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VOL. XXXII

No. 123

AUTUMN 1991

Montesquieu's Paradox on Freedom and Hungary's Constitutions, 1790–1990 • <i>László Péter</i>	3
Szombathely Epiphany • <i>Hugh Maxton</i>	15
Occupation: Existence. On the Death of Géza Ottlik • <i>Miklós Györffy</i>	19
Just a Bad Boy • <i>Géza Ottlik</i>	25
How to Uncook Fish Soup • <i>Györgyi Kocsis</i>	29
Poems, translated by Alan Dixon • <i>Zsuzsa Rakovszky</i>	36

CLOSE-UP

A Woman's War • <i>Alaine Polcz</i>	44
---	----

THE POLITICAL CLOCK

Protestants under Communism • <i>Tamás Majsay</i>	58
Sickle Amnesia • <i>György Szücs</i>	68

PERSONAL

The Blue Danube • <i>Iván Bächer</i>	77
--	----

HISTORY

Pannonia Christiana • <i>Endre Tóth</i>	81
Herodotus Was Right • <i>János Makkay</i>	89
Hungarian Rhapsody • <i>Leonard Rix</i>	94

EXTRA HUNGARIAM

The Politics of Exile • <i>Zoltán Fejős</i>	97
A Hungarian University in Transylvania • <i>Ádám T. Szabó</i>	103

ECONOMY

Agriculture in Crisis: the Political and Economic Pressures • <i>Pál Juhász</i>	107
A Giant Step for Banking • <i>Éva Várhelyi</i>	114

ART

Art in the Sixties • <i>Géza Pernecky</i>	119
---	-----

BOOKS & AUTHORS

- The History and Geography of Fate • *Gergely Hajdú* — 125
How the East Was Won • *Mária M. Kovács* — 131
The Chequered Course of Economic Reform •
László Péter — 137
The Revolutionary and the Statesman • *László Ferenczi* — 141
Turn-of-the-Century Excitement • *Bob Dent* — 146

MUSIC

- A Giant in Lilliput • *György Kroó* — 149
More on Liszt • *Dezső Legány* — 155
Hungaroton and Quintana Records: June 1991 •
Paul Griffiths — 159

THEATRE & FILM

- Reviving the Middle-Class • *Tamás Koltai* — 161
Innocents and Murderers • *Gergely Bikácsy* — 165

Letters to the Editor — 170

DRAWINGS

Károly Szikszai

READERS ARE INVITED TO COMMENT
ON ARTICLES IN **NHQ**
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László Péter

Montesquieu's Paradox on Freedom and Hungary's Constitutions 1790-1990

When new political ideas appear their implications are frequently not immediately apparent. Ideas acquire a significance wider than they possessed when conceived through application to different situations. The direct influence of Montesquieu's views on Hungarian constitutional ideas and his distinction expressed in a paradox on freedom help us to indentify the nature as well as the springs of action—which he called the “principe” — of Hungary's political institutions for well over two centuries. These are eloquent examples of how some ideas can maintain permanent influence.

Montesquieu's constitutional ideas had a demonstrably direct influence on the Hungarian constitution in the eighteenth century, and they still exert some influence on today's constitution making. Furthermore, his paradox on freedom provides a perspective from which the ancient Hungarian constitution and also the constitution as transformed in 1848 and 1867 can be examined. And the paradox is still pertinent today. It tells us much that a West European liberal should expect to find in the new constitutional order, which now, after forty-five years of Communist rule, has a fair chance of being established in Hungary.

“I make a distinction,” writes Montesquieu in *The Spirit of the Laws* in 1748, “between the laws that establish political liberty as it relates to the constitution, and those by which it is established as it relates to the citizen.” “In the former case,” he writes later, “political liberty arises from a certain distribution of the three powers: but in the latter, we must consider it in another light. It consists in security, or in the opinion people have of their security.”

Then comes the paradox:

“The constitution may happen to be free and the subject not. The subject may be free, and not the constitution.”

As he explains elsewhere:

“The three powers may be very well distributed in regard to the liberty of the constitution, though not so well in respect of the liberty of the subject.” The

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paradox may be defective in the form in which Montesquieu presented it, yet it is not the superficial cleverness of a sharp Frenchman. The paradox concerns a distinction that Montesquieu was the first to make.

In sharp contrast to Hobbes, Locke and other writers of the natural law school, Montesquieu was not primarily concerned with the question of whether citizens had the right to political freedom. He took for granted that they did. His primary concern was what kind of institutions could guarantee the citizens' political freedom, to which they were entitled, against their rulers.

"Constant experience shows us," he writes, "that every man invested with power is apt to abuse it, and to carry his authority as far as it will go... To prevent this abuse, it is necessary from the nature of things that power should be a check to power."

The three branches of government, the legislative, the executive and the judicial, should be largely independent of each other: each should be in different hands. The laws should not be made by those whose task is to execute them and those who apply the laws to particular cases, the judges, should again be different.

The division of the three powers principle affected Montesquieu's classification of governments. If in fact, rather than in name only, all the three powers were in the same hands, the system was despotic. His examples were Russia, the Ottoman and other eastern empires. Where out of the three powers at least one, the judicial, if not formally, at least in practice, was largely independent of the other two branches of government, there the subject enjoyed some security. He was not "compelled to do things to which the law does not oblige him, nor forced to abstain from things which the law permits". In these respects the subject was free. This was more or less the situation in France and in other European monarchies, where, as Montesquieu believed, the powers of the ruler were limited by fundamental laws and the privileges conferred on the nobility.

Montesquieu distinguished the limited monarchy from the, usually but not necessarily, republican governmental system which possessed a free constitution. Both types produced "moderate government". But to ensure that the constitution itself was free the separation of the judiciary from the other two branches was not enough. For the independence of the courts was a remedy against the abuse of the subject's freedom through the violation of the laws; it was not a remedy against the oppressiveness of the laws themselves. The constitution was free only when, in addition to the judiciary, the other two branches, the legislative and the executive, were also in different hands. For the laws were less likely to be oppressive if those who made them knew that others would be responsible for their execution. Montesquieu thought that in ancient times the Roman Republic possessed a free constitution. In modern times, there was also one country, England, "that has political liberty as the direct end of its constitution".

The two separations of power in Montesquieu therefore served different purposes, although Montesquieu failed to make those clear. The separation of the judiciary aided the liberty of the subject, whereas the separation of the

legislative from the executive power secured the liberty of the constitution. On this basis Montesquieu thought it possible not only that the subject was free though the constitution was not, but also the reverse.

Ever inclined to romanticize the role played by the nobility in public affairs, Montesquieu and the Hungarian constitution were a good match. An open-minded traveller with insatiable curiosity, Montesquieu knew something about Hungary. In 1728 he visited Pressburg (Pozsony) during the Diet where he met leading public men including Prince Primate Esterházy. In *The Spirit of the Laws*, twenty years later he wrote flatteringly about the Hungarian nobility.

“The House of Austria has never relaxed its efforts to oppress the Hungarian nobility. Little did that House know how serviceable that very nobility would be one day to her. That House sought to extort non-existent wealth from them but failed to see what sort of men these were. When princes combined to dismember Austria’s dominions, all its parts remained immobile and powerless, and fell on a heap, as it were. No life was then to be seen but in those very nobles, who, resenting the affronts offered to the sovereign, and forgetting the injuries done to themselves, took up arms to avenge her cause, and considered it the highest glory bravely to die and forgive.”

The passage was an allusion to the scene in Pressburg Castle where, in 1741, at the beginning of the Austrian War of Succession, the Hungarian nobility enthusiastically promised a despairing Maria Theresa, ‘*damus vitam et sanguinem*’. Their gallantry saved her, or so it was claimed.

For Montesquieu the attitude of the Hungarian nobility in 1741 was a prime example of the fact that in a monarchy it was indispensable that honour, the driving force or the principle of that form of government, was maintained unimpaired. For the Hungarian nobility the passage, written by a leading French philosopher, offered powerful support for their institutions and attitudes. Not surprisingly, Montesquieu’s book, shortly after its publication in 1748, became a Bible for the nobility. An English traveller, Caldwick, even saw its Latin translation during the Diet in a bookshop in Pressburg in 1751.

The chief reason for the book’s enormous popularity among educated nobles was, however, not the flattering passage. The Hungarian nobility, like many other elites in eighteenth-century Europe, learnt from the book a huge amount about their own institutions. They discovered, not unlike Molière’s burgher who learnt that he was speaking “prose”, that what they possessed was a “constitution” rather than just a collection of customary rights, and they were particularly thrilled by the, albeit half understood, theory of the division of powers. Montesquieu emphatically argued that “without monarchy there was no nobility; without nobility, no monarchy. For then there is only a despotic prince”. The Hungarian nobility read this passage as confirmation that both the monarch and the Diet nobility possessed indefeasible prerogatives, that the two “powers” were interconnected, and yet existed independently side by side. Whereas the executive branch belonged to the monarch, legislation was shared between the monarch and the Diet of the nobility. The principle of the division

of powers soon became such a commonplace in the kingdom that a libretto, written to celebrate the opening of the 1729 Transylvanian Diet, personified the "three powers" who were to sing a trio.

The claim that Montesquieu's separation of the three powers was a feature of the Hungarian system of government was unrealistic. But separation did exist in Hungary, whose institutions were bipolar: the Crown and the nobility, the *ország* Diet, were two largely independent depositories of customary right. There was in this sense a division of powers. Werbőczy's *Tripartitum* listed the nobility's cardinal privileges which, together with a large number of other individual and collective rights, were to be maintained unimpaired by the monarch to whom the nobility, through *dietalis* coronation, the Oath and the Inaugural Certificate, had transferred the right to rule and govern the kingdom. The royal prerogatives, the *ország*'s cardinal rights and the "mutual connections" between the two parties generated a symmetrically linked and mutually recognized set of rights and duties which added up to what from 1790 onwards was called the "ancient constitution".

At the Diet, the chief forum of the institutional links between the Crown and the nobility, the two "powers", bargained with each other. The *dietalis tractatus* was a procedure through which the representatives of the Crown, the aristocracy and the gentry deputies of the counties dealt with the taxes and army recruits, demanded by the Court, jointly with the grievances and the *postulata* of the nobility and other measures as a single *pactum*, based on consent rather than on the enforcement of the majority principle. The king then enacted the pact in a *decretum*. From 1790, under the direct and indirect influence of Montesquieu, this process was identified as legislation and was distinguished from the executive power which until 1848, remained a royal *reservata*. This was the essence of the Hungarian parliamentary tradition which secured, through structural dualism, a constitutional balance between the Crown and the noble "nation". Although the balance was always tilted towards the Crown, Hungary's constitution may have been the most effective one in Central and Eastern Europe after the partition of Poland.

On the basis of the division between the "legislative" and the "executive" powers and encouraged by Montesquieu, the nobility proudly claimed to possess a "free constitution". But it could not and was not claimed that the subject was free in Hungary. One could make the obvious point that the subject was unfree in Hungary because its constitution was predicated on the nobility who made up only about 5 per cent of the kingdom's population, that the position of the towns, apart from Transylvania, was marginal and that the rest of the population were serfs. Civil society did not yet exist in Hungary, or anywhere else, outside western Europe.

More relevant to Montesquieu's ideas was, however, the consideration that, in addition to the parliamentary tradition which secured a free constitution of a sort, Hungarian institutions exhibited a feature, that is, the autocratic principle of the law, which obstructed the freedom of the subject. The essence of the autocratic principle of the law was the right of the government to issue

ordinances. To explain the principle we may start with Montesquieu, who argued that the subject was free when he was not “compelled to do things to which the law does not oblige him, nor forced to abstain from things which the law permits”. For Montesquieu it was axiomatic that where the law was silent the citizen should be free (and whenever in fact he was not, his freedom was violated).

In the legal systems beyond the Rhine, the opposite presumption prevailed: where the law was silent, in other words, the subject was not expressly protected by laws, it was the state authorities who were “free”. We have now reached the heart of the matter. The state authorities in Central and Eastern Europe could lawfully issue ordinances and act at their own discretion in matters which interfered with the subject. Enacted statute law limited and restricted the area in which the authorities could lawfully act. And beyond the restrictions which statute law imposed on the official, lay the sphere, termed *freie Verwaltung*, in which the authorities were free from legal restrictions in their dealings with the citizen: the government had the right to issue ordinances.

This right, which may be termed the autocratic principle of the law, was an accepted part of the Hungarian legal system and the courts invariably applied government ordinances whenever, in their view, they did not conflict with the enactments of *decreta* or later statute law. Even if the judge had been independent, as he was not before the 1860s, the judiciary could not have protected the subject. Under the autocratic principle of the law, only detailed, comprehensive statutory provisions can establish the liberty of the subject, institutions that German jurists later called the *Rechtsstaat*. These did not exist in Hungary. All in all, and following Montesquieu, it could be argued that, in Hungary before 1848, the constitution was free, but the subject was not.

Few constitutions generated as much political controversy in nineteenth-century Europe as the Hungarian constitution. It could be said that its defenders, as much as its detractors, selected their arguments from only one side of the distinction on which Montesquieu had based his paradox (of which most of them, however, had probably never heard).

“No other nation apart from the English and the Hungarian can be called free”, declared the County of Zemplén in its 1784 address. The claim of “kinship” between the British and the Hungarian constitutions was the product of the nobility’s resistance to the “unconstitutional” rule of the uncrowned “hatted king”, Joseph II. The exploration of the “parallels” between the two constitutions (comparing, for instance, the Magna Carta with the Golden Bull of 1222) became a part of political discourse right down to 1918 whenever the issue was the defence, or the extension, of parliament’s rights towards the Crown.

Now, the origin of the “kinship theory” unmistakably points to the direct influence of Montesquieu’s book in which Adalbert Barits, a law professor in Pest, found that the British possessed the best constitution because it had clearly separated the legislative and the executive powers from each other.

The detractors of the Hungarian constitution, Austrian jurists and publicists, the Transylvanian Saxon, Harold Steinacker, or the Scotsman R.W. Seton-Watson dismissed the claim of similarities either as superficial or being an *idée fixe* of Hungarian nationalists. The critics invariably found their arguments from the other side of Montesquieu's paradox, pointing out the dearth of provisions in the Hungarian laws to protect the political freedom of the subject.

