening."

We eat our frankfurters; she looks up.

"Are you going to be giving a long talk?"

"No... not too long."

"That's good. We're all worn out... we were up until late last night, carousing. We even sang in the streets, but luckily there was no policeman around to stop us." She laughs. "What could he have done with so many tipsy women, anyway? Nursery school teachers—women are always treated differently, have you noticed? I wouldn't mind seeing a male nursery school teacher one of these days. But that subject is taboo. And then, with a nationwide conference... What can a country copper do anyway?"

The girl behind the counter interrupts us.

"Will the lecturer from Budapest go to the hotel... there is a car waiting for her outside!"

I pay quickly, say goodbye.

"We'll be seeing each other again soon, then."

"Sure. Just keep it short!"

She kisses me, hard. She uses East German Kalodent toothpaste.

We are going to the munipical community centre. As it is just a step away from the hotel I find the courtesy of being driven there a trifle extravagant, but the two young girls sitting beside me appear to be enjoying the ride.

"Where are you from?" I ask.

"From the asylum for the deaf and dumb," they say.

"Do you work there?"

"Yes, in the office..." They exchange glances. "But we aren't deaf!"

"I guessed as much." They are sharing something from a paper bag, throwing handfuls of whatever it is into their mouths, I cannot tell what. "What on earth is it that you're eating?" I finally ask, leaning closer for a better look. They burst out laughing. "Chocolate wafers... but we sat on the bag by mistake and squashed them and now they're just crumbs." They do not rest until I agree to have a taste, shake a handful of crumbs into my palm. They are sad when the car stops. The lobby is already full of people waiting for us, milling round in a cluster, administrative staff, nursery teachers, locals, country people. There are hardly any men. The first few minutes are spent on introductions, I do not catch any of the names. They are all in actual fact taken up with each other, with some mix-up in organization, I cannot follow the comments. Through a dusty tall window I look out onto a yellow wall with an artistic spot of damp dribbling down it. Someone sticks a cigarette between my fingers, but she is pulled away. I do not feel like smoking. A new round of introductions, several people kiss me on the cheek. I put the cigarette unobtrusively on a window sill. A little further back, aside, stands a young man in a black suit, claret shirt and yellow tie. He walks over to the flower-stand, flicks the air-root of a philodendron lightly. A member of the administrative staff shoves a huge sheaf of paper—the programme of the conference ending today—into my hands. I flip the pages, curious about preceding lectures. In the meanwhile I take advantage of the opportunity of being left alone and open the door of the auditorium. A stage with draperies, brand-new furniture, concealed lights, a table up on the stage, two bottles of mineral water, glasses. Around it, chairs with op-art covers. Facing the stage, a huge gallery. I am a little disconcerted. There are wires along the walls; a young man assures me that there will be a microphone at my disposal. Four people come looking for me, I am to go to the office. "What office?" "Never you mind!" We hurry up a service staircase. The office is full of smoke, stifling, people are sitting on tables. We are given coffee, biscuits, apricot brandy. The young man in the claret shirt is there. As far as I can tell he is not speaking to anyone, he tops up his coffee with apricot brandy. The telephone rings. "A trunk call! They want the lecturer from the ministry!" A short woman in glasses takes the receiver, a batik

scarf around her neck. For a moment the room falls silent, then everyone begins to speak again. They are arguing about the subject of my lecture. "You are a stand-in after all... What would you like to talk about?" By the time we have come to an agreement, the medical secretary suggests something different. The trunk-call is over, we all fall silent again. The woman from the ministry decides I should stick to the subject given in the programme. "Right... how long should it be? Forty-five minutes?" No, that's too long... I need time to close the conference," she says. "There's always a rush on Saturdays. They all have families waiting, back home." "Whatever you wish... just give a signal when you want me to stop." We begin to crowd towards the auditorium. At the door someone hands me another glass of brandy. I drink it quickly. Shudder. Go up on stage. Only the first six rows are occupied, half of the participants did not show up today. I begin haltingly, try to concentrate. In the gallery, two children are reading magazines, you can hear the paper rustling from below. Irma arrives a good ten minutes late with the peppers. I see a familiar face, a face I know from Budapest, we had met at an exhibition opening. Renata something, I think. Vera is here too. Erzsébet is sitting in the first row holding a roll wrapped in tissue paper. At first I touch upon general problems, then go on to questions of minor detail. "The slackening of family ties, which is a world-wide phenomenon, means a particularly supplementary role for nursery school teachers..." I list concrete, illustrative cases, educational techniques. And watch the local bosses' faces; no one makes a sign, though I have been speaking for over thirty minutes. I add another eight and finish. There is much clapping; Irma drops her bag of peppers but only a few roll away. I make way for the woman with the green scarf. "You were great," come the whispers from behind. "Are you coming to the Asylum, after...?" "Where?" I ask, also in a whisper. The woman from the ministry is trying to keep it short, but loses the thread of what she is trying to say, ties and reties her scarf as she speaks. She too gets a round of applause. In the back rows some people stand up, then sit back down again. Someone from the county closes the conference, a burly giant of a man. His speech is articulate, didactic, he bridges over the pauses using the same suggestive smile. We clap for a long time, standing. Then everyone mills round again. I stay in my seat. The secretary signals to me to come to the office. Renata walks up from behind, hugs me tempestuously. "Do you recognize me?" "Of course." "It was a wonderful six days," she says, speaking quickly, "It's just that we're all worn out. It's a pity you didn't come sooner. Do you know what's next on the agenda?" "No, I really... perhaps the Asylum...?" "What?", she says, clutching her necklace. She looks around irresolutely. Leans closer. "We have to get together in Budapest... There's a new crowd... poets, painters, a couple of engineers and chemists..." She laughs. "They've served over forty years in prison between them, and not one of them is a reactionary!" Irma joins us, we look at her pepper. "That was a very good speech," she says. "I understood everything even though I missed the beginning." Then the man from the county comes over to congratulate me. "Will there be something over at the Asylum, do you know?" I ask. He wipes his forehead, sniffs at his handkerchief. "I'm afraid I don't. It is quite by

chance that I made it here at all— I am expected at the court of arbitration and conciliation." Renata makes a face and moves away, Irma stops to chat. A young, slender woman takes my arm, excuses herself for interrupting. "Have you had any experience with deaf-mutes?" "No... have you?" "I thought you were going to lecture there too." "Why, are we to go over to the Asylum after all?" "Please wait here while I find out..." And threads her way persistently through the crowd. I go out into the lobby, where I learn that we are to visit a model nursery school nearby. "Why do you look so surprised?" asks the secretary. There is a cataract beginning on one of her eyes. "It's just that I thought we were going to the Asylum..." "There was never any question of that," she says and hurries off in the direction of the toilets. Everyone has put on their coat, Irma is squatting behind the counter, wrapping her bag of peppers in a Woman's Day poster. We troop out into the street tumultously, blocking the road. "Where are we to go now?," cries Vera. "The nursery school?" I hold out my hands, palms up, to show her that I don't know. "Did you find them?" "What?" she says uncomprehending. I don't want to say the word out loud, shrug. "Márta was afraid that you'd lost them..." "My panties?" Then we hear the clapping—coming from a woman with a starched kerchief from the nursery school. The secretary leads me over to her, introduces us. "I've heard of you," she says, and hugs me. Suddenly I realize there is something missing. My umbrella. The secretary offers to fetch it for me, but I refuse. "You won't be able to find it, I'm an expert at losing things." "Alright, we'll be on our way then," says the woman in the starched kerchief. "First street to your left, you can't miss it..." And we smile again. The lobby is empty. It is hard to believe that there was such a tumult here just a few minutes ago. Absentmindedly I begin to read an article pinned up on a bulletin-board. I hear steps. The young man in the yellow neck-tie is coming down the stairs, treading softly, but the lobby still reverberates with the sound of his footsteps. He stops beside me, stiffly polite. "Aren't you coming to the model nursery school?" I ask. He shakes his head, traces precise, figurative signs with his hand in the air. That is when I realize he is a deaf-mute. "At first we were to go to the Asylum..." I say awkwardly. For a moment he is silent, then answers with his hands, as if he were certain that I understood sign-language. We stand, ill at ease. At last he bows and walks up another staircase. He watches from the landing as I walk out with my umbrella. There is no one waiting for me outside.

Towards five o'clock I dash out to the station. Vera and Irma had taken an earlier train. It is raining again. A strong wind is blowing. I trudge along the street we walked along the previous evening with the meteorologist-to-be's mother. Uncle Ernő is interested in the weather too. He describes at length the haze–free air of Egypt in his diary, the fluctuations of temperature. They had even been to see the Sahara. "The pyramids," he writes, "made no particular impression on me. They are not so much monumental as coarsely made, rough-hewn. But the Sphinx was a unique experience. The idea of having it stare out into the desert is unique." At the station I find the information booth closed. There is a slip of paper outside with the words: "The cloak-room is opposite."

I walk over to it. A thick-set man is leaning on the counter, not looking anybody in the face, and this somehow makes him look less intelligent. At first he does not seem to hear me. "Can I change trains for Szilas from here?" "If they issue you a ticket you can. Go to the booking office." "Why... can I or can't I? Aren't you sure?" "Yes! You can change trains." He is annoyed at my asking again to make sure, wipes the counter with a cloth, and leans on it again. The ticket is issued without a word. There is a rubber bandage around the cashier's wrist and a bit of sponge around her finger. The life and accident insurance stamp falls off my ticket for the second time. "Never mind, it isn't all that important..." I say, sticking my head in at the window. "But I've already charged you forty fillérs for it!" And wets the stamp for the third time. Finally she taps it with the handle of the rubber stamp, but still it refuses to stick. "Don't hold up the line!", people shout from the end of the queue. Everyone is drenched, irritable, the stamp falls to the floor. I leave it there. I hurry out to the platform. I ask directions from several ticket-inspectors, in vain; in the end a fireman leads me to the right platform, leading the way between two sets of carriages. The engine is already in place, two coaches, this'll be the train for Budapest. There is no heating yet, the carriages are dark. I sit down, shivering, in an empty compartment. On the platform beside ours stands a train that is lighted up. There are many children, a man in shirt-sleeves, his braces cutting into the flesh of his shoulders, a handkerchief stuck beneath one of the braces. An elderly couple is eating a chicken from a shoe-box, putting the bones on the lid. A little girl sitting opposite keeps reaching out for the bones, the woman pulls the lid out of her reach, smiling. They give the child half a gherkin. Beside them two angular women are knitting engrossed, a peasant skirt rolled up into a sausage hangs down from above their heads. In my compartment the radiator begins to rattle; outside a cloud of steam rises, whipped and torn by the wind. The lighted-up carriages begin to move. As the last car passes us the cloud of steam hangs in the air for a moment longer, then is caught up and snatched away. That is when I catch sight of them. Renata and at least ten others, standing with their suitcases on the other side of the tracks. It takes them some time to recognize me in the dark behind the unlighted window. "How come... that you're here already?" Renata runs ahead; she seems to be a little tipsy. "What a piece of junk! It'll fall apart by the time we reach Pest!" Some of the others catch up with her, all wearing identical black wellies, shiny black, like freshly dried shellac. Then they charge the steps. There are plenty of empty compartments but they all flock into mine. At last everyone is seated, on suitcases, crushed against each other, grateful that I saved them a place. Renata pulls out an opened bottle of plum brandy from her bag and they hand it round. "There's plenty where that came from, girls!" My neighbour breathes into my face, sucking her teeth. "Are you coming up to Budapest too?" In the hubbub of voices she doesn't catch my reply, everyone is talking all at once. "No... I'm going to visit my aunt first." "Who?" Someone cries out, sharply: "Jesus, there's no heating in here!" They all fall silent, as though total silence were necessary to be able to feel the cold.

"Every hole'll be frozen over in her," says Renata. My neighbour shrugs. "You were lucky you didn't come to the restaurant. In the end they dragged us off to the Asylum." "So you did go, after all," I say, a little envious. Meanwhile, the train pulls out of the station, unnoticed. It takes some time for the noise to abate. Some of them fall asleep. A couple begin to play a game: relating a story—some kind of police communiqué—in various ways. For a while I try to pay attention, then fall asleep. I wake up at Dombóvár. The others say we have been standing for a good half hour; they uncoupled our engine but first shunted us on to a siding. It is unpleasantly cold. We cannot see the station, just a stack of barrels. Later, a shunter comes to a stop beside us, they are firing it now. There are hardly any new passengers. They are all waiting for the express in the warmth of the railway restaurant, most likely. We stay where we are. There is a general feeling—engendered by Renata—that it is better not to move so at least we'll stay together, in one compartment. Every time they open the boiler door our faces are sharply lit up by the ruddy glow. Someone pulls down the window, five heads lean out all at once. I am crushed into a corner, surrounded by hips and thighs, a wired bra presses against my mouth. I slip down in my seat. There is some light filtering in beneath two armpits. I can just make out the opposite seat. Renata is staring ahead of her, limply, emptily, her face framed by the armpits. I reach out towards her with my umbrella, she catches hold of the tip, startled. Her face comes to life, her eyes begin to focus. "Do you know Attila Bódi?" she asks. "Bódi?... No... Never heard of him." In the dark I lose sight of Renata's face. I would like to adjust my suspender-belt but I cannot reach it. I try to concentrate on the slight pain the fastener is causing me. Not really a pain at all—something akin to what a point of intersection might feel. But it serves to isolate me a little. And I begin to doze again. I wake up with a start at the sound of shrill laughter and a loud rumble. "Why, would you know how to handle deaf-mutes?" asks my neighbour, leaning into my face. Renata looks out of the window, standing up on her seat. "That's the express for Pécs, girls! Coming to the restaurant?" Then squats down all of a sudden, presses her hand to her stomach, and sits back down again. All of a sudden I feel I have somehow lost my bearings. Everyone is jumping up, stretching, voices raised in excitement resound in the corridor. We are shunted on to another track and coupled to the express. This impatient haste seems almost ludicrous; it is as if they were trying to rectify an error instead of us. At all events we are all adrift outside, except Renata. At the last moment she stayed behind, with two others, we do not know why. Renata likes to play-act, they say, but perhaps this time it's simply that she's getting her period. We elbow our way through packed compartments. The restaurant is crowded too; the crew table is the only one left untaken. Here we learn that on its way down from Pest this morning the train ran over a cow at Rétszilas. The cow was thrown across the engine-housing, everything was blood all over, and this shocked the driver to the extent that he was unable to continue. In the end an old steam-engine was coupled onto the train and took it to Pécs. They've got the right engine recoupled now but so far have not been able to make up for

the time lost. I begin to worry about catching my train to Szilas. Erzsi and her crowd order tea and bacon scrambled eggs. It turns out there is no tea to be had, they did not take enough water on board at Pécs. "Surely, there's enough water to make tea with?" The waiter smiles. "The water at Pécs is very bad. Even the newspapers have written about it." His reply irritates them, all their happy good humour is gone. They all order mineral water, ostentatiously, and cancel the scrambled eggs. They begin relating detailed accounts of hushed-up scandals. "They know the ropes, kid. They can foist anything they want on you..." "What about the wine-bottle scandal, then? They got half a decilitre out of every bottle..." "Who did?" "How do you mean, who? *Them.*" The subject came up at the right moment, they can give went to their irritation. "Why, you ever hear anyone say *WE?* Only the bosses ever say *WE.*" In the end none of them leaves a tip. On our way back we run into the ticket-inspector, and I ask him about changing trains to Szilas again. He reassures me that the passenger train to Szilas will wait for us at Alsó-Varasd. When we walk into the compartment we find Renata and the two others huddled up with their heads together; Renata is reading them Attila Bódi poems from a notebook. I am surprised at the hushed, reverent awe with which they are listening to her. We all sit down in silence, all turning our eyes away, looking somewhere into the distance. "Who is this Bódi?," asks Erzsi quietly. Renata does not answer, goes on turning the pages, absorbed. "He's a fantastic person," she says later. "We should visit his studio sometime. You've never seen such a hovel in your life... And on top of it all there are four kids and a hermaphrodite dog." This makes them all laugh a little. "A what?... I never even knew there was such a thing." "I didn't know either... that was my first time too," says Renata. "They examined it several times at the Veterinary College." While we dig out my suitcase we make a date to visit him together. I dare not admit that I am just as interested in the hermaphroditic dog. Then I say goodbye to everyone, kiss them all in turn. The train is just slowing down as I walk along the corridor and reach the door. Someone else is getting down too, from the carriage next to ours, but jumps back at the last moment.

For the Greater Glory of God

Father Mihály Godó S. J. talks about his life to Ágnes T. Katona

Father Mihály Godó, who is seventy-seven, lives in Pankota, in the western marches of Transylvania. During the communist dictatorship he spent twenty years in Rumanian prisons. He was a patient in the Budakeszi T. B. Sanatorium in Budapest for several months.

We met by chance, with no assistance from the press office of his order or any other official church organization. His robust mind—in what had once been an equally robust body—moved me. I felt I had to show him to others. If only there were many more to bear such witness in hard times! It would be good to discover in ourselves an attraction for such a life given to God.

Father Godó, in the true Jesuit manner, wanted to take his secrets, his torments, his unbroken spirit with him, unnoticed, leaving no mark. I am grateful to him for speaking up nevertheless.

Á. T. K.

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I never wanted to talk about myself: a Jesuit wants to live and die like a dog by the roadside, unknown to the world. This is what we dream of, because Christ is our all and Good Friday our example. I never wanted to be a martyr: martyrdom is one of the greatest of graces which God gives to those He favours. But it occurred to me that a prophet in the Old Testament warned of the slumbering dumb dogs. I thought to myself, this applied to me. There was no need to become a martyr—it would not be right to ask God for this—but I could well be a dog. And then I said to the Lord: "Lord, I want to be just the dog of a man with a fine bit of land: I'd bark my head off at anyone wanting to come near the house or do harm to our people. But I ask you, Lord, to give unto me what you give even to the fiercest of all dogs: faith in You." I never wanted to brag about my life to the world. But now I think it would be false modesty to keep silent. So I am speaking and telling you about everything as it was.

All my life I've wished to see Hungarians and Rumanians come closer to each other because both nations will perish if they don't become reconciled. Why can't Hungarians and Rumanians be reconciled just like the French, the Germans, the Portuguese, the Spanish, and the Austrians made their peace and are now creating a happy Europe? After all, we were born here; our forefathers are buried here.

Looking back on my life I can say I've gone through a lot, I've suffered much, but never, even for a moment, have I despaired. Even when I collapsed

during those interrogations I always felt God by my side. I feel God by my side although I know I'm not worthy of it.

All of the Catholic Church in Rumania fought for freedom after 1945. When the State was unable to do anything against us, they used force. Bishops were arrested and jailed. Not one bishop in Rumania remained free. They rounded up the cream of the clergy and all the members of the hierarchy. They left Bishop Márton to the end. That was the wonder of wonders since he fought the hardest, he was our example, he was our everything, the light of our eyes.

What did I, what could I, do then? I went on with my work. I held my missions in the larger churches and cathedrals. I preached that life for our people was faith in God. If we were to be torn away from God, then we were condemned to death. I spoke openly: watch out, God's maddest foe is communism, which seeks to annihilate the Church. Look what happened to the bishops. This is the way I spoke and wrote. The clergy held together like a granite rock. Yet they collected a few priests in Gyulafehérvár and wanted to establish something like a communist church there. We fought bitterly against this so-called religious centre, which they said was Catholic, while the local bishop was in jail. Sixty-four people—priests, nuns, laymen, ladies, girls—were copying my pamphlets and flooding Transylvania with them. The communists didn't even have the time to draw breath.

Then we and the Franciscans were rounded up. They were sent to Dézs, we were taken to Szamosújvár. The two places were only 12 kilometres apart. These two great orders, in their entirety, were there, almost side by side. The faithful surrounded the house. We slept there hugger-mugger like soldiers on active service. On my way out next morning I met the Securitate man, that demi-god, and he says "Look, here's a litre of altar wine for you to say mass here in the church." I say, "Listen, my good fellow, do you think we will play a foul trick on God and his church? You give me this wine for mass? How dare you, you atheist! Where are the Franciscan fathers? They alone have the right to say mass in this church; we won't even set a foot into this place." He almost tore me to pieces. The faithful stood at the back. And so there was no mass and this caused a great stir. I said to the Secu man: "If you don't believe in God, how is it you speak for His cause? What sort of an atheist are you?" You see, I could be impertinent, so when they felt the cup was well and truly filled, they stood me in front of a firing squad, and they were right, I'd asked for it.

There was not one "peace-priest" in Transylvania; everybody was in fear of us. I wrote a memorandum, with some help from lawyer friends. It said that there would be no communist Catholic Church in Rumania. The memorandum stirred the priesthood deeply and then a wave of arrests came. Of course, I was taken first, then our Provincial. Fifty of them came to arrest me, they thought I carried a gun. I was taken to Bucharest, where my own small calvary began. They wanted the names of my collaborators. I remembered how moving it had been to see all those young people, priests, nuns, girls and boys do that staggering amount of work for us. Should I be the one to inform on my dearest brethren?

They knew I'd had something to do with that famous circular.They wanted to find out the names of those who had worked with me, but I didn't give any of them away. That wasn't the real problem, the real problem was that I was impertinent to them. I told them they had no right even to ask me questions, so I would refuse to answer. Then they punished me. For a year. On the night of the second or third of March they carried me out to see my beloved superior, our Provincial, for the last time. That was when I went on hunger strike. I went right to it, I didn't eat anything for 21 days. Not that I was afraid of torture or punishment: I was afraid they'd give me an injection; I'd heard that it would reveal my guilty conscience, unplug my will and I'd let out all I had in my memory. Now, I was keeping secrets! Confessional secrets and others related to the Church. At the time I was the liaison between the Prince Primate of Hungary Cardinal Mindszenty, and Bishop Márton. I thought I'd wear myself down so badly that the injection would kill me. They brought along the Provincial and asked him if a Catholic priest was allowed to go on hunger strike. He said no. He told me to bear all the sufferings. But I explained that even saints flung themselves into fire or on nettles and fasted and risked their lives.

When I heard that our Provincial had died—the ultimate grace in our faith—that doubled my strength to resist interrogation. While I was being led up, I was saying the Veni Sancte, and on my way back, the Te Deum. I prayed silently during the sessions. Once they realized what I was doing, they were really angry. "You know very well", I said, "I won't betray the Church, after all, what kind of priest would tell on his companions?" Then one day all life ran out of these wretched legs of mine. The Securitate men held me by the arm like a bridegroom, then they put an ugly pair of glasses over my eyes, like the ones pilots wear, blue of course, to prevent me seeing right or left. They led me by the arms so that I didn't fall. I started to walk and I suddendly fell onto the floor, onto the concrete. They started whispering among themselves, picked me up and carried me off.

I'd never had it so good: they actually carried me in their arms all the way to the interrogation chamber. There were two things the communists were afraid of. One was the hunger strike, the other was that someone might die on them. No one was allowed to die, unless they tortured someone to death, if those were their orders. So, there I was, sitting in the same room with all those bigwigs, the chief medical officer, the commander and the political officer. "What's wrong with you, Father?" I said, "Nothing, I'm fine." "Not so fine", the doctor said and asked me to strip to the waist. That was all. Then they led me away on my own two feet. In the room they told me to lie down. But there was no bed. Anyway, the worst of all torments was sitting on the edge of an iron bed. I was in a blue funk within the hour.

At other times they punished me by not giving me a second of sleep. They took me away for interrogation at ten in the evening and brought me back at five in the morning. I heard the jailers bang at the doors, they were just waking the other prisoners, and then... I was not allowed to sleep at all, so I just crouched on the bed. I put one foot over the other and sat there from five in

He Was Our Example

Bishop Áron Márton (1896-1960)

There are four Roman Catholic dioceses in Transylvania, the Banat and the eastern Great Plain which were allotted to Rumania by the Peace of Trianon in 1920: Szatmár, Nagyvárad, Temesvár and Gyulafehérvár (Transylvania). That of Transylvania, with Gyulafehérvár as its seat, is the largest and oldest. Saint Stephen the King founded it around 1009, and its faithful number close to 600,000, as many as those of the other three dioceses taken together. (There are around 800, 000 Protestant and Unitarian Hungarians in Rumania). Ninety per cent of the Catholics in the diocese of Transylvania are Hungarians, the remainder are of German, Polish or Slovak origin.

Áron Márton's family were Székely peasants. He was commissioned in the Great War and was much liked by his men. In 1920, two years after demobilization, he started to study theology. He was ordained in 1924, proving himself an outstanding preacher and writer on religious subjects. His primary concern was the education of young people. He was barely forty-two when he became the administrator of his diocese, and was consecrated bishop on February 12th, 1939. As a diocesan bishop he placed special stress on the life of faith but he was mindful of outside threats to his flock as well. He always defended all those who were persecuted, whether they were members of his flock or not. The Second Vienna Award in 1940 divided Transylvania in two, returning the northern part to Hungary. Bishop Márton stayed on in his seat, Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia) which remained in Rumania, although the great majority of his flock were in territories allotted to Hungary. In May 1944, when Hungary—occupied then by the Nazis—prepared to deport the Jews—Bishop Márton's protests were loud and clear. Following a sermon in St Michael's, Kolozsvár, Bishop Márton was expelled from Hungary as a result of Gestapo pressure and was thus unable to visit the greater part of his diocese.

He showed as much determination in the defence of the Hungarian minority in Rumania after the war as well, and also in support of the Greek-Catholic (Uniate) Rumanians, persecuted after 1948.

He was arrested in June 1949. A show trial proved an impossibility since he was unwilling to collaborate by pleading guilty to trumped up charges. They were unable to break him. Not even screw-down handcuffs, tightened to make his hands swell, and kept on for days on end, made him give in. After six years of prison and eleven years of house arrest, he was once again able to exercise his office from 1967 to the spring of 1980, when the Pope, in view of his serious illness, relieved him of his duties. He died on September 29th that year.

Ever firm when dealing with the authorities, Bishop Márton was always modest and humble in his contacts with simple fok.

At one time, in prison, he was moved into a cell with murderers, in the expectation that he would be beaten up. The white haired bishop looked around the filthy and smelly cell, asked for water and a rag, and washed the floor. The "boss" of the cell—a multiple murderer—took his coat off, and placed it on his bunk. "Do sit down," he asked Bishop Márton, and then turned to the others. "Anyone who dares touch him, has had it."

Bishop Márton's beatification is in process.

Sándor Fodor

the morning to ten at night. Then they stopped questioning me because they saw it would obviously kill me. One day—it was the twenty-third of August, a great holiday for the Rumanians—they said, "you have a bed now," and I thought I was going to faint with joy. I suddenly forgot about it all, that I was in prison, after all those sufferings, I stretched myself full length over the bed like a frog and, believe me, I slept like I'd never slept in my life.

During the interrogations that followed I was twice kicked out of the room. My lawyer allegedly defended me, that was a lie. He said to the judge: "Your honour, please be considerate with Godó: he is insane, he's ill, a fanatic; look, I have his entire file here in my hand and it says that he knows everything but refuses to answer. We don't even have the right to ask him." When they said something about the Vatican the blood rushed to my head. A Jesuit will never let anyone touch the Pope, his bishop or his parish priest. The three are sacred to us, we hold them precious, these three; we are taught to care for the church. There is a beautiful meditation about us Jesuits: we like to say that we give our whole existence to God through the Church. You know what I did? It wasn't nice, it was an animal rage, a peasant rage that seized me. I said: "Mister counsel, do you know what I think of you? You are an uneducated and dishonest person! You want to defend me, is this what you call defence?" Then they kicked me out of the room again; I almost rolled down the stairs. And got another prison term.

Jilava is a huge defence system with three protective belts around it, a masterpiece of Charles I, whose memory is still cherished by the Rumanians. It is all underground, there is nothing of it you could see on the surface. They threw me into a cell—it was cold in late October. My first breakfast was *tercs,* which is like corn pone but sweet. I tell you, I almost licked the glazing off the plate, I was that hungry. All of us priests were in cell 13. That's where my road to Golgotha began.

I was taken to Nagyvárad. They asked me, "Can you see any savage religious persecution around here?" I gave them a list: Bishop Boga is dead, Bishop Matzalik is dead, Bishop János Scheffer died in room 8 where I was. Bishop Aftenie was beaten to death with a chair in the Ministry of the Interior, isn't that enough for bloody religious persecution? The lawyer was very kind, they stopped the whole thing. We were sent off. Nothing happened. The nuns were sent home and I was taken back to prison. (Interestingly enough, the rank and file soldiers and the jailers treated me with respect. They once saw a nurse hand 150 cigarettes to me—a real fortune, you see— and they said nothing. I hid them, took them away, smoked them and gave them away. I never saw these again. A fellow-prisoner slapped me on the leg and said, all right, Miska, we're going home. And they got us both again all the same. He did seven years rather than lie and it would have been just a little lie. Went to prison rather than lie. He was a wonderful man. He is buried in the Nagymajtény churchyard. The priests in Szatmár county were all good men, yet my deepest respect goes to the Székely priests in Transylvania. It was said I would be transferred to a lead

mine. I was happy because a lead mine was every political prisoner's dream. You were taken deep down, it was 20 degrees Centigrade down there, brimstone was dripping, it did burn you a little bit, but that's part of prison life. Then, after working eight hours, you were brought to the surface and given as much jam as you asked for. We got some bread and other food. They didn't give us any money, that went to the state, but we got food, the kind of filling miners get, and what else did we need? It was a grand life.

One day they came along in a flashy, elegant Volga, with rugs on the seats as if for a minister, and they motioned me to get in. I was afraid of the communists when they treated me in style. That was always a bad omen. He says, "Off we go". He had a gun in his hand, who would have risked running for it, and we drove over the Királyhágó saddle. The mountains were splendid. Over in Kolozsvár they put me in a prison run by the Securitate, from the frying pan into the fire. It was even worse there. They locked me up in cell 1. It was a solitary with two planks over a pair of trestles and a concrete floor. They poured three or four bucketfuls of water in there and made me stand in it as a punishment. I somehow got through the night. I got up in the morning and they told me to sign a paper. But my signature would have sent 16 people to jail. So I said I didn't know any of them. They didn't dare to beat me, it was forbidden. They took me back to my cell, I just sat there, but I was happy because I knew it was important. I held sixteen lives in my hand.

A week later they took me upstairs again. I didn't know that the minister in charge of the Securitate wanted to see me. He had come on various affairs, including my own questioning. He asked me why I wouldn't speak and sign the judicial record. I said even the worst crook wouldn't betray his companions, and if they were to take me to court, I would cause trouble. What business of yours are these poor priests and the Catholic Church? Did the people bestow power on you only to be deprived of faith, their sacred treasure? In whose name are you doing all this? Who's given you the right to teach that there is no God when you haven't the faintest idea about either theology or philosophy? When it's about fertilizers, it's the minister of industry's turn to do the lecturing; when it's about God, about faith, the weightiest of all disciplines, how come the lecturing is done by someone who hasn't the faintest idea about it?

Finally the minister left. He was a distinguished man and well spoken. That lad of a lieutenant said: "Do you know who he was?" Well, I didn't know.

I was then transferred to Moldavia. That was the sanctuary of suffering. It is the most precious memory of my life. I lived alone in a tiny little cell for almost eight years. I didn't meet a single soul, I didn't even know that my father had died. You wouldn't believe how awful the food was. We were given 250 grammes of bread in the morning with a dollop of jam, then a pannikin of thin sour soup for lunch, nothing else. I once drank all of it out of curiousity and found a piece of potato at the bottom. We had the same in the evening, without the potato. We didn't get beans very often but when we did, it was one third bean, two-thirds boiled parsley. So that was lunch and dinner.

We were ridiculously thin. We couldn't sleep and we couldn't put our legs together. We put a piece of cloth between our legs to prevent chafing.

It can get terribly cold in Moldavia. Once the North Easterly blew for 14 nights and 13 days on end. When I stood in the middle of my cell, the wind spat splinters of snow in my face. It happened more than once. Cold and hunger made me understand Dante. I hadn't understood before why—in the last circle—he mentions cold to depict the greatest suffering. Lucifer tearing souls apart over a frozen lake. Cold can give you great pain. Real cold is more than what seizes your hand when you're chilled. There's a special kind of cold that penetrates the bones on every breath you take. There are no words to describe it.

It all changed for the worse when the Hungarian Revolution broke out in 1956. They made us small seats. We had to sit on them from 5 in the morning to 10 at night. We were not allowed to sit on the edge of the softer beds; we had to sit on this small bench. You can imagine the agony: we were all skin and bones. Had they asked me in wintertime to choose between one day of this and a bullet in my skull, I would have chosen the bullet if that weren't against God's will.

One day I smelt sweat floating into my cell. I heard the rattle of chains. Some new prisoners had arrived and the duty officer made them dump their bundles in the centre. There was a small hole in the door—it was a thick oaken door. It was beautiful on the inside: over the years the prisoners had pierced a hole in it with needles or whatever to get a peep outside. The newcomers were neatly led off to their cells in twos, their chains taken off. Suddenly the door opened—first I heard them fumble with the keys. On such occasions you rushed and stood with your face to the wall. So I heard the rattle, I turned and saw the first man in my room in six years. But no, someone motioned from below, and he was led off, they took my companion away. I don't even know who he was. the door shut and I was alone. They were in twos in all the other cells. It was a very strict prison. I once looked through the hole and there were seven prisoners inside and fifty-five jailers. It took so many to guard us.

I knew something about the prisoners' Morse code when I arrived in that horrible place. It helped me to do a lot of good. The man on the floor above me—heros like him are rare in the history of the world. You can't praise him too much. He was beaten, he was punished every week, still he kept up people's spirits by sending them messages. I kept what little I knew to myself; I was too shy to begin with, but I slowly mastered the code by myself. After saying my prayers, I practiced on my knees. A year later I did it so well that I was able to cough in code in the yard. It was moving to hear it reverberate all over the prison; they knew I was a Catholic priest but I didn't know their language. So I told them in code that I'd been there six years, a Jesuit condemned to sixteen years, had been twice on death row, so hold out all of you. It was Easter and they knew they'd be punished severely if they were to cough out in code that Christ had risen, but they all coughed it out. That, you know, was a sacrifice greater than death. Slowly, sweetly, I found my way into the system and learnt who was in which cell.

Some time later my bronchitis returned, as good luck would have it. Because God can turn trials to advantage. I was unable to cough a line, only a dot: I said I would only cough out the dots, "e" would be one dot, "i" would two, "o" would be three dots, while the rest would be conveyed by spitting, blowing my nose or clearing my throat—that would mean a line. The prisoners took it very kindly and we carried on with this kind of communication. And how lucky we were, as they put an informer in among us. I noticed morsels of curd on his tin bowl and I knew right away that he was a dangerous informer. I then coughed it out to the others—you see, they couldn't catch me—"Be careful, there's an informer in the priest's cell". But they didn't bother and the code went on as usual. When a man in the next cell was dying, I used the cough-code to prepare him.

Later on they punished everybody who used the code. They emptied their rooms of everything including the beds. It was so bad, you can't imagine. They received 250 grammes of bread and a bowl of barley porrige every other day. Hunger, cold and they couldn't go to bed. In the evenings they were given a plank or two to lie down on. It hurts to talk about it. We were lucky that that scoundrel couldn't get me. My neighbour said he'd been badly beaten three times—he used his nails to tap it over to us. In the evening—and this was the last station of our sufferings there—we made rosary beads from soap, bits of bread and threads pulled from mattresses. Between decades of the Rosary I coughed out one word. You get it, one word after a decade, but only one.

One night an insane boy was brought in. He kept jumping off his bed, and kicked the door. He swore at the communists, the prison warden and everyone else. They took his last two cigarettes, it was forbidden to smoke in there. He swore for a whole day, then he fell silent. They'd given him an injection, which calmed him down and on the fourth day he began chanting the Lord's Prayer. He must have been a cantor, he sang so beautifully. From morning to noon, and from one until ten at night he sang the Pater Noster continuously. It lifted people's hearts in that chilling cold prison. The jailers were going mad; they couldn't beat him since he was crazy. This is one of my pleasant memories.

There was another touching story I'll never forget. Before he died, one of the prisoners tapped me a message, saying there was only one nation of character in Europe, the Hungarians, and only one church carried the divine mark on its brow, the Roman Catholic Church. Then he died. There were many conversions, the Catholic Church gained much by them. And that was because they jailed the bishops, the best of us. Two hundred and fifty thousand people were in prison at that time. Those people ate the same barley porridge, slept on the same mattresses and they all had mice running across their chests at night (they slept on concrete floors) and died in the same way. The prisoners met the élite of the Catholic clergy. There were quarrels if a ward had to do without a priest. We were as much in demand as a pretty girl at a dance. Many of them turned Catholic then. Our church took many over from the Orthodox crowds. There were many political prisoners from villages, who found themselves in a cell with a priest, and they got to know him and so it helped to ease hostility a great deal.

They let me out eventually, but I didn't want to leave. But this happened quite recently: in fact, I was jailed a second and a third time; that's when it happened. You know, I had a big mouth. I told the faithful in Herkulesfürdő to write down their grievances, collect the slips in a box, I would make a summary of them and answer just as I would standing before the Lord. And that's what I did. The authorities didn't like it because I lashed out occasionally. I didn't say communist swine, that is simply untrue. I avoided terms like that. But I did make jokes on other matters. Prophetic similes that the prophets themselves would have frowned at. One night ten colonels came along. They searched through everything, knocked out the mosaic in the church (I was then in charge of four churches 51 kilometres apart; they searched every place through and through.).

The second time another ten colonels arrived from Bucharest. When they came for the third time, they found nothing serious again. I said: "Gentlemen, I'm fed up with your visits, here's the key, and I'll put it down in writing that I wish to be arrested." In such a case the person must be arrested: it's called self-denunciation. They didn't want to at first, but then they took me up to Bucharest. Of course, this was in Ceausescu's time; prison life was quite different in 1979. Earlier on, political prisoners were treated as beasts, but now we had salami and small mounds of cheese in the cell. Which I shared with 41 murderers. Of all prisoners I liked them the best. They played chess in their free time, and if one was hungry then another gave him a piece of bread. They somehow got word of all that I'd been through. I received a lot of parcels which I distributed among them. Believe me, that was the best time in my life. I wouldn't let them do the cleaning on weekdays, when they had to go to work. I didn't have to because I was over sixty. All week, my room was as clean as a glass. They just came back and went to bed. We almost had a fight on Sundays, when they wouldn't let me do any work and they did the cleaning. I held services for them, but without hymns. I talked to them about God. This political system sought to kill man's desire for the supernatural, and that is what I hoped to revive in them. Those murderers made beautiful confessions. And that jailer, my! I'm sure God has pardoned his sins. I asked for an audience and told them I wished to stay in prison until I died. They thought I'd gone mad. They were kind and asked why. I listed my points: I would never intentionally break any law, I wouldn't disturb the others with my parcels or hold loud or noisy divine services. They said it was impossible.

I'd tell your something interesting. Remember this if you ever have anything wrong with your heart. One night I felt sick in my cell. To be more precise, I didn't know I was ill. The jailer knocked me up at five in the morning, I thought the Americans had come. I don't know why. I went to bed at eleven, and a little old Jewish doctor—a very nice man he was—well, he said to us with a wink: "Don't be afraid, you'll be free". Then he told me I'd almost died during the night, there was something wrong with my heart. I told him I'd never had anything like that happen to me before, but I really felt a pain in my heart; as if

it were being squeezed by claws. I was given an injection every day, but they didn't help. It occured to me then that there was a book by a Jesuit that contained all the scientific knowledge of the time. For example, how to mesmerize a hen. It says if you have anything wrong with your heart, just laugh. When I saw that there were no medicines at all, I thought I'd do this cure myself. From 11 to 12 I did my stint. They rushed in, armed, to swaddle me up like a madman. I said: "Doctor Dollen, please find this famous book in your library. I have it in Rumanian, back in Pankota. It says if you have something wrong with your heart you can cure it by laughing. I'm doing this cure right now and I bet there'll be no need for your shots in a week's time. And I let the administration know that from 11 until 12 when the fast train to Iasi passes by, I'll take my prescribed dose of laughter." I did laugh a lot, and they got used to it like a dog does to fleabites. I was perfectly all right before five days were up.