In 1848 the nobility forced through major reforms of the ancient constitution at the Diet. Serfdom was abolished, legal equality declared and representative government introduced on the basis of a franchise. The Diet, transferred from Pressburg to Pest, became a modern parliament to which the government was to be legally responsible. The executive power, no longer a *reservata*, had to be discharged by the monarch through the "independent Hungarian responsible ministry". The law introduced ministerial countersignature. The minister had to appear and answer questions in both Houses and the law provided that parliament could impeach ministers. Although in 1848 the settlement between the "Crown and the Nation" was unsuccessful, the 1867 Settlement, a pact reached between the two sides in accordance with the norms of the *dietalis tractatus*, created the institutional basis for a liberal constitutional order, the so-called Dualist system, which survived for half a century.

The reforms increased, rather than reduced, the discrepancies in the political institutions created by the coexistence of the parliamentary tradition and the autocratic principle of the law. Parliament acquired more influence after 1867. Legislation increased enormously. Statutes established free-market conditions, defined modern property rights and guaranteed personal freedoms. The government became politically as well as legally responsible to parliament. But its responsibility towards the monarch remained strong. Thus even in the twentieth century political responsibility was strictly dualistic. No government could survive without the confidence of both Francis Joseph and the House of Representatives. During his first administration Sándor Wekerle had enjoyed a solid majority, yet he resigned in December 1894 because, as he declared in the House, he had lost the confidence of the Crown. But the House destroyed more governments than the monarch. The first was Count Menyhért Lónyai's in 1872. Parliament could throw out a government but the opposition was not able to replace it. The new government came from the "government party". Governments were appointed first; elections were held after. Count István Tisza, uniquely in Central and Eastern Europe, lost a general election in 1905— which created a constitutional crisis from which the monarch emerged as the winner on points.

All in all, after 1867 the government was constitutional and responsible, politically and legally, but it was not parliamentary in the sense in which parliamentary government was understood in Western Europe. The main reason for this was not the narrow franchise (which was a fact) but that the source of the government's authority was not the electorate (or the elected parliament) but the Crown and parliament jointly. The government's political responsibility towards parliament consisted primarily in its constitutional duty to maintain

unimpaired Hungary's rights and interests in relationship to the monarch and Austria and thereby preserve the constitutional balance between the Nation and the Crown.

Nevertheless, the Hungarian parliament had probably more influence on the government than parliaments had anywhere else in Central and Eastern Europe before 1918. To mention a single example, the Hungarian parliament was able to obstruct the implementation of the army expansion plans, said to be vital for the maintenance of the Monarchy's great-power status, by refusing to pass two army bills, between 1902 and 1912. Arguably, neither the Reichsrat in Vienna nor the Reichstag in Berlin wielded so much influence.

After the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Hungarian parliament lost its constitutional function as the defender of Hungarian interests. The House of Representatives was no longer the repository of "national rights" in relationship to the Regent, the government and the military. The influence of parliament diminished. But it could still throw out governments and it ensured the survival of constitutional forms even during the Second World War, until October 1944, when elsewhere in the region the military had taken over.

The autocratic principle of the law also remained a central feature of the Hungarian constitution after 1867. The courts became independent and they protected personal freedoms, property rights and private contracts. The press was more or less free. The established churches were autonomous and there were independent associations. A great deal was accomplished of what Montesquieu had considered to be essential in order to protect the freedom of the subject. But the institutions of the *Rechtsstaat* were only partly established. The law did not define the basic rights of the citizen. Instead of statute law, ministerial ordinances and orders issued by local authorities at their discretion governed wide spheres of social life; these interfered with the individuals' and social groups' liberties. The right of association and of assembly, the right to strike and, to a large extent, even Church-State relations were left under administrative tutelage. In these and many other matters disputes were settled by ministry and local officials rather than by independent courts. The authorities frequently acted in a tolerant and sometimes even in a liberal manner, but they could also be brutal. The point is that the subject could be, to quote Montesquieu once more, "compelled to do things to which the law does not oblige him" and was "forced to abstain from things which the law permits".

Furthermore, the autocratic presumption of the law, which starts from the right of the state rather than from that of the citizen, allows the government (which is not hindered by another power!) to expand its regulations which interfere with the citizen where he is not protected by statute law. Indeed, administrative regulation *praeter legem* grew fast in the late nineteenth century. Its expansion, Montesquieu would have observed, was not checked by some other power. Győző Concha, a leading law professor in Budapest, complained as early as in the 1880s that "nowhere else would one find the concentration of power that our government possesses". Yet the authorities' administrative power in the nineteenth century was but a dwarf compared with the giant it became during and after the Great War.

If we consider the two dominant features, the parliamentary tradition and the autocratic principle, of Hungary's nineteenth-century modernized constitution, we might again suggest that in Montesquieu's terms it was free while the citizen was not. And again, when we examine the arguments advanced in the early twentieth century by the critics and the defenders of the constitution we find that they largely selected their arguments from only one side of Montesquieu's paradox.

The Communists, once in power in Hungary, as elsewhere, rejected the principle of the division of power; Montesquieu's discovery was declared to be a piece of bourgeois deception. "Democratic centralism" was the basic principle of the single-party state which believed in undivided political power. Montesquieu's paradox was no longer relevant. It had applied only to what he had termed as moderate government. Where there was no division of powers, neither the subject nor the Constitution was free and the government was *per definitionem* despotic.

The Communist government systematically destroyed much that had been established by nineteenth-century liberals as institutions of civil society. It had confiscated private property, instituted the state ownership of the economy, obliterated the market and monopolized employment. In the early 1950s the government trampled on most elementary personal rights. As an after-effect of the 1956 revolution, the government in the 1960s began to tolerate elementary forms of personal liberty. It still insisted, however, on the principle of the unity of political power. It did not tolerate the existence of independent social organizations. There was neither a free press nor were there independent associations, nor even autonomous churches.

For forty years the Communists governed the country through party instructions and ordinances issued by the Presidential Council and by the ministries. Parliament, in which according to the 1949 and 1972 revised Constitution, sovereignty was vested, became an empty shell with mock elections and mock procedures. Its legislative role was largely taken over by the Presidential Council which passed ordinances without debate. Sometimes the Council was not even called together and its members consented to enactments on the telephone (*körtelefon*). Although the regime became more tolerant in the 1980s, parliament's political weight was reduced even further. In the first four years of Communist rule between 1949 and 1953 parliament sat on 60 days and passed 34 laws. In the closing years, parliament sat only on 32 days and passed altogether 22 laws *nem. con.*

Montesquieu's constitutional ideas bounced back to become a potent force once more when, in the mid 1980s, the Communist system ran into a crisis which turned out to be terminal. The government, facing economic bankruptcy, began to reform the state machinery. Instead of recovering, it collapsed under the weight of Gorbachev's policies and the pressure of the Opposition which the crisis had generated, in the autumn of 1989. Historians frequently label 1848 in Hungary as a "lawful revolution"; likewise, it has been said of 1989 that it was the year of Hungary's "negotiated revolution". These labels simply play with words; it is not my task, however, to examine the political transformation itself.

Transformation it has undoubtedly been. The Communist political system has been supplanted by another, although the change-over has been continuous. Paradoxically, of all the people's democracies, it was in Hungary that the mass demonstrations and violent disruptions were least important in effecting changes. Yet only in Hungary could the opponents of the Communist regime form a government without going into coalition with some Communists or former Communists. Radical though the transformation of the political institutions in Eastern Europe may have been, the changes have not produced anywhere a "new" political system. The former people's democracies have returned to, or hope soon to return to, political institutions which they once possessed or aspired to.

There is a singular absence of new ideas in today's Eastern Europe, even though political life has been flooded by professors and intellectuals as never before anywhere. The new leaders and their followers want everywhere to return to old, well-tried European methods and ideas. In this intellectual climate, what Montesquieu established two hundred and forty years ago about the division of powers seemed, quite plausibly, the best remedy against the monopoly of Communist one-party rule. Montesquieu's ideas cropped up in Hungary's samizdat opposition literature; they were also exploited by the reform communists. Professor Géza Kilényi, chairman of the government commission on political reforms, recommended, by reference to the "much maligned" French *philosophe*, that the main branches of the state "ought to be able to check each other's power".

The political transformation began with the reform of parliament in September 1987. After thirty-one years, parliament was called together without the government setting a time limit to its session. In Law XI of 1987 parliament carried out the first of many revisions of the Constitution. The remit of the Presidential Council, within which it could issue ordinances, was restricted. In the autumn session alone parliament passed 12 laws. In the course of 1988 parliament's political power increased; debate became free. The decisive change came in 1989 when parliament laid down in a statute the procedural rules concerning the motion of no confidence in the government. The Németh government became politically responsible to parliament. The government's dependence on the Communist party centre grew weaker and then ceased.

1989 turned out to be a year of landslide. Formally, the new laws revised the Constitution but, in fact, on 23 October the country received a new constitution which declared Hungary to be an "independent republic" and a "democratic *Rechtsstaat*" in which the principle of the division of the powers was to be realized concerning all three branches of state power. The President elected by parliament replaced the Presidential Council, which was abolished. The authority of parliament, which passed fifty-eight laws in 1989, increased.

In the second half of the year the political opposition to the régime, which had meanwhile split into different parties, played a crucial role in the preparation of legislation. Much has been made of the conflicts among the political parties by commentators in and outside Hungary. In fact, however, the parties co-operated.

The Oppositional Round Table Conference worked out the political reform proposals on the basis on common consent in the summer of 1989. Without this the Opposition could not have compelled the government to accept the more radical reforms at every stage in the negotiations. The constitutional revision passed by parliament in October was based on a "pact" among the (extra-parliamentary) parties. The formation of the Antall government, after the free parliamentary elections, in May 1990, was again based on pacts among the partners of the government coalition, as well as between the government and the leading opposition party, the SzDSz. The constitutional revision carried out in July was once more based on an inter-party agreement. The rule that requires a two-thirds majority for constitutional revision undoubtedly helped to bring about these pacts. But there is more to it than that. An old tradition has come to life again. Legislation was based on party pacts in 1945–46 as well as in the 1920s. Ferenc Deák's politics in the 1860s was based on pacts and his political habits had been shaped by the procedures of the ancient constitution's *dietalis tractatus*. There is, as there has always been in the past, a deeply ingrained aversion to the enforcement of the majority principle in Hungary.

What is new today is that for the first time the negotiated pacts generated a constitution which has acquired the support of most if not all the articulate organized political forces in the country. The past was very different. In the conditions of the ancient constitution the *dietalis tractatus* between the Crown and the *ország* could never bridge the conflicting views on the distribution of rights and duties between the two parties. The April Laws of 1848 were flawed by conflicting interpretations and the 1867 Settlement created a constitutional opposition from the start. The collapse in 1918–19 did not produce viable political institutions and the restoration in 1920 created only a constitutional *provisorium*. The new political order, established in 1945 on false premises, was undermined by the Communists. The 1949 Constitution was a sham. In October 1956 consensus emerged for a liberal democratic constitution, only to be destroyed by Soviet intervention, and Kádár, though at times popular with the new middle classes, could never create a political order based on consent.

The moaning minnies and the professional pessimists concerning the prospects of the recent transformation should bear in mind that for the first time, in 1989–90, in propitious international circumstances and through a series of pacts, referenda and elections, a constitutional order was born, which has attained the consent of all, including most of the former Communists. The right-of-centre parties won the general elections, held in the Spring of 1990, and were able to form a coalition government in May. The ruling parties and the centre-left parties, which provide the opposition, heartily dislike each other but, uniquely in Hungary, there is today no opposition to the constitution.

The country has in hand a legally valid, enforceable constitution which is generally accepted but which, nevertheless, is considered, politically, as temporary. Formally the Constitution is still Law XX of 1949 (the Communist Constitution), several times and radically revised. Although the changes have

been so substantial that only a few passages of the original have been left unaltered, there is an understandable keenness among political leaders to endow the new democratic régime with its own constitution. The Preamble (from 23 October 1989) enacts the present law "until the enactment of the country's new constitution". Minister President Antall, on taking office, listed among the tasks of the government and the parliament the drafting of a new constitution. In a lecture in the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, the Speaker of Parliament, György Szabad, predicted that in 1993 a new constitution would be introduced.

It is indeed not inconceivable that in the near future a new constitution will supplant the present one, although this is not very likely (unless the new document rearranges rather than substantially changes the provisions). Parliament's timetable is overcrowded (the legislature has already passed well over a hundred laws and resolutions under the present government). Because of the two-thirds majority required for constitutional change, the proposed draft would have to attain substantial opposition support at a round table inter-party conference which may not be easily secured. Politics would be likely to be saddled with so many urgent tasks in the next few years that, when necessary, ad hoc revisions are more likely to be carried out than root and branch change. Most of what legal provisions can do to secure a "free constitution" has already been done.

If one looks at the other side of Montesquieu's paradox (traditionally the vulnerable side of Hungary's political institutions) the achievements have so far been more modest.

Simultaneously with the restoration of parliament's authority, some basic institutions of the *Rechtsstaat* were established. The aim was to protect the "freedom of the subject" by statutory provisions, enforceable in law courts and guaranteed by the two-thirds rule, and, correspondingly, by the reduction of the discretionary powers of the government and its agents. Much today is still not in place. No law as yet protects the freedom of the press and broadcasting. The police do not operate under statute law. Nevertheless, for the first time in history, judicially enforceable parliament-made statutes protect the citizen's rights of, for example, association, assembly, travel or emigration. Most of these laws need more detailed provisions to secure the more effective protection of individuals and groups. Church-state relations have been regulated by a statute law based on yet another *pactum* between two parties. These reforms, which substantially widened the scope of the judiciary, have been completed by the establishment of the Constitutional Court.

Today the legal-institutional conditions that are necessary for the separation of the three branches of state power in Hungary are in place. One has to ask whether the three branches will in fact separate from each other. Critics of the new constitution point out that, because of deeply held suspicion towards the executive power, the revised Constitution concentrates too much power in parliament. The responsibilities of the President, elected by parliament rather than by the people, are too narrow.

The formal powers of parliament are indeed too wide and there are people who

believe that "parliamentary government" ought to mean just that. But the weight this view may carry must not be exaggerated. Political rhetoric should be distinguished from institutional realities. The system today is transitory. Parliament has not yet become an effective counterweight to the executive. The government is still the owner of the bulk of the country's property; it is in charge of something like ninety per cent of the economy and also of most of the social institutions. Today liberal democrats try to run the Communist command economy. Notwithstanding the constitutional reforms, the presumption of the law has not been shifted to the side of the citizen. The government can still lawfully issue ordinances in the economy and in many other fields. Some experts defend the government's wide discretionary powers on the grounds that without them the government would not be able to supplant the command economy with a system based on the free market. Others envisage a Peronist authoritarian type of development in East Central Europe based on state *dirigisme*.

Obvious remedies exist for the not particularly strong danger of government by parliament and the more real threat of an overbearing executive.

(1) The President's powers could be strengthened with regard to the government.

(2) The establishment of a second chamber would provide a counterweight to the power of the House of Representatives without strengthening the executive branch.

(3) As soon as parties alternate in office, the parliamentary control of the government becomes more effective.

(4) The wide autonomy of local government would provide a constitutional guarantee.

(5) The constitutional balance between the legislative and the executive powers will have to be protected by the rule of law (by the setting up of administrative courts) and by the growing authority of the judicial branch.

I have listed only the formal-institutional remedies and have not considered the social guarantees of the new constitutional system, such as the free press, the independent radio and TV, the emergence of a new business class, the integrity of academic research into politics, and many others.

All in all, in 1989-90 sufficient formal-institutional reforms were created to make a free liberal system possible. Whether in fact the institutions will stay on a liberal course or will veer towards an authoritarian one, as some economists fear, we have no means of predicting. Nevertheless, the fear that Hungarian politics will, as it frequently has in the past, take an authoritarian turn is unjustified. The new political elite, an essentially tolerant group on both sides of the political divide, should be able to work the institutions so that both the "subject" and the "constitution" become free and the ghost of Montesquieu's paradox, for Hungary, is at last laid to rest. For once, it is not the political institutions themselves that create intractable problems in Hungary. Ultimately the success of the new constitution will depend on politics: whether or not the government will be prepared to face the social upheaval that the rapid dismantling of the command economy will unavoidably create.

Hugh Maxton

Szombathely Epiphany

Early in January 1982, a train arrived at a little station in western Hungary and I dismounted. There are no raised platforms at Szombathely. I was still so novice a traveller in Europe that I remarked the fact as I stepped heavily across railway lines and obstacles towards the ticket-hall-exit. A considerable number of middle-aged women, wearing black cloaks or coats, with raddled headscarves and carrying flowers, stood evidently waiting. Here was colourful matter requiring the wise traveller's patient and triumphant interpretation, a display in which anticipation would again defeat the immediate object of sense. As the purpose of my journey from Dublin was to visit the actual birth-place of the fictitious Lipot Virag (father of Leopold Bloom) in the centenary year of James Joyce's birth, I naturally took these women to be mourners left over from Paddy Dignam's funeral, relics and relicts of 16 June 1904. Everything was to be accommodated in my composed framework, even Lenin Street into which we now turned, for both Lenin and Joyce had spent time in Zurich.

My travelling companion stomached these observations, and we set off in tolerable sunshine to find a flower shop. Virág, in Hungarian, means flower; and the word decorates the booths where flowers are sold. I naturally wanted to photograph such a booth with Bloom's ancestral name displayed on it, and so capture a double image of Virág's meaning.

Idiotically keen to see everything that echoes, I seized on coincidences or egregious mergers of sense and nonsense wherever they arose—and elsewhere. My mission was to find ready-transformed whatever it was I had set out blindly to find. A tour of the town proved effortlessly pleasant. The unseasonable time of year, and the company of a native Hungarian, flattered the tourist's desire not to be seen as a tourist. An illusion, of course, but at least a benign one. Later in the day, however, and emboldened perhaps by the total absence of (any other) foreigners, I raised my camera to photograph the doorway of a cellar in which men could be seen drinking contently, the doorway painted nicely, the light at play helpfully. Without warning, a man emerged to shout unmistakably across the road. For that moment I stood admonished.

Hugh Maxton's translation *Between (Selected Poems of Ágnes Nemes Nagy)* was published by Corvina Books (Budapest) and Dedalus Press (Dublin) in 1988. He has also translated poems by Endre Ady and Sándor Weöres. The present piece is taken from the opening pages of his forthcoming memoir, *Waking*.

The day as yet progressed. There was a labour museum to be visited, Roman sites to be considered. Ultimately, the day would require a meal before the train took us away again to stay overnight in less celebrated Győr. Szombathely was not only a point in Joyce's imaginative memory, it had been important in the Roman world, that world of very actual things—trade routes, conquests, silk, the economics of slavery, Ovid, material culture. There had been a temple of Isis here when the place was called Savaria. And while the temple of Isis went unvisited, Roman Szombathely unexpectedly re-emerged when we went to eat. In mid-winter, these provincial towns were not thriving and, as darkness climbed from the twisting pavements up to the roofs and into the snow-lightened sky, the only restaurant we could find was the Pannonia. It was both warm and empty. We sat at a table with a good perspective on the long beaten copper or bronze depiction of Roman helmets, weapons and other implements, which ran like a frieze round the upper part of the dining room.

Pannonia had been the name the Romans gave to their province in this region, and today it is the name of a state-owned hotel chain. The long-distance efficacy of memory, its transmission efficiency in onomastics, tradition and sentiment, can generally be relied upon. Things of the moment are less fully documentable. Was, is, the Roman depiction on that restaurant wall made of copper or of bronze? Was, is, it a frieze or 'like a frieze'? These are merely particular uncertainties. Why does the will refuse to check the particular frenzy which is indetermination? Even the painful transcription of uncertainty, its wriggling and eye-averting deposition before some other eyes, seems preferable to the fugitive exercise of knowledge. It is the easiest thing in the world to say that metal images were of this metal or that, easy as establishing that they were of this metal or that. Yet the question is more assertive than the answer, and the shields which seemed like recent bruises remain in one dimension unknown. How they are, yes; but what?

Now the little aperitif drinks came, or a bottle of wine. Probably not Unicum, the distinctive liqueur of Hungary, its sharp and sticky tang became familiar on later visits. Then the food came, again the details escape me for now, but I saw that it was good. The service of course was slow and the conversation drifted, rose and fell, veered left and right. No laws of gravity set the tone or dictated a theme. The late afternoon was mellowing into night, and the iconography on the wall began to recall the motifs of neo-classical Paris, Picasso, Joyce again. The citizen-boozer in the cellar became Virag Resurrectus, angrily seeing off my Cyclopien camera. The day's museum, the day's mourners, the unperformed rites at the temple of Isis took their place in the chronicle Joyce imagined sixty years earlier. At some point during the conversation, I became aware that another table was occupied. Or rather, the table in question was vacant, quite blank. The table was empty, if a table may be said to be empty. But at it, or very near it, was the figure of a man who had perhaps eaten earlier and now simply sat on. Having come into the Pannonia to eat and to drink and to talk, we had been unable to notice someone who so totally was not doing any of these things, things which for him passed. Radically apart from the table, silent, not morose but unvital to

a disturbing degree, he continued. Continued where he was until at some moment when my attention was distracted he went. Or was not. He could not have been taken for anyone. Yet at the time, and following the line of associations, I was reminded of George Moore. It seemed a good joke, Moore reduced to wintering in socialist Hungary, and I tried to interest my companion in it. But, very sensibly, she had never heard of George Moore.

Hungary ... George Moore ... With such fearfully proper nouns, the omens are not encouraging. Surely a life is not portioned out between exotic location and pompous literary allusion? For there are local and mundane things to be said, schools of no particular distinction to be chronicled, friends of no extraordinary influence recalled, discoveries and losses, the known world. But then there is also the resilient and seemingly ineradicable first person. As in a baroque picture where human beings carelessly disport themselves unaware of the symmetries and equally ordered breaches of symmetry which govern their activities, a sculpted motto flies somewhere overhead, its ornately preserved vacant spaces signifying, Et in Arcadia ego, a further ominous distraction from the ordinarily real.

To speak the truth and to have nothing to say, that is Cassandra's latter-day predicament. Not everyone can expect such a central role, of course. To feel compelled to write down the nothing that has happened to her or him, write up the nothings that accumulate to flesh or enspirit the self of her or him—that is the non-prophet's hardly less unenviable fate. And it is trash, meretricious and transparent, the unwrappings of a toy beat suffocating in its child-owner's imagination. And it must be embraced, like the non-existent ogre in the fairy-tale or the pathetic religious fictions which permit the one rite of the least substance, prayer for the dead. To be compelled by fidelity to the little knowledge one has and is, and to test thinking endlessly and (it must seem) vainly against knowledge—test and not testify for the latter is death—is an obligation which mocks itself.

Discovery of this came years after a school friend fell slowly victim to brain tumours, and came at the corner of a Dublin suburban road within two miles of my childhood home—or one of them—within two hundred yards of the residence—now vanished itself, demolished, replaced—wherein she boarded. (A flower has been surreptitiously picked from the new garden, as an act of reversed homage, on several random occasions.) She will be Meridiana in these prayers and curses, the name trapping in flight the precocious imitation of tongues, recourse to learned ignorance, a hiding-place under the skies. School, and the school-boy's dreadful seed-time-yes, these will follow. And favourite uncles, and places oozing with association, grandfather's two-foot rule, the field behind the house—all these things shall be added also, if only for the present.

Years have passed, not many but enough to prompt the question, Who was I to picture George Moore in post-war dilapidation? The whole business had been pretentious, of course, but it instanced graver temptations, greater difficulties. To wipe the slate clean, wipe the mirror clean, for example. To return

to one's own past, having paid whatever the reckoning in the present may have been. But the question can be put in more formal terms, How can we know the dead? However one may attempt to modify (or render less immodest) issues of this kind, every author is engaged on memoirs of his or her dead life. Intimations of the undertaking can be gained in the least auspicious circumstances, dining in foreign restaurants in the dead of winter, or digging trenches in non-descript Wicklow. The words one steps over send up giggles which do not diminish with every distancing step. In this case, the non-descript has been ever revealing, and the formulary wisdom heard in childhood shines like a cliché in Eden. Yet I have also returned to Hungary on numerous occasions and, on some of these at least, presumption has not always obscured an uncanny apprehension of inchoate Selfhood. Memory provides no escape from a present no less real for being fragmentary. The comforting maps and time-tables which carry people to Budapest did not transport me or anyone else back to the eighteen eighties or even to Joyce's sojourn in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The past is a time-space continuum, with the space missing. Nevertheless, when we traffic between then and now in conversation as if only one dimension were involved, our deluded fluency gives rise to these conceits by which we compare a man in a restaurant to a dead novelist or a medieval king. And so, little by little, it came to me that I had not been at all reminded of George Moore.

Mediations seldom work so obligingly, for that would too much flatter the shining armour you strap on against vanity. You cannot become as a little child without fully accepting the full reality—historical irreversibility, cumbrously inscribed ambiguity—which prevents that stream-lined innocence. Knowledge is a very limited form of truth. Few Jewish Hungarians, even among those most thoroughly assimilated, changed the name Blum to its Hungarian equivalent. And there are gentile Virágs. In such gritty facticity, Joyce's own is rebuked. By a similarly intrusive learning, what I had been reminded of was one of Henry Tonks's portraits of Moore. The loss and gain of this realization, the sense of isolation from the lost real, and yet sense of intimacy, should have been a warning. But more than days passed before I recognised, in that latter-day manifestation of Moore by Tonks in the deserts of Central Europe, my own blurred face.

Miklós Györffy

Occupation: Existence

On the death of Géza Ottlik

In 1988 Miklós Szentkuthy died at the age of eighty; in 1989 Sándor Márai, who had lived in exile in America, committed suicide at the age of eighty-nine, and in the autumn of that same year Géza Ottlik died at the age of seventy-eight. With them, almost all of the great names of the second and third generation associated with the literary journal *Nyugat* have left us. Only István Vas, now eighty-one, remains. Ottlik was the other writer left who had started to publish in pre-war Hungary. This is more than a simple matter of chronology: those who began their careers as writers in the old world (whether they were of middle class or peasant origin) retained something that has since vanished without a trace. They were the repositories of a spiritual heritage which, in principle, could be passed on despite several decades of suppression.

What exactly this tradition was remains to be clarified. It is beyond doubt, however, that after Ottlik's death it has even less chance of surviving the current crisis of values or of acting as a bridgehead for resistance and renewal. The literary aspect of this tradition is fairly easy to identify: the journal *Nyugat*, which lasted from 1908 to 1941. As Ottlik said, "*Nyugat* had a European significance which—in terms of another history—can only be compared to that of the French encyclopedists; it had been our greatest moral and intellectual renaissance since the Hungarian reform age in the early 19th century." This shows clearly that *Nyugat*, although it primarily brought together writers of western literary tastes who renewed Hungarian literature and made it commensurate with the best of contemporary European writing was not only a school of writers but also an intellectual-moral tradition, one of a more general relevance that reflected a turning-point in the history of Hungarian society, that is, the birth of a Hungarian middle-class. *Nyugat* was the chief mouthpiece of the Hungarian variant of a modern European middle-class. In addition to being a great writer, Ottlik was a "westerner", who maintained a burgher's way of thinking, dignity and morality right up to his dying day. He took something to the grave of which little enough survives and it is that which we now so desperately need for our desired reintegration into Europe.

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For younger Hungarian writers Ottlik was “the man in the suit”, the solid citizen-father, and even though Ottlik played the part somewhat awkwardly, he never struck a false note in it. For this part he only had to be what he was anyway, the outsider, the independent man in a suit, literature’s exile whom poisonous and infectious cultural politics could never touch. He was a gentleman even as a member of the middle class. He preserved a dignity and pride bespeaking genteel birth.