I spent a long time in prison. I'd have to add it all up. First I did ten years under the regime of the executioners, then I got six years. Under Rumanian law if you are over sixty and behave well, you only have to do a quarter of your sentence. For another five years I lived under residential restriction.

In the feverish days of the 1989 revolution, when country and freedom were their God, young people were polled whether they believed in God. Eighty per cent answered they'd never considered the question. What a horrible destruction they have wrought on people's souls. And now that the Rumanians have pulled themselves together a little, the first thing the politicians—no, not the churches—did was introduce religious education into the universities.

When driving along, I always gave a lift to everybody and asked them about God. How many Gods exist? Some said four, five or six. I catechized them, I asked them: "Do you believe in God?" They mostly said, they didn't. Not out of hatred, this feeling in man can be killed. Most Satanic.

Our bishops were locked up and they all died in prison. The élite of our priesthood are dead. Bishop Ágoston returned home blind and lived another two weeks. These are our treasures. The Church doesn't like too much publicity. The Church leaves it to God, who brings all to the surface over the centuries and blesses them.

May God bless you all.

Gábor Murányi

The Discreet Charm of the Free Press

Those who have not experienced how the press was functioning under socialism in Eastern Europe, how censorship, officially non–existent, covered all information, cannot understand the euphoria felt by journalists two years ago. The euphoria was entirely due to the new found freedom of the press.

The other day I came across a "strictly confidential" draft agreement by the former state-party, subtitled "political openness, the reform of information and the activity of the party within the press." It was drafted before the great explosion, when János Kádár was sent packing, and is headed by a typical, Kafkaesque warning: "The destruction of the text is the duty of the recipient!"

So much for openness.

One of the recipients, the editor of one of the dailies failed to carry out his duty, and so has made a real gem of a document available, with pithy thoughts such as "No effective support can be demanded from the press if...", "There has been a slackening of discipline in some of the newspaper offices, accompanied by the diminishing political influence of the party, and publicity being given to those who question party and government policies...", "Intentions are evident to use publicity also to express political views opposed to the leading role of the party..."

Gábor Murányi *is on the staff of* Magyar Nemzet, *a national daily.*

Even during the period kept in evidence as the "soft" dictatorship of the 1970s and '80s, the party claimed the right to direct the mass media. There was always a difference between the proclaimed principles and the methods it used. Senior staff, including the chief sub-editors and those in charge of various sections of the paper, could only be appointed with party approval, to ensure personal guarantees for the implementation of the party line. The principles of publicity and democracy were proclaimed; the scandals broke out when, in recent years, the journalists who they had appointed began to take the proclaimed slogans seriously.

Sometimes the mere mention of a subject (for example the grievances of Hungarians living in Transylvania) resulted in the dismissal of the editor. A single word considered undesirable could spark off the resentment of the apparatus. In the early 1980s it was *Mozgó Világ*, a monthly with an emphasis on younger writers, that incurred the displeasure of the powers that be. The magazine carried bold investigative journalism and avant-garde fiction and criticism; despite a print-run of only 4,000-5,000 copies, it enjoyed a large readership amongst intellectuals. (The small number of copies was fixed by censorship and not by the laws of supply and demand.) The periodical was even banned; later it was restarted, but with a new staff. It still appears.

When, despite warnings, some of the periodicals overstepped the limits of tol-

erance and were banned (in addition to *Mozgó Világ, Tiszatáj,* the Szeged monthly, printed in 4,000 copies), this led to such a protest that it became impossible to openly ban further papers. Thus, in the case of the university quarterly, *Medvetánc,* they simply denied a licence for the appearance of the next number, but the daily *Magyar Nemzet* could still carry an article on its fifth anniversary. After that, such silent suppression was no longer feasible, and the authorities were forced to choose between indignation over further banning or acknowledgement of being outmanoeuvred.

These little press games, however, were matters of life and death, day-to-day skirmishes fraying peoples' nerves, with many unforeseen consequences.

The gradually freed press was backed up by the growing presence of samizdat publications. At first they were turned out primitively, not even Xerox but mimeograph or silk-screen printing being used. The most important was *Beszélő;* in Hungarian the name has a double meaning: both someone who is speaking and an authorized prison visit.

Beszélő, a samizdat monthly, was launched in 1981, on 120 pages, in a thousand copies; its last issue as an underground publication came out in 7,000 copies. It was followed by many others. From 1981 onwards, *AB* (Independent Publishers) brought out an astonishing range of books and magazines in rapidly growing circulations and functioned as a publisher. They sold in private homes, which, between searches, operated as bookshops.

These papers, besides disseminating free thought, also served as models for the official press, showing them how it was possible to write freely whithout self-censorship.

The turning point in the history of the Hungarian press came in 1988, the year Kádár was kicked upstairs. Even before that a few pieces had appeared which today can be used as points of reference. Such was the interview late in 1987, in the national daily *Magyar Nemzet,* with Imre Pozsgay, the leading reform communist. It was here for the first time that Pozsgay stated officially, as it were, that an opposition exists, which is not necessarily an enemy, but can be conceived of as a negotiating party. This was soon followed by sensations practically day by day, which also made it clear why the taboo subjects had actually been taboo, and that the Party no longer had the strength, the possibility, the inclination, nor the determination to prevent the appearance of these writings. After a certain point the process became self-generating: the genie of freedom of press had escaped from the lamp, and the journalists were carried away by the rapture of free expression. Meanwhile, the day-to-day battle was a bitter and dangerous one and the political situation extremely insecure: it was not to be known to what extent the reform forces within the party—who by that time had already recognized the inevitable need for change—would be able to carry through their wish, and whether a temporary reaction would not follow. In 1988, and up to the middle of 1989, the possibility of a new, open and aggressive dictatorship was still on the cards. In fact it was only after the reburial, on June 16, 1989, of Prime Minister Imre Nagy and his fellow martyrs who had been executed in 1958, that the likelihood of a change, and indeed of a peaceful change, became greater.

By the autumn of 1989, conciliatory round-table talks were already going on, and the press was functioning in the way it should. It kept people informed, reporting on everything, and printing opposed views. Papers of long standing awoke from their Sleeping Beauty slumber. *Magyar Nemzet* was founded in 1938, and its first days of glory lasted until March 21, 1944, the day the German army moved into Hungary, when it was banned. For the second time it soared upwards when, for a few days in

October 1956, it was one of the competent and moderate voices of the revolution; it reached its third climax in 1988-89, as the most reliable chronicler and promoter of political change. Typically, during this short period when demand had begun to have an effect on the number of copies, *Magyar Nemzet* doubled its circulation, to 190,000. A definite shift could be felt in the line of another daily, *Magyar Hírlap* as well. Ever since its foundation twenty years ago, *Magyar Hírlap* had been the government paper and the staff fought to shake off that status. Today Robert Maxwell is its major shareholder.

Existing papers shook off their shackles and new ones were founded in the years 1989 and 1990. At a moderate estimate, the number of newspapers has increased some four to five fold. Colleges and universities launched high-standard scholarly periodicals which, unlike outdated academic periodicals, carried the writings of young scholars. Sometimes a small-town printer decided to start a national daily: *Dátum* of the town of Szekszárd in Southern Hungary, managed to keep going for a year and a half, before its losses forced it to cease publication.

The growing freedom of press has also turned the newspapers into a paying proposition, which explains the appearance of foreign capital.

One of the first papers on the scene, with Hungarian capital, was the weekly *Reform,* which first appeared in September 1988, with a circulation of several hundred thousands, showing what a dangerous weapon a well edited popular tabloid can be. *Reform* has since grown into a great power and, although it has also turned more shallow, it keeps prospering and is even extending its activity.

Dailies

A bitter fight started for the property rights of the national and county dailies. But since legislation had not been prepared for the political change, the horse trading over these transactions went on in the absence of law or in exploiting its gaps. Scandal followed scandal, but even scandalous deals were registered.

One of the first such affairs was the appearance of the Axel Springer syndicate on the scene. They bought seven county dailies overnight, simply hiring the journalists. Since no one else turned up to produce the papers, all the premises, the accessories and the printing capacity, complete with the subscribers, were handed over to the syndicate. It was a well thought out move, which presumably had been squared with the Socialist Party, the successor party of the HSWP.

The indignation that followed this called for the setting up of a parliamentary committee (as it turned out, in vain, since Axel Springer knew how to go about things). The Socialist Party passed the remaining eleven county papers into the hands of various firms with foreign financial interests, by calling for tenders. The absence of legislation served as an excuse.

Of the national dailies, it was the old government paper, *Magyar Hírlap* that was first sold, with Robert Maxwell obtaining a majority shareholding. He was in a position to impose strict conditions in exchange for putting up the cash, as for instance, a drastic reduction in staff. At the same time, however, he created the conditions for a good paper. After a year of preparations, *Magyar Hírlap* has recently switched to a new format, to desk-top editing and photo-setting; its circulation has gone up 50 per cent, to 120,000.

A different but no lesser scandal surrounded the privatization of *Magyar Nemzet,* which, as mentioned already, had gained tremendous prestige during the years of political change. As it unquestionably was the most promising proposition, several foreign firms had set their eyes on the daily. The editorial staff was contacted first by Andrew Sarlós and then by György Soros; the negotiations ran

aground due to party strife prior to the elections. Next, the editors had already almost signed a contract with the Boniert group, which publishes the *Dagens Nyheter* in Sweden, when the newly elected government intervened. Lawyers have ever since questioned the government's right to do so. Still, the government called upon the paper, or rather the Pallas publishing house (which, presumably not by accident, had at the time been under government control for a few days already) to "call for tenders". As it turned out, the government, no one knows exactly why, favoured the French Hersant group as the foreign part owner of *Magyar Nemzet*. After dragged out political skirmishing, open and clandestine battles, the editorial staff, which would have preferred the Swedes, was compelled to surrender after about a year of procrastination, in the course of which some eminent journalists left the paper. *Magyar Nemzet* was turned into a cooperation in which the Hersant group holds a major share.

Népszabadság, originally the largest-circulation national daily of the HSWP, the direct management of which has meanwhile been waived by the heirs, the Socialist Party, announced under much quieter circumstances and almost unexpectedly that they had come to an agreement with Berlusconi. They started out on their new course with a share capital of 350 million forints, which is unheard of for a Hungarian daily. (As a basis for comparison, the total capital of *Magyar Nemzet* amounts to 130 million).

Of the evening papers, *Esti Hírlap* (160,000 copies) also passed into the hands of the Maxwell corporation. *Népszava*, the trade-union morning daily, is still waiting for applicants. As far as the new dailies are concerned, including *Pesti Hírlap*, *Kurír*, and the tabloid papers *(Mai Nap, A Reggel)*, it remains to be seen whether they will be able to hang on and remain on the market, none of them having yet reached the magic 50,000 mark; *A Reggel* has already gone bankrupt.

Party press and free press

The lack of legislation and the party conflicts have created unusually vehement struggles for the possession of the press. When the newly formed parties were in a position to do so, they made attempts at creating their own papers. The Hungarian Democratic Forum, which won the elections, developed close links with the bi-weekly *Hitel*, a cultural rather than political paper with a circulation of 15,000 copies. It remained a kind of semi-official Hungarian-Democratic-Forum paper, until in October 1989, *Magyar Fórum*, "the national weekly of the MDF" appeared on the scene. The editor did not really represent his party's position, and after eight months publication was discontinued. *Magyar Fórum* was relaunched early in 1991, no longer as the official paper of the Hungarian Democratic Forum. The Forum has no daily of its own though *Új Magyarország* offers it broad support.

The finances of the Association of Free Democrats, who came second in the elections, as the largest opposition party, only sufficed for a weekly, the former samizdat periodical *Beszélő*. Lacking a professional team of journalists, the work of the editor has been undertaken by the MP Ferenc Kőszeg, who at the time edited the samizdat publication, and although the threads linking the paper to the Free Democrats are fairly loose (for some time Kőszeg did not wish to be on the Associations's executive), *Beszélő* has still remained the press organ of the Free Democrats. The Association of Young Democrats could only afford a bi-weekly: *Magyar Narancs*, a satirical politico-cultural paper. Both *Beszélő* and *Magyar Narancs* carry intra-party debates as well.

The Independent Smallholders' Party also has a weekly, *Kis Újság*, which woke from its several decades of slumber in June 1989. It intends to be a mass paper, but is still a long way from that.

The Christian Democratic Party has no permanent paper.

As mentioned already, the Hungarian Socialist Party let its papers go and has also given up its direct control over *Népszabadság*. Nonetheless, the attribute "socialist" in the paper's subtitle still indicates its links with the party. At present it has still the widest circulation, despite the fact that its original number of some 700-800 thousand copies has fallen by more than half.

Since the parties could have no say in the press as a whole, they tried to win over the publishers and the editors, and soon arguments were replaced by political struggle for possession. A special committee has been set up by Parliament to investigate the privatization of the press and to draft a new press law.

Two conflicting positions exist. Some, including the supporters of the government party, the Hungarian Democratic Forum argue that, since the government has been formed by the Forum, it is this party which has the right and the possiblity to decide who those associated in privatizations should be. Since a major part of the papers are still issued by state-run publishing houses, the press executives can also be appointed by them.

This is all the more necessary, they claim, because the change has not yet been completed and the papers are still headed by the same people who had served the HSWP in the previous regime. Now there is a new power, with a new will, and the old team can only delay its work.

This approach is opposed by the liberals of the Association of Free Democrats and the Association of Young Democrats. They argue that in the course of the privatization of the press, government control would threaten the elementary guarantees of publicity and the freedom of press. The solution lies in the earliest possible passing of legislation. No one on the outside has the right to remove editors, as this is the privilige of the editorial staff and the proprietors.

Without subsidy

The last year passed in these battles. The government, which, through two state-owned publishing firms, inherited, as it were, proprietary rights of a great many papers, has acted most resolutely whenever its interests so demanded. It exerted influence on several weeklies in choosing new editors, and the battle is still going on. Some first class papers and periodicals of long standing have moved to the brink due to financial reasons. Cultural reviews and periodicals were widely read in recent years. True, their cost called for financial support, but this they were granted for several years. State support is now practically non-existent and new forms of sponsorship are still only potential promises. New foundations, various kinds of state and non-state support, escape into the arms of some foreign capitalist, canvassing for subscribers, winning the support of some society or of one of the parties—these are just a few of the many tentative options. Nonetheless, it is easily possible that the current year will be a baneful one for many. There is no money in the country, nor are there enough readers for all the papers which have flooded the scene. A different but not a minor consideration is that they include only a few really good, high-quality periodicals. The problem is rendered more difficult by the poverty of Hungarian professional people (the potential readers of cultural papers—teachers, researchers, university staff-members, to mention just a few of the relevant professions), which make it practically impossible to sell these magazines of relatively small circulation (3,000 to 6,000) at cost price. Lacking outside support, this closes the circle.

Specialist papers are in trouble as well, for example *Filmvilág,* a review which has become one of the most important and highest standard periodicals of recent years, of interest to Hungarian

intellectuals not merely as a film journal.

Nonetheless there are some promising initiatives which deserve mention.

In April 1989, the monthly *2000* was launched, taking as its model *Nyugat,* the prestigeous but limited circulation periodical of the Hungary of the 1920s and '30s. Founded by literateurs, historians and critics, *2000* initially relied upon personal contacts, this being practically their only capital. They planned to avoid the payment of fees by using their contacts both in Western and Eastern Europe. This has worked so far. By 1991, *2000* had won the support of the Soros Foundation, a Hungarian bank and a limited company. And so it is sold at the ridiculously low price of 29 forints, the cost of a cheap glass of beer.

From the beginning *2000* has been sponsored by the publishing firm of another Hungarian weekly, *Heti Világgazdaság,* the only one that has had a spectacular success, a brilliantly edited economic review that burst upon the scene in 1978, and has continued to increase its circulation. The information and policy of the journal unquestionably paved the way for the present freedom of the press.

How far from easy it is to turn out such a paper is, perhaps, best shown by the repeated attempts of other weeklies. *Világ* and *Magyarország* (which has recently been cocking an eye at the government) have not really found their place. They naturally lag behind the dailies with the news, while their analyses cannot improve on those in the periodicals. They have failed to find a middle course. *Magyar Nők Lapja,* the colour weekly for women, once the largest circulation paper, has also plunged into a crisis. The nearly one million copies printed three years ago have dwindled to about 300,000.

For some years now *168 óra* (168 Hours) has been one of the most popular radio programmes, summing up the week in a series of interviews broadcast Friday nights. Printing an edited transcript under the same title proved a brilliant idea, one of the genuine publishing successes of these transition years.

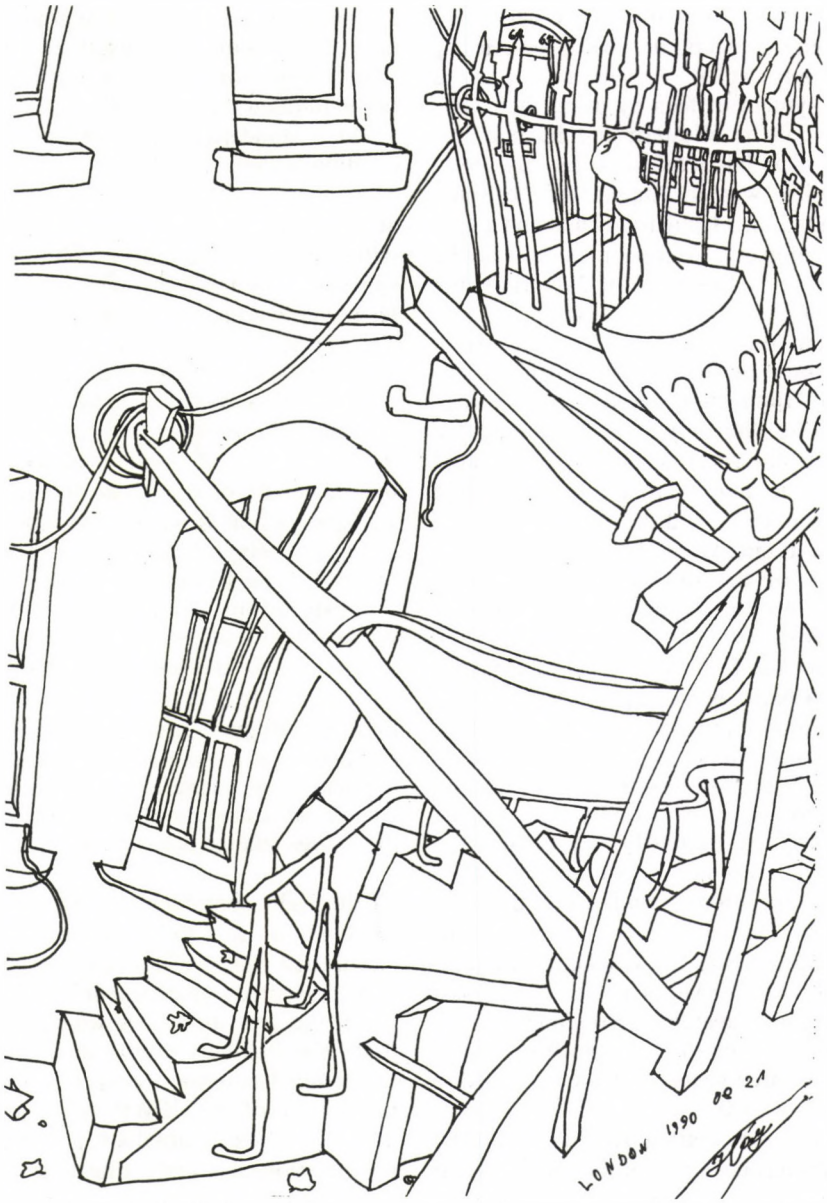
The monthly *Holmi*, launched in October 1989 and sold, even if at a somewhat higher price than *2000,* still at a very favourable price compared to production costs, has also modelled itself on *Nyugat.* The fifteen numbers or so so far have borne out that the three editors, insisting on high standards, have succeedded in creating a first class literary periodical. They started with 6,000 copies and created a widely popular monthly, still only within an extended coterie. Without the sponsoring of the Soros Foundation, an insurance company and the state Osvát Ernő Fund, it would have ceased publication, in spite of evident quality.

Budapesti Könyszemle (BUKSZ) started as a quarterly, subtitled "Critical Writings from the Field of Social Sciences", as the successor of the scholarly pre-war Budapest Book Review. The title also serves as a playful but serious reference to the *New York Review of Books*, one of its inspirations. *BUKSZ* chooses the works it reviews from the humanities, and in its editorial policy adheres to the basic principle of "criticism is the beginning of dialogue". It always carries articles in reply to criticisms, and also contrary opinions. The quarterly is professionally edited, and is supported by several publishing houses and the Soros Foundation.

The fight continues and promises to continue in 1991. The government has drafted a press bill which is expected to be presented to Parliament by the middle of the year. In the knowledge of the draft, the Publicity Club, the organization which has formed early in 1988, still in the time of the HSWP, rallying hundreds of noted journalists and mediapeople protested early this year. "The press, as one of the main safeguards of

public freedom must be allowed to operate under fair rules of the game. But the draft, instead of specifying the guarantees of the freedom of press, wants to rudely liquidate even existing ones." In practice it would make direct interference possible, the public prosecutor decide on certain publications and not a court.

György Konrád, President of International PEN, not long ago a samizdat writer himself, harrassed by the communist authorities, said in an interview: "The press will be free to the degree to which journalists will fight for this themselves."



István Bart

Publish and Be Damned: Privatization and Publishing

It was some time early in the glorious year of '89 when there appeared in the papers a short official announcement to the effect that, from now on, any legally registered company or organization (and some months later any private individual as well) could freely engage in publishing (books, periodicals, newspapers) without prior consent or licence from the authorities and—even more importantly—without the notorious imprimatur, which the printer had been required by the law to ask for before accepting a job. This piece of paper, issued by the Ministry of Culture's Publishing Directorate, used to be the chief means of censorship of books, which made the Ministry a kind of last check-point. During the last years of the dictatorship, the Ministry did not read the manuscripts any more (they had never read many), but reserved the right to do so if something aroused their suspicion.

> Gone are the easy 100,00 copies and quick sales of the recent publishing bonanza. More than 400 new publishing ventures face grim economic realities, accompanied by an almost total collapse of centralized distribution.

The few months that followed will be remembered as one of the great periods in the history of Hungarian publishing.

It was an explosion. Like the tide of water when a dam is suddenly breached, books and newspapers literally flooded the country. There were (and still are, for that matter) books everywhere; in the streets, in pedestrian subways, in underground stations: bookshops were simply too small and few in number to accommodate the immense profusion pouring forth from the presses. In about six feverish months just about everything that could not have been openly published for almost half a century was now being printed and sold in huge quantities. People were eagerly buying up anything from political tracts and philosophical works to novels and memoirs, Hungarian or translated—provided it had the aura of "banned by the communists" to it. Print runs were almost absurdly high for a country of Hungary's size, even if Hungarians are a nation of readers. Booksellers—many of them small—run on a shoestring and new to the business, never blinked an eye on hearing of editions as large as 100 or 200,000 copies. The hunger of the public was unsatiable.

In other words, there was no business like publishing; entrepreneurially minded

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Hungarians were quick to grab the opportunity. Instead of the twenty-odd state-owned publishing houses (one for juvenile books, one for technical books, one for art, one for new Hungarian writing, one for the classics, one for translations and so on) who had provided the staple reading matter for forty years—suddenly there were more than four hundred publishing ventures (small, smaller and smallest—but quickly growing; some at least)—while the state-owned "giants" (still representing at lest 70 per cent of the total turnover, even in 1991) were trying to come to grips with an identity crisis the overnight appearance of a market induced. The new competition caught them off balance. They had no choice but to hide behind the heavy armour of their considerable experience and the defences provided by their sheer size. But these also made them vulnerable and were of precious little help against the agile light-brigade of new and reckless ventures, whose chief value was commercial success—to be gained only by inventiveness and speed and not through meticulous standards of editing texts, sharpened by forty years of censorship.

What we saw and experienced in those months was the euphoria of a free (even recklessly free) press—but it was also fueled by unusual, in fact unprecedentedly high, capital gains, since until very recently there was an 80 per cent tax preference in capital gains for publishing—abolished only in January 1991. Price was another factor; state subsidies (the remnants of which still survive even today) made books inexpensive—and the tough new competition (and no V.A.T.) still keeps the price of books down—compared to anything else, at least, making them very good value for money, even against a background of rising production costs and a high (30 per cent in 1990) inflation rate. The trick to making ends meet and a nice profit to boot, lies in exceptionally long print runs. A very delicate balance, to be sure.

Blue Monday

The first round of the publishing bonanza—that coincided with the twelve or eighteen months of the peaceful revolution—finished with the final demise of the old regime, with the free elections in April '90. There came inevitably a Blue Monday when, "the morning after", people had to face grim economic realities. Naturally they turned their interest away from politics and history and the old regime's crimes to a daily life that looked suddenly all the more gloomy after the joy of unexpected victory. For publishers—old and new a like—this meant that with all the suppressed manuscripts, secret memoirs and banned novels now published, gone were the easy 100,000 copies and the quick sales their businesses depended on. An almost total collapse of the old state-owned distribution system followed (mostly due to unmarketable stocks and lack of capital to finance them); to make things worse, the new booksellers—who have only very little capital to finance growth (or even existence), and even less experience—are too slow to fill in the void. Clearly, these are the pangs of transition—felt in similar ways in newspaper, magazine and book publishing—and equally clearly, they will not go away until the transition (i.e., privatization of the industry) is complete.

Publishers and booksellers, both dependent on unnaturally high sales, turned from politics to the safe money-makers of the West. Flocks of Western publishers, agents and packagers arrived in due time, loaded mostly with second rate products thought to be good enough for a second rate market. But after a short spring of 'thrillers', 'romance', 'crime', 'popular biography', 'soft porn' (plus not so soft, home-spun stuff, at the newsstands) and general 'blockbusters'—when most of the US, British and German bestsellers of recent years were published in Hungarian, most of them returned home disillusioned. Sales did not match expectations. (The

trend is nowadays rather more in 'practical guides', 'self-help', and the 'occult'—but the wheel is turning at maddening speed.) Only the toughest and most far sighted stayed behind and tried to settle down by setting up joint ventures, starting small, preparing for a brighter future.

The large state-owned publishing houses and the crippled but still oversized distribution chains (that are both wholesalers and own almost all traditional retail outlets as well) however remain unprivatized and consequently insecure and largely in the dark as regards their future. Yet in spite of the new upsurge in publishing (a full 100 per cent rise in the number of titles published by the new publishers from '88 to '89) the twenty-odd state-owned publishers still provided in '89 more than 75 per cent of all titles published. (The new publishers' share will certainly rise, both in the number of titles published and copies printed, though probably not so dramatically.) In other words, this means that only a couple of the new publishers have made it into the big league, while the majority have fallen back to subsistence level. Similarly all the numerous small organizations in distribution do not sell nationally more than 20-25 per cent of all copies printed.

Obviously, given their continuing market-share, the future of the business hinges on the privatization process of the state-owned organizations in publishing and distribution. The process is slow and protracted to say the least; this is a reflection of a political debate going on within the government and in Parliament, otherwise genuinely committed to the creation of a market economy. Culture (and the media in general), however, seems to be a different ball-game altogether, in some politically influential circles at least. The protection of a national culture—from the detrimental influences of the market economy and the uncurbed onslaught of Western popular culture—is very high on the agenda for the intellectual core of the leading party in the government coalition, who see the privatization of respecable national institutions (the quality-press and some—if not all—publishing houses) as a sellout to foreign interests.

To be sure, the experience they had with privatization of the press (almost complete by now) has made them all the more cautious. Maxwell, Murdoch and Bertelsman were the quickest; foreign investors have acquired all the national dailies, the big prize—the daily 400 thousand copies of *Népszabadság*, the former Communist Party central organ—going Bertelsman's way for peanuts. Axel Springer had to be satisfied with only a dozen of the provincial dailies previously owned (and practically given away) by the late Communist party and the French Hersant group *(Nice-Matin)* with a prestigious but ailing Budapest daily, the *Magyar Nemzet* . Latecomers such as Berlusconi, Hachette and Time-Warner, are now competing (with Maxwell in the ring, too) for the biggest prize of all: the two television channels, not available until a moratorium is lifted after the passing of the new Media Law, some time next spring. (It may very well include legislation against excessive domination of the written or electronic media as well.)

The danger a suddenly omnipresent foreign ownership may pose to the freedom of the Hungarian press is probably a matter of political interpretation. The government however, traditionally at odds with the press anyway, seems to be determined not to repeat the mistake of rushing privatization (read: sellout to foreign capital) in book publishing. No details are known of the plan—if indeed there is one— only a number of unanswered questions:

– if foreign capital is unwelcome (in a business whose turnover is estimated to be well above 110 million US Dollars in 1990), where else will money come from for privatization? (When the German academic publishers, Joseph Springer,

recently made an offer to purchase the prestigious medical publishing house Medicina, only 40 per cent was available, whereupon Joseph Springer backed out and is setting up a new operation headed by the former top people in Medicina, which continues to be state-owned.) Does this mean that they would prefer Hungarian investors—should there be any?

– will they try to find some other way to create 'real' owners (as the Ministry of Culture is only a bureaucratic controlling body and not even technically the owner of state-owned publishing companies) for example by setting up a (largely) state owned holding company—to be called the 'National Culture Fund', according to some rumours in Ministry circles?

– where would the capital come from? So much is needed to make these publishing houses credible business ventures capable of competing with some of the rapidly growing new ventures, not to mention the would-be Hungarian branches of Western firms. (The situation is similar with the distribution chains: the Austrian Morawa and Herder together with the French Hachette are said to be seriously looking at one of the three big Hungarian firms or— as an alternative to buying—setting up their own business here.)

– would there be continued government sponsorship of quality publishing that would in some way prefer the houses where the state— in support of culture— retains (if indeed it decides to do so) some share at least?

The odds are however that all the alternatives to avoiding outright privatization (to foreign or local investors) of state-owned publishing houses (as a means to protect national culture) will quickly disappear: in the budget for '91 the government realized that no such plan could be financially supported. This will force the realization that privatization is in fact the only way to protect—if not national culture as such—the publishing business from the total collapse that is certain to come during the next year, unless state-owned publishing houses are let loose to fend for themselves.

While the state-owned houses are losing ground due to lack of capital and an unclear vision of their future, new ventures are gaining in strengh. Within a year or two the publishing scene will be dominated by new names. The traditional publishers will be playing only a secondary role. There is a good chance that reluctance and indecision on the government's part will do more harm than good where national culture is concerned; the chance of an ordered privatization will be missed and the wildly disorganized privatization of the press will be repeated, opening the doors wide for foreign investors of any kind.

THE YEAR 1989 IN THE HUNGARIAN BOOK-TRADE

number of titles (books)	- 3,000			
number of copies printed	- 108 million			
average print run	- 36,000			
highest print run	- 390,000 copies			
(author: Robin Cook)	(price: 75 Fts=1.2 US $)			
total sales of books	- 6,3 billion Ft			
	(100 million US $)			
number of outlets	- 968 bookshops and stalls			
	(one per 10,000 inhabitants)			
rise in book-prise	- 20 per cent (1988 to 1989)			
			1988	**1989**
number of translated	- American	=	133	202
titles according to	- British	=	117	228
the nationality of	- Soviet	=	107	89
authors 1988 and 1989	- German	=	98	121
number of titles issued by	- 1988 = 634 (42 publishers)			
private publishers	- 1989 = 1,323 (unknown)			

Ildikó Nagy

The Posters of Change

Change first manifested itself when the city was flooded with posters of the young pop groups which mushroomed in the 1980s. As night fell small bands of teenagers set out carrying pails and plastering over the billboards and hoardings, and even the marbled entrances of the underground. They were pasting up notices illicitly in public places. Some ten to twenty years earlier one such poster could have meant political persecution, but in the face of such quantities, the authorities were helpless. If caught red-handed, the offenders were fined. A tussle between youth and the police was the result, and since music fans outnumbered the police, and were more determined, there was no doubt about the outcome.

This fly-posting was one of the first visible signs of freedom. A faint sign, indicating that the relationship between the individual and the powers that be can change. So it is understandable that the current exhibition at the National Gallery, which follows the political changes of recent years in posters, opens with the posters of underground pop groups, fairly primitive technically, but abounding in pictorial ideas and verbal quibbles.

The poster is an important document of its day, but it has turned into a work of art only at certain periods. Such a period, for example, was art nouveau, which, perhaps for the last time, was able to unite all art forms, creating a treasury of motifs, forms, and a stylization, which lifted even the most banal themes out of triviality. Hungarian poster-art produced its own outstanding craftsmen later too, particularly painters working in the spirit of the Bauhaus, but the genre has never given rise to any real interest. Particularly not in the last forty years, when both posters and advertisements were insipid and boring. If an economy has no variety of goods to offer and there is no competition, advertising is pointless. Although many designers were commissioned, some of whom were gifted, posters were dominated by a kind of uniform enervation, which set the mood of the streets. The loathsome stereotypes of the policital posters, the illustrative nature of cinema play bills and the dull commercial posters clearly reflected the limited choices life offered, where even the imagination is curbed by the state.

Against the sleek boredom of professional posters, the black-and-white bills of the pop groups, often home-produced and printed on wrapping paper, were breath-takingly provocative and refreshingly dilettante. *Sex-e-pil, Independent, Art Reactor, Balkan Fouturist, Aranyláz,* (Goldrush), *Korom és méz* (Soot and Honey) or *Vágtázó Halottkémek* (Galloping Coroners) were rock groups that produced posters full of vigour and imagination, which drew inspiration from the latest fashions in art. This agressive post-modernism incorporated science-fiction elements, children's drawings, the graphic work of the Russian avantgarde and forms of Amerindian art. It used, with a specific touch of irony, the sacrosanct symbols of communism; the red star, the hammer and sickle, or the typical requisites of the Hungarian 1950s, for instance, the *Munkás* (Worker) cigarette packet, (probably the worst cigarettes ever made). Their witti-

Ildikó Nagy *is an art critic specializing in contemporary Hungarian art.*

est poster was for HUNGAROCAROT, organized on the model of CAROT, the underground music festival at Warsaw. In it, the female figure of the Liberation Monument in Budapest (which was erected in 1945 at the order of Marshal Voroshilov) raises high a huge carrot instead of the original's palm-frond. The fact that they were allowed to poke fun at the intangible symbols of the system marked the change— and also proved the infinite cynicism of the system.

But the real sign of change came when people started to discuss politics openly. The exhibition follows events in a chronological order using posters, handbills and badges. "S.ave O.ur S.ettlements" reads a banner calling for support for Transylvania at the huge demonstration in Hősök tere in 1988, in protest against the forced rural resettlement programme and the demolition of hundreds of villages. The demonstration that followed had even stronger political overtones. This was against the construction of the Nagymaros water barrage and took place in front of Parliament. When the crowd turned into the huge square before Parliament building, older people involuntarily looked up at the roof of the Ministry of Agriculture to the left. Is was from there on October 26th 1956, that a similarly peaceful crowd was fired upon, an event known ever since as the Kossuth-tér massacre. By 1988, shots could no longer be fired into a crowd. This demonstration against the river barrage was followed by many more, with posters and handbills; in one, the minister for the protection of the environment is smiling over Stalin's shoulder.

In 1989, for the first time in several decades, March the 15th, a day which the Kádár regime had struck off the list of official holidays, could be celebrated appropriately. In previous years, marches by young people had been dispersed by the police; now we saw with malicious delight that policemen, too, were wearing red-white-green armbands and that they were only allowed to direct traffic. The famous twelve points were printed for the procession—the leaflet in which the young of March 15, 1848, known as the "Youth of March", set down under 12 headings, "What does the Hungarian nation demand?", a list, which had lost little of its validity in the past 150 years. Although the Twelve Points could not be omitted from the school curriculum, someone reciting them outside a history class immediately came under suspicion, as the demands included: "Hungarian soldiers should not serve abroad, nor foreign soldiers in Hungary!"

It was Viktor Orbán, the speaker of the young Democrats, at the time organizing themselves into a party, who alone dared to openly make this demand on June 16, 1989, at the re-burying of Imre Nagy and his fellow victims. The next section of the exhibition recalls the martyrs of 1956. The posters were made for the reburying and for a competition conducted for a memorial. (See *NHQ* 118, *Ed's Note*.) This was no longer a mere "sign". This was the unbelievable change itself. The features of Imre Nagy appeared on posters, book covers and postcards. Instead of views of Budapest, we sent these cards to our friends abroad. Politics dominated our reading, our conversation, our lives. Even more so, as the changes did not stop at the country's borders. We were watching with bated breath events in Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Rumania. One of the finest posters honoured the Rumanian revolution, with a detail of Michelangelo's *Pièta,* in which the dead Jesus has a blue-yellow-red armband, the Rumanian *tricolore*.

Some of the finest posters conjure up the tragic events of the past with photographs. For instance "Light a Candle for the Victims", recalls the bloodily suppressed Brassó (Kronstadt-Brasov) uprising of 1987, or the China poster for the anniversary of the Peking students' revolt. The handsome face of the injured, young Chinese man has the heart-

rending power of reality. Reality has been brought by television into our living rooms, with all distances of time and space removed.

The majority of the exhibits are made up of the posters for the 1990 elections. Multiparty elections were held in the spring of 1990 in a country where for many years a single party system existed, and Parliament consisted of a predetermined proportion of workers, peasants and professionals, with the number of soldier, artist, sportsman, priest and ethnic MPs, the proportion of old-age pensioners and active wage-earners, of men and women, all carefully set in advance, and whose first freely elected MP, the Lutheran clergyman Gábor Roszik, won a seat at a by-election in the summer of 1989. After more than forty years, the country witnessed a high-powered election campaign, which the exhibition marks by a large number of documentary photographs. These show how the posters large and small fitted into the cityscape, what the streets looked like with posters covering everything at eye level, scribbled over, with other bills stuck over them, with all the witty or repusive symptoms of spontaneous expression. The posters, slogans and badges expressing and symbolizing the party platforms, did so in different manners and with differing degrees of success.

The parties of the post-war coalition between 1945 and 1948, which were now reorganizing—the Smallholders' Party and the Social Democrats—tried to stress their continuity, but this often proved to be a dead weight rather than an advantage. After a vacuum of forty years, things could obviously not be taken up where they had to be left off, regarding either programmes or symbols. The new parties, on the other hand, were much too new to be able to create individual images. The Hungarian Democratic Forum, declaring themselves national liberals (who were to win the elections), chose a stylized tulip for their emblem, and the Alliance of Free Democrats took three, red-white-green birds with spread wings. The emblem of the Socialist Party is a red carnation, and that of the Federation of Young Democrats, an orange. The latter attracted attention for being so utterly amazing. Oranges do not grow in Hungary, or the few that do are sour. The Young Democrats did not want to gloss over Hungarian reality, but stood for looking facts in the face with a wry sobriety.

The Hungarian Democratic Forum declared itself a "calm force", and graphically too, they had calm, static posters. They are marked by symmetry, and emphatic central axes. In their slogans they referred to the "future" (as did all the parties); this they symbolized by showing children of different ages; from those in the womb, babes-in-arms and school children. They, too, defined their platform by reference to other parties, for instance "We do not fly, we have our feet on the ground"—hinting at the Free Democrats' bird emblem. They employed draughtsmen of distinction such as Béla Aba or István Orosz for their posters. The latter is responsible for a very popular poster showing the back of the head and nape of a Russian officer, with the inscription, in Cyrillic letters, *Tovarishi, khonets* (Comrades, the end) which refers to both the Soviet Army leaving the country and the end of the Soviet-type system. All the same, in spite of professional draughtsmanship, most of the posters were not witty enough. Some were simply botched: in a summons for a "National Spring Cleaning!", the objects thrown into the dustbin—workers' militia badges, Lenin pictures, Stalin statues, and the like—are so small that they could only be recognized at close range: posters are meant to be effective from a distance. From this point of view the most effective were the posters of the Alliance of Free Democrats. They found themselves an excel-

lent designer in the person of György Kara, whose strength lay in good emblem design and dynamic compositions. Their slogan "With a clean past for a clean future" was authentic, since it is well-known that the core of the party was recruited from the former democratic opposition. The party considers itself to be "socio-liberal", but they also recognize that national sentiments are not to be ignored—or simply confined to the repetition of the national colours of red, white and green. So they reached back to the 19th century, when liberalism had already been linked with a national revival, for models.

The most awkward posters were those of the Social Democratic Party, which may have had a part in their resounding defeat at the polls. The Independent Smallholders' Party remained the most conservative. They used their old slogans to go with their symbol of an ear of wheat—"God, Fatherland, Family", and "Wine, wheat and peace"—phrases which were once embroidered on the wall-decorations of village kitchens. But their popularity (they came third at the elections) was precisely due to this conservativism. A considerable proportion of Hungarians are engaged in agriculture, which makes the issue of the ownership of land the most burning problem today, and the Smallholders promised to re-establish the land ownership conditions of 1947. Their emblems also recalled those years. The Christian Democratic People's Party constantly referred to their fellow Christian Democrats elsewhere in Europe, and emphasized on posters as well that the party is a "bridge" or "passport" to Europe. These were fair but fairly dull posters, as were those of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (namely, the Communist Party); it was struggling with a strong identity crisis.

The elections were won by the Hungarian Democratic Forum; the poster competition, had there been such a thing, would have been won by the Young Democrats. Their pictorial ideas, puns and witty rhymes (unfortunately not lending themselves to translation) were a fresh breeze on a rather serious and rigid Hungarian public scene. A poster of theirs, which read "The Choice is Yours!", was reproduced all over the world within days. (The visual shows a grotesque picture of Brezhnyev and Honecker kissing each other and another of a handsome young couple doing the same thing.) The abbreviation of their name, FIDESZ, points to the Latin *fides* (faith, confidence), and they have developed their slogan to the words and melody of a piece by the Swedish Roxette duet, "Listen to your Heart". The "heart" was also used as a symbol in its own right: the election poster of their leader, Gábor Fodor, had a big heart pierced by an arrow next to the shock-headed, smiling, good-looking candidate. And not in vain either. Teenage winners of television contests have asked as their prize,—instead of a day off or tickets to a football match—the chance to have an ice-cream with Gábor Fodor. Chance favoured the Young Democrats. The V-sign, as the symbol of victory, was used by practically every party in their campaign prints, but who could do so with more justification than Viktor Orbán, who leads their parliamentary party, for he cannot even write his name without using the letter.

Nomen est omen? Perhaps this does not fully hold true for these elections yet, but the Young Democrats have time on their side. The average age of their members is 27. Their posters are "unkempt", as are their be-jeaned politicians: they are the direct continuation of the underground rock posters. Cheerful and deliberately cheap execution, and amateurism, paired with humour and intelligence.

There is a need for this humour. The Hungarian politician is traditionally serious and harassed, "worrying about his nation". This image was formed in the

FIDESZ (Young Democrats) election poster.
Sándor Kállai: The Choice is Yours. *The photograph of the Brezhnev-Honecker kiss was brought into the party office by a stranger unidentified to this day.*

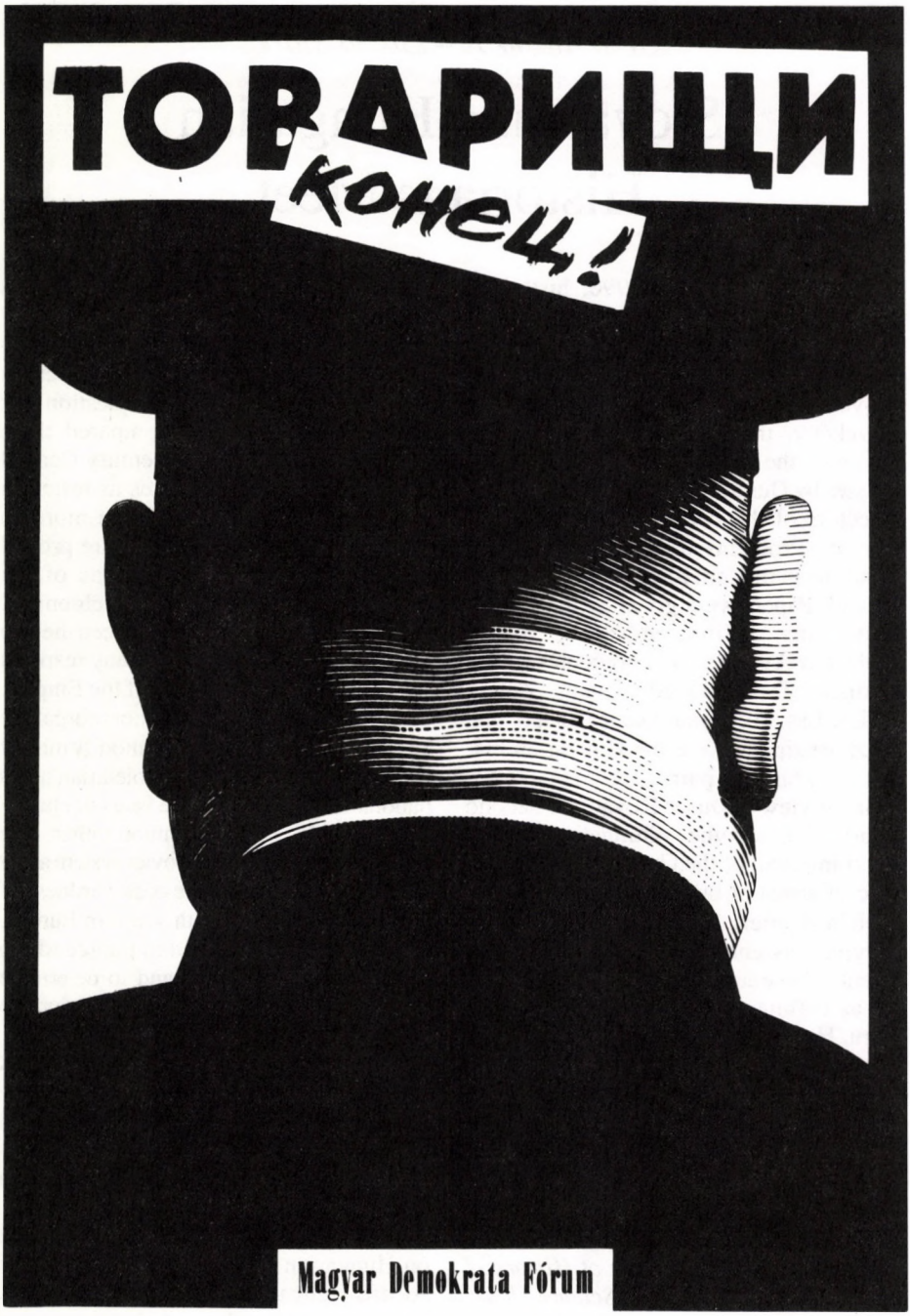
last century and the shape of things since then has not suggested a change. The politicians of the major parties have followed this prototype, most typically József Antall, who is now Prime Minister. Apart from the Young Democrats, only the Allience of Free Democrats dared to present smiling politicians. Their huge poster with the life-size, laughing portraits of Iván Pető, László Rajk and Bálint Magyar, and the slogan "We know, we dare, we do", was the most effective poster in the mottled and confused street-scape. (Typically, children stood in front of the poster to have themselves photographed as a fourth in the line.)

The elections and the preparations for them dominated our lives, the streets, the squares and the underground. Understandably, cultural and commercial posters also profited. "Vote for us", suggested the poster of the Budapest Spring Festival. "Enter the IKEA" urged the latest branch of the Swedish department-store chain in Budapest, as if it were recruiting members for a new party. And the City Grill fast-food chain echoed the famous Young Democrats' poster by showing a young courting couple: "Let's meet in the City Grill."

The elections over, the whirl of posters subsided. A hoarding, displayed in its original form at the exhibition, shows the now meaningless image of posters, pasted on top of one another in several layers, torn down, repasted and scribbled over.

Posters continue to present changes. There is a growing amount of good work, with original artists who have developed their own style appearing in advertising and cultural posters. Posters for occasions are sometimes designed by public figures, such as the architect and politician László Rajk or the architect Gábor Bachmann. The designers of the underground rock posters have also grown older, but they have maintained their wit and post-modern wryness. Of course, there are also less welcome changes. Liberty goes hand in hand with a lurid tide of sex and violence films. An advertisement pillar at the exhibition shows that cheap admixture of tripe and brutality brought about by this commercial culture.

The year 1990 was the year of elections in Hungary. After several plebiscites and the two-round parliamentary elections, people went to the polls for the last time in November, for local elections. By then everybody was somewhat tired, the campaign was more low-key and the war of posters also lost some of its heat. It was clearly a sign of quietening tempers that the poster for the Free Democrats, reading "WHAT WILL HAPPEN HERE?", was pasted over with bills like "Baroque concert," "Carnival party" and the like.



Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) election poster.
István Orosz: Tovarishi, Khonets *(Comrades, the end)*

Géza Buzinkay – László Szarka

Slovak and Hungarian Historians Meet

Early in December 1990, historians from the relevant institutes of the Slovak and the Hungarian Academies of Sciences met at Malé Vozokany in Slovakia, the old Hungarian village of Vezekény, the site of a famous battle against the Turks. After keynote addresses by Dusan Kovác and Ferenc Glatz, directors of the two institutes, they discussed "Problems of Slovak-Hungarian relations in modern history" for two days on end. Papers were given by the Slovak historians Július Mésáros, Milan Podrimavsky, Ms. B. Ferencuhova and Ladislav Deák. Magda Ádám, Zoltán Szász, László Szarka, Dániel Szabó, and Géza Buzinkay were the Hungarian historians who took part.

In the view of Dusan Kovác, the Second World War was the continuation, after a short interval, of the Great War. The mosaic of states of this region had been established after the Great War and has survived essentially to this day, consequently those arrangements must be looked on as defining the situation in the long-term. He stressed the need for realism on the part of historians, thus mentioning that no mixed Austro-Slovak school text book committee was on the cards yet.

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Ferenc Glatz argued that nation states were certainly the product of history but now considered as, in the 19th-century sense, the acme of progress. What can a state do for its citizens is the question that has to be asked. Glatz compared three modes for 19th and 20th century Central and Eastern European states as tested in practice. After 1848, and even more so after 1867, the Habsburg Empire proved unable to guarantee the nations of the region equal rights and equal development. Nevertheless, small states between the two World Wars reproduced in many respects the flaws and inadequacies of the Empire. They could neither maintain nor reorganize an integrated labour and commodity market in the region. The pseudo "proletarian internationalism", following the years of change 1945 to 1948, was no solution either. The extension of the Stalinist Soviet system as far as the Elbe confirmed the backwardness of the region compared with Western Europe. Glatz insisted on the need to transcend the three abortive solutions and to determine future priorities and what has to be done to achieve them.

Under the title "The idea of Slovak national self-determination and Hungarian statehood," Július Mésáros discussed circumspectly the Slovak view that Hungary had been the prison of Slovaks for a thousand years.

Then followed a paper by Zoltán Szász on Hungarian minorities policy after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867. The minorities policy of the Hungarian governments of that time is usually ap-

proached from two extreme positions. On the one hand, many historians, chiefly of non-Hungarian origin, present this as the period of total national oppression; on the other hand, several Hungarian historians proceed from the assumption that the disintegration of historical Hungary was the outcome of its government's wavering, and an excessively liberal minority policy which did not preempt national movements. In Szász's opinion, a common error of the two views is their exaggeration of the powers of the state. His was an attempt to draw a more differentiated picture of the minorities policy. According to him in the initial stage, between 1867 to 1873, no-one believed that things would last and the political establishment was hoping that the Hungarian state would be able to cooperate with the minorities, that the concept "political nation" would be acceptable to all concerned. This belief inspired the 1868 Public Education Act and the Minorities Act. The second stage, beginning in the mid-1870s, saw government policy becoming more and more aggressive towards the minorities. After the euphoria following the Compromise, economic prosperity did not set in at once and it became obvious that dualism could not be translated into a Hungarian-centred empire. The 1879 Public Education Act introduced the teaching of Hungarian as a compulsory subject. This measure was originally opposed by Francis Joseph, but Prime Minister Kálmán Tisza managed to persuade him that the weakness of the government required this nationalist gesture. This sort of concession to Magyar nationalism continued to accompany minority policy; indeed, local authorities were in general more extreme in their nationalism than the central government. Around 1890, the number of conflicts conspicuously grew. The Prime Minister, Baron Bánffy, initiated new methods of police control and surveillance in an effort to keep the situation in hand; but he failed in spite of enjoying the support of the Hungarian ruling classes. At the fin de siécle, Kálmán Széll tried to revert to the fundamental principles of Ferenc Deák, to "right, law and justice". The coalition government of 1906 to 1909 was again characterized by a sort of reaction: irresolute, and consequently aggressive, civil servants were in office, and the press of the national minorities was frequently proceeded against in the courts. Between 1910 to 1914 the national minorities question appeared in the guise of a conflict between democracy and conservatism. The minorities became increasingly institutionalized. When war broke out, their leaders still imagined that their wholehearted support for the war effort would ensure greater rights. In fact, policy depended not only on the time but also on the area and on the particularly people. The whole situation was far too complex to permit abridgement. No doubt a serious responsibility devolved upon the framers of Hungary's minorities policy for the disintegration of 1918, but their failures in themselves would certainly not have sufficed to produce the break-up of the state.

Milan Podrimavsky discussed the Slovak national movement's aspirations for national emancipation in their contemporary domestic and foreign contexts. He examined in detail particularly the need for reconciling national autonomy with the demand for national independence. In his opinion, the leading idea in Slovak political thinking after the Compromise was, from the very beginning, "to serve the greatest possible integrity of national self-determination" among all the possible alternatives.

In the discussion which followed, Július Mésáros's and Zoltán Szász's papers proved the most controversial. Several Hungarians praised Mésáros's tone, the desire to be objective and the elements of self-criticism. (see pp.98-102 of this issue) Ferenc Glatz underlined that cooperation

was essential to allow the writing of history to be effective in combating mutual national prejudice: misconceptions in the nationalisms of one's own people and of neighbouring peoples for the most part derive from an identical source. In this phase of the discussion, the examples mentioned by Slovak participants referred exclusively and unanimously to the discriminatory character of the Hungarian government's minorities policy. Periodization on this basis was said to be problematic. Differentiation would only serve to relativize aggressive Hungarian nationalism.

The following two papers examined the process of disintegration of historical Hungary and the shaping of Hungarian-Slovak relations in 1918-1919. Dusan Kovác, speaking on "The year 1918 in Slovak political development", intended to demonstrate that defeat in war and the Treaty of Trianon marked the end of a long process within the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire and historical Hungary. He criticized those Hungarians who could imagine only an integral historical Hungary and looked for external causes to explain its disintegration. In his opinion, the real reason was that the state had ceased to fulfil its task and stressed its function of oppressing non-Hungarians. The Slovak national movement, according to Kovác, tried in a particularly unfavourable situation to battle with the oppressive minorities policy of Hungarian governments; because all the Slovak nation lived in Hungary, they were not a minority whose interests could be represented by an outside country — as was the case with Rumanians. The losses due to assimilation grew more serious, being predominantly middle class and thus involving educated professional men in the first place. Slovak national aspirations did not enjoy either outside support or an international echo. Speaking of Trianon, Kovác felt he could understand the grief of Hungarians, suffering the shock of the break-up of their thousand-year-old country, as well as the discontent of Hungarians now finding themselves members of a minority; yet the fact of the matter was that the treaties at the end of the Great War had created for the other nations of the region much more equitable arrangements than they had ever enjoyed before and, for the whole of the region, considerably better conditions for development than those that prevailed in the Austro-Hungarian empire.

László Szarka, in his paper on "The 1918-19 view on the Slovak question in Hungarian government policy", underlined the constant and changing elements of the minorities policy of the Hungarian government, pointing out, as Zoltán Szász had done, that the Budapest governments had formulated a number of alternatives. It is true that it was precisely towards the Slovaks that it showed itself least flexible, which can be explained for the most part by the Slovaks' weakness and the absence of international backing for their endeavours. Earlier Hungarian governments likewise took a determined stand against the movement for a Czecho-Slovak union, wishing thereby to countearct its —originally rather modest— influence and also hoping to exploit the Slovak system of cultural and educational institutions still more effectively for the purposes of Magyarization.

Szarka reviewed the desperate and mostly hopelessly isolated efforts (in the interest of Slovak autonomy, or a Hungarian-Slovak People's Republic, the Slovak People's Republic, Eastern Slovak separatism, etc.) made by the government of Count Mihály Károlyi in the months of the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire. As a positive aspect, connected mostly with the policies of National Minorities Minister Oszkár Jászi, Szarka emphasized that they had demonstrated the recognition of the need for national autonomy (though somewhat too late) in the belief that an agreed settlement on an ethnic basis would have been possible

along the Hungarian-Slovak linguistic demarcation line; he pointed to the possibility of a democratic alternative as against a great-power decision.

Following some time given over to discussion, Magda Ádám gave her paper on "The role of French foreign policy at the Paris (Trianon) peace conference". Her paper, (see pp. 91-7 of this issue) based on unpublished documents in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, may essentially modify the picture of French policy in respect of this region, but Dr Ádám also drew attention to the danger that current criticism and revision of Stalinist historiography is often fuelled, unfortunately, by the spirit of nationalism rather than by a scrutiny of the facts. The Hungarian participants were somewhat astounded by what one of the Slovak historians had said, that priority should not be given to fresh research in various foreign archives, but to a closer look at local sources.

In her paper "France's policy concerning Central Europe in 1918-1921", Dr Ferencuhová summed up the conventional Slovak standpoint, leaving out of account newly available documents. In her view, there was no developed French policy for the whole region —which prompted the remark that after all there was just a single French foreign policy; that France had from the start supported the Czechoslovak variant and had been aware of how many Hungarians and Germans would find themselves within the new boundaries; that the Little Entente had been directed not only against Hungary— though she admitted that this was its primary objective and that it was not aimed at any other Central European state. According to Dr Ferencuhová, France's plans for this political alliance were not drafted but only consented to by Czechoslovak politicians; things however, right from the start, did not work out as the French had imagined them.

Under the heading "Stefan Osusky and the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic," Ladislas Deák described the life of the secretary of the Czechoslovak delegation to the Peace Conference. In 1906, the 17-year-old Osusky, after being excluded from all the schools of Hungary, went to the United States, where he ultimately graduated in law. His political forum was the paper *Slovensky Dennik* and he drew up the 1915 Cleveland agreement. In 1916 he returned to Europe, entrusted with the task of informing the Allies on Slovak policy. From the beginning he stood for the break up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. During the war he was a journalist in London, then in Paris; later he started a press agency in Switzerland. Since, of all the Slovak exiles, he was best acquainted with Hungarian conditions, he devoted all his energy to counteracting Hungarian propaganda. He exposed—that was Deák's term, unfortunately—the Hungarian nationalist motivations of Count Mihály Károlyi's and Oszkár Jászi's plans, alleging that the democratic and liberal ideas were merely a cloak to conceal these motivations. As secretary of the commission on the peace treaty after 1919, he used all his energy to oppose those who favoured Slovak autonomy within Hungary; he had the politically influential leaders of that movement put under surveillance. All documents relating to the Czechoslovak state and the Entente's relevant diplomatic activities were in his hands—a powerful weapon indeed. His duties differed from those he had originally been assigned to perform in Europe. He concentrated first of all on the preparation of peace negotiations with Hungary, lest the Hungarian amendments to the proposed frontier be accepted. He did all the homework necessary to counteract the work of the Hungarian delegation. What helped was that the Hungarian delegation was headed by Count Albert Apponyi, on whom he had trained his sights well in advance. He supplied the U. S., British and French delegates —as well as the press— with much material on

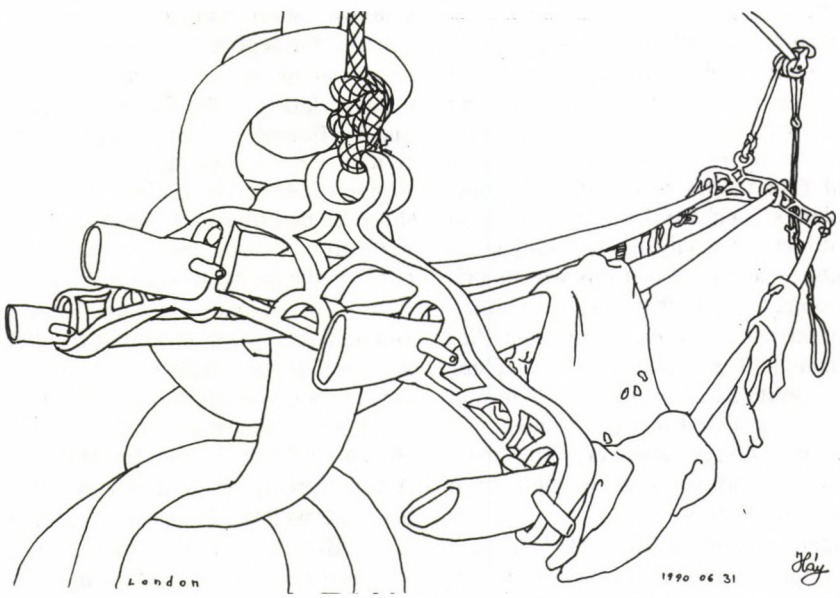
Apponyi's political past, and the extreme nationalism of Apponyi's tenure of office as Minister of Public Worship and Instruction. Deák pointed out that it was largely to the credit of Osusky that Hungarian hopes for changes in the course of the peace negotiations were frustrated.

The discussion after the papers covered a wide range, dealing with the character and effect of the assimilation processes in the era of dualism, the role of the Hungarian-Slovak linguistic demarcation line, the authenticity of the ethnographic information available to the peace conference and the Great Powers, and the function of the efforts to achieve Czecho-Slovak unification. Magda Ádám drew attention to the fact that official French policy (as well as Millerand and Paléologue individually) was clearly opposed to the idea of the Little Entente, because they realized that it would divide the region and push Hungary sooner or later into the arms of the Germans. The Little Entente did not help the cause of consolidation in the region, but it was an old idea of Eduard Benes.

Dániel Szabó drew attention to the dangers of nostalgia for the past, of historians being preoccupied with the question "when were we hurt", instead of "what happened, when and why".

Géza Buzinkay produced data on press policy and censorship, to help in the differentiation and periodization of Hungarian minorities policy, calling attention to the marked differences between a central policy of a more or less liberal character and the narrow-minded nationalist local authorities, and to the need to distinguish between liberal legislation of a European standard and backward administration.

In the two days of discussion, more than once monologues replaced the exchange of ideas (this is what Dusan Kovác called the "tunnel vision effect"). All the same, certain changes were manifest. After decades of ritual meetings between Hungarian and Slovak historians, when problems of real interest to the historians had been systematically kept out, serious and controversial questions were now argued out. The seeds of promise of a subsequent real dialogue have been sown, and the prospects are much better than as regards contacts with historians of some other nations in the region.



Magda Ádám

New Sources on Trianon

The recent availability of once classified (mostly French) archive material allows scholars to reconstruct the history of Central Europe after the Great War. The Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences is publishing the relevant documents in a four-volume series titled *A Quai d'Orsay és Magyarország* (The Quai d'Orsay and Hungary). The first two volumes dealing with the Treaty of Trianon are already in press.

These French archive sources, and some of my research in Washington, clearly impel us to go into more detail on how national independence and unification movements affected the Great Powers and their role in the birth of the successor states. The relationship between independence and unification movements and the Allied Powers cannot be discussed in a general manner out of context. The situation in the early stages of the war, when the Allies "bought" military assistance by promising chunks of enemy territory, changed between 1917 and January 1918: the US entered the war, Russia dropped out and Austria-Hungary put out secret peace feelers to keep the Habsburg Empire intact. A further change came half a year before the end of the war when, having failed to detach Austria-Hungary from Germany through a separate peace, the Allies decided in Versailles, on June 3rd, 1918 to carve up the Habsburg Empire. During the first period the Allies completely ignored the principle of national self-determination. The secret pacts, concluded in London and Bucharest, promising large territories to Italy and Rumania, were based on other considerations.

In the second phase the Allies were already giving thought to the principle of national self-determination; however, they failed to consistently apply that principle in the case of Austria-Hungary. That was partly because the US, and especially President Woodrow Wilson (who made the Allies deal with national sovereignity) wished to preserve the Habsburg Empire. As far as the Empire was concerned, Wilson's famous principles of self-determination did not mean that nations were to break away. (The President himself stressed that.) Rather than tear it apart, Wilson intended to have the Empire federalized. With one of his friends and advisors at its head, a Commision of Inquiry studied that problem exhaustively. Charles Seymour, a nember of that Commission and, later, a US delegate to the Peace Conference, drew up a plan for a federated Austria-Hungary. The text accompanying a map was signed on May 25th, 1919, five months before the war ended. According to the plan, the Austro-Hungarian Empire would have been replaced by a federation of six states: Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, Yugoslavia, Poland-Ruthenia and Transylvania, with populations ranging from 16 million (Hungary) to slightly over 2.5 million (Transylvania). Wilson did not support Czechoslovak, Yugoslav and

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Rumanian independence and unification movements, he did not recognize their National Committees. Nor did he meet their leaders, who tried hard to arrange invitations to the White House. He refused to see even T. G. Masaryk, the most prominent figure in the national independence movements, until mid-June 1918. By that time his ideas concerning the unity of Austria-Hungary had been overtaken by events: France and Britain had dropped the idea of preserving Austria-Hungary and had recognized the independence movements. Wilson's rational plan was no longer realistic.

After their failure to detach Austria-Hungary from Germany and make a separate peace with her, the Allies adopted the idea of creating small states. Only then, a mere six months before the end of the war, did the objectives of national independence and unification movements coincide with the intentions of the Allies. The Allies started supporting them without further hesitation. Wilson did, however, maintain a kind of ambiguity on the matter until the end of the war.

Trianon and the question of small statehood should be given careful consideration and be discussed without bias. Such words carry different meanings in Czecho–Slovakia and Hungary. The former experienced the conclusion of its process of becoming a state — the latter came apart at the ethnic seams. Trianon is the sum of those two factors. Neither may be ignored. It must be recognized that several ethnically mixed states were created. In other words, the pre-war situation was recreated on a smaller scale. Political boundaries did not coincide with ethnic ones. Controversy was heightened by the fact that the new states contained large ethnic groups in communities that overlapped borders.

The recognition of that fact resulted in the Allies beginning to be deeply involved in protecting ethnic minorities. They attempted to build up a structure to protect them. Wilson initiated it, but was unable to push through his original idea of ensuring extensive minority rights. Still, his ideas on protecting ethnic minorities could no longer be ignored. Only two of the successor states, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, accepted the Allies' decisions on minorities without protest. Masaryk wanted to create a state resembling Switzerland, where authorities would conduct their business in the language of a community's majority population, and the rights of ethnic minorities would be ensured by law. Masaryk was never able to implement his liberal ideas, even though conditions for the minorities of Czechoslovakia were far better than those prevailing in all the other successor states. Hungary had every reason to agree with the Allies' decisions on minorities and, unlike the other successor states, even welcomed the idea of international monitoring. This was not surprising, with every third native Hungarian becoming, as a result of Trianon, a citizen of one of the neighbouring states. Thus it was in Hungary's own interest to see that the protection of the minority and human rights of Hungarians was guaranteed by treaties and international monitoring. Granting the rights required for the minorities remaining in Hungary was no major problem: ethnic minorities in Hungary came to slightly under 9 per cent of the population. Another significant difference lay in the fact that Hungary's ethnic minorities did not live in contiguous areas; they were scattered over the country, a fact which excluded the possibility of territorial autonomy for them. Furthermore, Hungary's ethnic minorities did not live near the borders across which their kin lived in their own sovereign states. In spite of all this, even Hungary failed to abide by the minority treaties, however easy it would have been to do so. Old reflexes working against ethnic minorities prevented it from doing so. Being a part of the hated Treaty of Trianon made those regulations unpopular.

The successor states, including Hungary and Czechoslovakia, thus did not observe the stipulations of the minority treaties and ignored the fact that there were different ethnic groups in their territories. Professing the concept of nation-states, they did their worst to make that fiction come true.

There is another controversial area in the process of creating national self-determination. Earlier I described how slowly the Allies adopted the idea of creating small states. They gave their blessing to it in the spring of 1918, hoping that such a solution would be a temporary one, and the independent small states would eventually re-integrate. In the period discussed, even Masaryk thought along those lines, as he explained in his book *Nova Europa* (New Europe). There was good reason why, after giving up his intention of federalizing Austria-Hungary, Wilson adopted Masaryk's ideas on the unification of the independent states. Nor is it mere chance that Britain and France came forward with integration plans immediately after the war, wishing to bring together the successor states through preferences, custom tariffs and even a confederation.

But the individual states could no longer be united. All small nations, victors and defeated alike, rejected those efforts. The former suspected that cooperation based on the earlier division of labour would sooner or later serve the interests of the defeated, recreating a principal-subordinate relationship. As to the defeated, they were afraid of cooperation reinforcing the status quo, a status they were interested in weakening and eventually destroying. For a short time Hungary was an exception, genuinely interested in Maurice Paléologue's endeavours to unite the states of Central Europe around Hungary. In the 1930s all the successor states realized that integration would be the best way to prosperity for the region. But it was too late then. Germany was already strong enough to block the attempts at an integration that ran counter to German interests.

In the 1920s all the successor states rejected multilateral, close economic cooperation. Political frontiers became economic borders. Nationalistic economic policies were adopted with a view to total autarchy, even though the conditions for this were lacking. This is mostly true for the victorious successor states. The region became Balkanized. The ealier relatively efficient economic integration was broken up. All that took place just as economic development everywhere was pointing towards integration.

To sum up, Trianon, which promoted the birth of sovereign multinational states, is a complex historical question that needs a complex and detailed approach.

The next area that deserves more thorough reviewing is the Allies' post-war policy towards Central Europe. They had been, as our sources show, far from having any detailed, finite proposals for a post-Versailles Hungary.

At Versailles on June 13th, 1918, when they decided to break up the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they lacked any positive plans regarding Central Europe. They did not know what they actually wanted, nor how they should replace the Empire. (Only Czechoslovaks had such plans.) It was clearly seen by many that the best replacement for the Empire would be a homogeneous Central Europe; accordingly they wanted to prevent the region from splitting into two opposing camps. It was also obvious that easing the punishment for the defeated was a condition for creating a homogeneous Central Europe.

Such a creation was the aim of the US and Britain and, initially at least, also of France. Clemenceau wanted to see a homogeneous Central Europe under French influence. Thus he possibly intended to draw its borders along ethnographic lines.

In early December 1918 a change took place in Clemenceau's thinking on Cen-

tral Europe. The Russian problem played a key role here. As the attempts to topple the Bolshevik regime and produce a pro-Entente government in Russia failed, Clemenceau strove to create a Central Europe that would replace Russia, France's former ally in the East, a Central Europe that would serve as a cordon sanitaire and a buffer against Germany. His new Central Europe was to represent France's interests against both Russia and Germany. That was the situation in which the importance of Czechoslovakia and Rumania grew, mainly because of their geographic location. As a logical consequence Clemenceau began to listen more closely to, and actually promote, these two countries' increasingly strong demands for borders drawn on economic, transport and strategic principles.

Some maintain that the French actually encouraged Hungary's neighbours to cross the demarcation lines. None of the newly available sources support this. Except for General Berthelot, who was friendly to Rumania, French military leaders kept protesting against encroachments. Even Clemenceau did too, clashing with Berthelot and considering replacing him.

Apart from the Russian problem, the change in Clemenceau's Central European policy was also impelled by the fact that neither militarily nor economically was France strong enough to handle the whole region. Britain and Italy were also uneasy about the French drive and countered it as best they could. The situation emerging in the region favoured the victorious successor states. Indeed, they made the most of the fact that the Allied forces stayed away from the region and Hungary had disarmed in accordance with the Belgrade Military Convention. French archive sources show that the Allies were often presented with a fait accompli.

According to those sources, the victorious successor states' role in creating the Trianon borders was considerable; much greater than described in standard historical works. The border commission's material provides an interesting picture of the viewpoints of the victorious successor states and the Great Powers. The US, Italy and, initially, Britain argued for ethnic borders and plebiscites. They opposed the victorious successor states' exaggerated demands.

However, the British soon abandoned their earlier position, coming nearer and nearer to that of the French, until they held identical views. The Franco-British position gradually gained the upper hand in the commission. After an extended struggle, the American and Italian delegates gave way.

The victorious successor states, supported by France, could not make their demands effective on two points. They were unable to get the Allies to accept a Yugoslav-Czechoslovak corridor and the river Tisza as the border between Rumania and Hungary.

The new sources also put an end to other misconceptions concerning France, which was not as successful in her Central Europe policy, nor were its relations with the victorious successor states as cloudless as standard views have it. France experienced many failures not only after the armistice but also at the peace conference and even later. She was unable to reach many of her objectives; others she could only reach in part. For example, a homogeneous Central Europe under French influence never came into being. A corridor was not carved out of Hungary and Austria. The dismembered region could not be integrated as, following Clemenceau's fall, Millerand and Paléologue would have liked to. The birth of the Little Entente could not be prevented. Later, when they aligned themselves with the Little Entente, born despite their intentions, the French could not conclude the intended military and political agreements with the members of the Little Entente; instead they had to make do with less important political accords. A mili-

tary agreement only came later and then only with Czechoslovakia—and not in 1924, as many historians say, when the Franco-Czechoslovak treaty was signed, but later, in the context of the Locarno Treaties.

On the other hand, as the new sources clearly indicate, Britain had a much more significant influence than was believed earlier. Albeit mainly economically interested in the region, Britain also intervened in its politics, playing a crucial part in several issues. Britain intervened to defend her economic interests, to counter France's failure to create a French-oriented homogeneous Central Europe, disliking such plans and working against them. On the other hand, Britain agreed on the formation of an anti-French Little Entente and played some part in the failure of Paléologue's Central Europe policy. British diplomacy made a major contribution to preventing an armed clash between Hungary and its neighbours at repeated attempts of the Habsburg King Charles IV to recover his throne.

French archive sources refute the view, widespread both amongst historians and the general public, that the Little Entente was a French-made body. On the contrary, the sources show that the French government did not favour Benes's plan for a Little Entente and did everything it could to prevent it. Czechoslovakia's foreign minister was told that he had chosen an evil and dangerous path, as the intended military and political bloc would split Central Europe in two: the victors and the vanquished. It would also increase the danger of conflict, erect hurdles in the way of natural relations, and isolate Hungary, which would then inevitably side with Germany, hoping for support there. Benes ignored the protests from Paris; he even increased diplomatic efforts to create the Little Entente. Influenced by the secret Franco-Hungarian negotiations, Yugoslavia and Rumania started warming to Benes' suggestions, which they had treated with reservation before. Earlier they had refused to form a Little Entente, as a Hungary, economically exhausted, disarmed and lacking a Great Power's support, was no threat to them, while both faced real dangers posed by Italy to Yugoslavia and by Soviet Russia to Rumania. They would not have been protected against those dangers, by the alliance offered by Benes. Czechoslovakia's foreign minister had to show that Hungary was supported by a Great Power and thus posed a threat to all three of them. France was said to have made a secret pact with Hungary, undertaking to revise her borders and rearm her army. Even a copy of the secret pact was produced and Benes published it. The document was forged: France had never made any such agreement with Hungary. However, Benes's diplomatic manuoeuvre was successful; first Yugoslavia, then Rumania signed the Little Entente protocols. Charles IV's first attempt to return was a factor in overcoming Rumania's hesitation.

It would be important, I think, for the neighbouring states' historians, including Czechs and Slovaks, to take the new research results into consideration when discussing the birth of the Little Entente and the part it played in the region. That is already being done by Hungarian historians.

Finally, let me mention yet another problem to be reviewed and discussed in a more detailed manner. This concerns the policies pursued by Hungarian governments in the post-war and Trianon period. How suitable were the policies they pursued? Were they aware of the new situation, did they take it into consideration? I do not think they were or did. Hungarian governments and society were caught unawares by the coming apart of a thousand-year-old Hungary, followed by Trianon. The trauma was tremendous. Completely isolated, lacking foreign connections and political experience, successive Hungarian governments were unable

to assess the situation. Thus, especially at the beginning, they entertained unrealistic notions. In their attempts to save the country, they strove to preserve historical Hungary instead of concentrating efforts on preventing large numbers of Hungarians from being detached from the country. Count Mihály Károlyi, Prime Minister and later president of the liberal Hungarian Republic, hoped to realize his aims with Western help. That was the reason for Hungary's immediate fulfilment of the Belgrade Military Convention's clause concerning the Hungarian army. Károlyi set out to organize and reorganize the armed forces only when it had become obvious that he had chased a will of the wisp. It took him a long time to realize that the Western powers had turned away from the burden he had become for them. Typically, he expected the French occupation forces to defend the country against Czechs, Rumanians, and Serbians, although the Belgrade accord with General Franchet d'Esperey had already become inoperative in December 1918.

The hopes of Count Mihály Károlyi and Béla Kun for alliances with Italy and Soviet Russia were unrealistic. All the more so in the former case since these were irreconcilable with the Yugoslav card played not only by them, but also by all successive Hungarian governments, to prevent Hungary being encircled by the Little Entente.

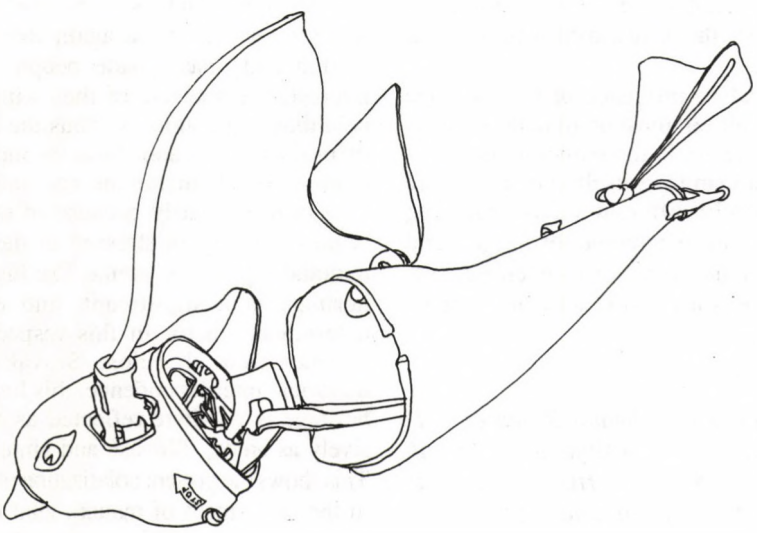
Count Albert Apponyi's performance in Paris was also inadequate in those circumstances. He made some reference to native Hungarian populations becoming minorities in alien countries and underlined the necessity for plebiscites. Rather than stressing arguments in those terms, he spoke generally about having to correct borders. In Paris that was rightly interpreted as an attempt to defend Hungary's integrity. In his memoirs Lloyd George mentions that, rather than concentrating on concrete modifications of Hungary's borders (which might have borne some fruit), Count Apponyi spoke in general terms about the necessity of revising those borders.

Beginning in March 1920, the secret negotiations between France and Hungary that touched on the possibility of some revised peace terms also proved that Budapest had not assessed the situation adequately and was thus unable to work for a meaningful compromise. Both Millerand who became Premier after the elections of January 20th in France, and Paléologue, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (especially the latter) opposed Clemenceau's Central Europe policy, as it had divided the region, turning Austria and Hungary, two states important for economic, geographical, strategic and transport reasons, against France, facilitating British and Italian influence, and eventually pushing both into the arms of Germany. The latter prospect in particular had an alarming effect on the new helmsmen in France. They did not consider an economically and politically broken up Central Europe, divided in two camps, to be an appropriate counterweight against the threat posed by Germany and Soviet Russia. Thus they intended to integrate the region, first economically, and later, politically. They wished to make good some of the Clemenceau team's outrageous injustices concerning Hungary; in other words they wished to revise the peace terms. That line was represented most of all by Paléologue who, going beyond economic cooperation in the course of his secret negotiations with Count Pál Teleki, Imre Csáky, István Bethlen, and Károly Halmos, also discussed the possibility of revising the peace terms. The Hungarians' territorial demands made the secret negotiations impossible. These excessive demands only strengthened Paléologue's scepticism regarding the realism of his own ideas. His plan came to nought thanks to the British-supported French opposition and to Benes.