In fact, he was more than a gentleman and more than a bourgeois, he was a high-flyer—another part of the tradition. And even for a *citoyen*, which he was rather than a *bourgeois*, he was one of another, a spiritual world. He did not champion political, ideological or economic ideas, he was a citizen of the republic of the intellect, morality and art. “Ottlik, you have your head in the clouds,” someone told him in his schooldays, someone he least expected the comment from: his commanding officer at the cadet school. But there are occasions when such men are needed even in down-to-earth occupations like soldiering. “It’s a pity you left us, Ottlik,” the same commander said years later, near the end of the war, when they ran into each other. “The General Staff badly needs people like you.”

This story is told in Ottlik’s “A másik Magyarország” (The Other Hungary), which is about the attempts of Ottlik and others to revive the periodical *Nyugat* and its successor, *Magyar Csillag*, published for three years until the Germans banned it in 1944. And all this before the war was over. The “other Hungary” was those who, throughout the siege of Budapest and the chaos of bringing the country back to life, could only think about such things. “And where is that other country? In the clouds. That is difficult to map.” And difficult to bring down to earth. The romantic dream of Ottlik and his fellows was not to be realized. But it could have been realized, for it had a model. “The only thing in which we could have followed our model, the great generation of *Nyugat*, which did the impossible, accomplished miracles under our own eyes and was the proof itself, was their strong sense of community.” They were like “the unity of saints in Catholic dogma: an indivisible variety”, to use István Vas’s words. *Nyugat* embodied convincingly the “other Hungary’s” spiritual existence, and thereby became a proof for its existence. Ottlik did not manage to bring this country down to earth, at first because of disagreements and then because of the historical changes that wiped out the “official” Hungary as well. Nevertheless, their country still existed somewhere in the clouds. Ottlik remained a citizen of this other, ever-shrinking spiritual Hungary and was never to return to its “official” territory (if he ever lived in it), to the new official Hungary and its temporary legitimacy.

He remained an exile like Márai, but instead of going to America he withdrew to the spiritual landscape inside him where he could join his fellow dreamers, some of them alive, some dead. His “other Hungary” is what we need now: people like Ottlik and his fellows, in the General Staff, or even in the clouds. They are not with us any more and it is doubtful whether in secret, in internal exile, any successors have grown up, successors who could constitute the “other Hungary” now that the time has come—let alone bring it down to earth in one form or another.

Whether Ottlik's literary work would have been different if he had not been forced into internal exile is a moot point. It is presumably not only because he was ostracized and accused of being a bourgeois that he had already imagined literary life as working "in the existence-business". Some become writers because they have a message. Ottlik had no particular message other than the whole of human existence and the whole of the world. He quoted Rilke in this connection. "Art is nothing but a mode of existence. One may want to become an artist by simply living." And Ottlik's "greater half" never chose any profession, neither that of the writer, nor any other. In tandem with himself he would remember that "his occupation still consists in simply being a man, a bloke—a bloke who cannot be defined any easier at the age of 30 and 60 than at the age of 7 or 5."

This is the awareness with which Ottlik seems to have gone through his years at the cadet school, the period in his life which seems to have been crucial, since it provided the material for his major work, the novel *Iskola a határon* (School on the Border, 1959). It is not only these schoolyears that the novel contains, although the special significance of this period for his whole life is beyond doubt, but the totality of Ottlik's experience of existence. His other fundamental experience, his studies of mathematics and physics, was also a basis for a literary and existential view of much wider scope. He was a student of the famous mathematician Lipót Fejér at the University of Budapest between 1930 and 1935. Although he did not become a mathematician, just as he did not become an officer, mathematics served him as an analogical paradigm. What he retained from his mathematical studies was that "once you have made a tool, you do not use it any more, you throw it away: what you keep is how you made it, the appropriate method—the algorithm. The mental algorithm he had learned from mathematics was his guide where his activity as a writer was concerned. "For example, as I have said before, the writer should remain silent if he has nothing to say. This is not as easy as it sounds. The writer is driven by a desire to communicate. He believes in himself and the importance of what he is saying. [...] So he cannot hold his tongue. He comments on everything, he exhibits, analyses and communicates his soul, worries about the future of the country and saves mankind. He founds a philosophical system, rejects the Nobel prize and describes his childhood in minute detail", he says in ironic reference to Sartre, against whom he must have felt a grudge at the time. He maintained that this was as if someone, having learned to multiply and to divide, carried out various multiplications and divisions for thirty years and published the—correct—results in the form of a book.

Ottlik, consequently, did not consider literature a purpose, but a means. A method for reaching something more important, something higher. And he was a writer as he was an officer, or a mathematician: occasionally, when he managed to conceive an existential algorithm which he could model by means of a literary work of art.

This is not to say that Ottlik was an amateur or a naive writer. On the contrary, he was a master of the writer's craft. In addition to his notion of literature as a

method of cognition, he was stopped from expression by his professional perfectionism as well. This is one of the reasons why he wrote, or at least published, little. After the communist takeover he was paralysed by censorship and by total neglect. He made a living by translating English and American classics. His start had been difficult too though *Nyugat* was still open to him at the time. True, that was a hard test. At that time he was a journalist, he published sketches and edited the bridge column of the newspaper *Budapesti Hírlap*. And suddenly, one of his short stories was accepted by *Nyugat*. "Babits sent a message saying he liked it. I was thereby accepted as a contributor to *Nyugat*. I have never been more honoured." This short story was followed by others, a novella, *Hajnali háztetők* (Roofs at Dawn). He rewrote the latter several times, as he did all his works, and published it as late as 1957, when the hardships, the necessary and voluntary silence seemed to be over and Ottlik himself seemed to enter literary life and become established. This was all the more to be expected as *School on the Border* was nearly finished. The novel was published two years later in 1959. In spite of strict party control and harsh Marxist–Leninist criticism it became evident that this "bourgeois" novel was an outstanding work of art. Within a few years it was translated into several languages. Yet, Ottlik's literary life ground to a halt: the decades to come saw only a couple of short stories and essay-like memoirs. An outsider has no way of knowing whether perhaps he continued to work but did not wish to publish because what he had written did not meet his own standards. It looks like Ottlik was again "just" a man, a "bloke" for most of those decades playing bridge, writing a book on bridge, reading and thinking. He was existing and watching. And, of course, he had financial problems, like most of those making existence their full-time occupation. In the meantime, more and more had come to realize that *School on the Border* was one of the best, if not the best, novel written in post-war Hungary. In 1982 Péter Esterházy, one of the outstanding writers of a new generation, copied the whole novel by hand, an act recalling medieval monks whose copying work could pass for a profession of faith. Esterházy copied the novel on a single white sheet of paper in a way that the layers of the lines turned into the complicated texture of a graphic tapestry. By this gesture of admiration *School on the Border* became something like a codex, a cardinal work of Hungarian literature.

School on the Border has a textural character itself. It tells of three years spent at a cadet school in the distant past, the 1930s, describing students and teachers, non-commissioned officers from several points of view, in a mosaic-like structure without a straight plotline or chronological order. This surface quality and mosaic structure results in a fragmentariness which is important for the content. Form has a primary relevance for content in all of Ottlik's work. It suggests something which is supported by references in the content, that everything is in connection with everything else. The structural framework of the novel can be imagined as a system of coordinates—in accordance with the author's mathematical view. One axis would show the central figures, their characteristics and personalities, the other would show the conditions at the

school. The continuously changing interrelation of these values is what the novel consists of. A network of relations of dependence comes into existence and the texture itself is the novel.

The dimension of time has an important role with respect to the textural quality and the network of references. Without assuming any direct influence, one could compare it to that of Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*. As with Mann, the passing of time starts very slowly. The space devoted to the first days in the book is out of proportion to their share in the total time span. The main structural line of the book is the first term at school, which thereby becomes a distinct symbolic time, that of initiation. The passing of time pushes on step by step with continuous digressions back and forth. Ottlik moves among the concrete objects of the world of his novel as though they were spatial forms. They do have a temporal dimension but this is not part of their essence. Whatever happened *is*, and therefore can be returned to, as if it were something existing in space. "The three years, for instance, did not pass at all, they are; each minute standing still as if projected on the screen of the universe, wide, like the point of intersection of a divergent beam of rays on a spherical surface."

On its publication, *School on the Border* was read by many as a timely parable of dictatorship. To Hungarian readers, who had been especially sensitive to political allegories, the cadet school became a school of Central European militarism, of Prussian drill, of K. u. K. narrow-mindedness, and of humiliation and submission—a model of post-monarchist and pre-Fascist terror. In fact, it is something else, something more: the whole of Central European existence. As a critic remarked lately, Ottlik's theme is "the sociological interior of Central Europe, the tissue of the only too well known normal and abnormal mechanisms of societies, the disillusioning cruelty and chaos of their power relations, consequently nothing special."

The above relations are matters of life and death in this region. Whoever wants to survive here, whoever is forced to live here, must learn to live with these relations; must attend the school of this life, be it good or bad. It is the unknown, the unintelligible, the disturbingly new and strange, that men, in the form of the boys, encounter at this school. They arrive at a "border", they even cross it. They obtain experience of the world which is beyond this border, beyond normal, comfortable and intelligible civil life, beyond the security of the years of childhood. This is the school of existence on the borderline of existence. *School on the Border* is a great novel because it is both about the nature of life in this region in general and about the unique individual and concrete years at the cadet school, and neither are short-circuited by authorial comments or interpretation. Where there is authorial comment, it is on such a low, almost naive, childlike level of generalization that it does not disrupt the consistently limited horizon of narration, the view which measures everything by the years at the cadet school. The crisis facing the boys, the disruption of the order of the universe is caused by dormitory incidents, insubordination, small defiant revolts, attractions and rivalries, disappointments and punishments —trifles which could have been experienced by anyone. For the boys, and by their system of values (which the

novel raises to an exclusive relevance) all this was life itself: the ever-recurring, yet unacceptable scandal of existence.

Ottlik's novel is, however, not just about uncertainty, about the disillusioning cruelty and chaos of relations, the loss of innocence and the spread of evil; it is also about the moral dignity and intellectual independence which can be gained through crises and tests. Being a work conceived in crisis, the novel itself has to be interpreted as a moral act, as evidence of achieved intellectual independence. Ottlik's literary method contributes to the achieved intellectual-moral quality. He argues that a writer who has considered the chances of depicting reality and the difficulties of narration with sincerity and responsibility, cannot wish to interpret the world, he must present it. Fiction is an intensive life for him, a real presence, a concreteness not to be analysed. "He restores the state of contemplation from which opinions originally came. He starts the world from the beginning." His novel does not communicate, it is not even about something, in its novel-like nature it *is*, like the tarry palm print of a character on the wooden wall of a lavatory in his novel, like time lost in memory.

Real presence is, however, unstable, since it depends on language. The writer stays somewhere "on the borderline of silence and the word, in no-man's-land, and invades language, the fixity of space-time-material, from time to time, taking with him as much of matter from this side as he can. Then he falls silent." This is Ottlik's last and final silence. In his few but intense works, however, he will continue to speak to us all.



Géza Ottlik

Just a Bad Boy

(Fiction)

In all the years I spent at junior cadet school there was only one “bad boy” among the over five hundred students graduating before us, arriving after us, or in the same year as us. I still remember his name. It was Apagyí. We were seniors at the time, aloof, experienced old troopers: every command, every custom, every smell of the building had long become imprinted on our minds and we had learned to be sparing with our every gesture. Apagyí was a recruit, a “rookie” who joined up with the freshmen and whose recalcitrance soon aroused the malevolent interest of the whole school.

He was pointed out to me almost as soon as he arrived.

“Hey, there’s a rookie you simply have to see sitting at Urbán’s table. Take a good look at him.”

We did not meet those below us except in the refectory or on the parade ground, so before lunch, before the duty officer arrived, I strolled down to the end of the dining hall where the freshmen were seated. Apagyí must have earned himself a reputation already, for there were many other seniors besides myself milling around Urbán’s table. It took me a while to find him in the multitude of faces. Everyone was staring at a rosy-cheeked, chubby-faced boy who differed from the other ten-year-olds only in that the cheerful grin never left his face, and that he would not come to attention or obey any order or command when called upon to do so, just shrugged his shoulders silently and tried to turn away.

“Apagyí! Apagyí!” they called to him. “Come here! Stand to attention! Down! Apagyí!”

But Apagyí did not take the slightest notice of them. He continued to grin imperturbably, though he had probably grown tired of all their pestering.

But we simply could not get enough of the fun. It was exceedingly interesting, a vastly amusing thing, this. Laughter tickled our throats. We stared at each other with glowing faces.

“Have you ever seen the like! Incredible!”

“Leave him be,” said Péter Halász, pressing forward. He stepped beside Apagyí to give him a friendly word of warning.

This is an excerpt from the author’s novel School on the Border. The present translation first appeared in the Hungarian issue of Translation, the Columbia University review (Autumn 1985), under the title “Apagyí”.

"Look here, old chap, let me explain. This is the one thing you've got to learn. Whenever you're spoken to, you stand at attention, like this. See? Easy as winking, isn't it, old sport?"

He spoke with patient benevolence, and to our surprise proved successful insofar as Apagyi finally opened his mouth.

"Tsk," he said disdainfully. "Oh ah."

It was no more than a drawn-out exclamation, contemptuous, derisive, but at least his stubborn silence was broken.

"If an officer or a senior orders you to do something," continued Péter Halász, "you have to do it, you know, old chap."

"Course! You don't say!" said Apagyi, bursting into laughter. "Who are you kidding?"

Everyone around him was staring at him silently, and in that silence his remark soared strangely, almost improbably with its mutilated syllables, for, as it turned out, Apagyi spoke with an outrageously broad accent. "Corse! Yer dunt say!" That is what it sounded like, more or less.

Péter Halász did not laugh, but strove to continue the child's education as tenderly as possible, taking hold of an ear for greater emphasis; this, however, perhaps out of spite, he accomplished with such forcefulness that Apagyi cried out and vehemently tried to tear his ear free from the senior's grasp. Halász did not let go, just struck him in the face instead. Apagyi began to bawl even louder, and suddenly, without any of us noticing where it had come from, there was an open jackknife in his hand. At that moment the duty officer walked in and the order was given to stand to attention.