Hungarian governments assessed the situation soundly after the ratification of

the Treaty of Trianon, and started adapting themselves to it. Referring to Millerand's covering letter of May 6, 1920, which referred to a possible future revision, during his talks with Benes in March 1921, Teleki only suggested that the border be drawn with more attention to ethnographic considerations. He did so all the more since, according to information at his disposal, Masaryk (who never really fought for the Csallóköz area) was willing to listen but was turned down by Benes.

After that episode, Bethlen, referring also to the Millerand letter, only fought to save this or that village (usually without success) in the phase of actually drawing the new borders, a phase which dragged on until 1923. Contrary to what a number of historical works maintain, Count Bethlen, the Prime Minister, did not struggle for a general revision of Trianon from his first day in office. On the contrary, Bethlen adapted to the Europe of Versailles. He engaged in a wide range of activities to secure Hungarian membership of the League of Nations. He gave up the idea of revision for the time being. He took measures against those irredentists that used violence. Nevertheless, that does not mean Bethlen accepted Trianon, as can be clearly seen from his policies in the late 1920s. But in the period under discussion he exchanged revisionism for political rationality.



Július Mésáros

Hungarian and Slovak History: a Distorting Mirror

In the 19th century a number of nations in Europe laid the foundations of their national independence and sovereignty, establishing the basis for their economic, political, scientific or cultural emancipation. Others had to fight hard for mere survival at that time. Distortions inherited from the 19th century adversely influenced their 20th century efforts to achieve national emancipation. The survival of such distortions has closely affected the national minorities issue in various places. This is also true for the ways of tackling them.

This historical heritage explains the present-day tangle in the nationality problem, the polarization of opinions over its genesis, its political appraisal and solution, in particular as regards the nations of what once was Austria-Hungary, with special reference to the Slovak Republic or, rather, the Czecho-Slovak Federal Republic.

The malign influence of this heritage makes itself felt most of all in three situations or, rather, in three directions.

First, it manifests itself in that there are still radically different views regarding the expression of national sovereignty and the extent and forms of its exercise; second, there is invariably no consensus on how and to what extent this sovereignty should be manifested, and how far it should be guaranteed in the event of a new arrangement of the Czecho-Slovak federation; third, public opinion is largely divided on how to settle relations with the minorities in the Slovak Republic, within the scope of our own national and state sovereignty. This applies to Hungarians in the first place. How can protection of their ethnic identity and their rights be assured in harmony with legislation that also is binding on them? After the disintegration of historical Hungary, some of these minorities were divided from their fellow nationals and became part of the population of post-Trianon Slovakia and Czechoslovakia, just as Slovaks found themselves inhabiting others of the successor states. The change which is at present taking place in the region has again aroused attention and has made people more interested in the fate of their kinfolk in neighbouring countries. Thus the minority problem, over and above the increased interest which historians and the press take in it, primarily because of politics, is now once again stressed in the international diplomatic arena. The historical heritage is a significant, and even a determinant factor in this respect, too.

Apart from the close Slovak-Czech historical interdependence, this historical heritage is nowhere reflected as expressively as among Slovaks and Hungarians. This shows the present polarization of views, in the assessment of matters vital to their own national minorities, and in the diplo-

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matic efforts to settle the situation. However, the point at issue here is not only the minority problem, but—in these historic times—first of all how our nations should join the democratic union of European nations or, rather, the road they should follow to achieve this. With a view to finding the common road and proceeding along it together without fear or prejudice, it is necessary, for both Hungarians and Slovaks, to look back once more in order to satisfy ourselves of the soundness of what we know about the past we have had in common for more than a thousand years, and our seventy years of living side by side as neighbours, as well as of the experience of the strains of these seventy years.

The first question which excites me not only as a historian but also as a citizen, is whether the codes of the statehood we have shared between us in historical Hungary are known to us and, if so, to what extent, and whether they are still alive in the minds of past and, especially the present generations, and what sources feed, maintain and modify these codes. Neither from an historical nor from a sociological angle have we looked into this matter, which is why I cannot preclude the possibility that there is a measure of subjectivity in my own views. I think, however, that I am not far from the truth if I state that still very much alive and in the everyday memory of an overwhelming majority of ordinary Slovaks, as well as in the press and in some history texts, is the view that historical Hungary was for a thousand years quite simply a prison for the Slovak nation. Persistently present in the minds of Slovaks to this very day is thus the view that historical Hungary was, for Slovaks, an oppressive and alien state. Closely related, quite logically, is another wide-spread view, that the Hungarians, the presumed dominant nation in historical Hungary, have from times of old been our oppressors and mortal enemies. Similar views held by the majority of Slovaks with regard to the historical Hungarian state, and consequently the Hungrian nation, were presented as fact during the latter half of the 19th and especially in the 20th century. As far as I know, these views derive from three main sources. The first and oldest source is that in the period when historical Hungary changed from a feudal state into a civil, constitutional state, the Slovaks' historical and natural rights to equal status as an independent nation within the Hungary of that time were not recognized and were systematically denied. The justification behind Hungary's national policy in refusing to recognize this right of the Slovaks was that, historically speaking, the only vehicle of Hungarian statehood was the Hungarian nation. The explanation offered in support of this argument was that foreign ethnic elements were tolerated in the Hungarian realm only as guests or as subjugated races. It was only possible for them to continue living in the Hungarian state if they gave up their national identity, became part of the state-forming nation and gradually merged with it. In the first half of the 19th century, when movements to achieve freedom for nationalities began, and during the initial stage of the struggle waged for equality of civil and national rights in multinational historical Hungary, there came into being the political doctrine of a future Hungary homogeneous from the national point of view, as the principle of its transformation into a nation state. Following the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise, this doctrine proved to be, especially to the Slovaks, a means of torpedoing their further national emancipation and gave rise to extensive oppression. It was in this period that the Slovak historical memory was born, in which the Hungarian state and its ruling nation were engraved as wicked step-parents.

The second source, whose influence in time extended to the period following the break-up of historical Hungary, was the political propaganda of the years of the first Czechoslovak Republic, and Slovak na-

tional propaganda in conjunction with it.

Since the new state had emerged and been formed through the idea of national liberation of Czechs and Slovaks, one of its necessarily most important aims was to keep up and strengthen, across the broadest possible social range of Czechs and Slovaks, the awareness that leaving Austria-Hungary was not leaving their own country, but a cruel and oppressive state. It was fairly easy, particularly in the case of Slovaks, for propaganda to exploit the memory of how they had fared in Hungary, to generalize those memories, or project them back to the situation of Slovaks over the thousand years of Hungary's existence. School and text books, in addition to the press, were the means of strengthening this deformed memory of Hungarian history and the role which Slovaks had played in it; this function was also served by the mostly amateurish or half-amateur works of historians. Slovak historiography of the kind which ought to have surveyed seriously the whole of the national history, including the history of Hungary, came into being only about half a century later. In that period, however, it was already crippled by the doctrines and political directives of the Marxist interpretation of history. This philosophy continued, applying dogmas concerning the exploitive and oppressive functions of social formations and states of the pre-socialist era, to keep alive in the Slovak national community the belief in the alien character of Hungary and the Hungarians, although this was done with a certain adjustment for class, on the grounds that the Hungarians were to the Slovaks an oppressive and alien nation.

The third source for the invigoration and survival of the distorted views formed on Hungary and the Hungarians, views which Czechoslovak and Slovak propaganda imprinted on the minds of the majority of the Slovak nation, was the irredentism of Horthy's Hungary. In fact, the philosophy and tactics of this irrendentism were based entirely on the proposition that the division into succesor states of historical Hungary was tantamount to an outrage against the Hungarian nation, a violent act that disgraced their thousand years of statehood and their state-creating role, an act violating the Hungarians' historical mission, which was seen as being that of defenders and promoters of European Christian culture and civilization in this region. The Hungarian government and the irredentist movement gave expression to their intransigence in the face of the verdicts of Versailles and Trianon by pursuing a wide-range of activities in the successor states, with the aid of a ramified network of agents established among the Hungarian minorities living there. There was also carefully nursed a spirit of revanche and pan-Magyar patriotism across the broadest strata of the Hungarian nation. Tangible evidence of this was given by rhyming slogans like "Mutilated Hungary is not a country, Greater Hungary is paradise!", "Let's recover everything!", or the children's everyday prayer before starting school in the morning: "I believe in one God, I believe in one country, I believe in one eternal, divine truth, I believe in the resurrection of Greater Hungary!". In the years when Hitler came on the scene with his programme of expansionism, these slogans were heard more and more often in Slovakia as well. Here they must have had a destructive effect, not only on Slovak-Hungarian neighbourly relations but also on the memory of the thousand years of coexistence of Slovaks and Hungarians inside the boundaries of historical Hungary.

Alongside other channels of information at the time, Hungarian historiography equally contributed much to strengthening the belief that historical Hungary was actually an Hungarian state or the state of the Hungarian nation. Numerous history-books and other works on the history of Hungary did not even mention the existence of non-Magyar nations, and if they

did, especially in the 19th century, they referred to them as a destructive force opposed to Hungarian statehood that denied the state-creating and cultural mission of the Hungarian nation. A role of no mean significance was played in this by the annexation of South Slovak territories to Horthy's Hungary after the Vienna Award of 1938, as well as by the treatment of the Slovak minority in Hungary.

It is not easy, nor can it be done at one fell swoop, to rectify both our nations' distorted, deformed knowledge of the shared past, the vital sources of which knowledge have still not yet dried up, as we can still see for ourselves. It is not only impossible to sweep this duty off the table, but that it is perhaps just in our time that conditions in Europe are at last conducive to doing something positive.

It would do much good to historiography in both countries if we carried out a comparison of the history of Hungary in many volumes and the Slovak counterparts to offer a profound analysis of the ideological orientation of those works. Although they are still dependent on Marxist ideas, yet it is a remarkable fact that they have moved in a more positive direction, towards an objective, or at least a more objective, presentation of Hungarian history. In this synthesis, the Slovak notion of the history of the Hungarian state and of the life and development of ethnic Slovaks inside Hungary, has already visibly moved away from the presentation of Hungarian history with unambiguous deformations as the history of the prison of the Slovak nation. On the contrary, there is a clear tendency to present historical Hungary as the Slovaks' homeland for centuries and the Slovak ethnic community as an active participant in Hungary's history. This goes also for the era in which Slovakia was exposed to the pressure of modern trends of development and to far-reaching internal changes, that is, the era when the feudal state was converted into a civil one, from a supranational into a national one, into a country where all nations strove for guarantees of equality of status. An appraisal of the Slovak synthesis shows a more complex picture of the question and of the reply to it; the question is how far it will be possible, when attention is logically and primarily concentrated on the history of the Slovaks or their national territory, with no set administrative or local government boundaries, to bring all this into harmony with the context of overall Hungarian development and the entire process should not have the effect of over-simplifying, distorting and obscuring the issue.

As regards the new Hungarian synthesis, the positive shift I can see is that it presents the multinational character of historical Hungary in a more expressive and less rigid manner than earlier summaries did. As against the Slovak synthesis, the Hungarian one has positive features also in that, owing to the priority of the attention devoted to historical Hungary, it takes into consideration, in a much more complex manner, the historical role of the ethnic communities living on Hungarian territory. Nevertheless, these works carry on a conscious or unconscious tendency to identify the history of the Hungarian state with that of the Hungarian people. This is made still more expressive by the Hungarian terminology used in treatises on history and constitutional law. This terminology uses identical words for the pre-Trianon multinational Hungarian state, for its institutions and other tangible assets and for all that appertains to the ethnic community of Hungarians. In English an attempt is made to deal with this problem.

Both the most serious and the most complicated task facing Slovak and Hungarian historiography now is to seek the common denominator needed to familiarize ourselves with our common history. In particular we need to appraise those vast social, economic, cultural and

nation-forming processes which took place in Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries, and which resulted in forced changes to the functions of multinational Hungarian society, of Hungarian feudal society and of the Hungarian state. In this respect, our positions ought to come closer on the cardinal issue raised by the explanation of the causes of the disintegration of historical Hungary. In order to eliminate the confusion which this has created in the minds of our nations, we ought to explain what circumstances, conditions and forces had led to the collapse of old Hungary. This would be of importance, not from the point of view of times past, but in the interest of eliminating future possible injustices deriving from the heritage of the past, in the interest of future friendship between the Slovak and the Hungarian nations.

From what I know of the history of 19th century Hungary, I think that it is possible to come to an objective understanding of the different aspects of the national question and of the fate of the Hungarian state. To achieve this, we have to look for the key in the transformation of multinational historical Hungary's supranational state power into the supreme power of one nation, a process during which a feudal society, multilingual in terms of nationality, the *natio Hungarica,* changed into a *natio Magyarica* exercising both the functions of the hegemon of state power and that of the leading political force of the renascent Hungarian nation. This metamorphosis of Hungarian feudal society had as a necessary consequence the birth, in the early 19th century, of the doctrine of the existence in Hungary of a single state-forming nation; this doctrine underlay the vision of the country's transformation into a Hungarian national state.

I am of the opinion that historical Hungary's subsequent fate was determined not by the revolution of 1848-1849 but by the first twenty-five years after the revolution. The outcome of the revolution was a first and very difficult test of the viability of the aforementioned state doctrine, which should have served as a lesson for the future. Which, I believe, it did. The post-revolutionary period compelled a number of important Hungarian and Slovak politicians and statesmen earnestly to take stock of the vicissitudes of Hungary's political development in the pre-revolutionary period—including the entanglement which set in during the revolutionary years 1848-1849—in order to confront these facts with develoments within the empire and in all of Europe. From this they were to draw new conclusions regarding prognoses for Hungary's future development. This stock-taking, together with very serious thinking and planning for the future transformation of the Hungarian state, a draft constitution and a plan for a more or less wide-ranging solution of the national problem, was carried out by politicians of the post-revolutionary period, such as Lajos Kossuth, Ferenc Pulszky, József Eötvös, Zsigmond Kemény and many others. On the Slovak side a balance was struck, immediately following the revolution, by S. Vozár and Ludovit Stúr, and after them by S. M. Dazner, J. Palárik, J. Mally and others. Slovak and Hungarian historians are familiar with these conclusions, programmes and prognoses. For the most part, however, the historical works of both nations are inadequate and distorted.

Ottó Orbán

My Statue in Poona

By Indian standards, Poona is a medium-size university town in Maharashtra State, seventy-five miles southeast of Bombay. Its inhabitants number seven hundred and eighteen thousand.

1

I keep my things in order. A whimsical sort of order, but an order all the same. Thus, I always place letters that have to be answered, and inscribed volumes, so that my notebook and typewriter are inaccessible, using these and other objects to keep me from my work—which usually irritates me to the extent that I prefer to get on with writing the letters, in the course of which the envelopes of acknowledged letters, the wrappings of the inscribed volumes—occasionally the letters and the books themselves—end up being flung onto the floor. This continues until at least a corner of the object aimed at (in the case of car keys, the key ring) becomes visible. At which point I joyfully stop, only to begin the whole rigmarole from scratch the following day. There is no other way to get things done, I hate writing letters. Even so I sometimes cheat, allow that feverish moment of shame to pass, and then it is too late. The intention springs a leak and slowly but surely begins to sink, as a result of which the unacknowledged item, be it letter or parcel, abruptly finds itself in the out pile, among hotel bills, cards and other documents that no one would bother to keep, stacked in order of arrival: everything has its proper place in the out pile. Just as growth-rings define a tree's age, so the place—height and depth—of a document in the pile defines its age. But I cannot find S. G. Mungekar's card anywhere. Here's an unfilled prescription, the card of the president of the Slovene P. E. N. Club, a circular asking me to buy a log cabin in Cedar Rapids on an instalment plan, a several year old copy of the Finnair monthly inscibed by the editor, and quite a few other things that might come in useful some day. It is only S. G. Mungekar's card that is missing. So all I can do is surmise that S. G. Mungekar must be one of the two Indian journalists whom I met some

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Ottó Orbán *is a poet and essayist, translator of many British, American, Spanish and other poets. This is from the appendix to a recently reissued book he wrote on his first visit to India in the 1960s.*

months ago at the request of the Hungarian Journalists' Federation, in the coffee-shop at Journalist House. It was I who suggested we should meet there, on neutral ground so to speak, so I would not be obliged to take them under my wing for a whole day. The two Indians shook hands in the European manner and presented me with their cards. I wanted to give them one of my own in return but did not have one on me. They both noted my name and address in their memo-pads and industriously continued to note practically everything I said. I probably spoke of my war-time childhood, or some such subject. After an hour I began to fidget; they thanked me warmly for the most interesting conversation. It did cross my mind to drive them to their next appointment before going home, but finally decided that a country—in accordance with the regulations in force—which requests its writer-son (after a book published on India, six months spent in the United States, and several lectures delivered in English) to submit to an oral proficiency examination in English at the Kossuth Club (where the sterner of the two examiners, an elderly lady, interrupting the conversation on India, suddenly changed the subject, began to cross-question me, in case I should be reciting a set speech: "You live in Frankel Leó utca, would you tell us about Frankel, please?"—well, a country that can do that to you, can transport its guests in state-owned cars, or have them walk or blow them up into balloons, in compliance with the appropriate item in the schedule of the cultural exchange agreement. For all that, I did suffer some pangs of conscience as I bade farewell to the two Indians. They, I must say, were all enthusiasm. They had found themselves a Hungarian theme. There was fire and trust in their eyes.

2

Poona, 26th October, 1979

Dear Orbán Ottó,

I was inspired to write this letter, when I read an article written by Shri S. G. Mungekar in "Sakal" Daily.

A salient feature of your poetic life touched my heart. It is true that your poem is your life. I being a poet fully agree with your poetic ideas. As I came to know that you have translated a good number of poems in other languages, I desired to write to you.

The enclosed letter speaks itself. Only today I have appealed to all the Consulates in Bombay for translation of my poem. As I did not get address of Hungeri, I am approaching you.

Please read this poem written on "International Year of Child". I shall be very happy if you can translate the same in Spanish and other languages also. On hearing from you I can send the remaining portion of my poem by air-mail.

Awaiting a line of reply.

(Enclosed with the above)

Poona, 23rd October, 1979

Dear Sir,

This 1979 year, being International Year of the Child, I was inspired to write a poem especially for this occasion.

In this poem, I have endeavoured to project the aspect of what we owe to children and what will make the little ones cheerful. The poem may be published in such a manner, that the message travels far and wide. The poem is based on UNO's ideals for this year. I am mentioning some portion from my poem.

Our Call

(Title)

We want to break the bonds of unfreedom, will you be with us?
This is our call, call of countless children, will you hearken to us?
Mother Earth is our birth place,
We have known no caste, creed, religion,
Mankind is our only bond
We declare that all men are brothers
In identifying with this sense of human unity, will you be with us?
This is our call, call of countless children, will you hearken to us?

The poem is of seven hundred words having 27 stanzas. Prior to this I have written on International subject like "World Peace", etc.

I desire that this poem may be translated in your country. Publication in magazines, Broadcasting on TV, Radio, etc., will be highly appreciated.

Please go through this poem, so that I can send the entire work to you. Awaiting reply from your goodself.

With best wishes,

Yours faithfully
(N. G. D—e)

Poona, 19th November 1979

Dear Orbán Ottó,
Sir,

I read you topic in "Sakal Paper" which is published in Poona which was very interesting.

So I request you to send poem written by you. I have hobby of collecting stamps. So if you have stamps of Hungary please send to me.

I am taking education in Fergusson College, Poona in 12th standard.

Thanking you

Yours faithfully,
P. B. V.—t

Poona, 13th December, 1979

Respected Sir,

I read a minute of Interview you had with the Indian Editor Mr S. G. Mungekar (Editor of Daily Sakal *Poona) which was published in Sunday 21st October.*

I am very glad to know that your poem is the sign of Hungarian History and reflection of Social, Cultural and Political life of Hungarian people.

I am one of well wisher and amature of International literature.

I shall be obliged if you send me your most favourate Poem duly translated in English for my personnel record.

Thanking you,

Yours faithfully,
H. S. G—e

Poona, 2nd January 1980

Dear Sir,

Wish you a happy New Year!

I read an interesting acount about yourself in the Sunday edition dated 21st October 1979 of Daily Sakal—*a Marathi language newspaper of Poona, edited and written by Mr. S. G. Mungekar, who recently visited European countries and met you also.*

I am really happy to read about your work which is quite interesting to any reader who happens to read it.

At that time I was reminded of a pen Friend of mine who was living in Budhapest. His name was George Donnenberg who was a Jew but quite a nice pen pal of mine. I was in touch in correspondence with him up to Second World War of 1939, when he could not write to me as Hitler of Germany had invaded almost all European Countries.

My friend Mr George Donnenberg had invited me to visit his country Hungary and meet him personally and also his parents.

I do not know what has happened during the Second World War. I am really unfortunate as I could not visit Hungary for want of money, finance, etc, etc, and during and after World War II I could not do anything.

I am a resident of Poona since 1960, and lost all my papers, life's earning, property etc. in Paushet Dam Floods of 1961 and I am really unfortunate for I lost all the letters written by my dearest pen friend Mr George Donnenberg, a resident of Budhapest in 1939 aged about 18 years at that time.

I am now 63 years old in 1979.

I have a great desire to visit all European countries including your great country Hungary but for want of money, finances, etc., I am rally unlucky so

far. I have written short stories, etc., in Marathi language (my mother tongue) and were published in Daily Sakal.
I hope you will organize help for me!
Thanking you, and wish your a happy New Year

Yours faithfully,
D. P. D—d

3

I picture Poona to myself. It is probably like all the other Indian cities. Madness and hope in the smoky brilliance. And in front of the station, amidst the sea of sacred cows, bicycles and its-a-wonder-they're-still-running taxis, there stands a huge bronze statue. With just two words on the pedestal: *Otto Orban.*

4

Eight months ago a piece of mine, "Örkény in Poona", was published in the Budapest weekly *Élet és Irodalom.*

Eight months of Hungarian reality. Sometimes you can't get this, sometimes that. "Sorry, in short supply." The only thing that comes to mind when I think of angels is tinsel. That too would be unavailable for sure if I needed it. Fortunately, I don't.

That is when the letter from America (in Hungarian) arrived—with a covering note.

(A printed letter-head, crossed out in ink)
THE RACQUET CLUB OF PALM SPRINGS, LOS ANGELES
OCT. 3, 1980.
Élet és Irodalom Hetilap

Dear Sir,

An article by Ottó Orbán, "Örkény in Poona" was published in Volume XXIV No. 5. Feb. 2, 1980 of your weekly.

Would you please forward the enclosed letter to Mr Orbán since I do not have his address.

Thanking you in advance for your trouble I remain,

Yours sincerely,
George Desi

(A printed letter-head, crossed out in ink)
THE RACQUET CLUB OF PALM SPRINGS
LOS ANGELES, OCT. 3, 1980

Dear Mr Ottó Orbán,

In your article you published a letter written to you by D. P. D—d of Poona. In this, Mr D. P. D—d mentions an old pen friend, György Donnenberg, with whom he exchanged letters in 1939, 41 years ago. A relative of mine living in Budapest read your article and sent it on to me asking whether the György Donnenberg of 1939 was the same as the György Desi of 1980. Yes, the 1980 George Desi of Los Angeles, California, is the same as the György Donnenberg of 1939 in Budapest. And I still have Mr D. P. D—d's letters and photographs. I would very much like to write to him and reestablish contact after 41 years, so if you should by any chance come upon D. P. D—d's address in Poona on your desk, please send it to me so I can renew our correspondence after all these years.

Thanking you in advance for your trouble, I remain,

Yours sincerely,
George Desi
that is,
Donnenberg György

5

The writer, when he writes, is somewhat like God. And somewhat like Mr Fejes, the drunken electrician who, weary of wobbling hopelessly on top of his ladder, in a sudden fit of temper over the fact that he, a qualified electrician, mender of so many flat-irons and chandeliers, now confronted by an ordinary switchboard panel, the workings of which were beyond him (which was only natural, given his state — he was uncommonly drunk— though this he would never admit, since the determinant characteristic of drunkenness is that it divests us of our power of judgement); as I say, agitated by this present, acute crisis, which he recognized as such, even in his state, picked up his plastic-handled screwdriver, as a knight might pick up his lance, and stuck it into the wire jungle of the switchboard panel, or rather, considering the act from his somewhat clouded viewpoint, straight into black nothingness. There was a delightful, sickle-shaped flash and all the lights went out. "That's fucked it. Begging your pardon." Here we are at the climax of the story, intoxicated with the ecstasy of writing, wobbling on the ladder of our craft. All that remains is to descend on unsteady legs, excuse ourselves and, sobered somewhat by the shock we have just experienced, begin to repair the lights first in the house, and then in the flat to which we were originally called —routine chores. The main point is that jab at the tangled web of fate, knowing that anything may happen to a qualified craftsman who has taken up writing professionaly— even that his work may in some way mend the world's defective contacts. How and when?

Until it happens, that remains a mystery. The lure is never ending. It is thus impossible to set a lesser goal—even to the shortest of our sentences— than the world itself. This constitutes the heady bliss, the ecstasy of our profession. And of course, its awesome responsibility.

6

I will make no secret of it—I am expecting another letter in connection with their affair. I do not expect it to come through the post, because the Hungarian postal service does not run to forwarding posted matters written in letters of flame. The text will presumably appear in our living-room, on the empty wall-surface between the back of the green sofa that opens up into a bed and the lower border of the Hornyánszky picture that portrays the roofs of Ráday utca in cubist fashion — there it shall appear, letter, by letter, like on a computer screen:

WELL DONE, OLD CHAP!

There will obviously be no signature. The person tapping out the message on the constellar-keyboards —of the profession also, if distantly— is famed for his obsession of wishing, at all costs, to remain nameless.

7

We were sitting side by side on a white ornamented, iron-frame couch in the garden of the presidential palace. Behind us stood a magnificently attired, turbaned guard and two men wearing collar and tie. The guard was holding an enormous, leather-bound portfolio —slightly incongruous considering his costume— presumably containing the list of guests and the programme, listed point by point. The two plainclothesmen stood with their hands loosely clasped behind their back, their holsters appeared in subtle relief under the thin cloth of their jackets. Facing them about two metres away, was another couch, with two mercurial officials, presidential aids by the look of things, and a Congress party member of parliament (known to be a writer in private life). We all smiled. Even the photographers in ambush around us lying, sitting, crouching, flat on their bellies, the two plainclothesmen with their hands clasped behind their back too.

I was sitting beside the president of the Republic of India. His Excellency Zail Singh is a Sikh, he wore a turban, and a metal bracelet on his right wrist. The only ornament on his dazzlingly white suit was a flaming red rose, pinned to the breast of his jacket. He stared ahead as he spoke to me:

"Welcome to India, Mr Orbán."

"It is a great honour to be able to meet you, Your Excellency."

"Is this your first visit to India?"

"My second, Your Excellency. And I wrote a bulky volume on my first."

"And how do you find our country, Mr Orbán?"

"Vast and exciting."

"Enjoy yourself in India, Mr Orbán."

He did not turn towards me, just raised his hand a fraction of an inch; at this one of the mercurial officials jumped to my side and with diplomatic determination steered me towards the crowd milling around the buffet, while the other seated another poet in my place.

I sampled some of the roasted and braised tit-bits, giving a wide berth to the enticingly colourful fresh salads.

Then I talked to the Vice President as well:

"How do you do, Mr Orbán."

"How do you do, Mr Vice President."

Later, I took a turn in Akhbar's hanging gardens, even if they are only Akhbar's hanging gardens, and not Queen Victoria's flowery petticoats. It was the start of the Valmiki World Poetry Festival and my inner clock was still on Central European time, feeling the many hours of flying. Valmiki, by the by, is the first Indian Poet, a figure out of a tale, the legendary creator of the Ramayana, who was apparently first inspired to write poetry upon witnessing a pair of mating birds shot down with a single arrow.

On the third day I was asked to preside at the afternoon's session.

"You were a much better chairman than Professor Okai."

A woman's voice in the great hubbub, I could not tell offhand whom it belonged to, I smiled back automatically, the lady was noisily applauded by several people. This, to resort to a brand new Hungarian understatement, is not nothing. Professor Atzukwei Okai is from Ghana, tall and slender, as are so many Africans; he had a fine-boned Mephisto face and a wonderful, embroidered nightshirt which naturally he did not use as a nightshirt but as his Sunday best, as is the custom in his country. On top of all this he had a highly developed sense of humour—he was terribly fond of cracking jokes, and that was the problem. Professor Okai was a born sprinter who will insist on taking part in middle-distance races. On the run-in he had three really good jokes, but he would go on and tell the fifth and the eighth. He presided at the morning session; I thought I would not stand an earthly chance, coming after him. Yet here we were, moderate humour has triumphed over immoderate humour. A great win for Hungary. Everything in order.

That is what I would have thought if I were a fool.

But I am not. I knew that nothing was as it should have been, but I was not whimpering yet. At least, not loudly enough to be heard.

After all, I had just arrived. Had just revisited the Iron Tower, the Old City, the Red Fort.

I shall stoop to unscrupulous devices only when I come to the foot of the Taj Mahal.

"Here I had stood in blue socks sixteen years ago," I whispered to the djinn (invisible to anyone else) beside me.

"Here," he said.

"And here I had produced a short lecture for two Americans."

"Aha," he said, and stared out into the dazzling incandescence above the river that had, so-to-speak, shrunk to a brook.

I still refused to understand. I returned at night to look at the Taj for the third time, in moonlight this time. I nonchalantly pocketed the paraphernalia of poetry-making and waited for the click. Waited for my imagination to take wing, as it did before, for everything to come into rapport with everything else - the state of grace.

Nothing.

The next day I stared at Akhbar's ghost town just as lamely: that I knew, and this; I recognized everything, but it was all in vain. "Is this all that is left", the former writer of prose whimpered within me, audibly now, "that I know how to avoid the trots, unlike the ash-faced Canadian giant, who only yesterday was ruddy-cheeked and shovelling down green salads?"

It was only on our way to Delhi, bumping and jolting along in the bus, that a voice began to address me, sadly and from afar, as if in a dream, I stared at the bicycles and the toy tractors in the heat-yellowed dirty courtyards.

"But they did accomplish their green revolution, even though it was only the fanatics who believed in it. They did accomplish something that is almost a miracle. And of course, now that it is accomplished, the limits of the miracle have become apparent. That the green revolution is what it is and nothing more: a working agriculture."

After that the voice remained silent.

But India appeared to be on the point of waking. Now that I had no further use for them, it scatters pearls in front of me made to be mounted in prose.

Rioting welcomed us to Bhopal. An armed assault troop guarded the two buses carrying the international poets. Some of the soldiers boarded the bus, their long rifles only getting in with difficulty. And soldiers welcomed us the next day at the shut-down Union Carbide works from where the deadly gas had poured into the city of Bhopal. Within the factory grounds, at a turn of the road stood a sign, steadily shedding its letters: S F TY F RST! Opposite the factory is the shanty town housing illegal settlers, shacks made of straw and clay, uncurtained openings serving as doors and windows, so that the gas poured straight into the lungs of those who lived there.

Pearls? The decorations of the Mogul age seemed to have affected my brain. If we must, compelled precisely by our compassion-inspired profession, deal with human suffering in a businesslike manner, let us at least be precise in our choice of words. Threads, loose threads hanging out of the great texture of society. Pull one and the whole thing comes apart. If there is sufficient fury and defiance in us to believe, with manic obsession, in our ability to solve puzzles and in the public importance of the lesson that can be learnt. To use a more high-falutin' phrase: in our mission.

In which the good-for-nothing who was here sixteen years ago believed so sincerely.

It was hard to get used to the fact that I was a better class of tourist now, an international poet.

And not unsuccessful in that capacity. In Bhopal, on the last day of the festival, I was improvising on an open air stage on the lake-shore as one of the speakers assigned to the closing session. In the audience, one of my confrères, who had also been to Iowa, bellowed out:

"Tell them the one about the bomb and the bath!"

So I gave them my hit number on the siege of Budapest. There was much cheering and applause, I gave them an encore, like a concert pianist. No one would believe that it was a whipped dog they were seeing, taking his bow in the spotlight.

It was only on the way home, in the hump of the Jumbo, that I hit on the moral:

"If this is the way things stand, then the book is even more about the Hungary of the sixties than I would ever have thought."

8

Let us hope that good deeds reap their rewards and foul deeds their just punishments.

Ashok was one of the Indian chicks of the Culture Exchange hen who, one autumn in the early seventies, wandered about cold Budapest without help or guidance. In addition to this, Ashok had been dealt a personal blow by fate, for the caprice of organization had him travel with Dr Puts-everyone's-back-up, a dumbox disguised as a university professor.

"I'll come and pick you up at the hotel in the morning", I said to Ashok.

"I'll be there" said Dr Puts-everyone's-back-up, hurling himself between us.

The next day, in the lobby of the Royal Hotel; we had already been waiting ten minutes, Ashok and I, when I had a sudden brainwave:

"Let's run for it!"

"What?" said Ashok, staring at me. His face was like a moving-picture screen; first it was all dark no-we-can't, then he-is-my-countryman-even-if-he-is-an-imbecile, then finally an all-encompassing, brilliant, relieved smile:

"As fast as we can, then!" he said with a broad grin, and the flat-capped porter stared in wonder as we jumped onto a tram waiting at the stop.

We spent one day together, it was late at night when I took him back to the hotel. He said it was the best day he had had since leaving India, and that he worked in some government office.

But what the job was he did not say. He did not say he was a high official in charge of cultural affairs under the prime minister of Madhya Pradesh—a V. I. P. if I understood things right.

In Bhopal he sent a car for me and invited me to his home.

"He's the one, you know, the Hungarian," he said, introducing me to his wife.

Then he showed me the printed report of an Afro-Asian conference, where he had cited something he had heard from me during one of our talks in Budapest,

something that had made such a deep impression on him that it had transformed his view of literature. "Good God," I thought to myself, alarmed, "What on earth could I have said to him?"

"Here it is," he said, pointing at one of the pages. There were two things I could identify on the page: Ashok's photograph and my own name, printed in Latin characters.

I had performed a good deed and assisted a weary traveller— no wonder that I was chosen in return to set a new course for Afro-Asian literature. But as a punishment for always giving little lectures, I will never know what it was. My epochmaking statement was printed in Hindi, and the more I looked at it, the more it resembled those highly imaginative patterns drawn by industrious five-year-olds in kindergarten.

It was Ashok who created Bharat Bhavan, that tangible miracle, the artistic centre in Bhopal, half sanctuary of the higher arts, half an educational institution where poetry, the dance and theatre (here the two are merged) and the fine arts all fit in. It was Ashok who had invited Swaminathan and Dilip Chitre to act as associate directors beside him.

It was Swaminathan who collected (at times transported, by bicycle, or by a buffalo team) the material for the two museums in the institution, the moderately interesting collection of modern Indian art, and the other, the exhibition of tribal art; still alive not far from here, upon the sight of which any director of any museum in the world would have dropped dead with envy. Imagine artists whose innocence, cosmic sense of proportion and elementary force all keep you spellbound.

"Are you salvaging your finds, Swami?" I asked him, grinning. "What are you, a humanist?"

"I'm an honest anarchist, it's just that my beard is going grey," says Swami, hugging me.

Since our first meeting Dilip and I have become close friends. Close is meant to be taken literally: for six months we lived next door to each other as writers at the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. Sampled each other's cooking, came to know each other's thoughts. After the six months were over, Vidju, Dilip's wife, took off the necklace her mother had given her and placed it in my hand, saying: "Take this home to your wife." In situations like this, men usually act like the clods that they are: in addition I was terribly touched, because I knew that the Chitres were not at all well-to-do and that Vidju cherished that necklace. So with great intelligence I said "Well... umm..."

Dilip's duties as the director of the Bharat Bhavan poetry centre were not as spectacular as Swaminathan's. But I know whom we have to thank for the huge portrait of Attila József that hangs beside that of Rilke in the corridor leading to the small library; it was also Dilip who thought up the Valmiki festival. The fact that the entire programme was hijacked and diverted, like a plane, to Delhi by the central government, only weeks before the invited arrived, only goes to show the value of the original idea. Strictly speaking, we international poets are here to demonstrate, through our actual presence, in favour of Bharat Bhavan and local initiative.

I watched the three of them on the open-air stage by the lake-shore, where preparations for the evening's final session were in progress. Two impassionate unconventional épateurs des bourgeois and a smart official who knew that what this great venture really needed were these two stumbling stones. The three faces of a Hindu God. An intellectual Trimurthi.

My good fortune sent shivers up my spine — even now. Hundreds of millions live in India, artists abound, yet I was able, at different times, in different places, to meet and make friends with these three, who together represent the power that can overcome misery.

Unfortunately, not for ever.

Two years later, in Tokyo, I learned that Dilip's heart trouble had forced him to resign from his post as director and that he had moved from Bhopal and was finding it tough making ends meet.

And I learned at the same time, from an account in an Indian paper written by Ashey Chitre, Dilip and Vidju's son, a teenager when I last saw him, then a married man, of the gas blow-out in Bhopal. Ashey and his pregnant wife were both in the danger zone that morning. And Ashey wanted at all costs to reach his wife.

"...the wet cloth pressed to my face no longer helps... I cannot see ... a knife is turning in my breast..."

Fate's warning to us not to allow ourselves to be carried away?

I learned that they were alive, all three of them. Ashey walks with a limp because of his paralysed right leg. But the child and the mother are both healthy and well. And that, despite his heart trouble, Dilip is an indefatigable grandfather.

India was playing games with me, I thought to myself when I found out where Dilip has moved to from Bhopal.

To Poona.

9

After six months teaching at the University of Minnesota we put an ad in several papers: our Chevy Chevette, bought second-hand, was up for sale.

Several prospective buyers showed up. They raised the bonnet and hummed and hawed anxiously to make us lose courage and lower the price. "Like hell," I thought to myself; the little white car, though sputtering and harrumphing at times, had covered several thousand miles with us, at a pace usually a little above the speed-limit; "I'd rather send it home by registered post than sell it for less."

Fortune favours the brave. Two weeks before we were due to leave my wife buzzed up to say: "We're on our way up. They look promising. Indians..."

"Oh yes," she added. "An uncle is with them. He does the talking."

"The trouble with these cars is that they look good from the outside but they're falling apart inside," said the uncle, before crossing the threshold, with a bloodthirsty look.

"Where are you from?" I asked the young man, presumably the buyer.

"Brooklyn Park, beside Freeway 94," he says.

He was the buyer, a research physician with ten months to go; he needed a car for that time.

"That's not what I meant," I say. "I meant in India."

"From Bombay," he says.

"I've been there," I said. "I have written a book about India."

"That skirt your wife's wearing," said the young woman, silent up till now. "Bought in the Delhi market."

"My wife", said the young man, remembering to introduce her. "She's from Poona.

"Poona?" I neighed, like a race-horse. "Where there's a statue of me?"

"A what?" they looked at me, astounded, all three.

I told them about S. G. Mungekar, the *Sakal Daily,* the letters, and *Élet és Irodalom.*

They laughed, but not in the way I expected them to.

"S. G. Mungekar is well-known in Poona," the young woman finally said. He is the editor-in-chief of *Sakal Daily* now."

Not to mince matters, they bought the car and let us keep it another week, so we would not have to hire one until the very last days. Even the uncle smiled upon the agreement.

"Smart," the head of my department said, with sincere admiration, when he heard about the transaction."Discounting insurance costs, you had a reasonable car for six months for a mere hundred dollars."

I snickered in confusion. Even though I have proved to be a successful businessman, there is enough honesty left in me not to strut in borrowed plumes. I know perfectly well that it was not myself, but an elderly, continent sized lady who concluded the deal so successfully—a lady about whom I wrote a book some twenty years ago, who rapped my knuckles when I wanted to write about her again, but who helped me out nevertheless, in view of our former, turbulently passionate relationship.

I shall, however, remain silent on the subject. Perhaps I would not be thought demented if it came to light that I was in communication with the lady bathed by three seas through the good offices of a spirit. After all, who is to say where parapsychology ends and insanity begins? Here today, there tomorrow.

But that a spirit should be called S. G. Mungekar!

And yet that is his name.

He edits a newspaper in Poona, and is a great friend to Hungarians.

Linda Leith

In Search of The Budapest of the Imagination

As publisher and editor of *Matrix* magazine, which is an English-language arts and literary magazine from Montreal, I have spent part of my time during the past eight months in Budapest preparing a special issue—*Matrix* #34—focussing on "The Budapest of the Imagination". For this issue of *Matrix,* which will be printed in Montreal in July 1991, I have sought out writers and artists whose work emerges out of the city of Budapest, and I have looked for imaginative and practical visions of the city. In soliciting this material I have assembled a range of personal and critical essays, stories and poems, interviews, artwork, graphics, and photographs that speak to this particular place at this particular time. In the process I have learned a great deal about the Hungarian cultural scene generally and that of Budapest specifically, and I have found remarkable, and in some ways surprising, differences between my own world and this one.

To the task of editing this special issue of *Matrix* I brought a fair knowledge of Budapest, only enough Hungarian to negotiate the marketplace, extensive editorial experience, a background as a literary journalist and as an academic critic, a considerable sympathy for Hungarians, and an interest in the arts and literary scene here in Budapest. I have spoken to dozens of writers, poets, editors, artists, translators, critics, and journalists in Budapest, almost all of them Hungarian, and most of them able to speak English or French. In my search for the most exciting work to have recently emerged out of the city I have visited galleries, exhibitions, and shows of contemporary art and photography, and in my attempt to understand the literary milieu within which contemporary writers work, I have read such English and French translations as I have been able to find of recent Hungarian fiction and poetry. Difficult as some of these translations are to track down, a substantial amount of this

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creative work has appeared in translation—thanks especially to *The New Hungarian Quarterly,* to Corvina, and to the Hungarian PEN.

A rather different situation prevails as far as critical materials are concerned. Here I think Hungarians sell themselves short. There is only a little Hungarian cultural criticism in English or in French, and what there is tends to be surprisingly polite. The foreign observer gets hardly a whiff of the debates raging in Hungarian intellectual circles: you'd never guess at the vitality and energy that goes into these debates from the mild-mannered material that is presented to the world. In addition, almost all the critical material in print is the work of Hungarians, of expatriate Hungarians or, in a few cases, of translators. There are obvious reasons why it should indeed be rare to find anything like an outside observer. It means, however, that the terms of reference of critical material are almost entirely Hungarian. Astute, informative and perceptive as commentary on Hungarian culture is, it is also typically *interested.*

Outsiders may not always say what Hungarians want to hear, but they can have an important role to play. Other cultures have long benefited—and have at times suffered—from the commentary of foreign observers. Hungarian culture, however, has been insulated from international critical attention. For a long time the reason for this was linguistic isolation, but with that now significantly changed, a different kind of danger presents itself. It is possible to damn with warm praise, to kill with kindness. Admiration on the part of one Hungarian for another—however justified it may be—is more likely to dampen than to arouse international enthusiasm. If Hungarian writers and artists are to become known, discussed, and admired outside the charmed circle of Hungarians, émigrés, and translators, they have to get out of this cossetted isolation ward. One way out is for Hungarians to pique our curiosity with something we can get our teeth into: an issue, an argument, a difference of opinion.

My own problem over the past eight months has rather been to find the way in. Willing—as I have been—to be convinced of the value of the Hungarian work in question, still I have found much of the commentary available to me partial and unsatisfactory. I have been fortunate in meeting some of the most capable and knowledgable of Hungarian commentators in Budapest. I have also become more familiar than most outsiders with the best critical essays that have been translated—many not only informative, but clearly written with a foreign readership in mind. Models of a kind as these are, they have in fact been disappointing, for they speak out of a world that differs significantly from my own. Though they answer many questions, they do not answer the questions I have been wondering about. Though they address many issues, those are not the issues that I have found puzzling. My way would have been eased if I had had access not only to what Hungarians and their chosen emissaries have had to say about their artists, but also to what another outsider might have said about the Hungarian cultural milieu. What I have needed—and what I have not found—is a view of this culture from the outside, a way of crossing the border between my world and this one: a way in.

So what did I expect? I had, to begin with, some notion about this being a world in which the importance of the arts is widely acknowledged. While this is certainly true, it is not quite as I imagined, for I imagined that this could only be a good thing, and I imagined that I might learn something here that might in some way affect the situation of Canadian artists.

Any Canadian with an interest in the arts, where the arts are relegated to frills, at the bottom of almost everyone's list of priorities, envies a world in which they figure prominently in everyday life. Every day on the bus and streetcar in Budapest I see several people intent on the book on their lap; on every other streetcorner I see a bookseller—much dross, to be sure, but serious works as well; daily in the newspapers here I see original drawings by local artists; I am still surprised to meet Hungarian politicians and businessmen who chose to spend their spare time visiting the galleries or reading a book of poetry, but it has happened so often that it should no longer surprise me. On my visits to my sons' school I see the classroom walls hung with thirty larger-than-life portraits of great Hungarian writers. Statues of writers abound all over Budapest, towering over the heads of passersby, sitting companionably on a parkbench, and squares and streets across the city are named after poets and writers and composers and opera singers as often as they are named after royalty and politicians.

It was not naive of me to admire the strong sense that Hungarians have of their own culture. What is naive, to begin with, is to imagine that this should have any bearing on the experience of another nation. For this sense of the importance of the arts was dearly won, inspired not only by precious, costly, moments of glory, but wrung out of bloodshed and oppression, misery and defeat. No one can aspire to share the experiences that have nurtured it.

It is naive, too, to imagine that such a sense of importance is simply a boon. For importance takes its own toll. When politicians read poetry, they remember who wrote what. When they go to the galleries, they notice who is critical of what, who mocks, who subverts. Who—they are likely to wonder—are the artists who share our view of the future of this country? Who are the intellectuals who share our values? In such a world, writing and painting can be not only serious, but deadly serious.

Perhaps this helps to explain the intensity of so much of the work I have found here. But can it illuminate the political associations of some of the writing I have read, some of the visual art I have seen? And what can account for the obsessional interest in death in the work of many writers and artists? I have at times felt overwhelmed with the sheer darkness of the painting, the sheer gloominess of the writing.

The wonder is the brilliance that flashes through this darkness in the work of the best artists. There is an unpleasant quality in what I have read of Péter Nádas's fiction, particularly disturbing in its treatment of women, and yet I think him the most interesting writer I have found here. His is a dangerous world, but it keeps me on edge as only the work of a great artist can. Sándor Weöres and Ágnes Nemes Nagy are the poets I will come back to most often. There are other writers—Zsuzsa Rakovszky, Mihály Kornis—whose careers I will want to

watch; the artists El Kazovszkij, László Fehér, Ilona Keserű... but this is a list that will become invidious, because it will inevitably be incomplete, so let it rather suffice here to say that I have been impressed with much of the contemporary writing I have read, much of the contemporary art.

I had also some expectation that now, in the wake of dramatic political change, I might witness some significant new cultural expression. Several of the people I have spoken to put a damper on that expectation pretty quickly. The great poets are all dead, I was told (many of the commentators are gloomy too), the changes have already been felt, and anyway people are too interested just in living these days to produce much. Others disagreed, and my own impression, spotty as it undoubtedly is, is that things are indeed lively, on the move. I see this most clearly—most immediately (here I am not dependent on translation)—in the visual arts, but I would be surprised if it were restricted to one field.

The biggest surprise to me, though, has been the invisibility of women writers here. This is a feature of the literary milieu that is as remarkable for the Western visitor as it is apparently unremarkable to Hungarians themselves. It is perhaps especially striking to a Canadian like myself.

Much, perhaps most, of the best of Canadian writing and art is acknowledged to be the work of women. From the first novelist, Frances Brooke, right through to the extraordinary Canadian and Québécoises women writers of the past thirty years—among whom Anne Hébert, Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, Mavis Gallant, Nicole Brossard, Marie-Claire Blais and Antonine Maillet are probably the most renowned writers of serious fiction—Canada has a tradition of women's writing that seems all the more extraordinary to me now that I am in a position to view it from afar.

In their work these writers range from the most conventional acknowledgement that women are socially and economically disadvantaged in Canadian society (Gallant, unusually, does not even consider herself a feminist) to the radical views of some of the Québécoises feminists. Such a range is, moreover, influential in Canadian cultural circles inasmuch as many of these women, and many other women and men similarly interested in what women have to say, sit on the committees that decide who wins literary prizes, who gets arts grants, who gets published, who gets translated, who gets recognized. At least four Canadian publishers are explicitly feminist in their interests, there is a raft of feminist publications, and feminist interests have become mainstream to an extent that might surprise Hungarians. One of the boldest works of recent feminist criticism—Patricia Smart's *Writing in the Father's House: The Emergence of the Feminine in the Quebec Literary Tradition*—not only was a runaway success in French when it appeared from a mainstream Quebec publisher, Québec/Amérique, but won the prestigious Governor-General's Award for Non-Fiction in 1989, and was subsequently translated into English and published by one of the most eminent and solidly respectable of all Canadian presses, the University of Toronto Press. It is not radical, or even unusual, for a man or a woman to express an interest in the work of women

writers in Canada. And Canada, though it may be exemplary, is far from alone among Western nations in this interest.

Imagine how unprepared I was, therefore, for literary Budapest. Time after time, the helpful, friendly individual on whom I was calling was explaining who he considered the most interesting writers for me to consider for *Matrix* magazine. Often this list would include only men writers. In only two cases, indeed, did a woman figure in any Hungarian's shortlist. I would listen with genuine interest and then, after a while, I would ask some version of, "Are there any women writers?" or "Who are the interesting women writers?" In this way I have unintentionally caused many a cloud to pass over many a Budapest brow. In the process I did, however, come up with the names of a few women writers—Zsuzsa Rakovszky, Ágnes Gergely; Ágnes Nemes Nagy I already knew about as I had discovered a collection of translations of her work in an Irish bookshop some months earlier. Maybe that would have to do. My job in putting together this special issue, I told myself, was simply to present new work in English for the readers of the magazine, not to impose my own interests on what I found here. But I was not alone in my interest. As the weeks went by I met a succession of other Westerners, who independently remarked on the invisibility of women writers and who, in some cases, are responsible for bringing them to international attention by choosing to translate them. And over the next few months, as my circle widened and I got hold of more material and spoke to some of these women, I discoverd that none of them wish to be thought of as "women" writers or poets, but I also learned of other contemporary literary women—Julia Lázár, Zsuzsa Takács, Amy Károlyi, Piroska Szántó, and of some of their forebears—Gizella Hervay, Anna Hajnal, and Margit Kaffka among them. (Far from exhaustive as this list is, these are the names I learned from the people I was speaking to.) Eventually I learned of the existence of a few feminist writers too—Margit Ács and Zsuzsa Király, for example, neither of whose novels I have yet been able to read—and who another woman writer described as "hating men". Their work is considered in a new, as yet unpublished, essay that apparently focusses on how women writers have been neglected. Over the months I discovered that there is in fact a fair number—and variety—of recent women poets and fiction writers whose work is admired, that there is indeed a tradition of women's writing, and that at least one critic has recently taken an interest in the situation of the Hungarian women writers.

The reasons advanced for this unenviable situation are scattered and curious. Women are not, I have heard, any worse off in Hungary than in neighbouring countries. Literary women, I was told on another occasion, are not in an unusual situation in the Hungarian context, for their situation in the society as a whole is hardly better. And the reason I have heard most often (from three different people) for the unpopularity of feminism here is that incompetent women were promoted during the Communist regime, and that no one wants any more of that. This seems at best an odd argument when we are dealing with demonstrable competence and, in some cases, brilliance. In one particular instance, when

every single name proposed for an exalted cultural body was a man's name, and a voice was raised to suggest that a woman might perhaps be included, the response was, "We don't want to discriminate on the basis of sex, do we?"

Given my dependence on translation, I am not now—and I may never be—in a position to judge the relative merits of these various women writers' work. I have found it interesting, however, that though women's names are rarely the first to come to mind, almost all the people I have spoken to can, when prompted, name one or two women whose work they genuinely admire. This suggests that these women's work is not considered inferior, but rather that it simply is not often considered. I sense no ill-will in the people I have been speaking to: they have no desire willfully to exclude women; some of them, indeed, are women. It's just that they haven't, men or women, had occasion to give a great deal of thought to this issue. It hasn't been pressing: it has seemed far more important that a writer's work just be good.

And of course it should be good. There is no argument over that. But has some very good work not somehow been underrated? Unintentionally as it may be, thoughtlessly perhaps, good work has somehow slipped out of sight. The questions that leap to the mind of any Canadian critic at this point are questions about literary values. Is it enough "just to be good"? And what does it mean "just" to be good? Good for whom? What kind of work is considered good? Who decides what's good?

For in Canada and in the United States, and to a considerably lesser extent in England and France, some of the most urgent literary and cultural debates of the past decade have been debates over the canon—over those works whose merits have been agreed on, on the literary and cultural establishment that decides which texts will be recognized and taught and anthologized, and which texts excluded and forgotten.

This debate has been fuelled in large part by feminist critics' insistence that the hitherto underrated work of women be given a hearing, and it has compelled a rethinking both of curricula in the humanities and of major texts to include not only women but the works of other writers and artists whose work has been neglected in the past because it did not conform to the standards that have traditionally dominated that establishment. It has not only brought the work of many good writers out of obscurity, but it has also highlighted entire traditions of writing of which we were unaware, extended our sense of literary possibility, and underlined the importance of the various contexts out of which texts have emerged. As a result of the changes brought about by this debate, it is hardly possible today—as it was still possible when I was a student in the late 1960s—to take seriously a course on the Twentieth Century Novel, say, that includes only the work of white men.

This re-evaluation of the literary canon is not a process, it need hardly be stressed, that has met with universal approval. Within the United States and England especially—less so in Canada—it has met with a volley of fire from individuals who fear this will mean the end of Western civilization. It is indeed a process that has gone to some extreme lengths, and one of the most

heated discussons in Canadian literary circles over the past two years has been over writers' freedom to imagine themselves in the shoes of people unlike themselves. Native writers—fed up with white writers appropriating their history and their stories—have been arguing that they alone should have the right to tell their own tales. In response, white writers howl about censorship, insisting on their right to write as they wish, on whatever subject and in whatever voice they choose. It is a debate charged with righteousness and indignation on both sides.

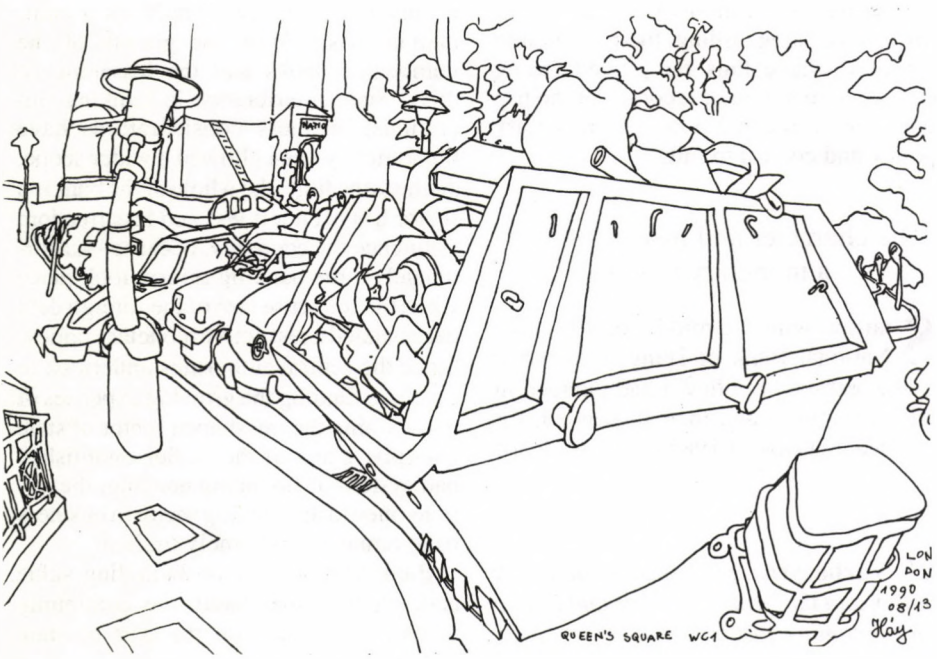
This has taken us far from the Budapest of the Imagination. That, however, is my point. For this is a debate that seems, so far as I can tell, not—not much? not yet?—to have affected the way that people here think about writing or the other arts. It seems to me improbable for a culture to be so unaware of its own women writers if it had indeed viewed its male-dominated canon with the kind of sustained critical attention that we have seen in the United States and Britain and Canada—and elsewhere—over the past quarter century. And if indeed these questions of the canon and of the place of the woman writer have been debated within the academy in Budapest, they have certainly not had the kind of trickle-down effect they have had in Canada. These are questions that prompt comments—about man-hating feminists, for example—that have not been current in intellectual circles in Canada for more than two decades. These are questions that take both men and women here aback—and evidently no one has so far objected to the fact that every one of those portraits on my son's classroom wall is that of a male writer. Like other members of my generation in the West, like several of the Western men I have met here, I have grown up with this debate in ways that are significantly different from what Hungarians have experienced, I have participated in it, and I have lived it for the past twenty-five years, taking first one position, then another, and then a third.

There have indeed always been women writers, here perhaps no less than in Canada. For them to be visible, however, and not just in the token fashion that I find so surprisingly persistent here, requires a criticism alert to the differences in feminine writing and able to reveal the particular qualities of such work. What those qualities are remains to be demonstrated, and by far better qualified critics of Hungarian culture than I can ever be, but in other literatures women's writing has often shown a tendency—characteristic, interestingly enough, also of some of the most extraordinary men's writing—towards playfulness and a subversive resistence to tradition both formal and substantial.

I have at various times in the past months imagined what effect it might have if the voices of women—and of other underrated writers—were to be heard here. It has been known to make a substantial difference in other contexts. One of my own interests over the past fifteen years or so has been the study of science fiction, and especially American science fiction. This is a field traditionally dominated to an overwhelming extent by male writers and, indeed, male readers and, at the same time, a field noted through most of this century for visions of almost unrelieved bleakness. The horrific, decidedly dystopian

quality of much of this material (consider, for example, the grotesque futures envisaged by one of the most talented New Wave writers, Thomas Disch) has been noticeably affected by feminist writers and feminist criticism. The 1970s and early 1980s saw a wave of feminist utopian writing of extraordinary power and excitement in the work of writers such as Ursula K. LeGuin, Monique Wittig, James Tiptree, jr., Joanna Russ, Samuel Delany, and Marge Piercy who have changed the ways in which we can think not only of science fiction, but of the future.

I have not wanted to impose my point of view on the special issue of *Matrix,* which will speak in the voices of the contributors, and I have hesitated before writing this. There is something impertinent about the comments of an outsider. If I have decided nonetheless to say my piece, the reason is that I am aware, more than most, of the remarkable energies and talents that have gone into ensuring that the writing of talented Hungarians will not be cut off from the rest of the world; I have been privileged, even though spottily and in many ways superficially, to get closer to what is happening here now than most other outsiders; I have faced many of the obstacles that foreigners face in trying to get a sense of this world; and I know it is worth the effort required. Even if it is not, perhaps, an entirely painless process, I have thought it necessary and desirable that I record my experiences in the hope that my comments may help Hungarians find the way out, and that they may help other outsiders find their own way in.



Éva Várhegyi

The Pitfalls of Monetary Policy

The country's liquidity, and the reduction of domestic imbalances over the past three years, owes a great deal to the restrictions imposed by the National Bank on the circulation of money. This policy was successful only over an uncertain period and only on a macro-economic level. The effect it had on economic agents was either too feeble or not in keeping with expectations. Hungary's so far only semi-market economy has its own preventive mechanisms able to counteract, or at least postpone, the demand-reducing effect of monetary restrictions. Those interested in defending the *status quo* — the state enterprises anxious to survive, the big banks in cahoots with them, central funds safeguarding their economic potential—have thus far proved strong enough to maintain or reconstruct the trip wires that can cause a rational monetary policy and control to fail.

The character and instruments of a monetary policy

Starting with the middle of 1987, the National Bank of Hungary reverted to the restrictive policy it had pursued in the early 1980s and then suspended, for political reasons, in 1985-86. Confidence in the new restrictions that were part of the Grósz goverment's stabilization programme (1988) was founded on the idea that strict monetary control, given the new two-tier banking system, in existence since early 1987, might be considerably more efficient than it had been under the single-tier system. The monetary policy intended to diminish domestic demand was believed —just as early in the 1980s— to be capable of restoring external equilibrium step by step and increasingly from 1988, of checking inflation.

The 1987 introduction of the two-tier banking system made it formally possible to influence the economy by monetary means and to allocate credit on a commercial basis. With the growth of the number of banks and the lessening of direct state interference in banking operations, business considerations have theoretically been allowed a wider scope. At the same time, the whole of the banking sector has been left less and less freedom to finance the economy, because—unfortunately—the banking reform took place when the immense size of the foreign debt necessitated a restrictive monetary policy. Since the central authorities undertook to continue funding the growing expenses of maintaining the misshapen sector of state enterprises and of the earlier established bad system of financing housing, the options open to the banking sector in business have remained extremely limited.

Banking resources of dwindling value and, on the other hand, the continuing hunger for money on the part of state

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enterprises did not favour business-like conduct on the part of banks. Moreover, the biggest banks, which play a dominant role in financing the economy, inherited, under the banking reform, a lending portfolio with a dangerously large proportion of bad and doubtful debts owed by large state-owned enterprises in a critical situation.

This is why the reform of the banking system failed to create the conditions for the modernization of monetary control. Any existing freedom of the central bank against the government, chiefly the agencies in control of the administration of public finances (the state budget and state-subsidised development projects) did not increase substantially. The National Bank was invariably under strong pressure owing to the need to finance state expenditure in a wider sense. But the bank of issue itself did not really clarify its objectives: it continued to assume responsibility for deciding on the applications of individual firms for larger credits, and the granting of development credits refinanced by the World Bank.

Consequently the only way left open to control the money supply was for the central bank to place restrictions on the money making capacity of the trading banks.

In this respect, however, it proved unable—and is still unable—to work through indirect monetary regulation, since companies and banks alike lack managers sensitive to monetary indices. The central bank was at first able to manage its restrictive policy primarily by limiting credit facilities for refinancing later. A regulation tempered by individual bargains was later supplemented by rough changes in the minimum reserve regulation. Coupled with these two —far from refined— methods were, only in a complementary way, changes (raises) in the interest rates applied by the bank of issue and the exchange rate policy. The former was (or could have been, at least in principle) influenced increasingly by demand on the money market, but the latter remained, even in principle, independent of domestic demand for foreign currencies. There was no direct feedback from the level of demand for currency into the official exchange rates. (This is not contradicted by the fact that, in recent times, there has been a noteworthy fall in the difference between official and black-market rates of exchange.)

In conjunction with the reduction of the bank of issue's refinancing credit ceilings, the method of rediscounting bills of exchange has received greater emphasis. Although monetary regulation exerted by limits on refinancing applied to for individual banks cannot be looked on as a refined method of monetary control, in Hungarian conditions the rediscounting of bills of exchange has had the disadvantange that it makes for direct intervention in the flow of money. In fact it enables the bank of issue to secure, even in conditions of general restriction, a supply of money to given enterprises for purposes thought to be important for certain vested interest.

Signs of success in the monetary processes

Monetary restriction by the bank of issue was successful for a great part of the period in question. As a result of restrictions on credit the amount of money decreased in real value: the money stock (M2) fell more—by 7 per cent in 1988, by 5.6 per cent in 1989 and by 9.6 per cent in the first eight months of 1990— than the gross domestic product (GDP). All this shows that the roots of inflation were not to be sought in the money supply.

The relative tightness of money was doubtless a result of the credit restrictions. At the same time it should be noted that credit squeezes unequally affected the major categories of income-owners. The sums of credit allocated by the bank of

issue were absorbed by public finances to a considerable degree and to the detriment of commercial banks. In 1988 the central money resources of the banks engaged in granting credit to firms declined even in absolute value (by Ft 28,000 million); in 1989 they grew to a lesser degree than the central credit resources of the State Development Institute alone (by Ft 22,000 as against 31,000 million). State finances today use up three times as much of all central banking resources as all the banks financing firms taken together. Within this, the State Development Institute's total of central bank credits is today almost at the same level as the trading banks' central credit sources. All this points also to the intrinsic nature of the credit squeeze, showing that, over the past three years, the National Bank's policy of monetary restriction was implemented in practice by the commercial banks while government spending was left intact.

The improvement, in the past three years, of the balance of trade with convertible-currency countries can be taken as a success for the restrictive monetary policy. It is particularly worthy of note that the positive balance of foreign trade increased in conjunction with the liberalization of imports. The improvement attained in the early 1980s was still the result of import restrictions, occasionally of the direct licensing control of individual imports. The limitation of domestic demand has undeniably favoured the growth of exports to convertible-currency countries and checked the increase in imports; yet the strength of such effects cannot be clearly demonstrated. The creation of a positive balance of trade coincided not only with a policy of monetary restriction but also with a world-market boom in Hungary's most important exports (metallurgy, food). On the other hand, when examining the effects of monetary control, we cannot ignore administrative props such as the system of import deposits, which checked demand for foreign currencies since the forints deposited as cover are held in escrow for months on end. Finally, the performance of the external economy must also be differently judged (from the aspect of lasting favourable processes) if one takes into account the price to be paid at home for expansion in foreign markets: continuance of subsidies to maintain the exports commodity pattern and allowing importers a longer time for payment, a necessary consequence of the rearrangement of scanty credit. In 1988 for example, the debts which hard currency customers owed for Hungarian metallurgical and food products increased by 73 and 112 per cent respectively; Hungarian exporters' receipts from sales for convertible currency rose by 56 and 32 per cent respectively. This shows that the export boom was only possible by considerably extending the terms of payment, i. e. by giving the buyers credit for a longer time than is customary.

Finally it can be (and is generally) attributed to monetary restraint that—contrary to the expectations of many— there has been no runaway inflation so far. It is likely that, given the expansive monetary policy of 1985-86, the rate of inflation would have gone out of control. On the other hand, however, it must be attributed to a failure of monetary control that rates of inflation which have far exceeded the rate of growth of the money supply and which, considering the recession, cannot be considered low, rose last year and this year.

Pitfalls of monetary control

In discussing the signs of success, the problems which cast a shadow on outwardly favourable signs have been mentioned.

There was, for example, the problem of one-sided restrictions which only troubled merchant banks without affecting public spending. This resulted in the continued

elimination of bank credits whose share in the resources of firms was low anyway and thus, paradoxically, led to the neglect of an important means of monetary control; in other words, the makers of monetary policy cut the ground away from under their own feet. In a Hungarian economy monetarized at a low level, the monetary behaviour of enterprises which shows little sensitivity to finer monetary indices (rates of interest, rates of exchange) can be effectively influenced only in case of a relatively broad credit zone. In Hungary today less than half of all firms use bank credits, and the share of bank credits in their financing is very low. With smaller volumes of credit, the possibility of fine regulation becomes more limited; the costs of a slight increase in interest rates can be easily passed on in prices. Credit restriction therefore works as a boomerang in the hands of the bank of issue: the more it reduces the credit-supplying capacity of the banks, the less can it influence the attitude of firms. This is what I consider to be the first pitfall in monetary control.

The unhampered allocation of credits to the public sector also makes its effect felt in the long run. It is no use strengthening the autonomy of the bank of issue and passing a National Bank Act (which will set strict limits on the utilization of central banking resources by the government) if the bank of issue must get other owners of money to reimburse a shortfall in interest payments of the substantial public debt accumulated thus far. One possible device to this end is a high level of the minimum reserves fixed for commercial banks, something which indirectly raises rates of interest on bank credits. In this way it restrains investments needed for sound development and generates inflation in the same way as the raising of the rates of interest on central bank credit. The third device is to place a ceiling on interest payable on deposits, which again checks the growth of savings. The bank of issue employs all three methods at the same time in order to compensate for the loss of interest payments by public funds. Avoiding this pitfall is possible only if public expenditure is considerably reduced and a start is made on paying off the immense public debt. This, however, is not facilitated by this year's likely budget deficit.

The economic recession which will predictably last for some time, and the comparably high rate of inflation, are indicative of the failure of monetary policy. Of course, monetary control cannot be exclusively or even primarily blamed for stagflation. All the earlier shortsighted governments were unwilling to lose their power basis, the large enterprise sector is responsible for the failure of the very largest of them (due to the collapse of the Comecon markets). Some responsibility devolves on the bank of issue for the appreciation of the rouble in January 1989, even in spite of its limited autonomy. The monetary authority has every reason to be proud of the way it handled inflation—as I mentioned earlier. The rise in the rate of inflation was not due to an excessive growth in the stock of money. Nor should one leave out of account that the attitude of Hungarian firms may differ from that of their Western equivalents, not only in that they are not sufficiently profit-minded but in that— and this is related—they are not clearly interested in the raising of prices. Recent years threw light upon an enterprise attitude which reacted to the rising costs of factors of production by reducing capacity, by selling off, or using up, assets. The growth in inflation could be hindered by this reaction in the same way as by the policy of monetary restriction aimed at checking demand.

The general effect of monetary restriction on checking demand is made questionable also by the growing number of uncovered promissory notes. Another pitfall of monetary control is the ways in which firms try to parry the effects of a restrictive monetary policy. A money-

making mechanism operates among enterprises; this is able to increase demand without being embodied in the usual money categories. Unsecured promissory notes given to the banks came to a total of Ft 128,000 million at the end of last year. Since trading credits obtained in that way do not appear in the form of any negotiable sort of promissory note, e. g. of bills of exchange, creditors do not experience any excess of liquidity, and thus the amount of money circulating in the economy does not grow either. At the same time the debtor firm can obtain additional goods and services without using the money in its possession. It is owing to the absence of sufficient cover (meaning deposits utilisable for the settlement of accounts) that the bank has been unable to pay the sum due to the (involuntary) creditor firm. The debtor may therefore appear on the market for goods and services with a demand surplus which is not covered by anybody's savings.

What is this if not a kind of making of money? This, of course, is not the classic banking mechanism of creating money, but an increase of demand occasioned outside the banking system and consequently not likely to be controlled by monetary regulation. Supplementary demand taking shape in queues waiting for payment also makes possible a rise in prices on the commodity market. Whoever pays through a promise to be carried out who knows when will not quibble over prices. Furthermore, if an enterprise is, by putting off payments, in a position to reduce its current costs earmarked for the purchase of materials and semi-finished goods, it will have more resources left for wage increases. What this latter implies is not a fictitious, but a real outlay of money, it appears in the money stock. It can play a role in the rise of inflation if the debtor firm's excess payment is not accompanied, owing to the loss of sales income suffered by the involuntary creditor company, by a wages reduction policy of the latter.

This in the root of the problem. If the involuntary creditor firm were confronted with vital problems (to stick to the example: the compulsion to reduce wages) because of the delayed payment of buyer firms, then, after one or two such instances, it would stop supplying notoriously tardy trading partners. In practice, the supplier deprived of income from sales because of the liquidity problems of the buyer, fails to pay its own suppliers—and the chain continues in this manner. In the case of mutually owed debts the situation is quite simple: the account-keeping bank receives orders only to pay the balance of the debts. Or, in many cases, not even that, if the last creditor, in the hope of future cooperation, dispenses with the recovery of the sum due to it. This outstanding debt, which the bank has not been asked to recover, is called "pigeon-holed queuing" in banking jargon. (In a given situation the total of these debts may be considerable, although the excess of demand created in this way cannot even be estimated by the monetary control authority.)

The process outlined above has always been characteristic of the interfirm flow of money in Hungary. Its intensification could first be observed during the period of restrictive monetary policy between 1982 and 1984, a period at the close of which the agregate amount of recorded large debts that had been outstanding for a long time reached 75 per cent of the clearing deposits of firms (their resources for disbursements) and 25 per cent of short-term bank credits. In 1988 the practice of non-payment gained ground again after declining for three years: having been 19 per cent and 9 per cent respectively in the case of deposits and credits in 1987, it jumped as high as 65 per cent and 28 per cent in 1988; by March 1989 this ratio had risen to 87 per cent and 27 per cent respectively, and by the end of that same year to 90 and 35 per cent. (It can only be presumed that, in 1990, the growth in queuing did not slow down, since early in the year the banks suspended the

recording of such cases—because of technical difficulties in adding them up.) We therefore obtain a more realistic index of enterprise demand if we can add the amount of money materialized in company deposits to the supplementary purchasing power materialized in the existing total, which is represented by those queuing up.

The whole of this may even be called, as a matter of course, the real (or total) amount of money. Estimates only are available of how much the recorded waiting lines boost the total demand of firms. A few years earlier National Bank economists thought this effect was about half as strong (and Yugoslav observations were also in keeping with this estimate); they assumed that the granting of a unit of additional bank credit could do away with a queue representing an amount twice as high.

In the light of the above, it is clear that the actual processes of the money flow did not take place in the way envisaged by monetary control. The chains of interfirm debt, a phenomenon that was not new but was more widespread than earlier, considerably countered efforts made to control the amount of money. Instead of the apparent acceleration of money circulation, the process involved an increasingly marked decline in the quantity of currency put into circulation by the bank of issue, and money played a less significant part in payments between firms.

The degree and, mainly, the form of money-making outside banking operations point far beyond similar phenomena in market economies. The extension of credit, including commercial credit, outside the banks is of growing importance all over the world. This counteracts the efforts of governments. There is good reason why money in modern economies is systematically slipping away from the control of the central banks. This is due to the simple fact that those who operate on the market can find ways and means of making money which are not under government control. Experience shows that the forms of money-making outside banks spread especially in periods when restrictive monetary policies (based upon the quantitive theory of money) use credit control as an independent means that replaces fiscal policy. As the report of the Radcliffe Committee points out, postwar experiments in monetary policy often led to confusion, since firms spread the difficulties they met in contracting loans. This was done by a variety of methods: by looking for credit sources outside banks or, if this also was not possible, by putting off payments due.

In Hungary the main problem today is really not that the queue of firms results in uncontrolled money-making (for this might even imply the correction of an erroneous economic policy), but rather that credits are created which cannot stand any test of credit-rating. Thus the delayed payment of firms maintain, by means of fictitious demand, unprofitable (often decidedly loss-producing) activities. All this can be done because state subsidies supported by credit facilities, and the fear of mass bankruptcies, stabilize the position of the largest firms.

Obstacles and difficulties of renewal

I have referred to three phenomena as pitfalls in monetary policy and control: credit restriction dulling the monetary sensitivity of firms, public debts confusing money-market indices and money substitution, present in payment relations between firms. All the three phenomena are rooted in the semi-market nature of the Hungarian economy and are boosted by the government's inconsistent attitude. Not even the new coalition government formed after free elections has so far been able to change the kinds of conduct beneath the surface. The nine months the Antall government has so far been in power have not proved sufficient to give birth to a viable baby.

First of all one has to mention a budgetary policy which is the common cause of the pitfalls. True, last year's budget is still a heritage of the preceding government, so rationalization must take place in the current year. It is to be welcomed that, in 1990, there was a considerable decline in the volume, within the domestic total of credit facilities, of central bank credits used for state-subsidised investments. (The use of credits by the State Development Institute has declined from an earlier 50 per cent to 25 per cent of the refinancing credit meant for the enterprise sphere.) Because of the constancy of other expenditures and the growing losses by the state owing to housing credits, however, the public debt has grown. In consequence of the low level of savings, in anticipation of inflation, it has again been the bank of issue that has had to provide for credit allocations.

The trading banks have not yet been compelled to withdraw, even at the cost of writing off debts, from financing customers unable to adjust to market methods. Neither the tightening of bank control, nor their own interests have prompted them to change their policies. Instrumental in this was also the fact that their most powerful owner, the state, has drawn (and is still drawing) a considerable income from taxes on fictitious profits and from dividends.

Not even the bank of issue, which renewed its management and modernized its working methods, has been able to resist the political pressure exerted on its refinancing policy by vested interests (such as the agrarian sector or the Ministry of External Trade). Although the earlier broad preferential credit facilities have undoubtedly been tightened a definitive cutback is still to come. (Even this year's credit policy upholds a number of preferences.)

All this has made (and is still making) possible the survival of large enterprises in the red. Substitution for the absent resources necessary to short-term survival is made feasible by the relaxation of payment discipline. Since there is no firm in a strong enough position to file a bankruptcy petition against insolvent state-owned large enterprises, the chance to go on vegetating continues, and inflation spreads the losses over the entire economy.

The difficulty of renewal has been demonstrated in the past nine months. The danger that a European market proceding to integration might isolate itself and the collapse of the Eastern market, however, do not permit delays in modernization. Patronage by the state must be replaced by market rationality. Inherited losses must not be increased by additional ones, and the sources of losses must be eliminated at the earliest possible time.

János M. Rainer

Their Men in Budapest

Titkos jelentések 1956. okt. 23–nov. 4. (Confidential Reports, 23 Oct.-4 Nov. 1956). Selected by Sándor Geréb. Hírlapkiadó Vállalat, 1989, 152 pp.

The 1956 revolution prefigured the recent democratic changes in Hungary. The memory of thirty year old events and the chance that demands of that time might be satisfied, have acted as a considerable integrating force.

After long years of amnesia, 1956 sources and much that has only been published in the West has at long last become accessible. A varied and vivid picture of the events has unfolded, though time has not really been sufficient for the publication of all the new material that is now available.

Much is still in obscurity as regards the international background, particularly Soviet and Western reactions to the happenings. What is still not clear is not what they decided, but rather the decision–making process itself.

As regards Moscow, we do not know much more than we did earlier. The most important records of negotiations have for nearly twenty years now been Khrushchev's not quite authentic or accurate memoirs and the diary of Micunovic, the Yugoslav ambassador in Moscow. Greater detail is not likely to be available till glasnost comes to include the Soviet Central Archives (if it ever does).

The picture is not much clearer as far as Western reaction is concerned. Diplomatic documents in certain cases remain classified well beyond the customary thirty years.

Confidential Reports... must therefore be welcomed by historians and the general public alike. Unknown documents appear at a time when publishers, having escaped the constraints of censorship, are mostly content with the republication in Hungary of books that originally appeared abroad. The volume contains some 120 documents, most of them reports, telegrammes, and telex communications from the British and the U.S. Legations in Budapest. In addition, some of the records dated October-November 1956, from the Hungarian diplomatic missions in Belgrade, Vienna, Bonn, and Moscow are included together with papers originating in the Foreign Office in London and the Department of State in Washington. Several of the cables sent by the U. S. Legation from Budapest have already been published by Andor Sziklay in *Irodalmi Újság* (Published in Paris) as a supplement to its issue of July-October 1981, and by Elek Karsai in *História* No. 6 for 1982.