I managed to slip back to my table and saw from a distance the duty officer walking up to Apagyi after grace. The others had all gone back to their tables. The officer opened his mouth but suddenly stopped short to stare at the boy. For Apagyi was standing in front of him with his legs straddled, turning his head calmly this way and that as though he were looking for someone. The officer cast a distressed glance behind him; in an instant the warrant officer joined him, reported something to him in a subdued voice, and, in answer to his question, spoke again. Then they both stared silently at Apagyi for a minute.

"Go back to your seat," the duty officer said at last, and turned his back on the boy. The officers began to stroll towards the far end of the dining hall. Apagyi remained standing perplexedly in the center of the hall, left to his own resources, for we had all sat down; then he slowly turned and sat down in his place.

Counting from the day he joined up, he spent a week at school altogether. I saw him trudging here and there with his unit, with an awkward, sluggish gait, not even trying to keep in step; I saw him say his prayers with the others in the dining hall, without ever standing to attention; and one morning at punishment drill I saw him straighten up from a crouch, drop out of line and stand aside at his own resolve, probably grown tired of the shooting pain in his legs. A week is a long time. And he had only his jackknife to thank for lasting that long.

It did not need an Apagyi to provoke the intolerable persecution of one's fellow students. The least sign of helplessness, lumpishness or unconformity

was enough to arouse the ruthless fury of the others. There were a couple of students among the freshmen who were repeating their year, and at their instigation Apagyi's eighty other classmates hounded him and beat him up whenever they could. They goaded him, tormented him and picked quarrels with him, and needed no pretext to trip him up, knock his toothglass out of his hand, or pour a couple of spoonfuls of soup down his neck whenever the fancy took them; as soon as the warrant officer left the dorm, they would set upon him and stuff him in a locker, or put him on top of the stove. Apagyi soon learned that he could count on nobody but himself; that the officers and supervisors were not in the least interested in altercations between the students; the military spirit did not tolerate complaints or backbiting, tale-tellers were severely punished, and their accusations went ignored. In any case, Apagyi had opposed his adult superiors from the beginning. So out came his jackknife in fightful self-defense. By that time he was so tense he could not suffer being touched.

The open jackknife cooled the boys' fiery tempers. For two or three days Apagyi ceased to be an attraction; they let him alone. They did not lay hands on him, just jeered mockingly whenever they saw one of the warrant officers attempt to break his recalcitrant spirit, penetrate his obvious lethargy. During this period of calm the cheerful grin returned to Apagyi's chubby, rosy face. He was smiling still when, one afternoon during recruit drill, held on the field we called the parade-ground, he was led before the colonel who was the commandant of the school. The colonel spoke a few encouraging words to him, then asked

"Did you not obey your parents either, back home?"

Apagyi shrugged his shoulders.

"Me mam's ded," he said.

"And your father? Did you obey him?"

"Oh aye," the boy grinned.

"There you are then. You'll come to obey us too in time, you'll see."

"Notcha! Never!" cried Apagyi happily.

He consistently forgot to say "sir" to the officers; even now he addressed the colonel simply as "you" instead of "Colonel, Sir." It was killing to hear him talk this way, especially for us seniors. But, as far as the colonel was concerned, he was proved right in the end.

We never knew what happened exactly, though it was not hard to make a guess. Apagyi's jackknife was not enough to save him. On his seventh night at school, shortly before taps, Warrant Officer Bognár's fellow supervisor called him out of our dorm, very overwrought. Bognár left the dorm and a good many of us stole out into the corridor behind him. A confusion of noises could be heard coming from the freshman dorm, followed by a sudden, numb silence; then the shouting and tramping of feet recommenced and chaos reigned once more. We hid in the door bays and on the two flights of stairs leading up. A few minutes passed, then the door opened, and we had to fall back even further. All I saw were the two warrant officers coming out backwards, followed by three boys lugging something heavy in their arms. The light was dim in the corridor, the stairs were in darkness; a solitary light bulb glowed opposite the office of the second

company. We lay low behind the broad stone balustrade in our shirts and briefs, holding our breath. As they reached the circle of light I recognized the object they were carrying. It was Apagyi. He was wrapped in a greatcoat; his bare feet passed beneath the light first, then his sagging behind; two boys were holding him under the arms; his head was lolling on his chest, his eyes were closed, and on his forehead and face the trickle of thick blood glistened black. Péter Halász, who was kneeling beside me, later vowed that there was a large, bare patch, the size of a palm almost, on his head, where they had torn out his hair with the skin, but I did not see it.

"Do you think he's dead?"

"Dead cert."

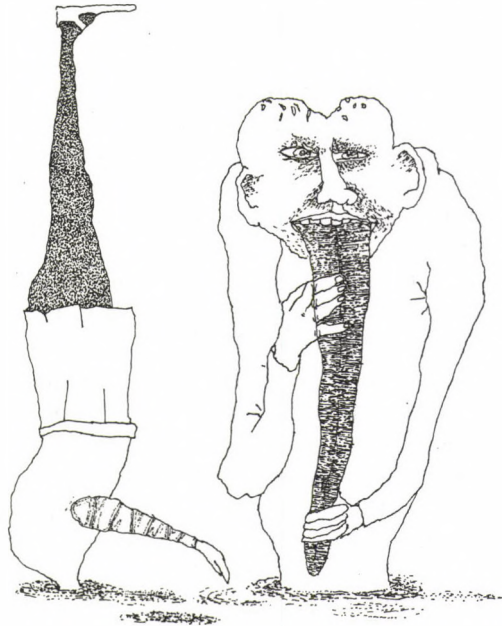
"Of course he is. I saw him, I tell you!"

"Rats."

"He's a goner."

It was a mild, early-autumn night. The distant whistle of a train could be clearly heard traversing the park as we probed the darkness below from the window of the toilet, to no avail. But we had proved inordinate in our judgment. The freshmen had not beaten Apagyi to death; they had turned upon him, and in the heat of the fight, wounded him, perhaps accidentally, with his own jackknife. Three days later he was seen leaving with a bandage around his head. He was walking down the main driveway hand in hand with a mustached old man and wearing a black broadcloth suit, out of uniform, so they said.

Translated by Eszter Molnár



Györgyi Kocsis

How to Uncook Fish Soup

Strategies for Privatization

“**T**he whole country is for sale”, said the managing director of the State Property Agency (S. P. A.) at a press conference in April, summing up his views on the privatization policy of the government. His was a direct message to Hungarian and foreign businessmen and economists who claim that the pace of privatization is too slow and to those who are doubtful that the government’s declared policy of reducing the proportion of state ownership below 50 per cent by 1994 can be implemented at all.

It is hard to say today who is right: those who call for an acceleration of the process or those who demand that a cautious approach should be taken because, by its very nature, it is almost impossible to keep a precise track of privatization in Hungary. A drive aimed at the “transformation” of state property had been started even before basic political changes. The Company Act of 1989 opened up new opportunities for state enterprises to invest considerable proportions of their assets in newly established economic associations, and in some cases this proportion practically covered the total assets of the enterprise, as in the “transformation” of Medicor, a medical instruments producer.

In most of the instances all the parties involved were state enterprises, consequently the new limited liability company, be it private or public, continued to operate as a state-owned business venture while at the same time, at least from the legal aspect, it belonged to the category of an economic association of the private sector. The private character of the transformation was less ambiguous when a new economic association was established in cooperation with a foreign investor, a form of venture which offered a number of advantages to the domestic enterprise, such as additional capital, a transfer of modern technology and business expertise, plus the tax-concessions that joint ventures are entitled to. At best there are only rough guesses about the quantity of assets channelled into the private sector in the course of what is called “spontaneous” privatization, which occurred until most forms of privatization were brought under state control in February 1990, through the setting up of the State Property Agency and the coming into force of legislation on the protection of state property. The strict regulations of the law on privatization, which opposition parties claim are more evidence of the government’s recentralization policy, clearly stipulate that state

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enterprises can sell, or contribute in kind, to a new economic association only up to 10 per cent of their assets without having to request permission from the S.P.A. The restrictive character of the law is usually justified by a political argument strongly critical of the state managers' dominant role in "spontaneous" privatization. This claimed that the managers of state enterprises were "giving away the store" to foreign investors or taking over the enterprises cheaply in management buy-outs. With the fast lane of Hungarian privatization brought under control, the new bureaucratic speed limit also implied a spanner in the works of ownership reform. Admittedly the new regulations have at least facilitated a better and more reliable monitoring of events. We know, for instance, that in 1990, on the initiative of management, almost 200 state enterprises were privatized with the authorization of the S. P. A.; as a result, 15 per cent of total state assets changed hands. By and large, this figure must be regarded as the "performance record" of privatization in Hungary. At the same time, the S. P. A. is apparently attaching great importance to what it calls "active" privatization programmes. Based on the British experience, such privatization is initiated by the central authorities and has so far produced much preparatory work but, alas, only few specific results: Tungsram—General Electric, Ganz Mávag—Hunslet, Lehel—Electrolux, Egri Dohánygyár—Philip Morris, and also the floating of IBUSZ shares on the stock exchange in general.

The package of the First Privatization Programme, announced by the S. P. A. last autumn, included twenty industrial enterprises, chiefly with attractive economic parameters, but so far only the assessment of these enterprises has been carried out, mainly by Western accountancy firms. Specific privatization steps will be taken concerning these enterprises in the course of this year, at least according to repeated promises made by the S. P. A., while preparatory work is being done on the second and third privatization package. It has already been announced that the Second Privatization Programme will cover "empty" enterprise headquarters—those that invested practically their total fixed assets in newly established economic associations in the months of "spontaneous" privatization, giving the old firm control over corporate bonds and securities only. The third package is expected to deal chiefly with construction firms—reflecting an industry oriented policy.

The State Property Agency is apparently finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the enormous power it is entrusted with and to handle the numerous tasks ahead of it. It is, first of all, the duty of the S. P. A. to prevent any sale of state property for less than its real value. It must also find the most reliable and competent accountancy firms, investment banks and agencies, it must decide on the proportion of foreign capital invested and, on top of that, it must also come to an agreement concerning policy with all the parties involved—the responsible ministry that founded the enterprise, the banks, the local administration, and also the work force. It is also the S. P. A.'s responsibility to handle the remaining corporate shares left unsold in the course of the transformation, shares which cannot find buyers today, or ever. The S. P. A. will also have to act on behalf of the state as a part owner in mixed, state-private, business ventures.

The powers and responsibilities entrusted to the S. P. A. are dangerously broad, especially because its activity lacks the support of an act of parliament based on a clear public consensus. It also lacks an unambiguous legal guideline on long-term government policy. What proportion of state ownership is desirable in certain sectors of the economy, what partial or total state control is deemed necessary by keeping a majority business stake, how the national interest can best be protected by maintaining majority shares exclusively owned by either the state or by Hungarian citizens? It is not yet clear which fields of the economy will carry the "free for all" tag, which will be equally accessible to domestic and foreign investors, what property local administrations can claim, and what assets the under-funded social insurance system will have to be provided with in order to function as an independent institution free of state ties and subsidies. We don't yet know how the Concession Act will fit into Hungarian ownership relations and what principles will govern employees' access to corporate shares. Last but not least, one of the crucial question marks is how to find a proper division of work and roles among state institutions to steer and implement the privatization programme as well as to manage state property.

The Privatization Bill, together with the government's programme on privatization, are being put together now by the government and the parliamentary draughtsmen to remedy the damage done by past mistakes, and also to find specific answers to the questions posed above. The final versions of the Bill and the programme are expected to be ready this autumn, provided parliament can work its way through a long sequence of bills that have a direct impact on the very essence of privatization; these include the Compensation Act of April 1991, which is probably one of the most important and most controversial legislative acts. The passing of the Compensation Act means that all efforts aimed at wide-scale reprivatization have been rejected—with the exception of farming land—and as a divisive issue finally resolved, it will no longer hinder privatization. Although the politically sensitive bill on the return of property to the churches has no direct impact on productive assets, its influence on the real estate market may affect potential foreign investors motivated by speculative profits. To make matters worse, some of the property for which the churches are filing claims are also on the request list of the local authorities, whose access to local property is one of the widely debated subjects on the agenda of the national assembly. Speaking about the difficulties facing the Hungarian social security system, analysts agree that neither the organizational structure nor its staff are ready to manage the enormous wealth it is expected to keep under its control. No wonder successive parliaments have for years postponed a final resolution on the reform of the social security system. It is still unclear under what conditions this increasingly important welfare institution will join the race for a bigger share of the privatization cake. A consensus of some sort seems to have been reached on the subject of employees' access to corporate shares: unlike in Poland or in Czecho-Slovakia, economists in Hungary are unanimously opposed to providing employees with corporate shares free of charge and to extending the scope of preferential share-holding to them.

How Others Are Coping

It is one thing to write a dissertation on amputation and quite another to be lying on the operating table. The Polish, Czecho-Slovak and Hungarian participants at the conference on privatization held in April 1991 in Prague, organized by the University of Maryland, after listening to overseas academic economists on the advantages of a market economy and the drawbacks of a socialist economy, once again became poorer by an illusion.

The illusion is that all the East European countries have to do is to make skilful use of the experience of those with some practice in the field. Few East Europeans need be convinced of the merits of an economy based on private property and competition. To their disappointment, however, United States economists find it no easier to get out of the maze the transition from socialism has created than economists in Warsaw or Budapest do.

The East European countries will themselves have to sweat blood to work out effective methods for their own changes. It is even doubtful whether they can learn anything much from one another. This is borne out by the diversity of views—even perhaps ideological views—that are held on privatization. The signs are that both in Poland and Czecho-Slovakia the main way of privatization of state-owned firms will be the redistribution of their assets at a nominal exchange-value. In Poland a relevant law has taken effect on April 1st, in Czecho-Slovakia legislation is still being drafted. In Hungary, on the other hand, they will be sold for their more or less realistic market value.

In the other two countries the political considerations of privatization

dominated. Characteristically, Dusan Triska, the Czecho-Slovak Deputy Minister of Finance, the man primarily responsible for privatization, expressed doubts about its economic merits and considered the real meaning of private property to be outside the economic sphere: it was the cornerstone of a democratic society.