Apart from a clearly hurriedly written preface, editing was practically confined

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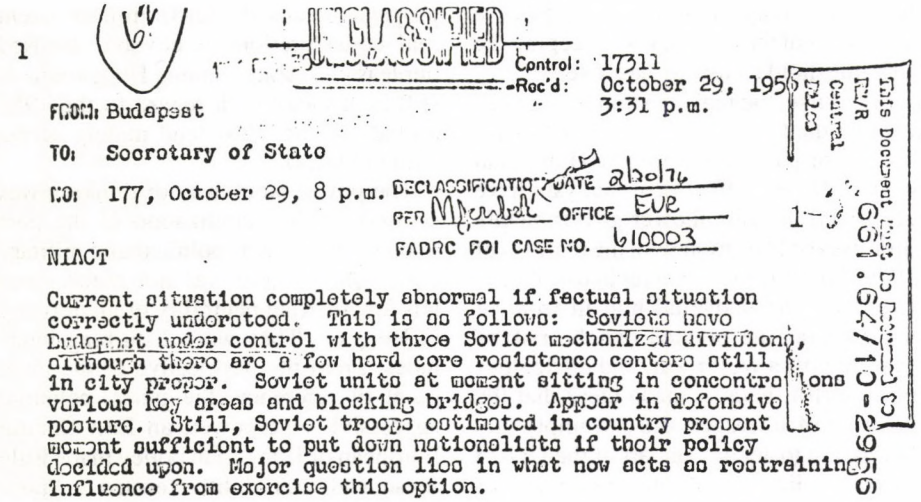
to putting the papers in chronological order and appending occasional explanatory notes (particulars on the diplomats who signed the documents — but only those whom the compiler knew from memory, as it were, to have held the respective posts in 1956), and to inserting subtitles. It is a minor fault that what is stressed in this manner is scandalously negative, pointing exclusively to the anarchic nature of the events, to the acts of terrorism, to upheaval and confusion. Of course, things of this kind, occurred but not only of this kind nor should there be need to stress them any longer. Much more deplorable is the absence of introductory notes, at least outlining the international impact or the attitude of the Great Powers, not to mention explanatory notes concerning events and individuals. Such notes are especially important for documents relating to foreign affairs: diplomatic reports aim at maximum brevity. A fundamental rule is reference to archival classification; in its absence, the contemporary file number, even if given with meticulous precision, does not tell much. It is hardly likely that a document of key importance regarding U. S. policy, such as a memorandum by Secretary of State J. F. Dulles, should remain undated. The preface does not state the principles by which selection was made either. If such an explanation was considered unnecessary since only released documents were available for publication, this ought to have been stated. Writers of reports often refer to documents of an earlier date. Since, however, appropriate notes are absent, it is difficult to discover whether or not the item referred to is here included and if not, why not.

Still, even with these flaws, the published documents tell us much about the West's policy on 1956.

In Hungary, before October 1956, Great Britain and the United States were treated as quasi-hostile countries. Any person who tried to establish contact, without being licensed to do so, with the British or the U.S. Legations in the early 1950s faced the most serious consequences: a charge of espionage, imprisonment, sometimes even the death penalty. All the same, about ten or so British diplomatic reports dating from the spring and summer of 1956—published at the beginning of the book—show clearly that Western diplomats were in possession of ample information about the activites of the authorities and of the reform-communist opposition which was already strong at the time. Still, Soviet policy was at the focus of interest: the diplomatic posts in East Central Europe primarily reported on Soviet policy towards the satellite country concerned.

The outbreak of what was undeniably a revolution on the 23rd of October took British and U.S. diplomats by surprise. In isolation from their informants, they were compelled to rely on rumours, being fed them mainly by foreign press correspondents. The place of confirmed and carefully considered news items and sound analyses based upon them was taken by speculation.

It would be a bold assumption to claim that the Western, and especially the American, passive attitude towards the revolution was influenced primarily by such reports. They make it evident, however, that the diplomats in Budapest misinterpreted events in two ways. For one thing, they failed for some time to recognize the broad-based and spontaneous character of the uprising, they suspected an organized plot and for this reason they were unable to understand why its centre and its revolutionary leaders gave no signs of life. Since there were no leaders of course, such signs were waited for in vain. When Imre Nagy and his government agreed to popular demands, the diplomats did not recognize, or only recognized too late, the historical importance of this step: rather, they viewed it as a tactical feint by



1

Control: 17311
Rec'd: October 29, 1956
3:31 p.m.

FROM: Budapest

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 177, October 29, 8 p.m.

DECLASSIFICATION DATE 2/20/76
PER Marbut OFFICE EUR
FADRC FOI CASE NO. 610003

NIACT

Current situation completely abnormal if factual situation correctly understood. This is as follows: Soviets have Budapest under control with three Soviet mechanized divisions, although there are a few hard core resistance centers still in city proper. Soviet units at moment sitting in concentrations various key areas and blocking bridges. Appear in defensive posture. Still, Soviet troops estimated in country present moment sufficient to put down nationalists if their policy decided upon. Major question lies in what now acts as restraining influence from exercise this option.

One guess might be evenly divided influence at moment between Soviet political thinkers who favor iron fist action and those for moderate course. If this is good guess and west reaction weak-kneed in this crisis would appear scale would tip in favor iron fist school. Legation would recommend pressure on Soviets to be heavy and in any possible form that appears compatible with Washington assessment of risks.

This Document Must Be Returned to RA/R Central Files

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HES

A cable from U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Barnes in Budapest to Secretary of State Foster Dulles

a group of communist leaders with the aim of controlling popular dissatisfaction. This peculiar "blindness" was all the more tragic since other reports make it obvious that they were aware of the Soviet intention to intervene before the 4th of November.

U.S. policy was not shaped on the basis of news from Budapest and the conclusions formulated there. The most elaborate study of this decision-making process, (Brian McCauley in the *Journal of Contemporary History*, No. 198, pp. 777-800), substantiates this. N. Spencer Barnes, the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires, in spite of all uncertainty and lack of information, was pressing for a more definite reaction. Though in his cabled report of October 27th, he indicated that he "does not have clear view of possible of alternatives open to U.S. Government," he added that in his opinion "careful consideration be given to means for supporting insurgent population", and that "some risk is warranted by emergence of this tremendous revulsion against Soviet domination". On October 29th he asked "what now acts as restraining influence" upon the Soviet effort to defeat the uprising by "iron fist action". Then he went on: "One guess might be evenly divided influence at moment between Soviet political thinkers who favour iron fist action and those for moderate course. If this is a good guess and West reaction weak-kneed in this crisis would appear scale would tip in favour of the iron fist school. Legation would recommend pressure on Soviets to be heavy and in any possible form that appears compatible with Washington assessment of risks". Dulles's memorandum dated two days later made U.S. diplomats understand the position Washington had adopted a few days be-

fore—that they should remain passive spectators of the events, while keeping the risk threshold as low as possible.

Of course, the real question is what can explain the U.S. administration's "weak-kneed" or passive reaction to Hungarian events. Dozens of critical analysts have compared the Eisenhower government's promises of liberation with the realities of 1956. True, the President replied to Walter Cronkite who badgered him in front of the cameras; he pointed out the risk of sparking off a world war, and difficulties of an airlift, he also made clear that the doctrine of liberation did not imply any obligation to act on the part of the United States. Indicative of the uneasiness of decision-makers was, however, the manifest eagerness with which they later discussed the Hungarian question. The revolution and the road leading up to it were studied intensively at both public and informal conferences.

It can be supposed that Americans only became familiar with opposition within the CP and revisionism or, as it was called at that time, national communism, after the event. If they had had appropriate information they might not have looked on Imre Nagy and the reform communists with such distrust and incomprehension in October 1956. It was easy to arrive at the conclusion that it was not worth taking considerable risks for these people.

(It made little difference to Hungary, but is worthy of attention all the same, how profoundly the West mastered the experience of 1956 and then of 1968. In the seventies and eighties, favour was showered on reform communists or those who posed as such. These inflated figures often eclipsed the genuinely democratic and national politicians of the oppositions.)

Even more important was thinking in terms of power blocks which, in the mid-1950s, characterized both U.S. and Soviet politicians. To this mindset, the liberation of the East Europeans was more than an electoral slogan. The difference between propaganda and the far from transparent real considerations it covered aroused unpleasant feelings among Hungarians—still held today with regard to the 1956 attitude of the West (and mainly of the United States).

The power block way of thinking was centred on the stabilization of the post Second World War political and military *status quo*.. There was not much room left for Austrian neutrality or an uprising in Hungary. They were disturbing interludes. From the perspective of the main point of reference, the other, potential aggressive superpower, an East Central European or Hungarian policy made little sense and was rightly termed a "non-policy" (Gáti, Lundestad).

Another cause, already apparent at the time, was a division of attention. What I mean is not so much what had to be done about the Suez Crisis, but rather the complex of effects this crisis brought on. To power block thinking the division of Europe had rigidified into immutability, but the Third World still appeared wide open. No blocks existed there, it was possible to think in terms of spheres of economic and political influence. In 1955-56 there were many indications that the states emerging from colonial status (India, Indonesia, Egypt, etc.) were taking their cue politically from the Soviet Union and China. The crude and anachronistic-looking intervention by Great Britain and France frayed the nerves of American politicians who regarded the Afro-Asian game as undecided. What would happen if all this induced the Arab world to seek shelter in the arms of the Soviet Union? Thus, attention was divided and the stakes were even higher.

In U.S. policy a decisive role was always played not only by pragmatic considerations, but also by the quasi-missionary propagation of Western democratic values and systems. This would have called for action. But because of the facts mentioned above, the ramifying

question of "what is to be done?" was simplified practically at once into the dilemma of whether to intervene at the risk of a world war or to look on passively and wait for what would happen.

Such a risk could not be taken in the light of the determination of the Soviets. Awareness of Soviet power policy, and especially of recent developments, made it possible to assume that the Soviets would surrender not one square inch. This was indeed so, even if recent leaks of information suggest that the Khrushchev leadership was far from being as determined and united as it was supposed to have been. Some of the reports in this volume indicate that contemporary observers were wholly aware of this circumstance. It was to this that they attributed, with some reason, Moscow's visibly hesitant attitude immediately following the 23rd of October.

The power block approach, with its focus on the Iron Curtain, explains the failure to notice also the anxieties masked by the determination of the opposite—Soviet—power block mentality: a policy afraid of the reactions of the West, mainly the United States. If American policy-makers had not, in their hearts, considered the national communists as much the devil's creatures as the rest of them, they might possibly have noticed that the Soviets, precisely in 1955-56, were irresolute in this respect. They were inclined to regard this opposition as heretics within their block, but at the same time to accept them as a suitable bridge (or Trojan horse?) when moving into a number of new states of Africa and Asia. For this reason it might have been worth coming to terms with the party opposition in Eastern Europe: with a Gomulka, or perhaps an Imre Nagy supported by an uprising.

Finally, it makes sense to call attention to one more point of view. More than one report betrays that some responsible person, a leading member of government, or a leader of the insurgents, was expected to make the situation clear to Western diplomats and convey to them what the Hungarian demands were. This was not even attempted.

It would have been out of the question for Imre Nagy to summon Chargé d'affaires Barnes to appear before him. He was a bold reformer, and his foreign policy notions (which certainly did not coalesce into a system that might have been a foreign policy philosophy) contained a few novelties—in relation to the Soviet block and to the Third World at the most. Such a novelty was, for example, the repudiation of power blocks. At the same time, however, Imre Nagy was an orthodox communist to whom the west meant imperialism, that is, the enemy. Agreement, independence, democracy—all this made sense to Imre Nagy in a specific political and geographic ambience. The openness and the ever greater flexibility he displayed towards alternatives at the time of the revolution, however, permit the supposition that, if he had been surrounded by people of a broader horizon than his, he would have been ready to take different steps. István Bibó, however, who was such a person and who had drafted a relevant memorandum, regrettably did not take part in any meeting of the cabinet. With his memorandum in his pocket, he arrived at Parliament on the 4th of November, at the dawn of the Soviet invasion. As shown by the volume, his memorandum found its way to Washington, but could then only serve as an example of the firmness and moral courage of an exceptional man. The logic of events took a different course.

The Hungarian reader cannot read this book without excitement, especially if he lived through those October days. Vibrating behind the succinct and cool sentences is the tension of events (sometimes affecting the authors of the reports), and an anxious question. Can the revolution and Hungary hope to receive help from somewhere with a view to realizing aspirations expressed with unprecedented unity? This is what makes the book, despite its serious defects, one of the most important documentary sources for 1956.

János Makkay

The Man Who Found Samuel

Miklós Kretzoi and Viola T. Dobosi (Editors):
Vértesszőlős – Man, Site and Culture.
Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1990, 555 pp.

This hardback volume is dedicated to the memory of László Vértes "who lived and died for Vértesszőlős". The dedication could have added: to the enthusiastic amateur who reached the top of the international world of archaeology through his exploration of the sole prehominid settlement in Southern and Eastern Europe.

Although he was an extraordinary individual, who had an extraordinary career, the volume does not tell us who László Vértes really was, not even the dates of his birth and death: November 3, 1914—August 2, 1968, are given. He never studied archaeology at university, completed a few terms at the Faculty of Medicine, was a gifted cartoonist, arcrobat, labourer, bookseller, amateur spelaeologist, and, even as a committed Party minder, did not forego his favourite drink, Bourbon. In 1956 it was he who removed the Red Star from the top of the National Museum; towards the end of his life he preferred his girlfriends black, if possible. As a spelaeologist, he became acquainted with palaeolithic archaeology, since palaeolithic remains were then only known from a few caves in the Bükk hills. During the years following the Second World War—especially after the outstanding scholar, Jenő Hillebrand's, withdrawal from research before dying in 1950—there was a vacuum in the field. Almost inevitably, Vértes took up post after post, before finally becoming Keeper of the Hungarian National Museum. Parallel to this, he had begun excavations, including one in the Istállóskő cave of the Bükk hills in 1947. It was even then clear that he made up by incredible will-power and resourcefulness for the knowledge which he, at least at that time, lacked. One example was how he transported from the cave to the vestibule of the National Museum, against every obstacle, a 30,000 year old fireplace, 12 square metres in area and 80 tons (!) in weight. On the way, bridges had to be strengthened, transfer from road to tail had to be effected, and, finally, even a toll had to be paid at the boundary of Budapest for the "goods". After a lengthy palaver, a nominal toll was imposed for "a smallest size cast iron stove". He reported all this enjoyably in his popular book, *Medveemberek krónikája* (The Story of the Cave-Dwellers) Budapest, 1957; one of his fortes was to regulary inform non-specialists on his projects and ideas. Towards the end of his short life, he summed up his professional work, frankly writing that on account of his lack of university training he was never sure whether what he wrote was up to the mark. A final yes in this would obviously have been given if he himself had been able to publish the results of his Vértesszőlős excavations. As it happened he was only able to give an inkling in his

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second—posthumous—book, *Kavics-ösvény* (Pebble Path), Budapest, 1969, of the explorations at the site of the fossil man. The direction of his research was also irregular: he proceeded backwards in time through human history: the cave of the Upper Palaeolithic, the open air site of the Middle Palaeolithic Mousterian in Tata, and the Vértesszőlős settlement of the Lower Palaeolithic. But even such an outstanding book as this contained a surprise, which he was not to live to see.

At the time Vértes was already a liberal intellectual: in 1967-1968 he thought that the time for sincerity had arrived. In his introduction to the volume, he wanted to indicate how minuscule the known history of a little village like Vértesszőlős is compared to the hundreds of thousands of years that had occurred in the passing of time. To do so, he published a few pages of the diary of an unknown local chronicler. The village existed as early as 1244 under the name of Villa Scellus, the population was devastated by cholera in 1866, in 1878 the greater part of the village burned down. The people, mostly Slovaks, had no priest speaking their language for a long period. Their village has been called Vértesszőlős since 1908. (Owing to the coincidence between his own name and that of the village, he called the finds the "Buda industry"—they are called the Vértesszőlős industry in this volume.) On account of some comments of the erstwhile chronicler's ("on June 28, 1914 the wicked Serbs, encouraged by the Russians, killed our good and blessed heir to the throne", further that "... in 1920 after the Red Dictatorship the 'Christian Line' came"), the censorship immediately had all copies of the volume withdrawn, and new pages printed for the missing four (pages 17-20), which were pasted into the 3,700 copies to replace those torn out.

Vértes was, to the very end of his life, sceptical about not only his own discoveries but concerning the omnipotence of the scientific approach in general. Probably this too was the reason that when, in 1962, "the pebbles and bones collected from the limestone tufa outcrops at Vértesszőlős by Mészáros and his students were shown to László Vértes, he identified them as Mousterian and compared them to the Tata finds (i.e. to his excavated remains from the Mousterian site in Tata). In contrast, M. Pécsi thought these finds to be representatives of a 'very old culture'. [...] Another year passed before Vértes set out to make a trial survey at Vértesszőlős inspired by the repeated nagging of Pécsi. He returned with two bags of loose lime silt collected for water sieving,... This find verified the 'Mindel' [for this expression, see below] dating of the limestone tufa, and ... the dating of the complex provided a chronological context for the culture and cast light on the full significance of the hominid find. The verified cultural remains of 'sinanthropus', their exact chronological position, and the stratigraphical position on the terrace could thus be identified on a European habitation site for the first time." (p. 18)

As a consequence, from 1963, László Vértes, and from 1964 science too, took Vértesszőlős seriously; substantial excavations began, which went on until October 29, 1967. This thick volume under review reports results of these five excavation campaigns, in a total of 32 studies. They include some which have nothing to do with the Lower Palaeolithic finds and Vértes himself figures only with two and a half—or three?—articles, partly jointly written, and partly compilations; they amount to 22 pages. The question is whether Vértes indeed had any study published or in manuscript that would have allowed him to appear at least symbolically in this volume even twenty-two years after his death. In this place we have to be satisfied with the circumstance that "the monument raised to László Vértes by this book will never reach the high level it could have if the monograph had been

produced by his own faith and energy. The volume will bear even less resemblance to the one Vértes dreamed of." (p. 9) The issue cannot be decided, although the friends, colleagues, associated experts and the publisher needed twenty-two years (!) to see the volume published; months were sufficient for Vértes to open, partially in 1967 and on May 1, 1968 the entirety of the open-air museum of Vértesszőlős, which is today one of the world's outstanding prehistoric displays.

Time somehow always played a strange role in Vértes's life: points in time as well as the coincidence of dates and events. He and his colleagues had decided, well before August 1965, that, if they found human remains, they would call them Samuel. A human occipital bone was found on 21 August, 1965 (Vértes died three years later, on August 20, 1968). The archaeologists had worked on the 21st, which was a Sunday because they had taken the previous day off (the 20th is a national holiday in Hungary). Weeks later it was realized that the occipital bone of Samuel was found on the nameday of Samuel. The baptism was celebrated with Tokay wine.

Vértes urged the establishment of a museum on the site, (it is alleged that he even called on János Kádár to try to remove all obstacles. He knew that a site a couple of minutes drive off the Vienna-Budapest motorway could become a world sensation, and would obviously become one once the Iron Curtain was dismantled.

He himself summed up the results by asserting that Vértesszőlős was almost the only site in the world where the following essential things and features were together from such an early period (it is difficult to tell the years exactly, but from more than 250,000 years ago):

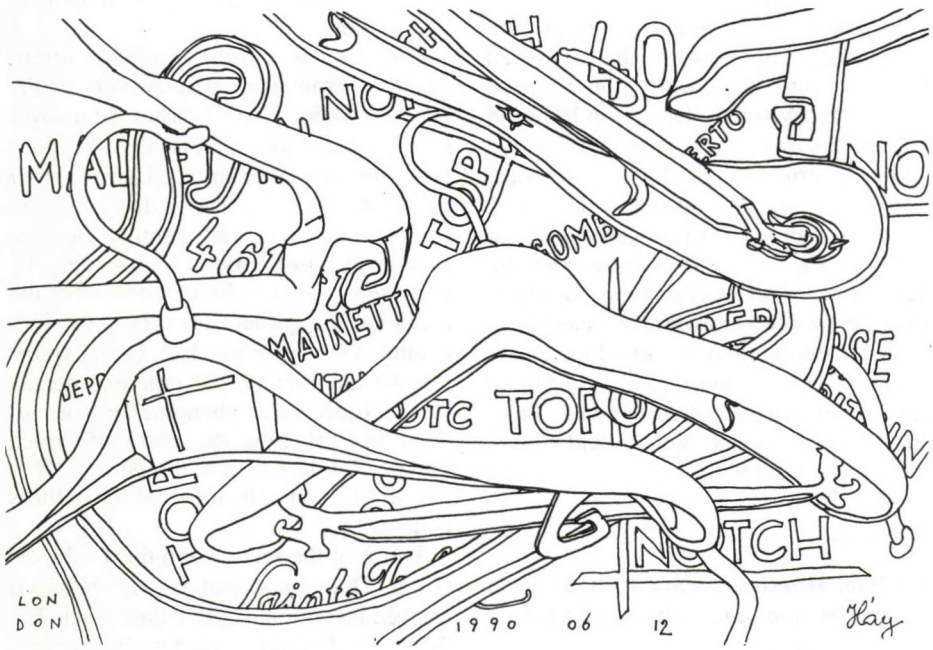
settlement remains in several successive horizons,
fireplaces with food remains, mostly animal bones,
butchering places,
living surfaces, with animal footprints,
proofs of skull cult,
tools, and, finally,
fossil human remains
and human footprints.

The most important finds are the human remains. Four fragments of tooth remains of an approximately seven year old child, as well as a human occipital bone of a young, adult male were found on the site. The features of the occipital bone bear the closest affinities to those of *Sinanthropus* among primitive hominids, the cranial capacity, however, and metrical patterns separate them. According to A. Thoma, the skull which can be reconstructed differs clearly from Neanderthal man, and is much more developed than the *Sinanthropus* or the *Pithecanthropus*. Consequently, the fossil man of Vértesszőlős must be considered a modern man, and placed in a new subspecies, which is a genuine transition between the *Homo erectus seu sapiens palaeohungaricus*. It has such relations as the Swanscombe (Kent, England) and Skhul V (Mt. Carmel) or even more the Petralona (Greece) and the Bilzingsleben (Germany) man. At the present moment it is the earliest authentic human remains explored together with tools in the whole of Southern and Eastern Europe.

This finding involves a certain modification to what was said, and the datings of twenty-five years ago, after the discovery. The appraisal of the tools has changed. The major part of these are stone tool: a total of 8,890 pieces, with which 93 bones are associated. The majority of the stone tools are choppers and chopping tools, but they include other types too, which may sound a bit strange to the reader: cleavers, bolas and half-bolas, proto-hand-axes, beaked points, scrapers, raclettes, borers and burins, burin-choppers and burin scrapers, flakes, hooks, anvils, retouchers, etc. One of their pecularities is that they are generally smaller in size than the choppers of their

hominid relations, as e.g. the choppers of the much earlier Olduvai Gorge (Tanzania). This also indicates that the earliest stratum of Vértesszőlős (from which the occipital bone was retrieved) is later by tens or even hundreds of thousands of years than *Homo erectus*. Other things, it has been discovered since that, cannot be confirmed. Among these are the human footprints, which are exhibited alongside the footprint of the famous ballerina Gabriella Lakatos. Today we know that they are not of human origin, but are the two successive, i.e. fore- and hindfoot imprints of a small species of bear. Nor is it certain any longer whether man had settled at Vértesszőlős on the bottom of limestone tufa basins of hot water springs only. On the other hand, interpretation of the extremely rich material of animal bones has remained stable. Accordingly, the animal bones of the lowermost level on site I—including the fossil human remains—can be dated to the second, so called Mindel period of the Ice Age or Pleistocene, and to be more exact, to its temporarily warmer Interstadial between two cold periods. In other words to 300,000 or even 350,000 years ago.

Of this, one of the most important publications produced by Hungarian scholarship, (one merit is that it has numerous foreign, German, Canadian, American and other, contributors as well) two things are to be said. Concerning Vértes, perhaps that *exegit monumentum aere perennius,* and in general, that it has taken long to publish s but it was worth it.



Michael Hurst

Honouring Clio

Triumph in Adversity. Studies in Hungarian Civilisation in Honour of Professor Ferenc Somogyi on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday. Ed. by Steven Bela Vardy and Agnes Huszár Vardy. 616 pp. East European Monographs, Boulder. Distributed by Columbia University Press, New York, 1988.

Here we have that rather uncommon condition of pietas blissfully married to the greater glory of history. Admirers of the late Ferenc Somogyi have composed and orchestrated twenty-seven essays devoted to matters Hungarian—predominantly of the past, yet reaching on into the complexities of the present. They are divided into seven sections and supplemented by a veritable phalanx of maps and illustrations, itself apportioned into four distinct groupings.

First of the essay clutches is one devoted to Somogyi himself. A distinguished Hungarian provincial who emigrated to an American province —Ohio— in 1950 and remade his history career with a devoted and unfaltering zest, he had had a metropolitan role of sorts — one as a member of the lower House of Parliament and social service official. In so many ways, though, he personified perfectly someone for whom Budapest was no more than a means to an end. An individual of a sort all too easily overlooked in a country with so brilliant and dominant a capital. Yet down in Pécs, studying history and law, he had slowly but surely become a vital figure in the interwar set-up. Just the crucial link between Budapest superstructure and county/city infrastructure — veritable table salt of the Horthy menu.

His disciples do him proud. His life and character are well portrayed and his works listed with a care as great as it is efficient. Less happy, however, is some of the comment on his christian name. Gyula Décsy betrays crass ignorance of what he terms "Protestant northern Europe" when claiming Francis is a rarely used name in that region.

Part Two is a truly ambitious affair, entitled 'From the Early Árpáds to the Age of Rákóczi'. Six essays take us over this most tortuous of courses. All do a good job of explanation; clarity is their hallmark. And, whether in dissecting the ancient carcass of 12th century German politics as a background for Hungary, or in presenting the technical niceties of the medieval Hungarian Chancery in the 15th century visá-vis humanism, or in exploring the theological and practical details of the Licentiatus phenomenon, or, indeed, in explaining the nature of Prince Ferenc Rákóczi in the Hungarian "Historical Mission", the touch of the authors is unerring.

Those of the second and third subjects (L. S. Domonkos and Cs. E. Mihályi) reached an outstandingly telling level. The three essay third section tackles Vörösmarty

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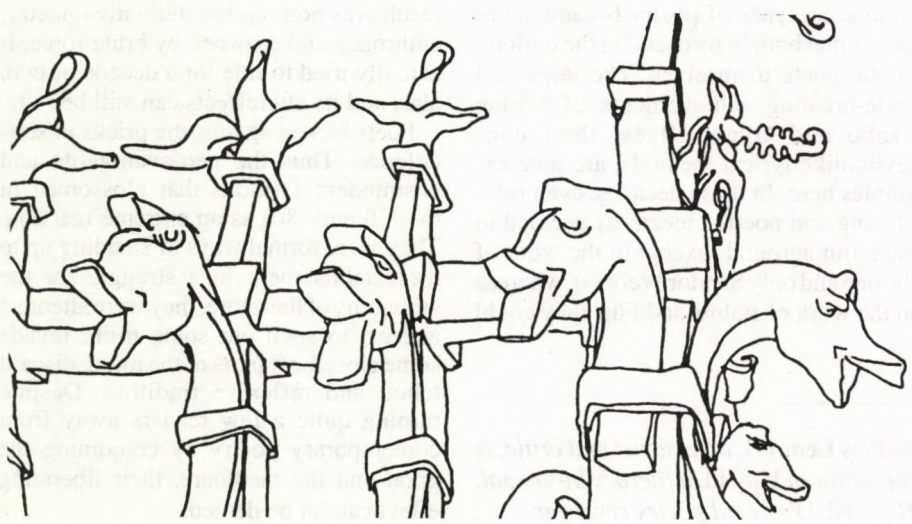
on Hungarian romanticism, the political essays of Eötvös, and the results are good. Lucidity and even-handedness reign, information remains full and relevant. Interpretation is perhaps not startingly original , but novelty obtrudes to an extent sufficient to keep the reader's appetite keen. E. W. Stroup is especially to be congratulated for his mastery of the tax scenes; and T. Szendrey certainly freshened up the Vörösmarty industry to no mean effect.

In part four we pass into the era of Hungary's interwar travail. Three pieces cope with how Trianon came about, how the Hungarian gendarmerie went off the rails of propriety, and how Hungary entered World War Two. Sad topics quite well tackled. But every essay lacks at least some of the depth reached in the earlier work. And with part five something of the rigmarole crops up in two of the three offerings. Perhaps in 1988 it was still difficult to discuss current minorities in Hungary and the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia with an all out frankness. Yet, there can be no doubt that J. Varsányi suffered no such constrictions in expatiating on the ethnoprotective role of the semi-autonomous county of "historic Hungary"! Nor did he labour under inherent intellectual drawbacks.

Somogyi was, of course, himself deeply involved with the social and economic developments of twentieth century Hungary dwelt on in part six. One can feel the draughts of right-radicalism blowing onto the Horthyite shoulders in the 1930's and the years of World War Two. Again we have more information than inspiration, but of the usefulness of all before us there cannot be the slightest doubt. Each of the three essays enriches our understanding of the period in ways not invariably available in the last and seventh grouping. Exiled or emigrant people are by definition membra disjuncta —things wrenched out of the full native context. They command no full scene and operate essentially in detail. Hence "Hungarian-American Life, Culture and Politics" could be said by its very nature to court the pathetic. The authors here were therefore unjustly disadvantaged and unable to turn dross into gold. But gold there was in plenty in much of this worthwhile book. Though valuable in himself, Somogyi must be esteemed for having been the inspiration of so many scholarly writers.



Balázs Lengyel

In the Sights of Time

István Baka: *Égtájak célkeresztjén* (In the Sights of the Points of the Compass). Szépirodalmi, 1990, 160 pp.; László Bertók: *Kő a tollpihén* (Stone on Down). Orpheusz Könyvek, 1990, 92 pp.; Gyula Takáts: *Szonettek a Styxen túlra* (Sonnets to Across the Styx). Magvető, 1990, 110 pp.; Ottó Orbán: *A kozmikus gavallér* (The Cosmic Cavalier). Orpheusz Könyvek, 1990, 88 pp.

It is a special feature of Hungarian poetry at the beginning of the century that it is highly fastidious as to its structure and formal severity—true particularly of the poets of the periodical *Nyugat* (1908-1914), and, at the same time, of the avantgarde of Lajos Kassák and his school replacing every kind of order with "dismantled order".

Another peculiarity of Hungarian poetry is that, from the late twenties through the thirties and forties of the century, the avantgarde somehow got bogged down. Compared with French, Russian, Czech, German, Spanish poetry, the dominant Hungarian types of poetry became more traditional both in form and in the outlook of the poets themselves. The large and style-creating achievements of Lőrinc Szabó and Gyula Illyés, their confessionlike lyrical methods, are nice examples here. In those decades, even role-playing and poetic objectivity seemed to have run aground (except in the work of the one and only Sándor Weöres), whereas in the work of Babits and Füst they could clearly be seen as abreast of what was being done in other European languages.

Later, though a cultural policy that forced the hands of some influential poets, silenced some and ignored others, Stalinism and post-Stalinism banged the gates shut on experiment and change. This was a period which saw aggressive conservatism reigning under the auspices of "progress". As official East German literary criticism put it, so characteristically for the socialist world, nothing could be published that might irritate or outrage the public, or shock it through novelty. The result was nothing but derivative poetry, enthroned and crowned by brute force. It actually tried to rule for a decade or two, alas, and its aftereffects can still be felt.

Poets kicked against the pricks in self-defence. Thus the neo-avantgarde and postmodern fashions that blossomed in the '70 and '80s as an extreme reaction. They were formal ways of standing up to the establishment in a struggle for the autonomy of literature; they were attempts at least to spell out some truth, invade some closed-off parts of the mind, discard taboo and reflexive tradition. Despite turning quite a few readers away from contemporary poetry by conjoining the good and the mediocre, their liberating effect cannot be denied.

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Nevertheless, what happened behind fashion? To the poets who were closer to tradition? To those who more or less maintained the old bonds even while experimenting with novel ways? The answer is unequivocal: it is they who make up the top rank of Hungarian poetry now. Here come just a few examples.

István Baka's new collection *In the Sights of Points of the Compass* summarizes his work over twenty years, his output from the age of twenty two to the present day—in only 160 pages. Born in 1948, István Baka shows us a life experience, a *Weltanschauung* that reflects a philosophic viewpoint outlined in the volume's title. By it, he means that our lives are spent sitting on the sights, the weapon of time, until the weapon shoots us, like a hunter his prey. Though the image is exact, it fails to convey an appropriate picture of the poet's experience of existence or his powers of expression. Uneasiness and menace permeate Baka's poetry with such force that his view of the world is overwhelmed by natural phenomena, love of country and nation.

Baka's nature imagery is dictated by suffering: "Snowdrops, you teeth/gleaming from the mouth of someone drowning/ you close in a contraction and the pain/ remains unscreamed." (*Tavaszdal*—Spring Song). Or another example: "The snow settles onto black branches /the shaven-headed trees with upraised arms /will receive striped garments./ That will be the forest. /But the soil in the meadow will freeze into a fist, / and the beastly blackness of pain and rage/ will throw crows high in the sky." *(Jövendölés egy télről*—Prophecy on a Winter).

Shaven-headed convicts, blackness of pain and rage is what the natural scene signifies. In winter, that is. Yet in spring, when suffocating snowdrops have died, "Blossoming trees /informers wearing/ identical flower badges /were lined up;/ and slaughterhouses were /already waiting for/the peaceful lambs of Bethlehem." *(Voltak itt tavaszok*—There Were Springs Here). I could carry on, for Baka's poetry abounds in nature images. But are these images really of nature? Rather, thy objectify a state of mind—the emphasis falls there, rather than on natural observation.

Then there are his "love poems", in which he speaks not of desire, happiness or passion. They offer no dissolution of that tormented state of mind, fear of life, awareness of fate. At most, there is some faint hope that glimmers here and there in some of the early poems.
Just as the forest means "green hopelessnes", "filled with fear" in an early piece, likewise love is little more than a minute's interval in suffering: "Look out! Your fallen cigarette /will make a dusty flower wither. / That is how the love of your woman/ is tormented by your loneliness smouldering in her loins."

Here we are confronted with a sense of fate conveyed with such extraordinary force and visuality that it seems to be related to that of Pilinszky; yet Baka's is different in that it fills out the tragedy of being born Hungarian. Tragic heroes of Hungary's history and literature appear in his role-playing. Those poems that refer to their views, sense of fate and figures turn even darker in tonality.

The disillusionment that followed the second World War becomes concrete in Baka: "We thought /age would weave/ the threads of our fate / into a future./ It weaved them /into a carpet/ for the conqueror to tread on."
Nevertheless, the main subject matter is one's relationship to God. Baka's state of mind (just as Pilinszky's) elevates that relationship to the forefront. Initially the poet's attitude is argumentative, struggling with doubt, then it becomes fully negative. But turning towards God as one's only hope, or turning against Him are simply the Janus face of the same metaphysics. Baka's starting point is that God may not see and must not tolerate

what is going on. But that chord is immediately amplified: "... the Moon is a cruel grin... / I am watching it, trembling/ Has God gone crazy in His negligence?" And, "Or God is a rat perhaps /but it's all the same, as/ it's all the same who we pray to /at the bottom of a barrel."

At first sight László Bertók also faithfully follows tradition. He does, as far as form is concerned. His new volume, *Kő a tollpihén* (Stone on Down), is a collection of sonnets, a form which is much favoured in 20th century Hungarian poetry. True, there is the inherent danger of a sonnet's opening being diluted in order to arrive at a stronger envoi (as even Petrarc and his followers have done). László Bertók evades that danger. Formally he achieves this through compression: instead of the customary five or five and a half iambs making up lines of ten to eleven syllables, he drops two syllables per line. Most of those lines require the Hungarian stress with a caesura dividing the line into 4/4 or 5/3 syllables. However, Bertók is even more daring in content and structure, which is what counts most, which is what makes him a modern poet discarding older tools of construction in creating a new manner.

His method is to fill his lines with statements and observations indirectly conveying a mood, an attitude to life; these, however, remain unexplained and seem to float independently as the poem is being built up. They almost hang in the air, like free associations drifting towards each other accidentally, yet, finally, the whole of the poem suddenly pulls them together, unifying them into a sophisticated but clear message. The lack of coordination that feeds upon many, sometimes superfluous, elements will thus change into a conscious, firm, structure. This is how László Bertók creates a voice unmistakeably his own, and a genre, even if not without antecedents, of his own.

His is poetry that is an analysis of self, existence and poetry. Like Baka (for that matter, like any poet of any note), Bertók's main problem is time. Time and how we live in it while it passes, determining our past and present, visibly limiting our existence. Time, that keeps us uncertain over our past as well as our present. We might have some ideas on where we are from—but nothing on what we are. How do we live, in what, and what for? What is the use of our making poetry? These are key questions. In the first third of our century Babits could still say "I do not believe in determination, for I have a will in my heart. If I wave my hand, the world will change its course." For the poet of today, that is a belief as remote as the Moon.

László Bertók's whole endeavour is to search for certainty in documented uncertainty, in the high fever of a troubled identity; he is aware that "it is neither the thread nor the needle but the fever" that is trying to hold together what is collapsing. (*"Csuszkál bennem a hasadás"*— The split skids about in me) And, instead of certainty, he finds something like "there is no aim but impetus" "because it must be continued some way", or "the graveyard is as near /as is I said home/ and when the future is born /it will be just like today." And the contents of that today? "To survive the moment/ from dreams to memories."

This is a permanent 'presence conditional' in which "somebody punishes me with myself". And man, "forced to choose/ he knows he will never be free". Instead of what may be familiar philosophical maxims, we should look for the state of mind or sense of existence underlying the formulae; we should note the behaviour that Eastern Central Europe's history set off. For it is a behaviour that forced those formulae to be coined, even if (and this too is typical of this poet in this collection) how this special sense of existence, historical and social experience came about is not mentioned here. This collection is a

distillation, a summary of the psychology of a social experiment. It is a distillation, from the aspect of poetry, which is simple and purified. Eschewing familiar devices, it employs simple words and barely any similes or images in its one-line statements. Yet, because of the rapidly occurring changes in each line, because of the withdrawal and poetic self-limiting felt throughout, its impact is all the more resounding, liberating and deepening for the reader's imagination.

Faith, or a kind of faith, provides some hope in this poetry. Faith in God and/or poetry. This poet cannot be said to have dispelled his doubts on existence, either in grace or in a promised religious or worldly justice. He cherishes no metaphysical hope. He writes "the Lord's feet are honeyed/ and it is as if he were walking on my chest/ stopping over my heart now and then." (*Ősz van és megannyi hátha"*—It is Autumn and a Lot of Maybes). Elsewhere he says with even greater clarity and scepticism, "If there is a Lord he may be /lying under the rockets /he is man-size/ and pushes the buttons." (*Magasan száll az egyszeregy"*—Multiplication Table Flying High). The poem closes with "the moment lasts forever /for I do not believe what I believe."

But if man does not believe what he believes, if he doubts the identity of the personality, an existence realized in a permanent present and the possibility of solving the metaphysical contradictions of existence, how could he then believe in poetry? "If there were not some weight /like in the tumbler / to help me push myself back / unsuspecting to the same spot." The whole problem of the sonnet and the expression of personality can be perceived in this answer, which can be directly interpreted to mean writing and the drive to write. The awareness of the vanity of poetry that he mentions elsewhere and the drive to pursue it, are a kind of weight similar to that in the tumbler. There is a duality, a contrast expressed here, that fills out this masterly group of sonnets and determines the poet's analysis of self and of the world. This work stands out by punctuating our existence without pathos or trickery and by listing facts and clear conclusions.

Gyula Takáts belongs to the third generation of authors around *Nyugat,* including Sándor Weöres, the great experimenter, as well as other excellent poets, such as Zoltán Jékely, and István Vas. When he began writing in the 1930s, Takáts abandoned his generation's liking for abstraction and joined himself to the realist tradition. Instead of approaching life in a romanticized way or, as was usual with Weöres, dressing life's problems in mythological garb, he devoted his poems to the everyday features of life. The landscapes of Somogy county he loves so much, the life of fishermen, hunters and fishtrappers around Lake Balaton, inlets and reeds full of secrets were all transformed by Takáts into realistic miniatures. His poems have made him a "lake poet" through their illuminating his small world. This, in turn, has enabled him to rise over the material world and search for its underlying meaning.

A telling point in his life is that, when young, Gyula Takáts had initially taken up the painter's brush. He soon realized, however, that it was the intangible medium of verse in which he could really express whatever he saw as the indirect, hidden, content of the material world. Thus did he become a poet. His poetry came to be the display of what he saw and the sound of a message that was either inherent or obvious to him. This message has harmony, it reveals cosmic bearings. With a kind of Pannonian joy preserving something of the Latin past, with the Horatian maxim of *carpe diem quam minimam credo a postero,* Takáts acknowledges the world as it is through its most commonplace features: a walnut falling, a flower blossoming, a swallow

twittering, even an ordinary piece of lava rock just being there. He never forgets, however, that an object or a fleeting moment are parts of a whole that includes an Earth soiled by human history, the sun, the starry sky. He attaches cosmic meaning to everything, for him it shines from under any surface, some meaning in the realm of intangibles, perceivable only through poetry.

His new volume (of 85 sonnets mostly compressed into 8-9-syllable lines) features early and recent poems that revolve around the memory of his late wife and his life with her (not only with her memory) in a spiritual or cosmic union that overcomes death. This is a union in which the woman fills their house even in her transcendence: the objects "even if mute, speak of her," and, "In them you go on living with me in here." This is no desperate grief, rather, as befitting this poetry, it is a grief that is harmonic and permanent. A temporary, double existence in which the poet himself is also preparing resignedly to leave for the other, his late wife's, sphere. Until then the vocabulary of branches, lianes, paths, colours, bulbs and petals, along with memories and images of travels together, all recall the woman. As he puts it in quiet resignation, "I talk" to them "about you."

This is a surprising and also touching fording or ferrying across the Styx. The trip to and back from there is natural to Takáts. There is no mystical trance behind that, nor any tragic sense of life. Nevertheless, we read of the realization of the Rule of the Whole, coherency "in the cruel matter". A personal interpretation is provided here for the message that a young Takáts, the tyro poet, once read into things. Though Takáts accepts even here that "life is a gift with death" (and here again he is surrounded by almost the same light-and-shadows game as he was in his youth), his acceptance of the Rule of the Whole as valid for him too turns his stoicism melancholic.

The basic feature of his oeuvre, the search for a hidden meaning is complemented here by a penetrating and moving melancholy—the finest achievements of this closed, classicist poetry.

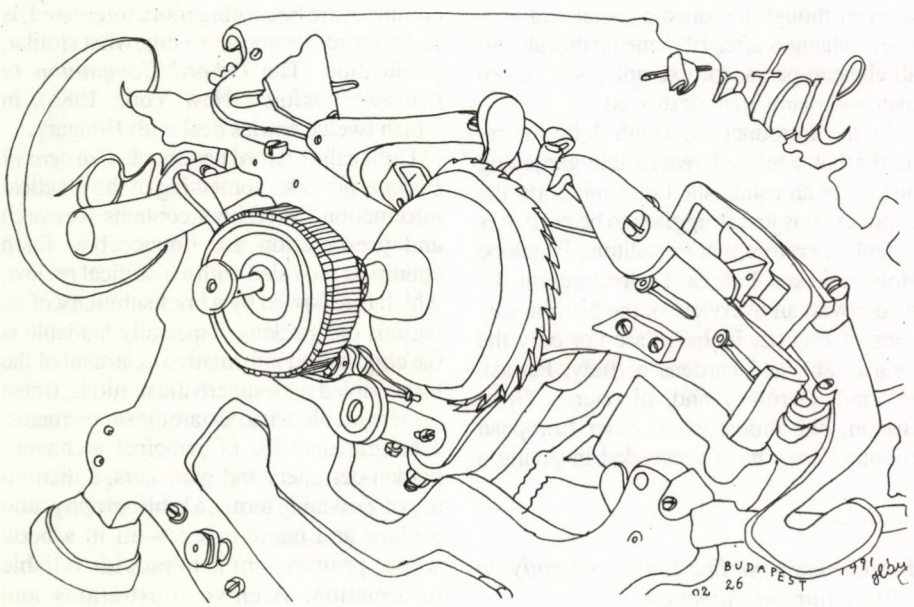
Ottó Orbán's poems in his new volume, A *kozmikus gavallér* (The Cosmic Cavalier) provide refreshing variety after so many sonnets, and not only in form. Orbán was wounded by history (in 1944-45) in such a way that he became a precocious *wunderkind,* something like—let me exaggerate here—Weöres had been in the 1930s, and, for long, an enfant terrible who, as he puts it, "peeled the apple called poetry with a blunt knife." Now, over fifty years of age, struggling in the grizzly embrace of a serious disease, he is one of our best poets. He tells us in his poem *"A rigóhoz"* (To the Blackbird) that "Every minute of my illness takes me closer to you, /to the paradox that your simpleton guise is true wisdom in fact/ as an apprentice poet I never aimed at less than the Eternal; /how could I have known the value of a day without sickness then? Now, living day by day, I translate your whistle, "Glory! Glory!" makes no difference whose, into words."
Having recovered from the trauma experienced in his childhood and building himself up through his poetry, Orbán saw much of the world; his judgement, wounded by the structure of the world and simplified by passion, remained the same. (Many of the pieces are from the poet's third visit to the U. S., some from a visit to Japan.) In an earlier volume (*A visszacsavart láng* —The Turned-Down Flame) he said: "Capital invests itself in palaces and uses liberal papers for covers." On the war, "Of the millions of corpses tenderized under cast-iron saddles, /time will make a sponge /to wash down the blackboard on which sneaky blood crawls in blind radials."

There is no change in this critical attitude which performs its painful glissandi,

truths and banalities following one another. Orbán is inventive in his refusal and in catching glimpses of the essence behind the glimmer in a glimmering world. He is almost irresponsible in following up his previous self, a man of bitter judgements, sparking the wit of his way of seeing things.

The change that deepens his poetry is elsewhere.In *Előadások a kortárs költészetről* (Lectures on Contemporary Poetry), a poem in the new volume, Orbán indicates, with his usual irony, that he has received a warning from the department organizing the lectures about his "writing biographical verse and thereby breaching Gottfried Benn's rules", that is, the "law" that poems should not be subjective. Orbán rages over this violent aesthetic fanaticism. It is, he says, akin to the Church linking its philosophy and dogma to the hooded executioners touching their torches to the pile around the stake. He wrote of the horrors of the world and mankind, since he had almost become a victim of those very horrors. What else should a poet's job have been?

As his fiftieth year loomed and then passed, he found that the horrors born within the body are worse than those of the world. This has left its mark on many of the new poems, in lines like "We are not prepared for having our bodies give notice", that experience modifies his attitude as well as his choice of subject matter. It colours his bitter irony, and not only darkens the rebellion he has long engaged in but also helps him find subjects that he had seemed to avoid earlier. With the sights of time's weapon trained on him, his sensitivity has increased and the surprising witticism with which he writes has become more tragic. His scepticism towards verse and oeuvre has become deeper. He confesses that "King Lear is wandering in my winter... and in some incomprehensible language he screams, / 'Blow, winds!' And there in his arms is the hope of the new world,/ a good-willing, simple royal princess strangled with a rope." On poetry, he concludes "I hate my trade /because it forces me to perform vivisection when I write." And fame is merely "A spring trap disguised by clouds."



József Sisa

Cultivating the Garden

The Gardens of Europe. Edited by Penelope Hobhouse and Patrick Taylor. Introduction by Hugh Johnson. George Philip Ltd., London, 1990. 385 pp., maps, black-and-white pictures.

Broadly speaking, the history of gardening reaches back thousands of years. Considering that it is closely related to landscaping, city-planning or establishing city parks and even housing developments, its importance should not be underestimated. One British scholar has noted that, thanks to partly economically motivated landscaping in 18th century Great Britain, nearly all the country's trees stand where they are today because of human design. Many of the hills, mountains and waters were shaped by human hands. Hungary has never seen landscaping on this scale; even so it has a greater than average number of man-shaped landscapes. This is so even though the drastic social and economic changes after 1945 meant that almost all chateau parks, for example, were taken over and many were destroyed.

In the introduction, Hugh Johnson remarks that, while in Great Britain gardening history is an established disclipine, on the continent it is just struggling to be born. It is notable therefore that the editors, Penelope Hobhouse and Patrick Taylor, present the reader with an overview of the historic gardens of Europe. Included are not only the long established gardens of Italy, France, Holland, Germany and, of course, Great Britain, but almost every other European country. They have succeeded in giving a sense of cultural unity, something many other authors have failed in. As the volume shows, the two main trends in garden design, the formal French garden, and the natural landscape-like English garden, were international styles. With the exception of the Balkan countries under Turkish dominance, these were the styles that the whole of Europe attempted to imitate. The editors commissioned their authors from several countries including Anna Zádor, who is Hungary's leading authority on the subject. For this, and other small countries, publication abroad is of special importance since Hungarian arts are not very well known outside the country. The fact that other countries are becoming more interested, is underscored by another, somewhat similar, publication, The *Oxford Companion to Gardens* (Oxford—New York, 1986), in which twelve entries deal with Hungary.

Unlike the Oxford handbook, *Gardens of Europe* provides something of the practical information a travel book contains. Research and presentation are impeccable. Each country is provided with a historical review, which is followed by a brief summary of its various old gardens. Especially laudable is the concise and informative treatment of the text coupled with superb illustrations, (most of them in colour); so too are the supplements: a biographical list of principal architects, garden-designers and gardeners, a dictionary of gardening terms, a bibliography, and a place and name index —all in a book whose primary aim is to provide reliable information. Archive illustrations and

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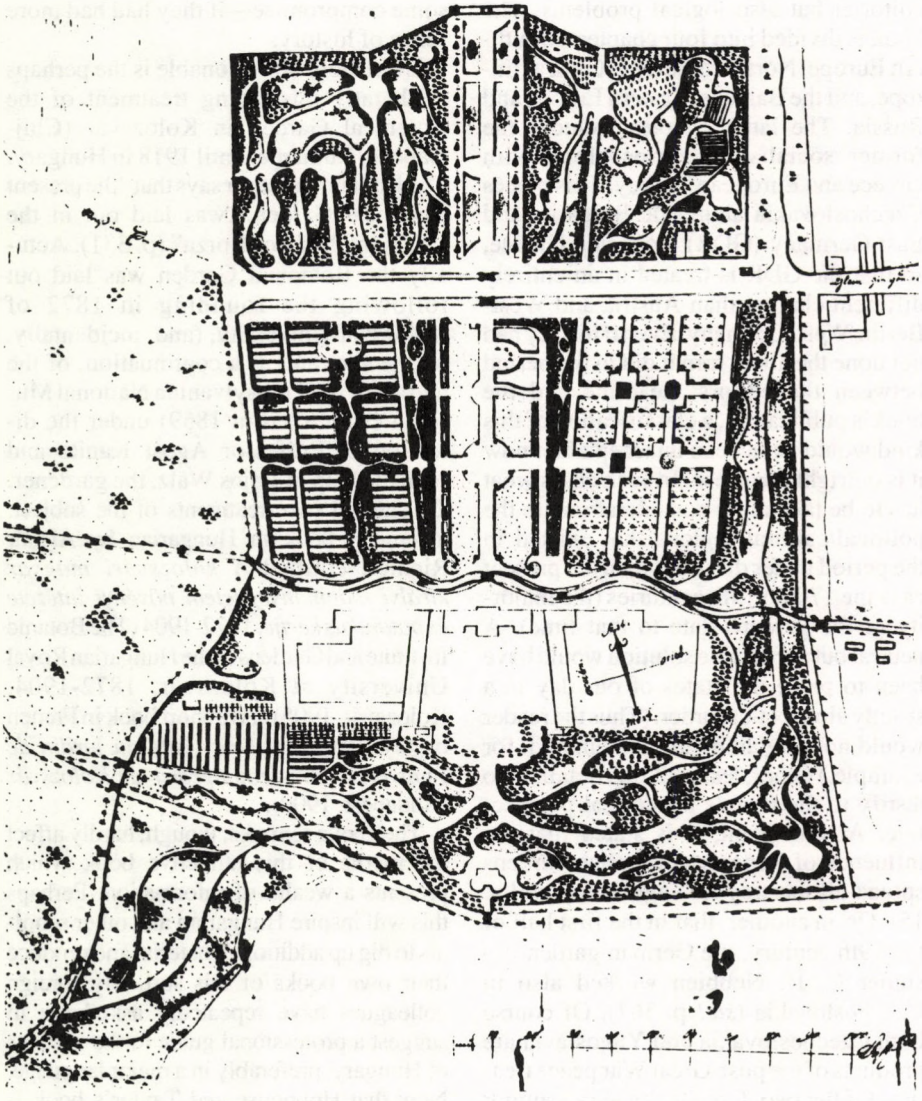
József Sisa's *publications are mainly on 19th century architecture.*



Nagycenk. Original design for the enlargement of the garden, 1780s.

groundplans, and the maps of countries, are both excellent and informative. What is missing are groundplans of gardens in their present condition, which would have been of interest both in the historical review and for finding one's way around on location.

More disturbing is the way the countries are classified. This raises not only editorial but also logical problems. The book is divided into four chapters: Southern Europe, Northern Europe, Central Europe, and the Balkans, Eastern Europe and Russia. The latter chapter includes the former socialist countries along with Greece and European Turkey. This places Czechoslovakia alongside Bulgaria, and East Germany (GDR) alongside Greece, so that the GDR is treated in an entirely different chapter than Austria and West-Berlin/West-Germany. Even if history had not done the about turn it did in the period between the editors' deadline and the book's publication, a classification of this kind would have been unacceptable; now it is outright nonsense. In such cases what has to be taken into consideration are the political/cultural regions that existed in the period under discussion, in the present case the 17th to 19th centuries (the majority of the gardens date to that time). A neutral but acceptable solution would have been to place the states of our day in a strictly alphabetical order. (Thus the reader would not search in vain for Finland, for example.) Other, less striking, details also testify to the book's ahistorical perspective. At one point, it is stated that the influence of Renaissance Italian gardens spread all the way to Yugoslavia (*sic!* p. 15). Or, in another, that in the first half of the 19th century, the German garden-designer C. H. Nebbien worked also in Czechoslovakia (*sic!* p. 367). Of course both Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia are products of the post-Great War peace treaties. Of the two, Czechoslovakia's author was a little better informed historically, and basically treated only Bohemia and Moravia—it follows that Slovakia's map shows no gardens at all. In discussing Hungarian gardens, Anna Zádor, as an historian must do, included historical Hungary's full territory including Upper Hungary, (now Slovakia) and so we do meet with a few gardens in Slovakia after all. The editors could surely have found some compromise—if they had had more sense of history.

Even more objectionable is the perhaps deliberatly misleading treatment of the Botanical Garden in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca, Rumania, until 1918 in Hungary. The Rumanian author says that "the present Botanical Garden...was laid out in the 1920s by Profesor Borza" (p. 331). Actually the Botanical Garden was laid out following the founding in 1872 of Kolozsvár University, (and, incidentally, on the site, and as a continuation, of the garden of the Transylvanian National Museum established in 1859) under the direction of Professor Ágost Kanitz and with the help of Lajos Walz, the gardener. To cite but two treatments of the subject: a lengthy book in Hungarian by Aladár Richter, entitled *A kolozsvári magyar királyi tudományegyetem növényi intézete és botanikus kertje*, 1872-1904 (The Botanic Institute and Gardens of the Hungarian Royal University at Kolozsvár, 1872-1904, Kolozsvár, 1905) and a short book in French by Gy. Istvánffy, *Une visite au jardin de l'université royale hongroise de Kolozsvár* (Budapest, 1900).

The above remarks, though, hardly affect the merits of this attractive book which presents a wealth of information. Perhaps this will inspire Hungarian and other scholars to dig up additional material and produce their own books of this sort. My foreign colleagues have repeatedly asked me to suggest a professional guide to the gardens of Hungary, preferably in a major language. Now that Hobhouse and Taylor's book is here, I finally have one to recommend.

Artists, Dealers, Museums

Éva Forgács talks to Lóránd Hegyi of the Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna

You are the first Hungarian to be appointed as director of a major Austrian arts institution. Does this mean that Austria is trying to open to Eastern Central Europe, indeed to Hungary?

This is what I thought but I have received a few signals to the contrary. I am expected to help bring Austrian art and artistic life closer to the West rather than to take Eastern art into Austria. What I am being asked to do is export Austrian art rather than import East-European art, although it is clear that the higher political leadership desires closer economic and cultural ties with the East European countries that are now becoming free. Vienna is once again bidding to become the centre of the region.

How well are the arts of the region known in Vienna?

They are not known, and my feeling is that there is no deep interest in them either. What is involved in this revived cultural interest is political prestige. It's an illusion to think that anyone is interested in what has been happening in Hungary or Czecho-Slovakia over the last forty or forty-five years. As far as my appointment is concerned, more than anything else, I see in it a gesture Austria is trying to make to the West, a signal that Austria is capable of becoming once again a cultural centre in Central Europe. Once again, Vienna intends to become the capital of the Prague-Pressburg-Budapest triangle.

Which it isn't yet, though. Can the director of a modern museum help it to become that?

Very much. They are out to achieve a situation where Vienna will be able to offer a particular culture, one that cannot be found anywhere else. This would make it worthwhile for Westerners to make a cultural pilgrimage to Vienna. For this, the *couleur locale* that the presence of Eastern Europe would lend is not enough, important though it may be. Vienna should be able to offer the latest and best of Western art as well. At present, neither the market nor the art trade nor the museums can take in a sufficient number of art objects from abroad. There isn't enough money at the disposal of the institutions, nor are there enough rich buyers around with an interst in foreign works of art. About 95 per cent of the works purchased by Austrians are Austrian. Connoisseurs barely know the foreigners and the leading Austrian artists are compelled to resettle in Germany or America if they wish to become internationally known and escape parochialism. On top of this, the Austrian galleries are trying to create an opening by setting up agencies in Chicago, New York and Paris. So what remains behind in Vienna are middling priced works; the leading artists are again unable to make a breakthrough in their own country, in their own

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Éva Forgács's *book on the Bauhaus will be published by Corvina, Budapest, in 1992.*

market, because the public seeks the more moderately, more customarily, modern works, and, of course, those at a more moderate price.

Have you decided on a policy on collecting and exhibiting to counterbalance this?

I had to opt for contemporary rather than classical art—if only because my four million Schillings would not be enough for much else. Let me give you an example. The Ludwig Stiftung gives five million Schillings annually to purchase pictures for the museum, and it is about to buy an Ad Reinhardt painting for that five million–that would be out of the question for me with my budget. Even if I would get the price lowered from the original 7 million even further to four million, I couldn't possibly spend my entire annual allocation on one picture. Yet these are the current prices; and this Ad Reinhardt painting is not from his most important period nor is it particularly large, though it is a very good picture. So my policy is to buy the works of contemporary artists, from the quite young to those in their forties and fifties—and to buy at least four or five works of each. By doing it this way, provided my choices are correct, the museum will have an absolutely up-to-date contemporary collection, something that simply doesn't exist in Austria—or anywhere else in the neighbouring countries.

What opportunities do exhibitions offer?

They are quite considerable. I am at present launching a six part series called Interferences, each presenting three artists; one a young Austrian and the other two young foreigners. I have the chance to buy the material of these shows at a reasonable price, since the artists get a well-organized exhibition in a prestigious place, a good catalogue and publicity—quite apart from selling their works. They are placed in an international context. The first exhibition, whose dominant theme is "Space Enlivened" *(Der belebte Raum)*, will present the Austrian Michael Kienzer, alongside a 29-year-old Frenchman, Philip Perrin and a 32-year-old Russian artist, Timur Novikov.

Does the fact that you are going to be concerned primarily with the very young also mean that there will be a free circulation between the museum world and of the art trade?

That is exactly what we have in mind. In fact, three galleries have already donated a work each to the museum and I have been able to buy a further four from young Austrian artists in the last six weeks. I am now having talks with the galleries to raise money for the catalogues and exhibitions; in exchange I'm promising to use the sum they offer to make purchases from them. This has advantages all round, since if I buy a picture, let's say, for 100,000 Schillings and pledge to keep it on permanent show for two or three years, then the gallery can sort of re-inject this sum into the artist's catalogue. The gallery does not receive any money from me, but gets a given number of copies, which it can use wherever it wishes, and anywhere it puts on its protegé, and the catalogue says Museum Moderner Kunst, Wien—and that doesn't half sound bad under the name of the young artist it represents. And it's good for the artists too, because their works are displayed in the museum and they get a fine exhibition plus a fine catalogue. On the other hand, I get the catalogue for the price of the work. It now looks as if the catalogues for each of the Austrians taking part in Interferences will be produced through this kind of co-operation scheme.

Will there be any Hungarians in this series?

Not in the first four. But for each of the exhibitions, I am organizing a festival with musicians, video and performance artists taking part. For the first of these I have

invited Tibor Szemző, who will put on a computer assisted acoustic performance.

What can be seen of Hungarian art in the West today?

Paradoxically, Hungarian art is better known in Germany than in Austria. Perhaps, in part because I managed to put together several major museum exhibitions of Hungarian art in Germany over the past four or five years, all with substantial catalogues and ample illustrative material. The literature on contemporary Hungarian art is of a higher quality in Germany than in Hungary—and there is more of it. Even so the impression it gives of Hungarian art is still rather superficial and incomplete. Certain artists, such as Imre Bak, István Nádler, Tamás Hencze, Ákos Birkás, László Fehér are somewhat better known because they have appeared more regularly at exhibitions, but the background from which they come, and from which the new wave of Hungarian art emerged in the 80s, is less well-known. Strangely, to German eyes Hungary is still the country of constructivism and they tend to see in this a Hungarian pictorial tradition. They have little or no idea of richer and more important currents such as The Eight or the late expressionists, or of an expressive realist painter as noteworthy as István Farkas, who exerted a considerable influence on László Fehér as well. Nor do they know the expressionist Aurél Bernáth nor Hugo Schreiber, an art deco painter of big city themes, not to mention the surrealists of Szentendre; they have never even heard of Lajos Vajda or Dezső Korniss.

I don't expect to be able to fill in these massive gaps in the next five years. However, my programme attempts to provide the outlines. I'd like to present European art of the post-1945 era through a series of exhibitions, entitled The Forgotten Decades, by showing the art of the late forties, fifties, and sixties in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and, possibly Poland. These decades are much less known than either the twenties or the thirties. What is worse, the impressions people do have are mostly mistaken: for example, it is usual to talk about Hungarian "neoconstructivism" in connection with the paintings of Imre Bak, István Nádler, György Jovanovics, Tamás Hencze or János Fájó, but these artists ought to be placed into the categories of colour field, hard edge, minimal art, shaped canvas, or under some other heading. If I am in a position to present an artist in these categories, I would have to emphasize that his works should be seen not only in a context of his foreign connections but also studied against his own, well-definable, cultural background. There can be no talk of a unified European consciousness until West-European scholarship has succeeded in integrating these areas.

To what extent do you think the art trade influences art?

Interestingly enough, I was on Austrian TV only last week discussing this topic with Peter Weyermeier, the director of the Frankfurt Kunstverein, the Austrian painter Peter Anzinger, a Japanese economist and an Austrian historian. What came out of the discussion was that the art trade's role is somewhat diminishing in the development of the most recent art, although it is still considerable.

A large proportion of the money going through the art trade is used to purchase not contemporary art works but the modern clasics, their work in the tens and twenties of the present century, or stars like Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns or Joseph Beuys. The galleries, of course, try to influence young artists, but it is equally true that the artists are themselves trying to work out the quickest route to financial success, whether they admit this, or not.

How do you discover what sells?

For the more recent works that's a rather complex question. I mean there are a host of artists who still sell very little directly but, thanks to the various types of sponsorship available, they can still eke out a living. But as soon as an artist makes an international name, it is almost inconceivable that he can get on without the galleries. And then it becomes inevitable that the gallery will put him out onto the circuit of art fairs, judging him by the standards of its own clientele and if he isn't marketable enough—because, for example, his latest period was a flop—then they try to nudge him back to where he was performing for them. At the same time I believe strongly, and here I was on my own during that TV discussion, that contemporary art is not shaped solely by the art trade but that intellectual currents and impulses exist which cannot be accounted for by the commercial aspect of art. They have their roots in much more general attitudes, and can be traced back to the artist's outlook and sense of life. Whatever goes on when an artist changes his style, rendering his new period unsaleable or a business failure, is purely a matter for the art trade. At this level, the gallery owner is in a position to influence him, successfully or unsuccessfully as the case may be. But I just can't conceive that profound and pervasive changes should be triggered merely by the manipulations or the ambitions of the art dealer. Behind those changes lie strong forces of the mind and soul that simply cannot be generated in that way. I see the role of the art trade more in the extent to which it can, or cannot, recognize very quickly whatever changes are occuring and either pounce on those who represent the change or treat badly those who remain unaffected by the change. But that the art trade should be the motivating force for any such far-reaching changes, I wouldn't say, it would need a strategy so well-concerted...

I think we often accuse them of hampering change, of trying to conserve...

That, more than anything else, is really more typical. In the early eighties the art trade was very quick to seize on the new eclectic, personal form of expression that replaced minimalist-conceptional-reductionist art and immediately publicized its most superficial, most simplistic, diluted version. That happened in the case of the new German painting. The art trade disseminated only the very simple, easily remembered slogan that the personality was again coming into its own, and that the local, for example, the city, was becoming interesting again at the expense of the large universal themes. But what was behind it all was something much deeper and something that continues to this day, the emergence of a more differentiated picture of the world. One in which there are no sterile models and in which belief in a straight-line development has petered out, with the recognition that there are a great number of parallel processes going on, bringing together a plurality of values, and even more, a relativization of values—all this the art trade in and by itself is unable to produce.

Let's return to the role of the museum director. By buying large-size works, and installations too, made specifically for museum exhibitions from young artists, don't you think you are promoting the predominance of what is called museum art?

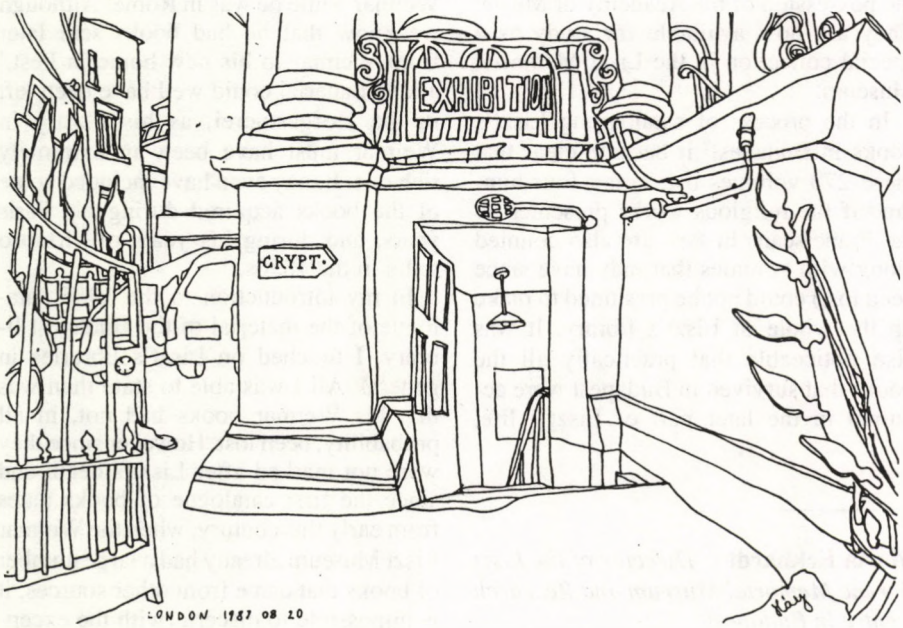
Interestingly enough that phrase has pejorative overtones: institutionalized art, museum art... as though they excluded the private individual, and real life. But if a museum is under skilled autonomous management, and it is largely so in the West, and if it has state funds for its budget, then one can say that it is a great deal more democratic to bring the pictures into the museum, out of the taxpaying citizens' money, than to let them remain hidden at the art dealers'.

But there is something grotesque if a work of art is not allowed to run a natural course of life, as it were.

Yes, but to what extent can one say that an exorbitantly priced picture has a natural course of life, when it goes from the artist's studio for, say DM160,000 not to a museum but to an exclusive gallery, where you have to phone in to indicate in advance your wish to see it, and only a hyperélite public is admitted to its well-hidden halls, and only two hundred visitors can see it at most, and—after one of them has purchased it—not even that number. That I don't call a natural course of life, either.

I don't mean it that way, I mean that time and a host of other factors perform the process of selection by which certain artists fall through the sieve, while others don't because they prove to be important, and that makes their works worthy of public display.

But that doesn't work any more. I for one am rather sceptical as to whether one can speak of a natural course of life where a work of art is concerned. It looks as if we are forced to the conclusion that all careers are élitist in a sense, whether the work goes to a museum, or to a gallery, or to a private collection. Take for instance someone like Signor Gori of Italy, who is a patron, and invites celebrated artists to his palace, pays for their keep, the cost of materials, and their assistants for three months, and expects them to complete a statue in his garden and then leave it there. Before long this will become a magnificent garden of statues—but one to which only his friends are admitted. The artists are pleased because they have never been given such wonderful conditions to work in, while the public is barred for ever. Perhaps, sooner or later, it will become a state funded collection, like the Fondation Maeght in France, but to say that this is the "natural course of life" for a work... well, art as such does not seem to be "natural" and neither are artistic careers.



Mária Eckhardt

Liszt's Weimar Library: the Hungarica

From his early years, Liszt read avidly across a wide span of interests, and collected books passionately. Scores of titles, literary allusions and quotations feature in his correspondence, as do concrete references to the cherished books which accompanied him on his recital tours or which he had sent after him.[1] Although he retained this passion for books throughout his life, only the last of his personal libraries—the books he bequeathed to the Budapest Academy of Music—has been open to investigation.

Immediately after Liszt's death, all the books in this collection were stamped "Ferencz Liszt's Bequest" and came into the possession of the Academy of Music. They are now available for study as a special collection in the Liszt Memorial Museum.

In the process of cataloguing Liszt's books in Budapest[2] it became clear that these 270 volumes (or, rather four hundred if the religious works presented to the Franciscans in Pest are also counted along with volumes that may have since been lost) could not be presumed to make up the whole of Liszt's library. It was also noticeable that practically all the books that survived in Budapest were acquired in the later part of Liszt's life, being published in the 1860s, '70s and '80s, Liszt's years in Rome and what was later described as his *vie trifurqée* shared between Pest, Weimar and Rome. Liszt maintained a permanent home in the Hofgärtnerei in Weimar from 1869 (he moved to his first home in Budapest, in Nádor utca, only two and a half years later) and he obviously must have had a larger personal library there. This seems all the more probable since it is reasonable to suppose that, on setting up home again in Weimar after an absence of eight years, he was re-united with the books he had used in the 1850s in the Altenburg and which had been put into storage in Weimar while he was in Rome. Although we know that he had books sent later from Weimar to his new home in Pest,[3] ample material could well have been left in the Hofgärtnerei, as his library in Weimar must have been an extremely rich one. It may even have included some of the books acquired during his Paris years, and during his years of virtuoso tours in the 1850s. [4]

In my introduction to the 1986 catalogue of the material of the Budapest library, I touched on Liszt's libraries in general. All I was able to state then was that his Weimar books had not, in all probability, been lost. However since they were not marked after Liszt's death and since the first catalogue of books dates from early this century, when the Weimar Liszt Museum already had a large number of books that came from other sources, it is impossible to discern (with the excep-

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tion of a few inscribed or dedicated volumes) which books formed part of Liszt's own library.

In July 1990, when I was engaged on research for the *Liszt Thematic Catalogue*, in the Weimar *Zentralbibliothek im Schloss*, which holds the printed books and scores of the Liszt collection,[5] I came upon a document that can considerably further our knowledge of what Liszt's former Weimar library contained, a knowledge which to date had been practically reduced to conjecture accompanied by a few meagre facts. The fourth item in the composite volume under shelf-number L 464 proved to be a catalogue: *Verzeichniss No. 365 des antiquarischen Bücher-Lagers Johannes Guttenberg der Otto'schen Buchhandlung in Erfurt, Paulstrasse Nr. 31. Bücher vermischten Inhalts aus Franz Liszt's Nachlass. 1887.* This must have escaped the attention of scholars for the reason that the library catalogue lacks the important information in the second sentence, namely that these miscellaneous books come from Liszt's estate. Scholars up to then had not been aware that a year after the composer's death, 1,300 items of his personal library in Weimar were offered for sale by an antiquarian bookseller in Erfurt.

Who gave permission for the sale of the books, indeed for their detachment from the estate? Were they put up to auction or gradually sold through the catalogue?[6] Was the collection purchased as a whole, or piecemeal? How were the moneys accruing from the sale put to use, to defer costs of the Liszt Museum opened in the Hofgärtnerei? Was their sale in Erfurt mentioned in the press? What became of the Otto bookshop, have any of their accounts or other documents survived? These are some of the questions which, for reasons of time and various duties, I was unable to find the answers to during my short stay. This research has been undertaken by my Weimar colleague, the musicologist Evelyn Liepsch, of the Goethe/Schiller Archives. Yet the printed list as such has much to say to Liszt scholars, as the individual books featuring in it are accompanied by relatively detailed descriptions. Thus, even if the books have now gone astray (presumably none of them found their way back into the Weimar Liszt bequest), one can identify the publications that once were in Liszt's possession with a fair degree of accuracy.

It would be intersting to know who selected the books—and for what considerations— that were retained for the Liszt museum that was soon to open. Books with Liszt's marginalia, or those dedicated to him, were obviously not sold, but there certainly must have been an additional minor group, particularly works on Liszt himself and his works, which were preserved. (Indeed, as recent research by Evelyn Liepsch shows, the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein* issued a public appeal to friends, supporters and publishers of Liszt's to send in all the manuscripts and printed materials relating to the composer, including books, so that the most extensive Liszt library possible could be established in the future Liszt Museum. The idea of setting up a *vollständige Liszt-Bibliothek* was also supported by the Grand Duke of Weimar). What actually Liszt's personal library in Weimar was like can only be reconstructed with accuracy if the books that had not been sold could be indentified (possibly on a basis of elimination)[7] within the Liszt collection of the NFG-Schlossbibliothek and studied together with the list of books that has now come to light. In any case, the list of 1,300 titles is rich enough to provide a picture of Liszt's personal library in Weimar and enable certain conclusions to be drawn.[8]

As far as the language of the books is concerned, a large majority—832 volumes— are in French, 64 per cent of the total.[9] The figure becomes even higher if one includes bilingual works (mostly dictionaries and manuals) where one of

the languages is French (making up 34 items). This, of course, does not always mean that the authors are also French; many popular literary works feature in French translation. The works in German amount to 330, only 27 per cent, even if one includes the 22 bilingual works involving German. The remaining material contains a surprisingly high proportion of English books (82 volumes plus 4 bilinguals), the majority being from the *Collection of British Authors* series. Italian and Hungarian works feature in approximately the same proportion (9 plus 2 bilingual books for the former and 8 plus 3 bilinguals for the latter). This is followed by Latin (3 plus 4 bilingual), with the remainder (almost exclusively dictionaries) being in Spanish, Dutch, Turkish, Polish and Russian.

Also of interest is the distribution of the dates of publication, as it can help determine the chronology of Liszt's Weimar library. The dates of publication of the books in his Budapest library indicate that Liszt collected them during his Rome period at the earliest, with the majority coming from his last *vie trifurquée* period: only 25 of the 270 works were published before 1861. The Erfurt catalogue shows a much wider span for years of publication. Of older publications, two date from the 17th century, and 36 from the 18th. For 145 books, the dates of publication fall between 1800 and 1834. The number of publications per year rises above 20 only from 1835 onwards, the beginning of Liszt's *années de pélerinage*.[10] From 1835 on (with a few exceptions), the number of publications per year is more or less even in distribution; between 1835 and 1847, that is during Liszt's most eventful years of touring, the number of books is approximately 28 per year; between 1848 and 1861, during his Weimar period, the figure is 26. (I do not speak of acquisitions for the library, since a book is not necessarily acquired in its year of publication; all the same, I think that these figures display, to a certain degree, the chronology of the library stock.) Between 1862 and 1870, the years in Rome and the beginning of his *vie trifurquée*, there is a sharp decline in the number of acquired books annually: the average comes to less than ten, while from 1871 onwards, the years when Liszt had a library in Pest as well, for which (as already mentioned) he even had certain works sent from his Weimar library, up to his death in 1886, the average only rises to 21 because I classified two series which were started in 1842 and 1855 respectively *(Collection of British Authors*, 59 volumes, and *Bibliothèque Elzevirienne*, 8 volumes), under the year when the last volume in these series appeared.

On the basis of all the above, one can venture to say that the books sold in Erfurt out of his library in Weimar, after Liszt's death, equally contained books which he had owned in Paris, and then used in the Altenburg, (i. e. his first library in Weimar)[11] and books which he bought while living in the Hofgärtnerei; however it can be stated with certainty that many books the young Liszt had owned were not in this collection. His correspondence with Marie d'Agoult[12] includes many titles and descriptions of books he had been reading; even if these (together with other books mentioned in the letters) were not necessarily owned by Liszt himself, those which he asked his mother to send to Geneva, most certainly were. Nonetheless, the Erfurt catalogue contains merely one or two of these.[13] Liszt must have lost many books during his years of travelling; more probably, some of them never reached Weimar from Paris, as it is know that when Liszt's daughters, in the charge of their governess, Madame Patersi, moved to 6 Rue Casimir Périer, he had a considerable portion of the books sent to them which had been preserved by his mother.[14] These books may later have came into the possession of Blandine, the daughter who was

who was married in France, and they may well have perished in the vicissitudes of the 1870-71 war.

More important than the origin and date of publication is the books' subjects. While most of the works in his Budapest library are on music, directly, or indirectly, such are relatively rare among the Weimar books in the Erfurt catalogue. There are about twenty items which, based on their catalogue description, seem to have been expressly works of music (score editions) and about 150 books linked with music and composers. All in all, these two categories only make up 13 per cent.[15] There are relatively few explicitly religious works too (scarcely more than 5 per cent), while the original Budapest library (that is, including the material that was later passed to the Franciscans) had 50 per cent of its composition taken up by religious literature and works concerning church music. On the other hand, fiction, which was amazingly poorly represented in the Budapest library, made up a considerable proportion in Weimar. French literature accounts for more than half of the approximately 430 books concerned[16] this is followed by works by English and German authors; classical antiquity is also represented by many great works, and Italian, Spanish and Hungarian literature by several works each. Alongside fiction, there are many volumes on the history of literature, literary theory and essays (56 titles). These and fiction together make up about 37 per cent of the material. Another, equally considerable, part of Liszt's Weimar collection consists of volumes on history and politics and economics. Judging by their titles, 184 works can be put under this heading. Literature, history and politics are subjects dealt with in the memoirs, the volumes of correspondence, and biographies and auto-biographies, as well as in monographs. These also make up a large number (about 100). Also present are works on philosophy, art history and aesthetics, medicine and other disciplines—which clearly shows the comprehensive nature of Liszt's interests.

Special mention should be made of books which highlight this universal interest— encyclopaedias, reference books and manuals. Joseph d'Ortigue, one of Liszt's earliest biographers, laid a special stress on the composer's insatiable curiosity, as one who went through an encyclopaedia in one reading, as he did a volume of poetry.[17] The Erfurt catalogue lists more than fifty encyclopaedias. They include general works as for instance the 15-volume Brockhaus *Konversationslexikon* (No. 226), Sardou and Pradel's *Clé de vie* (No. 293) or the 27–volume *Encyclopédie moderne* (No. 536) A large number of reference books provided summary biographies and other data on famous personalities (e. g. Nos. 183, 283, 390, 438-439, 550, 642 and 1293). Special dictionaries of the arts and sciences cover fields ranging from mythology through astronomy, architecture, the theatre, to law and history. Of the music dictionaries in the Erfurt catalogue, it is worth mentioning Rousseau's famous *Dictionnaire de musique* of 1789, Walther's *Musikalisches Lexicon od. musicalische Bibliothec* of 1732 and Reissmann's *Handlexikon der Tonkunst* (1882).[18] Liszt seems to have turned with the same keen interest to the latest music dictionaries as to those of historical interest.

A remarkable group among the reference books leads us to another field which proves to have been of particular importance for Liszt: philological, language usage manuals (e. g. correspondence and rhetorical manuals, collections of proverbs and maxims, etc.). Liszt's correspondence, with its polished style and frequent use of quotations and witty adages, bears out that he did not merely buy these books but perused them diligently. He was particularly interested in the history, structure and specifics of languages. The Erfurt list

includes about 40 relevant works here, to which should be added a considerable collection of dictionaries of English, Flemish, German, Hungarian, Italian, Latin, Polish, Spanish and Turkish, most of them paired with French.[19] These dictionaries, in various sizes and editions, must have been important aids for Liszt on his travels; to judge from their imprints, he must have bought most of them during his years of virtuoso tours.