A political motive for the free redistribution of assets was well argued by Jan Winiecki, a Polish professor of economics, who said it was the most effective way to prevent the men of the one party state from swapping power for wealth. In Poland and Czecho-Slovakia, both countries afflicted with a caste of economic leaders never even challenged by competition, there is more fear of the old apparatchiks salvaging their power through privatization than in Hungary, which has come relatively the longest way along the road to a market economy. Therefore the broadest channel of denationalization in Hungary, the officially more or less controlled but yet “spontaneous” process of privatization, strikes them as unacceptable.

Since it is obvious that, in all three East European countries, privatization of the British type, that is, controlled from above by government agencies and through the sale of individual firms, would take many decades, and in Poland and Czecho-Slovakia the sale of their own assets or shares by the enterprises is forbidden for the reasons mentioned above, there seems to be no way to achieve denationalization quickly in those two countries other than through the free distribution of wealth. Nothing can be done—it appeared from Mr Triska’s words—except to keep 30 per

cent of the country's 4,500 economic units in state ownership, to sell the best 10 per cent through individual transactions, and to wind up the worst 10 per cent. The remainder—well over 2,000 firms—will be transformed into joint stock companies and divided among the adult population for “investment cheque-books,” which will be obtainable for the equivalent of half a month's average income.

It is estimated that about 3-6 million people will want to obtain shares in this way, but that exactly who, and how many shares, will be involved, will only be decided on the basis of the applications lodged with the authorities.

The Czecho-Slovak and Polish assumption—questioned by the overwhelming majority of Hungarian economists—is that the beneficiaries would treat the freely obtained wealth like responsible owners, since the main aim of denationalization is precisely the finding of “good stewards”. One will have to wait and see which of these states is working on the right lines; whether it is the one which waives its claim to its property without any compensation, irrespective of the costs, in order to appease popular discontent, or the one which wants to use the scheme to raise revenue, preferably as much hard currency as possible, with which to reduce its foreign debt. True, the course here is not such a free choice, as Czecho-Slovakia's 10 billion dollar debt is less than half of what Hungary owes. Poland's creditors have written off that part of the country's debt which she hasn't been paying back anyway.

Although the Czecho-Slovak investment coupons are not negotiable, the company shares that can be obtained for them will have a genuine secondary market. Still, just as it is difficult to make micro-economic pre-

dictions regarding the Hungarian indemnification coupons, so it is macro-economically unpredictable in the case of the Czecho-Slovak privatization just how many people will want to get rid of their shares rightaway and for how much, starting an inflationary spiral, and who will want to buy them. In other words, how will the inevitable concentration of capital run its course together with the bankruptcies and disappointments on a massive scale attendant on the process—and how will the former *nomenklatura*, supposed to be ousted, claw back into economic power after this detour. Today even economists can offer no more than rough-and-ready answers in Czecho-Slovakia to the question of where banking, exchange and stock market institutions and expertise, let alone capital, are to come from all of a sudden, to deal with this huge trade in securities and stocks in a country where a stock market was only recently reestablished.

At least as interesting as this will be foreign reactions. In view of the partial cancellation of Poland's debt, it looks as if western politicians favour spectacular action by countries which after long decades of immobility are now resorting to shock therapy and experiments, tackling reforms with the impetuosity of a cavalry charge. At the same time, the more practically minded business world might feel more at ease in a country where development is more predictable, regulation more pragmatic, and less burdened by ideological constructs.

It may safely be predicted that the study of the experiment that is now abroad in Eastern Europe will found many an academic reputation and be discussed at countless conferences—provided the experimental mice can live long enough and stand up to the wear-and-tear.

Gy. K.

It is not surprising that given so many uncertainties of approach and political or economic ambiguities, even government circles are often divided on many aspects of privatization strategy. The secretary of the privatization subcommittee of the Economic Cabinet has recently said that the least controversial issue seems to be the definition of properties under Treasury control: such as state-funded institutions, ministries, direct-grant state hospitals, state university buildings, former Soviet barracks. It is usually agreed that a new organization under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance should be set up to manage this category of properties.

There are widely differing views, however, on who should manage the producing enterprises until they can be partly or fully privatized. The liberal view, usually associated with a former Deputy Minister of Justice, Professor Tamás Sárközi, the architect of the "transition law", claims that only the largest state enterprises should be privatized through the State Property Agency; all other state enterprises should be given the opportunity to find a buyer in the capital markets. The liberal view also rejects the idea of setting up a new organization to manage properties under long-term state control. It argues that the state-owned shares of the commercial banks, for instance, should be held by the Ministry of Finance, and logically the state-owned shares of the energy sector should be handled by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

The alternative view, represented mainly by the advisory teams of the Hungarian Democratic Forum and also by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce—a view called *étatist* by the opposition—holds that state enterprises will have to be transformed into limited companies in the course of a compulsory process and their shares—with a book value of about 600-800 billion forints—should then be owned by 15-20 state holding companies. These state holding companies would be responsible for the "upgrading" programme designed to improve the operations of loss-making firms. The holding companies would be designed to handle, and also to trade, these corporate shares. "These holding companies must be non-political and their business policies must be shaped strictly on a profit basis. We must avoid the mistake made by the Austrian holding companies and avert the confusion of economic rationality and employment issues or regional interests", says the head of the privatization department in the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. Those who criticize the plan claim that the absence of politics in a state institution—however loose its ties may be with the government—is but a case of wishful thinking in a country where civil servants have conventionally enjoyed privileged status. They also argue that the state holding companies to be set up are likely to act as a brake on privatization because they will create additional decision-makers on top of the existing S. P. A.'s control mechanism, thus interfering with the spontaneous privatization processes initiated by the state enterprises themselves. There is also a third compromise plan, halfway between the two above-mentioned ones, a draft proposal backed by the Ministry of Finance and also by the privatization committee of the Economic Cabinet. This plan envisages the setting up of no more than 3 to 4 state holding companies and intends to give a new impetus to

a privatization drive launched by corporate management. The recent proposal, to privatize a group of about 500 small and medium enterprises without S. P. A. approval, seems to be an indirect admission of failure to apply the strict procedural rules under S. P. A. control. The only condition set for this package is a requirement that the enterprises concerned must select their legal advisors and also the accountants assigned to conduct the business assessment from a list of "reliable" firms compiled by the S. P. A. Revenues generated by the privatization process under this plan would also—quite naturally—be channelled to the bank account of the S. P. A. The privatization committee also intends to put some pressure on state enterprises in order to "encourage" them to look for a private investor and potential owner by terminating the mandate of all enterprise councils (a principal institutional pillar of "self-governing" state enterprises) by 1994. To put it bluntly, it means that state enterprises which fail to transform their ownership structure into share-holding companies by the above deadline will be brought under the direct control of state administration. The ongoing debate on structural and organizational issues is further complicated by the controversial question as to which part, and what amount, of state property should be kept under permanent state or national control. Different draft proposals with the names of state enterprises listed under various concepts are being drawn up by a number of teams in the state administration; this work provides us only with vague guidelines as to government intentions on future privatization. It seems almost certain, however, that specific well-established industries, such as the public transport vehicle industry—Ikarus, Csepel Autó, Rába—the aluminium industry, and the pharmaceutical industry, will continue to operate with their majority shares under national control via the large commercial banks. Ownership rights—to a considerable degree—are likely to be exercised by the state in the natural gas and oil industries, in the electric power sector, as well as the Technika export-import company, which specializes in armaments. Yet, the proposal of the Ministry of Industry to maintain 51 per cent state control over enterprises such as the Tisza Cipőgyár, a shoe manufacturer, Magyar Viscosa Gyár, and Simontornyai Bőrgyár, a leather factory, or Hungexpo, an organizer of trade fairs and exhibitions, is widely challenged as unreasonable. It is hoped that foreign investors will make good use of the opportunities opened up by the policy resolution that any enterprise in the construction and food industries, and almost all foreign-trading companies, can be fully owned by foreign buyers.

One of the big question marks is whether foreign capital—with hopes and fears equally attached to its inflow—is prepared to wait and see until Hungary sets things right in its backyard of a twisted and confusing ownership system. The proverbial question posed originally by Adam Michnik—not answered so far—is still open:

"One can turn the contents of an aquarium into fish soup, but can one turn fish soup into an aquarium?"

Zsuzsa Rakovszky

Poems

Translated by Alan Dixon

The Black Queen

A fekete királynő

Beautiful, I was beautiful, the most beautiful.
Children, men, old women were just my crowd of extras,
clay figurines lit by my gleam, the roll, coil, curl

of living flame. My hair sprung the elastic band;
I cut out my bra tips, let the sharp ogle poke
blindly through my sailor blouse, at the thousand

eyes of the world. The boat adrift at Nagymaros
in gloom, I floated under the gloom of the sky
whitely over me the cosmical frozen eye.

Into my sixth month, but didn't look it at all,
slender oriental fetish dolled up in western
garments, gifts, from our sordid phase; my powerful

presence terrifies: sufficient to grip my freezing
face in an ice mask; everything darkens, shame tumbles
from the wonky wardrobe, what was a slithery Eden

grows fuzzy with sin. All that impartiality,
weighing of opinion, might look good in others
but scales and microscopes are not for me:

time's instruments —not mine— to unlock
the joints of my integrity,
inject my lapsing lyrical body with the slack

Zsuzsa Rakovszky has published three volumes of poems and numerous translations from British and American poetry and fiction.

of the epic, tacking on bits of age and environment.
Look at me, look what's become of me in the workroom
of time's ridicule: the ageing girl's mincing deportment,

stiff spray over the once ungovernable locks;
false teeth, lipstick, and the shape of a rounded fish
put into the swimsuit's breast-creel, with a push,

lascivious screeches over the spades and hearts.
A woman like all the rest. Is that what you really want,
those cowardly habits, and all that indolence

concerning the truth? In your dreams you are wiser than that:
you know who I am. Or rather: what. A sickly
red enticement seen at sunset, dissolving quickly,

leaving no trace. The unlikely puddles in dark halls
and narrow streets. The unquestioned clinging to rooms,
customs, a teaspoon, the well-known apartment some-

where over the opposite side of the earth.
The snake-venom of the rusting fence in the blood.
The big dead light in the night over the dusty yard

is me as well, and the pale green dawn sweetness
of existence, the shudder of the cabbage field
with its million delicate wings and drops of dew.

Sosopol

Szozopol

Pale roses in the stench of fish and cardboard beakers strewn
round the drinking fountain. Leitmotif of the sea
shines everywhere through the interstices.

We settle down here, as if we didn't know for how long.
On wine-red tartans, on the ten square metres made
comfortable for the sake of a supposed

changeable guest, as if we didn't know how many times
we've seen, round six o'clock, the dusty tumblers' fancy rims
fizzing—the commercial gold within the gold

of the cosmos, Maradona's photograph
on the glass case by the shell-hulled sailing ship
in the fruit syrup of the declining sun.

A hubbub in the square. Linguistic ignorance
sees meaning in flapping washing semaphored
between houses, and in the threadbare bathing gown

left out on the stair-landing for all to view,
in blaring red and green fruit cordials too,
or in the sweets in shapes of hearts and spades,

on walls and electricity poles where the dead
(candidates for local council? criminals?)
fray, yellowing in the light and wind, their smiles

fading for years. Imperial self-confidence
on dropsical placards and on the raspberry-
flavoured wafer's wrapper might move us to condescending pity

or to preposterous nostalgia.
But what can we do about the multitude shouting
in the tattered light of torches as the holiday

erupts in the park, as it loses a hundred years
with the power cut; light splutters and spills its arches
everywhere, the extinguishing blue-green eyes are submerging

in the dark of the deserted beach... gulls wheel and mew,
floating like speechless ghosts on the night wind,
white cut-outs on a background of deep blue.

New Life

Új élet

For good is it? Well, why not? It's a flat;
with someone else's past it's saturated,
that's true enough, I suppose, but then, so what?

Others are not so different... A few potted
plants saved for the winter... another three or four
months and you won't mind the crash-helmets deported

onto the top of the wardrobe any more,
or the two shelf-ward dipping ducks splitting the pleated blues
of the sky like dead bats on the nailed up fan... The door

frame's wood has swollen by rusty locks, and here it grows
into an edema (flesh round a wedding ring).
And in the fire-place the fire which throws

itself on the dust's grey matter covering
the glass cortex of the lamp is only the fire's thin faint
sister, mere "sensory datum" materializing.

*

It only needs a few more years and you won't
think of moving again. Or you might, but you'd know
you couldn't any more. Neither will D move out;

for another four or five hundred years he'll go
on struggling with the vibrant ghost of Dostoievsky
in front of his computer screen... and I too...

he'll still be going up and down the greasy
third floor wooden staircase with his music,
or he'll be found with the adopted, shivery

Pekinese, his present girlfriend's once, the TV sick
and booming in his room, never to get any better,
grey wind of space still dragging the elastic

skulls of each slanting terrorist or commentator
into a burning El Greco head of a saint.
All right, he might have the doorbell fixed, or, pressed by a neighbour,

the mower more likely. The far-famed lawn... Each plant,
yes, every one, eager and green all winter
long, as if some demented clock had been set

in it: the crab-apple or Japonica,
or some shrub or other is busy showing
a contrapuntal impudence, competitor,

flaunting all its bleeding hearts against the floating
February mist, and subjugator of the pale
catkin's offering. In the park the eyes are making

strewn off-white clusters into geese at first and fail
to recognize that they are sea-gulls:
stiff-stepping triangles, which, when they sail

away transform themselves to winged and awkward spindles.
The sun shines hardly at all, but when it does
it throws an evanescent back-light, kindles

a halo round every tree and grass clump, as if it shows
me the very idea of green. And, as with careful fingers
it fumbles the shaggy tweed coat into a fuzz...

Two or three years and it would be certain I'd never
even notice, and could not be bowled over by
that sense of sheer excess as I discover

eighteen different kinds of mustard, that I
can find the perfect breakfast cereal and ideal
bath-foam, and sooner or later become resigned to my

change to a pale priestess or precious pearl,
fidgety ghost left in the pallid light
of Monday, day after the carnival, until

my death, or to a sailor back from Hades to flaunt
a refined and sickening superiority
all over the place. That dark experience would decorate

and honour me above naivety.
The thinning waterproof would hold together until
I tired of it and seasonal routine variety;

in the rain-soaked dash of years I would not fulfil
myself with a more down-to-earth disguised alternative
as teacher, housewife, champion of gay or animal

rights armed with spray-gun and razor-blade, led to strive
against the fur coats of the middleclass but could agree
even to that if it proved impossible to just live.

(But why? Why is it impossible just to be,
in the way that fire, a sea-gull, a catkin, is
—just simply is. No, no, it cannot be like that.) I see

your sloughed-off life, lit only by a glim,
loom as if through a mist to an Albanian
grocery's cashier straying in Friesland in

her fishwife days, or through that time when in Japan
she had a little white dog... But there must be
something... What do you have in mind?... What can

there be beyond the tricks of space and the activity
of time?... It ricochets as if from shell-
proof glass... Some closed, pinpointed entity,

self-coining penny, a compass never to fail
on a dark path, all the way and beyond... A pin in silt...
Is there? I cannot tell. Is there? Truly I cannot tell.

Transparent Objects

The Greenwich Fleamarket

Áttetsző tárgyak

A greenwichi ócskapiac

No sewing machines. The free association
of chance assembles ski boots and umbrellas
to meet a golf club underneath an open
sky of deliquescent cloud-blocks with its shivers
(Bosch monstrosities—one-eared, a bottom lip on

a torso) touching the blackened, weathered silver of jugs
for relishes. Five ranks of brass door-handles
are bearing down and flash—when each gust drags
clouds apart—like an antique army; a trayful
of rings, stones glinting fish roes—a hatchery for dragons.

Wherever were they worn—ballrooms, receptions?—
the buttoned gloves, the brooch as light as air?
How many years did the author need to use up on
his monograph entitled “The Swordfish”—five? or more?
 (“To my forebearing spouse”, its dedication.)

Bloody Mary’s soup tureen and Anne Boleyn’s
embroidery frame were in the limelight at
one time or another; meeting these by mischance
prompts no embarrassment. This jug-formed cat
and the one-eyed bear are such pathetic things;

the icy blue, sky-blue designer's bowl for the fruit
without concavities which God permitted
at its creation—these things that lie in wait
on the operating table of daylight, divested
of all excuse, each feeling's laminate,

are still exuding hope from those fresh starts when everything
might have gone well, when they were handed round
under the fir tree, torn from the enveloping
Christmasy papers: wedding presents, things from childhood,
from a youth, a home perhaps. Encountering

the livers and kidneys of other pasts, and wrenched
from their proper histories they all lie here in a heap.
Cold eyes beside the pastries, out of skins split, stretched
and streaded from the bearing of children, are sizing up,
and without any tender myopia, select.

Decline and Fall

They will disappear, never to be seen again —
the cinemas and cigarette brands named
from constitutional law and military
history, the advertising matchbox
in aid of national sanitation or waterworks
or the advantages of parsimony.
In turn each state catering unit will vanish,
its chipped cups and tubular chairs with plastic
seats for gnomes, its drinks, stale and carbonic
and labelled with a fading sun or an orange,
is if the equatorial sun had parched them,
along with sticky tables of spurious marble.
Lingering like snow in cold spots of stable
micro-climate, to be swallowed by the earth, not time,
for rain to flake and wash away, the posters
for anniversaries, cause of discomposures
and no rejoicing, and for those trumped-up, futile
feasts, Children's, Women's and National Sports Day.
A lower skin will show when shreds have dropped away
from blossom, dove, numeral—the innocent profile
of a girl (with counterpointed compensating
breasts like those of a Playboy bunny, jutting

from the rags of an antique gymslip);
they will all be dispersed together with
every product of totalitarian classicism;
they will disappear from all those filthy
railway station waiting rooms and cultural centres,
the grotesque frescoes scaling off, the broken teeth
of mosaic showing a mankind singing happily
in choirs, reaping, assembling ball bearings,
achieving fulfilment through work and the sharing
of spare-time cultural activity.

The experiment with several million
white mice has been botched; torn like a toy balloon
with a bang into a thousand splinters
what we thought was reinforced concrete,
or it melts in slow flames, shrivels, becomes crooked—
in nothing but this dying it is akin to
let's say the fall of Rome or Babylon.
My mass-produced mirror, cold cream jar, mis-shapen
beaker will never enter a museum
for the instruction of Sunday families;
neither shall I be embalmed and squeezed
into a fiddle-case and a vacuum
nor be in flounced and dyed dark raffia wrapped,
eyes like bullets, nor shall I watch and prompt,
from my spitting image on the wall, the moral tone
of another new generation; what's more, the walls,
those prefab walls will be gone, leaving no trace at all—
those broodcoops of the moon named after twin towns,
those cubic homesheds which within two years
get twice as shabby as the fattened baroque of city squares.
A few gigantic slices of cake, growing black and green
—some public buildings from the turn of the century—
will have their short chance to survive, shabbily;
their posters based on an ornate use of language, their man-
high streamers have dropped off ultimately;
threadbare red carpet will be shredded down, the ornamental
palm will fold and dry its yellow leaves in the hall
where the local council lady in a business suit
registers files and marriages, orders people about;
the rooms where we turn up, in birth, death, in divorce,
survive only while we who have occupied
live on; they hold together mummified
in memory's honey, all judgements of value renounced.

Alaine Polcz

A Woman's War

We waited more and more impatiently for the Russians. The English or the Russians; if they didn't come everyone would be killed except Mami and me: either by the partisans or the Germans or the Hungarian gendarmes or the Hungarian soldiers. Soldiers? The officers perhaps—on *orders*. Who on the German side believed in victory at this stage? Yet there was still a curfew and there were shootings. Because, according to the hanging regulation ruling, anyone who did not obey orders was to be shot. No one knew what the other person was afraid of. In spite of this though, we somehow trusted each other, even strangers; more was ordered than carried out.

With the departure of Marci and the others and the arrival of Mami, my mother-in-law, Nyunyuka my cat went completely mad. Maybe the fact that Mami and I were alone in the room (the men had gone out hunting again), put her into such high spirits—she started jumping about and literally dancing. She took huge leaps over the furniture and threw herself up in the air. Mami and I looked at each other and laughed. I was about to sort out this and that for the festive Christmas meal and see how our “cooks” were getting on and what they were doing, when we heard the sound of a car. We were very surprised—as far as we knew no car had ever been able to get up here. It was quite hard even for a horse and cart. We ran outside. Two German army vehicles were in front of the house. One of them was a bit like a truck, yet different. Three officers jumped out; I could see the heads of several soldiers too. They kept the engines running. They walked swiftly over to us and said that we should get into the cars right away and be off, within one or two hours the Russians would be here. The hunt for partisans had started from this house (indeed the gendarmes had come to warm themselves up here) and everyone would be killed in revenge, and the house burnt down.

Mami turned so pale that she could hardly translate what the Germans said, and soon started weeping softly. “The men aren't at home,” I said. “We can't leave till they return.” “They won't return,” they declared firmly. “I'm not going,” I said. “Nor am I then,” added Mami.

Alaine Polcz is a clinical psychologist working with terminally ill children. This extract is taken from her memoir, Asszony a fronton (Woman at the Front), Szépirodalmi, 1991. See also Gergely Hajdú's review on p. 125.

"I'll ask the others what they want to do," I said and rushed inside. Of course they didn't want to go either. It would have been somewhat difficult for them, being Jewish, to accept this *strange* German offer of help.

A quick attempt to convince us followed, but I shook my head. "Ich kann nicht deutsch sprechen, und ich gehe nicht."

Then they enquired about firearms and asked us to hand them over. "With pleasure," I answered, and I gladly handed over every weapon in the house. From the expensive Belgian shotgun to the Russian sub-machine gun, as well as all the cartridges and ramrods and the hand grenades too, of course. I was quite amazed when two soldiers took the cartridges and hand grenades outside and threw them into a firewood basket: it was half full.

They quickly loaded up. Then one of the officers held out his hand. As I took it he gave me a quick tug and shoved me up onto the truck afterwards. I started to struggle wildly. I broke free and jumped out of the moving vehicle. Of course, I fell, but I jumped to my feet and shook my fist at them.

I'm amused by the thought of this scene even today. What threat could I have carried out to a truck carrying soldiers and laden with firearms?

At last the men arrived. Much joy and happiness. "Bloody Germans, etc. etc..." I'd handed over the firearms? They almost fell on me they were so angry. What will we do without guns? What'll happen to us? (I was glad we were rid of the guns, but I didn't say anything.) As a matter of fact there was a small pistol left in one of the Frenchman's pockets. We didn't know that then. He kept quiet about it.

In spite of everything I decorated a Christmas tree. We had just lit the candles when some escaping Hungarian soldiers knocked on the door. We took them all in. It was one of my husband János's principles. (Mine too.) Can one turn someone away in the cold of winter without anything? We quickly got them dressed in civilian clothes, and threw their army uniforms under the manure.

I gave everyone a Christmas present, chocolate, cigarettes, pencils, the festive supper and wine. Poor, grateful people with tears in their eyes.

I couldn't get to sleep that night. I awoke the next day with a heavy heart. It was Christmas Day. In the past, it had always been a joyful family occasion. All light, sparkle and laughter. (We were a big family.) I had a job keeping myself in check. We had breakfast. Without a single word.

That morning left a very deep impression on me. I was wearing a long red *matelassé* house-gown for the occasion. I spread honey on my bread, and looked out at the falling snow. It was snowing heavily, in large flakes. Then I saw two snowy figures on horseback in the yard, wearing camouflage cloaks with hoods. Like a vision!

They were entirely different from Hungarian or German soldiers. Maybe because of their hoods covered in snow and the fur caps with the red star on the front visible beneath the hoods, but their faces were different too. "The Russians!" I shouted, jumping up, and I pointed outside. Förstner, the Vatican

diplomat, actually a Jew in hiding, rushed in from the adjoining room along with the two Frenchmen.

The next moment they had kicked the door in with their boots, and there was a snow-covered soldier standing in the doorway, his sub-machine gun at the ready. He pointed the barrel at each of us in twin, without saying a word. I didn't look at the barrel of the gun, but at the person he happened to be aiming at. Everyone's face changed, some people's eyes widened, other's narrowed... but not only that. There was something else too. (After this I had plenty of opportunity to observe the play of fear on people's faces!)

After the stunned silence they asked something in Russian. We didn't understand.

Förstner, terrified, began to explain in faultless German that we were a diplomatic body, etc. He turned very pale. I got scared—why on earth is this fool explaining in German. I interrupted him. “Vengersky,” I said, indicating us. “Evrey,” pointing at Förstner. “Ruski soldát dobre. Nemetcki ne dobre.” At that they calmed down a bit.

They got us into a corner and asked us whether we had any weapons. “None.” More of them rushed in and started to make a search. Within moments they had turned the house upside-down, they tore everything apart, flung things aside and looked through everything. Then they searched us one by one. In the Frenchman's pocket they found the pistol. “What did you want this for? You'll die for that!” Now I saw fear on the Frenchman's face. That same fear.

These troops had fought their way across Rumania, they knew a smattering of Rumanian. We soon discovered this, and I started to interpret. (I also told them who we were, but they weren't interested.)

They hadn't taken the Frenchman out before one of the Hungarian soldiers we had taken in the previous evening was brought in. Some sort of pass had been found in his pocket. I don't know what it could have been, I didn't get the chance to look at it. I didn't have to translate because, all at once, the tall, slim boy with his very Hungarian face started to talk in fluent Russian. But he was very tense. You could tell he was being accused. He made a desperate attempt to defend himself, but seemingly in vain. They led him away. From behind the house there came three short, staccato shots. János nodded when I looked at him enquiringly, that now they had killed him. Then they took the Frenchman away too. (The next day he turned up looking pale and crushed.)

All this happened very swiftly. After that they simply took no more notice of us. They regarded us as indifferent objects. While we kept getting under their feet—there were thirty to forty to a room after all. You could hardly move. Everyone wanted to get warm. The stable was full up in no time, and the horses stood around in a circle beneath the trees, covered with coats, cloaks and blankets. And our eiderdowns too of course. They grabbed anything they wanted, without as much as noticing that it wasn't theirs. If we were sitting or standing somewhere, they left us in peace if they didn't happen to need the place right then. If they did, they pushed us aside. With absolute disdain and indifference. At night we slept huddled in a corner, three to a mattress. Strangely

enough they respected that. Occasionally they sat down on the edge of a mattress, but they rarely lay on it.

One evening, quite early on, Nina came in and said: "Just imagine, they brought in one of our gutted roebucks and carved up the whole thing. Two soldiers minced the meat (we had two mincers), while a third rubbed the boards with a bit of snow, and started to knead the minced meat there on the floor. He rolled up his shirtsleeves—his hands were black to the wrists and his arms white from there on up." (Which reminds me, I saw many things but I never saw a Russian soldier wash himself. With the exception of a woman, who I'll come to later. They did wash their feet, however. Several of them washed their feet before binding new foot-rags, made by ripping up my bed-linen, around their feet.)

They prepared the meat in the following way. They added salt and garlic and seasoned it with bayleaves too in some way. Then they shaped it into big oval dumplings and fried them in lard. Naturally our precious frozen meat didn't go far among so many. But they ate other things too. Everything they could lay their hands on. They didn't seem to have either a field-kitchen or even field-rations. In contrast to Hungarian or German soldiers, they didn't have anything with them except weapons. (Apart from what they had looted.) They carried a knife in the top of their boots, and they didn't have knapsacks or haversacks at all. They didn't need blankets; they could lie down even in the snow in their padded, quilted clothes and their fur-lined coats.

That evening as they were sitting at their table, the officers (it surprised me that even here the Russian officers sat apart) called me over and offered me some food. Or rather, they said I should eat with them, and they put three of those ominous meat dumplings onto my plate. They offered some to Mami too, but she felt ill and went out to be sick. After a bit of hesitation I ate one of them. The rest I offered to János, but he wouldn't accept it. Quite honestly it wasn't bad. Straight after supper I sought out Nina to tell her that I had eaten the mince. We laughed so much that the soldiers began to look at us suspiciously, wondering what was wrong with us. János got angry. As a matter of fact it never occurred to me that, among all these men, anyone should think of me as a woman. I moved completely unsuspecting and, as far as the circumstances would allow, freely among them. Nina, Marianne and Klári felt the same.