Interestingly, some books featured both in Liszt's Weimar and Budapest libraries (not always in the same edition). They are mainly musical works by Brendel, Glasenapp, La Mara, Müller, Nohl, Pohl and Wagner.

After that brief survey, I would like to treat the Erfurt catalogue, in somewhat greater detail, on one of its aspects—works with a Hungarian reference. Their number is far from negligible and their contents are significant.[20]

The first 14 items in the catalogue are works by Liszt or in connection with Liszt. Nos. 7-9 list different editions of Liszt's book on Gypsies (*Des bohémiens et de leur musique en Hongrie,* including the first Hungarian language edition of 1861, whose title is given with a minor misprint), and No. 12 marks a work by Ágoston Adelburg, which replies to this book (*Entgegnung auf Franz Liszt's "Die Zigeuner und ihre Musik in Ungarn"*, Pest, 1859). We know how much meticulous research Liszt did for this ill-fated and controversial book; this is also borne out by two items on the Erfurt list, George Borrow: *The Zincali; or, an Account of the Gypsies in Spain,* 3rd ed., London, 1843 (No. 199) and A. F. Pott: *Die Zigeuner in Europa und Asien,* Halle, 1844-45 (No. 967).[21]

There are a total of thirty books on the Erfurt list which have no direct links with Liszt but have some Hungarian reference.[22] By subject, they can be classed into four basic groups. The first is Hungarian poetry in German translation. Some of the items falling under this heading are collections of miscellaneous content, such as *Nationallieder der Magyaren* (Braunschweig, 1852, No. 886), *Nationalgesänge der Magyaren* (Cassel, 1850, No. 887), *Pannonia. Blumenlese auf dem Felde der neuesten ungarischen Lyrik* (Leipzig, 1840, two copies, the second a bilingual edition, Nos. 922 and 923) and *Harfentöne aus dem Ungarlande* (Leipzig, 1835, No. 1197). This group also contains translations of works by single Hungarian poets. János Arany (1817-1882), one of the greatest 19th century Hungarian poets, is represented by five volumes: his famous narrative poems, *Toldi, Toldi estéje,* and *Murány ostroma* (Nos. 29-30 and 33), and selections of his poems (Nos. 31-32). This is a surprising discovery, as nothing so far has been known of Liszt's interest in Arany. His attraction to another great poet, Sándor Petőfi (1823-1849), on the other hand, has long been known, an attraction that is evidenced by several compositions.[23] Thus the presence of a two-volume collection of Petőfi's poems is not really surprising *(Lyrische Gedichte,* Pest, 1864). Nor is the presence of a volume of selected poems (No. 568) by János Garay (1812-1853), a poet of Szekszárd, a town so dear to Liszt. The composer knew Garay personally.[24]

Two of the translators whose names feature in these volumes maintained personal contacts with Liszt, and supplied him with Hungarian literary works. One is Károly Kertbeny, who had changed his name from Carl Benkert (1824-1882), a writer, translator and bookseller of German-Hungarian birth, who also wrote under the pen-names Benkő and Ernst Korfai. In the early 1850s, particulary, Kertbeny maintained close links with Liszt, and apart from the publications already cited (Nos. 29-31, 568 and 886), sent him some of his other translations, thus, in 1854, the volume *Album hundert ungarischer Dichter,* which he dedicated to Liszt and which includes the ode, "To

Ferenc Liszt" by Mihály Vörösmarty.[25] Their relations were later severed as a result of the scandal Liszt's book on the Gypsies created in Hungary.[26] Intrestingly, despite this, the Erfurt list included one of Kertbeny's late bibliographies, published in 1880 *(Bibliographie der ungarischen Literatur. Bd. I. Ungarn betreffende deutsche Erstlingsdrucke 1450-1600,* (No. 694). The other translator whose work features in several volumes is Gustav Steinacker, who used the pen-name Gusztáv Treumund (1809-1877). Steinacker, a Lutheran clergyman, was born in Vienna; his studies also took him to Pest and Debrecen and he was active in Hungary for a time. In 1854 he moved to the village of Buttstädt, near Weimar, where he spent the rest of his life. He often appeared among Liszt's Weimar circle; in 1857 he published a poem of birthday greetings for the composer.[27] Steinacker translated the volumes listed as Nos. 923 and 1197. The two other volumes in this group are in Hungarian, which Liszt could not really understand and we have no knowledge how they came into Liszt's possession.

The second group of books relating to Hungary is comprised of works on Hungarian and Transylvanian history, politics, topography, culture and law. Here the two works that should be singled out are by the French writer Auguste de Gerando (1819-1849): *La Transylvanie et ses habitants,* Paris, 1845, and *L'esprit public en Hongrie depuis la révolution française*. Paris, 1848, (Nos. 418-419). In 1840, the Lyons-born writer married the Hungarian `Countess Emma Teleki, and devoted the rest of his life to fostering French-Hungarian links. Liszt presumably acquired de Gerando's work on Transylvania before his tour there in 1845-47; however it is possible that he did so later, together with the other work: after de Gerando's early death, he was in contact with the family, as is borne out by an inscribed photograph of the composer which has remained in the family's possession to the present day.[28] The famous work by John Paget (1808-1892), *Hungary and Transylvania* (No. 920, in a German edition of 1842), a Hungarian social history by the adventurer Pál Szabó Jr. (under the pseudonym of Boldényi), which proved so successful that it was also published in Italian, Swedish and Polish editions *La Hongrie ancienne et moderne,* Paris, 1851, (No. 657), and a summary of Hungarian history for young people by Viktor Hornyánszky (1828-1888), *Geschichte von Ungarn für die Jugend,* Pest, 1852 (No. 660), all show the composer's interest in the past and present of his native country.

The third and perhaps most surprising group is made up of works on the Hungarian language. An argument often adduced against Liszt's Hungarianness has been that he did not even know and never really learned the language. This by itself would not decide the issue at all ("Permit me, Liszt wrote in May 1873 to his Hungarian friend, Antal Augusz, "despite my regrettable nescience of the Hungarian language, to remain a Hungarian in my heart and sentiments from my birth to the grave")[29]. It should nevertheless be pointed out that Liszt, whose native language was German, but who most often and most willingly used French, started to learn Hungarian on several occasions in his life; all he achieved was a meagre passive knowledge of the language. Dezső Legány's research has thrown light on Liszt's language lessons in the 1870s, even identifying his teachers by name and the methods they used.[30] We also know from one of Liszt's letters that, as early as in 1843, he had promised Baron Miklós Wesselényi, the Hungarian reform politician (1796-1850), that he would learn Hungarian within a short time.[31] Up till now, however, there have been no known records to show that he had taken any steps towards this goal. The Erfurt list includes the second (1846) edition of

the Hungarian grammar by Mór Bloch/ Ballagi (*Ausführliche theoretisch-praktische Grammatik der ungarischen Sprache für Deutsche,* No. 193, a work which ran into seven editions), the second (1842) edition of the poet János Garay's manual of conversation, which by 1914 was in its 14th edition *(Handbuch ungarisch-deutsher Gespräche),* bound together with Mihály Kiss's Hungarian-French dictionary of 1844 (No. 567), and a work by Antal Kronperger from 1841 (*Reine Grundlehre d. ungarischen Sprache,* No. 719). The presence of these seems to indicate that Liszt, in all probability when he was preparing for his concert tour of Hungary and Transylvania in 1846-47, acquired the necessary books on the Hungarian language. But the hectic years of the concert tours were not conducive for regular study. This is also apparent from the note for item No. 567 in the list, *wie neu* (in mint condition).

The last group, of miscellaneous works, mainly includes volumes which Liszt must have acquired through personal contacts. The Hungarian translation of Byron's *Childe Harold* (No. 245) certainly came to him from the translator, Jane Frances Dickersteth, an admirer of the Magyars, when this daughter of Lord Longdale, newly married to Count Sándor Teleki, one of Liszt's most devoted Hungarian friends, visited him in Weimar. Liszt still remembered the event in 1879, by which time Teleki had long divorced the lady, and had taken a second wife.[32]The book by János Nepomuk Danielik (1817-1888), a Catholic priest and writer: *Magyarországi Szent Erzsébet élete* (The Life of St Elizabeth of Hungary [Thuringia] Pest, 1857, No. 403) served as a source for Liszt's oratorio, *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth.* We know that the author himself sent the book to the composer, who expressed his appreciation in writing and in money.[33] The later might have moved Danielik to send two more of his Hungarian works: *Columbus vagy Amerika fölfedezése* (Columbus or the Discovery of America) and *A Történet szelleme* (The Spirit of History), both published in Pest in 1857, Nos. 402 and 404), but it is also possible that these books reached Liszt as a present from Szent István Társulat Publishing House, together with two other Hungarian books (Nos. 1173 and 1251), the presence of which would otherwise be fairly difficult to explain in Liszt's library.

One can only hope that further research will identify any other books with Hungarian links that formed part of Liszt's Weimar library. Even the 30 items in the Erfurt catalogue here described permit the conclusion that, despite all the language difficulties, Liszt was keenly and actively interested in Hungarian culture.

NOTES

1 An apt example is the letter Liszt wrote to his mother on July 28, 1835, when he settled in Geneva; for the full and authentic French text see Jaxqueline Bellas: "François Liszt et le 'département des livres'" in *Studia Musicologica* XXVIII (1986), pp. 89-97.

2 For an annotated catalogue of the books, with comments in Hungarian and English see: *Liszt Ferenc hagyatéka a budapesti Zeneművészeti Főiskolán. I. Könyvek— Franz Liszt's Estate at the Budapest Academy of Music. I. Books. Compiled and edited by Mária Eckhardt.* Budapest, 1986. (Acta Academiae Musicae Francisco Liszt nominatae 1.)

3 See Liszt's letter to Antal Augusz of October 23, 1871, and that to Princess Wittgenstein of November 19, 1871 (Csapó, Wilhelm von: *Franz Liszts Briefe an Baron Anton Augusz,* Budapest, 1911, No. 79, and La Mara: *Franz Liszt's Briefe,* Leipzig, 1893-1905, Vol. VI, No. 291.)

4 Liszt asked his mother in a letter of August 29, 1851, to send his library of books and scores from Paris to Weimar (see: La Mara:

Franz Liszt's Briefe an seine Mutter, Leipzig, 1918, No. 67). Other references in his correspondence, however, show that the transfer only took place later and, possibly, only in part (see the letters Liszt's daughter Blandine wrote to her father, in Daniel Ollivier: *Correspondance de Liszt et de sa fille, Madame Emile Ollivier,* Paris, 1936, pp. 80 and 105.) We shall return to the relevant evidence of the Erfurt catalogue later.

5 Liszt' s estate in Weimar can be studied in the various institutions of the *Nationale Forschungs- und Gedenkstätte der Klassischen Deutschen Literatur,* in an arrangement made according to types of documents. The manuscripts are in the *Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv,* the objects in the *Goethe Nationalmuseum,* and the prints in the *Zentralbiblicthek.*

6 The latter seems the more probable, since the catalogue gives exact prices and it begins with the comment: "Postsendungen jeder Art können unter dem Betrage von fünf Mark ausnahmslos nicht gemacht werden." (No exception to the rule that mail orders for less than five works will not be executed).

7 This is not an absolutely hopeless proposition. Works published after the death of Liszt automatically exclude themselves, and those that came to the library from the Ramann bequest can elso be excluded, since a precise list exists for them. Regarding the remaining material, besides the works with Liszt's marginal notes and those works dedicated to him, the authors and contents of many other books make it probable that they, too, had been in the possession of the composer. Sometimes the exterior form of the books can be of assistance, although Liszt's library was not made up of volumes in a uniform binding.

8 A complete reprint of the catalogue is planned for publication in a lengthy study by Evelyn Liepsch and myself.

9 There are 1,298 numbered items. However, the actual figure is 1,300, since there also exists a No. 589a and 1116a. Indeed, the number of works is even higher, as two separate works are occasionally listed as a single item, obviously because they were bound together. (E.g. No. 567, which is discussed here separately because of its Hungarian connection.)

10 When works in several volumes appear under one number, or whenever, in the case of a series, the year of publication is not given volume by volume, the item concerned is always referred to with the date of publication of the ultimate volume.

11 After Liszt's departure from Weimar, the library he had used between 1849 and 1861 at first remained in the Altenburg, which was closed up. When the Altenburg was cleared out in 1867, storage space was rented in the Weimar house of a certain Rosine Walther for the furniture that was not put up for auction, including several boxes of books and scores. It stands to reason that Liszt put almost all of these into use again once he moved into the Hofgärtnerei. Still it is also known that many objects remained in boxes, awaiting the return of Princess Wittgenstein (which, however, never took place).

12 Daniel Ollivier: *Correspondance de Liszt et de la Comtesse d'Agoult,* Tomes 1-2, Paris, 1933-34. A new, revised edition, edited by Serge Gut, is in preparation.

13 They include Le Sage: *Atlas historique* (No. 760) and Saint-Simon: *Nouveau christianisme* (No. 1069).

14 For Liszt's request see the letter to his mother of October 21, 1850, in La Mara, op. cit. No. 62.

15 One reason for this may be that a larger number of musical works had been saved for Liszt's Weimar estate. At the same time, it is also possible that Liszt, who had earmarked his Budapest library from the outset for the Academy of Music, collected a higher proportion of scores and music works here.

16 It is not always possible to assign a work unambigously to a category, whether fiction, history, philosophy, etc. All that was at our disposal were the titles (these, however, can, in most cases, be clearly identified); thus the classifications and the data given here can only serve as rough guides.

17 Joseph d'Ortigue: "Études biographiques, I. Frantz Liszt" in *Gazette Musicale,* Paris, June, 1835. Quoted by Jacqueline Bellas on p. 93 of the article referred to in Note 1.

18 Liszt's Weimar library presumably included several more music dictionaries which were not put up for sale. Those still to be found in Weimar (and perhaps once in Liszt's possession) are Schuberth's *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexicon,* Ságh's *Magyar Zenészeti Lexicon* (Hungarian Dictonary of Music), Gassner's *Universallexicon der Tonkunst* and Schilling's *Encyclopädie der gesamten musikalischen Wissenschaft.*

19 In two cases, Latin and Hungarian are paired with German, and there is also a four-language manual of conversation, in French, German, English and Italian (No. 797).

20 Pott was elected honorary member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

22 Certain Hungarian works are known to have remained in Weimar, including works by Mihály Bogisich and Gyula Sárosy, dedicated to Liszt.

23 He set to music Petőfi's poem "A magyarok Istene" [God of the Hungarians], *(Ungarns Gott,* R. 635, p. 339); and created a musical portrait of the poet in the series *Historische ungarische Bildnisse,* R. 112, p. 205, for which he made use of two earlier pieces—a melodrama, *Des toten Dichters Liebe* (R. 657, p. 349) and a piano piece, *Dem Andenken Petőfis* (R. 111, p. 195).

24 On the occasion of Liszt's arrival in Pest in 1846, János Garay wrote a poem in his honour, which was performed in Károly Thern's musical setting. Liszt himself wrote a work for male choir on Garay's poem "A patakhoz". (To the Brook), (T. 564a).

25 For their correspondence, see Margit Prahács: *Franz Liszt. Briefe aus ungarischen Sammlungen 1835-1886,* Budapest 1966, Nos. 41, 52 and 170.

26 See Prahács, op. cit., letter No. 170 and notes on it.

27 Treumund, Gustav: *Des Meisters Bannerschaft. Festgallerie von Zukunfts-Portraits zu Franz Liszt's Geburtstagsfeier,* Weimar, 1857.

28 This information was kindly supplied by Mme Judith de Gerando Teleki (Saint-Pierre-des-Corps, France).

29 For a facsimile of the German original, see Füssmann, Werner—Mátéka, Béla: *Franz Liszt. Ein Künstlerleben in Wort und Bild,* Langensalza—Berlin—Leipzig, 1936, No. 201.

30 See Dezső Legány: *Ferenc Liszt and his Country 1869-1873,* Budapest, 1983, pp. 163-164.

31 The German translation of the original French letter (which is extant but not available), was published by Helene Heimann–Gyalui in *Pester Lloyd,* December 25, 1925.

32 For the reminiscence, see Tyler, William R.—Waters, Edward N.: *The Letters of Franz Liszt to Olga von Meyendorff (1871-1886),* Washington D. C. 1979, p. 339.

33 Prahács, op. cit., letter No. 102.

Tamás Koltai

Playback

István Eörsi: *Sírkő és kakaó* (Gravestone and Cocoa); *Egy tisztáson* (In a Clearing); *Az interjú* (The Interview); András Jeles: *A három nővér—Gulag opera* (The Three Sisters—A Gulag Opera).

Now that we have come through the fifties, the sixties, the seventies, and even the eighties, it is time to look again at how we were then and how we presented ourselves in the theatre. For this, there are two kinds of plays capable of arousing interest, those which were performed at the time and those which were not. The plays performed—at least those which conveyed a message to their own time—in a way reflected reality, sometimes falsely, dimly, sometimes in a very revealing distorting mirror; the banned and unperformed plays were conspicuous because of their absence. The best of these in the first category are well worth performing again; those in the second arouse curiosity and make us wonder whether they deserve their status of works considered "dangerous to the state." On top of all this, there are also new plays that attempt to settle with the past from a present point of view.

István Eörsi expresses all these types, with three recently performed plays.

Eörsi is an intellectual enfant terrible of literature. Born in 1931, he, like others, wrote poems on Stalin in the 1950s. (Unlike others, he has since discussed his former self openly,). He was a teacher and journalist before 1956. His part in the revolution earned him eight years in prison, from which he was released under the 1960 amnesty. He wrote poems and plays, made his living through translations before becoming dramaturge at the Csiky Gergely Theatre in Kaposvár, a company which acquired a name for itself in the 1970s. As a prominent dissident, he was dismissed from his post in the 1980s, and barred from publishing for quite some time. From 1983 to 1986, he lived in West Berlin, where two of his plays found performance, both being directed by himself. Since 1989 he has again been dramaturge at Kaposvár and is a leading member of the major liberal party of the opposition, the Association of Free Democrats.

Eörsi's play, *Gravestone and Cocoa,* first presented on stage in 1968, has been revived by the Gárdonyi Géza Theatre of Eger. This "tract" on the excesses of the lower middle class shows Brecht's influence. (According to Eörsi himself, he raised his hat to Brecht. Not only here, but in most of his poems, plays and newspaper articles.) At the time the play was first performed, it was already clear that it was not to be interpreted along the lines of its plot. The Piti couple—in Hungarian much as "Petty" in English—make a contract with the Old Lady to support her for life. This type of contract, in a Hungary of grave housing shortages, is based on a transfer of tenancy rights. The party contracting to support the tenant or owner, upon the death of the latter, inherits ownership of the flat or the tenancy. In Eörsi's

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

play the contract for support also implies a Social Contract setting up a *modus vivendi* not between rulers and ruled—between those in power and those subject to their power.

The Pitis of the play are on dramatically ambivalent terms with the Old Lady. They look after her and are afraid of her; they must keep her alive and yet are hoping for her demise. This predetermined dependence makes it impossible to obtain the flat (or their freedom?). The Piti couple vainly try out some of "the 499 lawful ways of doing away with old landladies," but their submissively grudging manoeuvres, their timid inclination to kill have no result. The Old Lady survives them and the new and further Piti couples as well. The flat can in principle be inherited, but the world spirit embodied in power, and the pettiness of the subject who cannot go beyond grumbling, are eternal.

Let us not forget that the play was written by Eörsi and presented by a studio theatre in the heyday of the compromise between the Kádár regime and the Hungarian intelligentsia.

Eörsi comments on *Gravestone and Cocoa* in a programme note: "Twenty-four years after it was written, social drama has gained an historical perspective. True, the housing shortage has not diminished since then, contracts which make some people vitally interested in the death of a fellow-being continue to be made. Authority still exercises its rights today, and the boundary between 'use' and 'abuse'—even though the two can today be better controlled and restrained—is still blurred.... The proof of any play is whether the world it represents is revived under changed circumstances, whether it is capable of making shifts in emphasis which continue to guarantee its timeliness. I hope that the emphasis today is on those problems in the play which were of peripheral importance at the time of writing. For example, is a man (or a community) fit for freedom after protracted captivity? Is the supply of subject people inexhaustible? Is authority capable of retaining its tested forms and ranges under any circumstances?"

It is a pity that the questions are not answered by the new production. Though director András Éri-Kovács takes Eörsi's advice and has the Old Lady played by a man, he fails to give an interpretation of the underlying dramatic situation. He does not offer a current analysis of the pettiness of the subjects that boldly adjust to being tragicomically locked up together. The situation is more than grotesque: at that time nobody was bold enough to notice what *Gravestone and Cocoa* was about. Now one could not notice it even if one wanted to, because it is practically unnoticeable.

The intellectual trap of the Kádár era was described by Eörsi in his *In a Clearing* in 1979. This could not be performed on stage although, in 1981, it was published in *Színház*, a theatrical journal of limited circulation. It has now been presented by the Petőfi Theatre of Veszprém.

The central figure in the play is Ignác Martinovics (1755-1795), Abbot of Szászvár, an historical figure entirely appropriate for an exploration of the role a privileged and ambitious intellectual could play in dictatorships of a roughly identical type. Martinovics was a priest of intellectual talents but of a restless and daring character. On completing his studies in philosophy and theology, he took orders and was appointed an army chaplain. A Privy Councillor friend of his arranged an audience with Leopold, Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary who, persuading himself of the applicant's alleged experience in chemistry, appointed him court chemist at a high salary. In return, Martinovics undertook to report to the monarch on secret societies active in Europe; in short, he became an informer. After the King-Emperor's death his position became shaky, since the new sovereign thought

less highly of his talents, and Martinovics, his pride stung, turned revolutionary. As leader of the Hungarian Jacobin conspiracy now named after him he came under the executioner's axe in Buda; his more honest companions met a similar fate. Ever since, posterity has not been able to decide whether to defend Martinovics or the Jacobin ideals—or rather which to defend against which. Judgement varies according to whether the intention is to idealize or to discredit the ideas at issue in the minds of the naive.

In the play, Martinovics is taken under arrest into woods near Vienna so as to extract evidence of secret preparations in Hungary from him. However, nothing is cleared up there since Martinovics finds out that a commissioner of police, a friend of his, Gotthardi, also a detainee, is acting as a decoy. Of course, Gotthardi also knows that Martinovics knows, so two shrewd and cynical political traders, who consider ideas as bargaining points, fight out an intellectual duel.

The duel involves no real stakes for those engaged in it. What it does is to reveal the self-justifying reflexes of an intellectual who wants to make a career for himself because— "without a career we can be only spectators in the theatre of our age"—although he would like to be an actor, the leading actor, preferably. Self-justification culminates in the statement that the act of informing promotes useful changes, since only by conjuring up real forms to the phantom of revolution is it possible to win the monarch's confidence and to compel him to introduce reforms. Such claims were made, and not only in the late 18th century. Proof of their futility is that the police shoot the innocent and honest witnesses of the situation, while the abbot, now frightened, now defiant, is dealt the cards by power itself.

This production of *In a Clearing* presupposes that actors and audience alike have an intellectual sensitivity similar to the author's. The Veszprém company understands what Eörsi is saying but trudges a little heavily behind his graceful ideas. István Pál's direction lacks the fine spirit of the play. His, it must be admitted, is no easy job, for the audience has to follow an Ariadne's thread of a plot through a labyrinth of ideas.

At the University of Budapest Eörsi studied under György Lukács. To Eörsi, in a startling comparison made by a friend of his, Lukács is as the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe is to the Mexican believer: sacred and inviolable. God or Jesus may be queried, but the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe, never. Perhaps Eörsi himself, a serious poser of questions, felt that this parallel was not entirely groundless; he decided to get to the bottom of his own private "Lukács affair." In 1971, along with a literary critic, he interviewed the terminally ill philosopher, in a last attempt to understand the motives in his life. First was the Road to Damascus, which, in 1911, chained the philosopher to the idea of communism for the next sixty years. This interview has lately become the basis of an absurdist documentary play, *The Interview*. Eörsi is quizzing his master but is seeking the answers to his own questions. For this very reason the play is a contribution not merely to Lukács studies—it contributes at least as much to Eörsi studies.

The author is aware that a tape-recorded dialogue with Lukács, no matter how well it may read on the page, is a rather drab stage piece, so he sizes up the mysterious relationship between the two of them by looking at it from a Berlin cabaret. A typical Eörsi device is to drown respect in frivolity. Another advantage is that Marian Adler, the custodian of Lukács in his last years, and of his estate, whom the author visibly did not like very much, is made to sing Eörsi chansons in the mask of a bar-dancer. To add to the frolicking, the aged philosopher occasionally appears in knee-length drawers or, resting his elbows on a

cloud, comments from beyond the grave on the fate his works will meet in the future.

In this unconventional setting, which also serves to ridicule those who aridly theorize on Lukács, the central theses of certain of Lukács's works (for most of which Eörsi provides aphoristic abstracts) are laid out one by one. Mention is made, from time to time, of the detours to be found on that Road to Damascus—thus, the Stalinist trials, as well as 1956 and 1968—which Lukács failed to refer to. Eörsi steadily dwells upon the master's adherence to the idea, as upon a "religious demand," which contradicts the manifest experience of "living socialism," of Bolshevism and—in Lukács's use of the word—"horriblenesses." In reply come terse axioms, usually put into Lukács's mouth by Eörsi to excuse his master. On hearing them, we—together with the reader—find ourselves in the paradoxical situation of being about to accept the unacceptable. For example, the point of serving the truth is not refusal of accept the lie, but the " intelligent virtue", which is "willing to throw away even its own self." The question is of the man who is able to deny principle for principle's sake. Finally the author's Eörsi-ego triumphs over his Lukács-ego but this triumph is merely an epigrammatic definition of the stalemate: "on the one hand /I am in the right/while on the other hand /I am absolutely in the right but as a flying arrow /the old voice stands high up there/in a cloud of cigar smoke."

László Babarczy has put together for the Játékszín stage a sensible, cultured, gloatingly philosophizing production. What he does is to conjure up spirits. He uses less than he might have of Eörsi's playfully boyish temperament—he dare not undertake to let Lukács appear in shorts—he chooses to start from the grotesque moment when the ancient scholar, fed up with the solemnity of funeral music, jumps up from his coffin. This intellectual clowning is closer also to the temper of Miklós Gábor, who plays Lukács. Gábor's Lukács speaks out with cunning charm what he has on his mind. He hears what he wants of the questions, and his replies are brilliant and elusive while pretending to be straight answers. The stages in Lukács's physical decline give Gábor occasion to indulge in the roguish humour which the interviewer found wanting in the philosopher's epistemological writings.

Around the middle of the play, Eörsi tries to exorcise Lukács's spirit; "I have become aware that along with the Old Man a period came to an end which crucially influenced my youth through its ideas, hopes and lies—and dying with it is Bolshevism, after having long ago yielded place to raison d'état and protocol."

A more astounding and provocative example of conjuring up spirits and playing back the past is the production the film director András Jeles brought to the stage of the Csiky Gergely Theatre of Kaposvár. As early as the 1980s, Jeles was already an influential member of a group of dissident artists; those in control of cultural policy frequently interfered with or banned his films—like the now famous *Dream Brigade*. In recent years Jeles directed two plays for the alternative theatre; this Kaposvár premiere is the first time he has worked with a professional company.

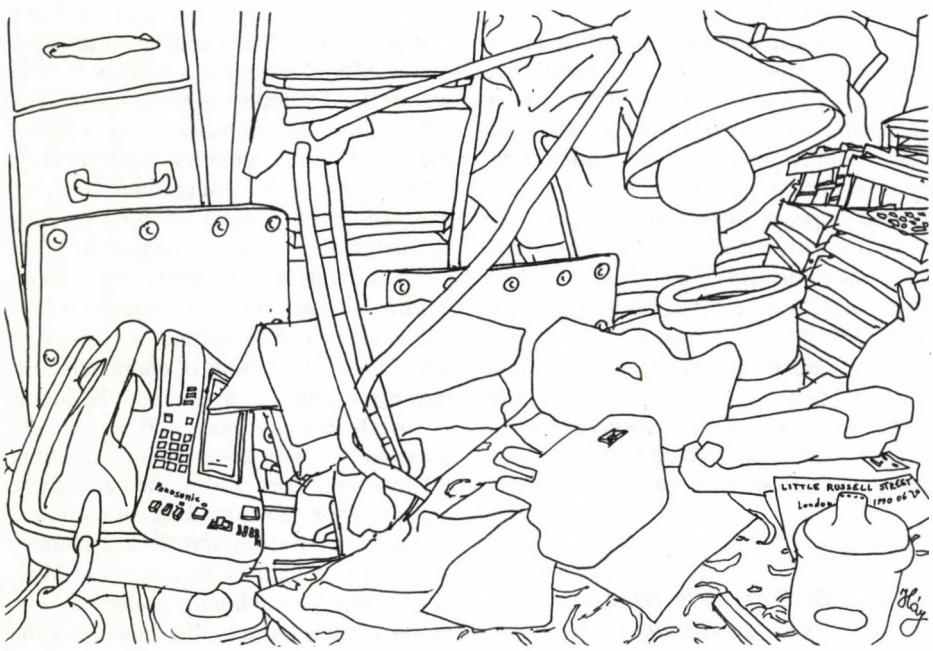
For a long time the play holds no suprises for the audience. The first two acts of Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* are given an almost traditional interpretation. The most that one may be surprised at is that the setting is not the customary home of Russian landowners but a spacious and cheerless row of marble columns, with flights of steps and stone balustrades—as if we were in a socialist realist palace, in a mausoleum, perhaps even in the Kremlin. The performance drags on ceremoniously, following the style of the once obligatory "Chekhovian boredom"; crystal glasses chime, actors behave

primly, and exchange meaningful glances. The suspicion is aroused that the mood is cooler, more inhuman than is usual in Chekhov's plays. Occasionally the oldest of the sisters, Olga, produces an aggressive gesture or a reprimanded maidservant sobs quietly.

After the intermission, towards the end of the second act, masked figures overrun the stage. In Chekhov's play they are only spoken of, here they appear on stage, though not as maskers in carnival disguises, but as ungainly apparitions looming with large stupid doll-heads and hollow eyes. They are both clumsy and terrifying when they bob their heads slowly as in a dream, small branches in their hands. Their squeaking, whimpering singing dissolves into haunting harmony, swelling sometimes into a solo, an aria. The lyrics to those delicate melodies—most of which were written by István Eörsi—speak of outrage to the human spirit and body, beatings and torments, prison camps and atrocities. This is a Gulag opera in those pantomimic scenes where the performers of the Chekhov play, as if in a nightmare, enact their bleeding relationships like the distorted, sharpened reflections of horror images.

This closing hour is a disturbing, harrowing experience: the theatrical essence of the "horriblenesses" is expressed with rarely seen perfection. The slowness, the lack of action put the audience to the test. Many cannot stand it, and leave the theatre during the performance.

In so doing they may be fulfilling the author's purpose, for he seems to be paraphrasing Adorno's question—is it possible after Auschwitz to write poetry? Jeles's imposing production quietly turns this into another question—is it possible after the Gulag to perform Chekhov as before?



Gergely Bikácsy

Turkish March with a Cake

Miklós Jancsó: *Isten hátrafelé megy* (God Goes Backwards)

A classical piece of music is played on a solo violin in one of the long corridors in Jancsó's latest film. The film itself is far from a classic. In fact it has no style at all: a prestigious formal artist, one of the revolutionaries and regenerators of the cinematic idiom, is now staggering down the styleless corridors of chaos. The violinist could, somehow, even be the successor to Tamás Cseh, who sang a narration to his own guitar in Jancsó's earlier films; in fact he is an anachronistic figure dressed in the old fashioned frogged dress of the Hungarian nobility. This, of course, is intentional, for Jancsó is now perhaps no longer able to take a singer-narrator of Tamás Cseh's stature seriously. His camera moves with a bitter irony and sarcasm that touches everything. But this self-irony every so often ends in cheap and jarring awkwardness, sleight of hand raspberry-blowing, clowning somersaults and sniggering.

God appears in the title and two of Jancsó's earlier films—*Season of Monsters* and *Jesus Christ's Horoscope*—had Satan and the Creator arguing with each other. But the tone of this film has something of a tipsy Jack-in-the-box to it. It is a tone that no longer even aims to conjure up the creation and destruction of worlds, the ambitions that have animated Jancsó's recent work. It prefers the ironies of daily politics pamphleteering—and visions that would fit into TV newscasts. Even so, all this remains entertaining and at places witty. Yet we can only feel sad witnessing what seems to be the end of a long, outstanding career.

A Turkish march is sounded but it is the shadow of the Russian occupiers that is cast on the story. An unidentified team is preparing for the shooting of a film (or a television report) at a location resembling a castle. (Some of the location work was at the Fishermen's Bastion in Buda.) Members of a commando squad are also in ambush at the scene (or they receive the newcomers standing at attention). Marci, the young producer (Károly Eperjes) inarticulately and half-drunkenly reviles Marci, his uncle, a politician, with whom the TV report is to be made. The elder Marci (József Madaras) is rehearsing a right-wing, populist patriotic text: "The rights of the Hungarians must be ensured in their own country by law against their enemies who threaten Hungarians from everywhere, even from within." These are now familiar sentiments expressed by certain demagogues. Meanwhile other kinds of characters also turn up: conspirators who see the ideals of socialism under threat and would even try to form a new government. All along the long corridors, and in the halls, there are television sets turned on, showing the characters of the film from different angles and at diferent times, and showing Moscow, where "something is going on". The plotters, spouting socialist cant, seize the

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place and arrest the Madaras character and his associates. The sudden arrival of tanks flying Hungarian flags with the crown-topped national coat of arms brings the surrender of the neo-Bolshevists. But soon the tanks are under fire and the castle-courtyard is occupied by foreign storm-troops, who kill the politicians of both left and right; for that matter they do not spare the television crew in a complete and final "rearrangement".

This, of course, is only the outline of the story and the film could still be weighty, as was *The Round-Up* or *The Red and the White*. But this film remains weightless and inane. Not just because of the story itself: every word and every shot, every camera move is in quotation marks; these quotation marks assume an individual life, settle upon the takes, the words, the scenes, until finally the film is only a carnival of quotation marks and question marks. Indeed, it is not even the sort of playful carnival creating a world of its own that the Middle Ages or contemporary Latin America provide; it is rather a masked ball of humour that a class of fifteen-year olds would bring out during a free-period. There is no Shakespearean Fool, no wise jester, no weapon, no blood or even death that could be taken seriously. All there is, is the lowest form of humour: jokes and banter.

"A novel within a novel" or "a film within a film"—familiar device in mature, sometimes over-mature, artists and periods. In Fellini's *Eight and a Half,* a film director conjures up his own life, now in crisis, under the pretext of shooting the film he is blocked on. Wajda's *Everything for Sale* is also a journal, a self-confession and an essay. Both are outstanding, well-weighed, consistent, with an almost tangible tension between the artist's material and his work (the shaping of the material). All Jancsó could afford here amounts to an acrid snigger. As soon as higher and more serious demands are made on the scenes, the more the scenes disappoint.

I do not think that the trouble springs from the parody-character of the film. In Jancsó's two previous works, *Season of Monsters* and *Jesus Christ's Horoscope,* the stake was universal creation, existence on earth, man's destiny, history at an impasse—the perspectives of both director and film at least seemed obvious even if the solution was ambiguous. Now, however, the very attitude, the approach and the demand have gone astray. The film is not about history, nor the purpose and wrong-doings of God (or Satan), nor even man's destiny, but about daily politics. One sees Gorbachev before a firing squad—for a few seconds the scene really seems eerie, as if one were watching a CNN broadcast. But then you expect the latest news from CNN, not art. All praise to Madaras for his recitation of bombastic, populist slogans: close to a live broadcast from parliament. Yet is this something worth praising? It can hardly be seen as success for the director who once gave us *The Round-Up*.

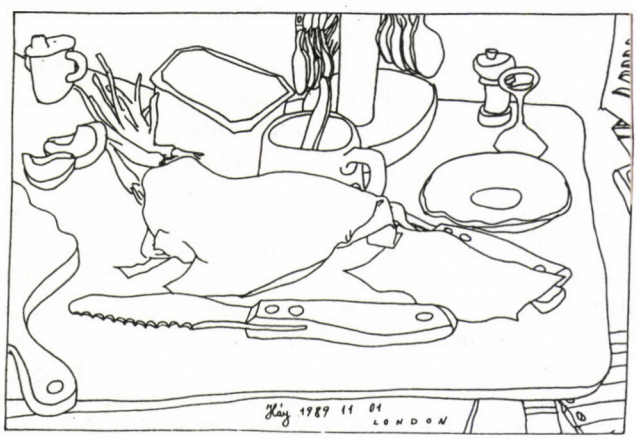
"If I wanted to be absolutely frivolous, I could say that we have lived, we have guffawed, and other people have succumbed to this as well." Jancsó said of *Jesus Christ's Horoscope* in an interview with the periodical *Filmvilág*. For quite some time now, Gyula Hernádi, Jancsó's script writer, has also written his books in the spirit of this "aesthetic". Way back in 1968-69, when his masterful collection of stories, *Száraz barokk* (Dry Baroque) came out, he (like the Jancsó of that time) still "knew no joke when it comes to humour" (as Frigyes Karinthy once put it), his humour and irony held a staggering number of facets.

"How many pistols do you have?" "Two." "I have three." This exchange features in Hernádi's novella of 1974, *Az erőd* (The Fortress), but it would fit perfectly into any of the scenes of *God Goes Backwards*. The viewer can only watch the film as a braying joke, cabaret humour, a relaxation, which soon fades away, (it is dreadful to have the term

entertainment emerging in connection with Jancsó at all). At least at this diminished level, the film is full of entertaining scenes. The protagonist is not one of the politicians but the young director (Károly Eperjes), who even seems to intimate the fool's cap, as he has a kind of a kerchief or hair-net dangling over his head. Eperjes (and obviously Jancsó, too) has found the only possible solution: indulging in genuine clowning—and doing so perfectly. You cannot even be annoyed at understanding practically nothing of what he says, as this is intentional mumbling, gibberish, giggling, word-swallowing, stuttering with upward curling, inarticulate accents—as if he were already beyond his own death. He has who knows how many pistols (he finds them on location) he flourishes them, and playfully shoots at Marci the elder (his politician uncle) and at the monitor showing Moscow television. Unfortunately the film would have us believe that he is afraid. "By now I'm afraid too," he tells one of the crew, who has already got cold feet. I must admit, I do not understand why a director, or anyone on a film crew, should feel frightened at seeing a pistol among the props when they are shooting a film. But this does not really matter, Eperjes gives a fine rendering of the guffawing, awkward pangs of death. But the great Fear, pervading everything, our lives and dreams, is not rendered either by him or by the film as a whole, though this obviously has been the goal.

The entertaining film becomes awkward when it tries to express serious and weighty things with a grim face. Most embarrassing is the closing part in which Jancsó himself appears at the private screening of his film. He is surrounded by his crew and his friends. He speaks off the cuff, haltingly, and then they all set out for a walk in the streets of Budapest. Here the film turns pathetically serious and sententious. "There are those among us who are despised or feel conscience-stricken because on twelve occasions they had lunch with a moderate politician, who played no part in the murders," he says, for instance, in a stagey voice. It is obviously a reference to György Aczél, the "moderate politician" who manipulated the cultural policy of the past thirty years with a machiavellian cunning. A huge cake is brought in, the type that gangsters burst out of in American films of the 1930s. Jancsó has his joke here with a parody of a scene in *Some Like It Hot.*

One would like to hope that despite this film Jancsó remains a great figure in the cinema. The hope can best be sustained by going to see *The Round-Up* or *The Red and the White* once again.



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I slowly mastered the code by myself. After saying my prayers, I practiced on my knees. A year later I did it so well that I was able to cough in code in the yard. It was moving to hear it reverberate all over the prison; they knew I was a Catholic priest but I didn't know their language. So I told them in code that I'd been there six years, a Jesuit condemned to sixteen years, had been twice on death row, so hold out all of you. It was Easter and they knew they'd be punished severely if they were to cough out in code that Christ had risen, but they all coughed it out. That, you know, was a sacrifice greater than death. Slowly, sweetly, I found my way into the system and learnt who was in which cell.

Mihály Godó S.J. on p.64.