Mami and Nyunyuka cocooned themselves: they fell into a depression. Nyunyuka didn't bother any more about her worst enemies, the dogs.

It's quite difficult in fact to describe the situation. There was never any peace and quiet. It was like a crowded tram inside the house. Some of us slept by night, some by day, sitting on the ground, leaning against each other, but we never really slept.

The soldiers came and went, day and night. The troops relieved each other. The days merged into some sort of strange, hazy oppressive dream.

The well ran dry. They cooked with melted snow. They watered the horses before they themselves drank. Of course we suffered all this along with them. We hadn't been able to wash for ages. There was neither place, water, nor opportu-

nity. We ate what they did. We were always half awake even when we were asleep. Quarrels broke out; occasionally there was shouting too.

Different soldiers kept arriving all the time. Some of them were rougher than others. Every day we longed for them to go away so that we'd be rid of them. One day the house was unexpectedly empty again. I cleaned up and we sorted ourselves out. It was then that the Rumanian soldiers came. They embraced me in tears and kissed my hand when I spoke to them in Rumanian. They had become quite forlorn alongside all those savages, fighting against Germans and Hungarians.

They begged us for some food. Even today I feel sorry that I only gave them crusts of bread. But they thanked me tearfully. We were running out of everything and I didn't dare bring our hidden stuff out.

Somewhere in the forest, near the rocks, we had buried—when we first arrived—a pot of lard. That was our iron ration. There were several occasions when I wanted to go back and find it when we were starving later on in the war, and again in peacetime.

We were desperate for peace. The Russians weren't; they wanted Berlin. They were the victors and they were enjoying the fighting.

They taught us Russian, in an extremely simple way. They said one morning, when I looked out of the window, *zima*. I listened, not understanding, whereupon one of the soldiers led me outside, pressed a good-sized ball of snow against my neck, and said: "Zima! Rozume?" I understood, and ever since then I know that it means cold. Or snow? It makes no difference—*zima* for me is the snow pressed against my neck which is cold.

One time they brought some sort of drink; they poured it out into big tumblers and said that we should drink to Stalin's health. Anyone who didn't empty their glass was an enemy. How I understood that I don't know. I think I learnt Russian very quickly. And they knew a few words of Rumanian too.

We stood around in a circle. I remember I raised the glass to my lips and sensed that there was *schnapps* in it.

As far as I was concerned a glass of strong schnapps meant drunkenness. So János led me to a corner and sat me down, and huddled up there, I soon fell asleep. By the time I woke up, I had more or less sobered up. They didn't harm me. I never even dreamt they could harm me.

Earlier on in Budapest, I had seen those posters showing a Russian soldier tearing the cross and chain from a woman, and I'd read pamphlets saying that the Russians did this and that. I didn't believe any of it; German propaganda, I thought. I considered it quite impossible for them to throw a woman down in such a way as to break her spine and things like that. Later I got to know how spines came to be broken. It is extremely simple, and not done on purpose.

One day one of the soldiers took the Yugoslav priest's watch. It was a big-faced old fob-watch with Roman numbers which he was very attached to. He came and complained to me. I think he spoke German, I understood.

I was terribly angry, and, having asked him to point out the soldier who had taken the watch, I went in and stood in front of him, scolding him at the top of

my voice and demanding the watch back. The other soldiers stood there staring at the scene and listening; they didn't say a word.

Actually it was easy to communicate with the Russians. Shouting could be done in Hungarian too. For a long time now, I've known that the older and more primitive and closer to nature a people is, the better they understand what people are saying, provided the gestures are adequate. What we call metacommunication, by means of tone of voice, mimicry and stress, they understand perfectly. They gave the priest back his watch.

Good God how naive I was then, I didn't know I should be afraid of them!

I explained what a diplomatic body was: we are *extra territorial* and *immune*. They took that literally, and surrounded me, laughing and hitting me (not very hard). "You see, you're not immune." Another time they asked me to step "extra territory". They waited curiously for me to do it.

This was no joke. They thought that immunity was some kind of state of grace; for instance, the arm that wanted to hit me would be stopped in mid-air. Or they didn't believe it. The word meant that to them, but with a few exceptions they were all atheists, and, to my amazement, anti-Semitic. When they mocked Förstner for being Jewish, I protested strongly, and they stopped immediately.

There was a woman in the troop too. Her name was Nadia. One evening she took me by the wrist and led me into the kitchen. We secured the door somehow—I think we tied it up with string. She shouted out something in Russian: "Leave us in peace", I imagine, then she heated some water and first washed her hair, then herself and finally her bra and pants, putting them straight back on again wet. Earlier, as she was getting undressed, she had asked me to cut through the string which held her bra together at the back because that was the only way she could get out of it. Then she asked me to wash her back, and later, once she had put her wet bra back on, she asked me to tie it up again with string. "Pull it good and tight," she urged. I was horrified. Then I realized that she would go on fighting like this for weeks, and she could only move and ride among all these men if she was bound up tightly. After all, she was a cavalry trooper, in man's uniform.

I couldn't understand why they had posted one lone woman to serve with the men. I never saw them banter with her or fondle her. There was a child with them too, or at least a boy who could be called a child; he was a soldier too and fought with them. They played and romped around with him a lot. He was a very sweet boy, sometimes he played with me too, just as a young boy would do.

Then another group came who ate raw meat. It was frozen meat; simply raw, freshly slaughtered pork which had frozen in the cold in the sack carried by the horses. I don't know who they were, they didn't speak Russian. They offered some to us. We ate it with salt, it wasn't bad.

Fixed to the wall in our room there was an old-fashioned telephone made of wood which connected the forester's lodges to each other and to the forestry centre—it hadn't worked for ages. I heard one of the soldiers say to the other: "Nye robota." When a new group came and they picked up the receiver, I said:

“Nye robota.” At that they rushed over to me and wanted to hit me, tugging me this way and that. They thought I was a spy. If I speak Russian, then why don’t I speak it—and if I don’t speak it, then how come I speak it? That’s how we lived.

One fine morning they suddenly got us all to pack up. They provided us with a cart onto which we could put some of our things, and Mami would have been allowed to ride on it, but she didn’t want to. She wanted to come with us. We were driven down the hill on foot bearing a little scrap of paper. Something was written in cyrillic script on the small piece of paper torn out of a squared exercise book, but we couldn’t read it. A Russian soldier escorted us, naturally on horseback, while we went on foot. When we reached Pusztakőhányás we were handed over to a bigger unit; a couple of troopers rode in front, then several men and women, and more troopers brought up the rear. We carried on like this till we got to some place I didn’t know, where another group joined us.

Then the men were separated from the women. János and I looked at each other: we were sure they were taking us prisoners of war. We thought of Siberia, all the more because it was a cold winter, the snow was hard, the sun shone dazzlingly, and there was a heavy frost.

We trudged along in this group down a road unfamiliar to me.

I was cut off from János. No one spoke much. We were quite a big group. Anyone who couldn’t keep going fell by the wayside and was either kicked or shot. It was mainly old people, women and children who dropped out, collapsing from exhaustion, and since they wouldn’t have been able to go any further, they would have soon frozen to death if they hadn’t been finished off by a bullet. This way nothing was left to chance. I didn’t know we were crossing the line of fire.

We went on like this till evening. By this time Mami could hardly walk. Supporting her on both sides we dragged her along; she trailed her legs, poor thing, and tears were streaming down her face.

My heart ached—that’s the wrong expression, but I can’t think of anything better. Later, I was filled with wild anger against the Russians. The kind of anger and fury I rarely experience in life. But when I do, I become so resolute that I’m not frightened of anything in the world.

I jumped out of line—I don’t know why they didn’t shoot me. I ran forward and grabbed the reins of the horse at the head of the group—they were hanging loosely since they were only jogging. I had long lost my fear of horses by then—they are much better than people. The horse stopped dead and reared as I stood stock still in front of him. The soldier raised his whip and lashed at me, or wanted to, I don’t remember now, and it’s not that important.

The fact is that I shouted one or two words in Russian and in Hungarian I yelled: “Brutes! Can’t you see that the women and children can’t take any more? Stoy! Stop!” I shouted. And they stopped. The soldiers and the whole group, some collapsing where they were, some trying to rest a little, others having a pee. I don’t know how long we stayed there, after a while we gathered ourselves up and went on our way.

At this stage my memory breaks down from cold and exhaustion, I don’t know what happened.

I'm not sure how we got to the presbytery at Csákvár, it has all got confused in my mind. The fact is we were there, we were directed there (maybe that was what was written on the piece of paper), and, wonder of wonders, the cart too arrived with all our stuff. Just as I say, nothing whatsoever was missing. The Russians' disorganized organization remains an eternal puzzle to me. Just like their behaviour: you could never count on anything. The opposite of anything and everything could also happen.

Nyunyuka was there too in her travelling basket. Yet a long time had gone by, almost two days. We took Nyunyuka out. She crouched down and started to pee, and she went on peeing interminably. Cats are so clean that she had survived those one and a half or two days in the basket without dirtying it. (One of war's basic problems is that one has to urinate, yes, but when and where? Strangely enough even if one hasn't eaten for days. Later I was to observe this of people who were unconscious and dying too.)

We settled into the presbytery. The parish priest, who was also the dean or something, lived there as well as his curate and now us. It was quite a big L-shaped house with a separate kitchen at the end. French prisoners of war were living in the kitchen and doing the cooking. A glassed-in veranda ran right along the side of the house facing the big yard. And on the side facing the square, the windows looked out on a front garden.

A Soviet soldier stood guard at the gate: he wouldn't let anyone in. From time to time the village came under fire, but otherwise it was relatively peaceful.

One evening the men were downstairs playing cards in the cellar; the women were sheltering there too. János and I were upstairs. János had taken his boots to be mended; he was wearing his slippers and a jacket. We were sitting on a mattress on the floor at the foot of the Yugoslav priest's bed, the three dogs beside us. János stood up and walked about in the narrow little room. We heard the loud explosions. "Gott sei Dank, heute ist es ganz ruhig"—exclaimed the Yugoslav priest. He was that deaf. János and I were laughing about that and we'd be protected from shrapnel if the house were hit, when the door suddenly swung open. Russian soldiers swarmed in. One of them grabbed me by the wrist and jerked me to my feet, another did the same to János. The dogs barked madly; the soldiers shouted. Then they got hold of János and took him out just as he was, in his slippers and jacket, with no hat. I rushed after them. In the landing they met up with the rest of the men coming up from the cellar. They were all taken away.

From the words thrown at me I understood "in the morning". It was ghastly. I can't describe how I felt, I simply can't describe it.

I went down to the cellar and told Mami and the others that it was quiet upstairs, but that the shooting could start at any moment so they should stay there and sleep there. The men were guarding the house.

Upstairs I held a pillow to the back of my head to reduce the noise of the explosions; I pressed it against my ears, leant my forehead against the window and looked out into the moonlit night. I stayed like that till morning.

With all the nerves in my body, I sensed that *now* they had separated me from János, they had taken him away. God knows what would happen to him. Maybe I sensed what was in store for us too.

In the morning the women came up from the cellar. Laments and reproaches for not having told them there and then what had happened. What could they have done? I answered, there was a curfew till morning, so who would have dared to out in the night, and where to and for what?

Then I set off on my own. I put a headscarf round my head and went to see the commandant. There were a lot of people sitting and waiting their turn there. Among them was a girl whose head was bleeding, a lock of her hair had been torn out. She was miserable and desperate. "The Russians rode over her," said her mother. I didn't understand. "With a bicycle?" I asked. The woman became angry. "Are you a fool? Don't you know what they do to women?"

I listened to what people were saying around me. One woman had broken her spine, another had passed out, someone was bleeding and they were unable to stop the flow, a man had been shot for trying to defend his wife.

All at once the horror all around us was revealed. All at once it became clear that inside a presbytery guarded by Soviet soldiers our experience was limited to the few soldiers who came in occasionally, in high spirits, to loot and eat our food, but who were by and large kept under control, and we knew nothing of what was happening outside. Could János have known and not told us?

One day—I don't think the parish priest was at home, once again the days are confused in my mind—a lot of soldiers came and made a search of everything. One of them drew me aside and showed me a photograph. It was of János in his army officer's uniform. Or rather, it wasn't as simple as that. He showed me a picture of myself and pointed to me saying "That's you". Then he showed me a civilian picture of János and asked "Your husband?" Yes, I said. Then he produced the picture of us both, János in officer's uniform, so there was nothing I could say. He shouted in Russian "Spy, traitor, officer, German, soldier!" How did I understand those words? Those were the words we learnt first. And I could tell from his expression.

I was eating French beans at the time, tinned beans, and I felt I couldn't swallow. I couldn't swallow them, however much I tried, so I drew away and spat them out. The boy pointed to his head, he'll be shot "toya muzh" ("your man"). Then he smiled and beckoned me into the bedroom. I went in with him, I knew what he wanted. He put the picture down on the bedside table and lay me down on the bed. I was afraid he wouldn't give the photo to me. When he had finished, he picked up the picture and showed it to me again. (I was more and more afraid he wouldn't give it to me.) I was wearing a checked blouse with a small pocket that could be buttoned. He undid the button and put the photo inside, did up the button and stroked me where the picture was. Then he left.

Somehow I got back to the others. Mami looked at me. I think she knew exactly what had happened, but we didn't talk about it.

On the second or third day after that, strangers from the next village came and told us that the men had been executed. They were first made to dig a long trench, then they were ordered to stand at its edge, were shot in the nape of the neck, fell into the trench and three of the locals had covered them with earth. (This is the custom in almost every war—you have to dig your own grave.)

“It’s not true,” I said to Mami, “I know it’s not true.” I was dreadfully afraid and apprehensive, but I felt inside that it wasn’t true. I don’t know exactly how it was, I just know that I kept repeating to myself: it isn’t true, it isn’t true, it isn’t true.

After the men had been taken away, it became clear that there were serious problems in the village, and there was no longer a guard posted outside the house. (I suggested to the women that we all shelter in one room and spend the nights like that for safety’s sake. But they didn’t want to, because some of them wanted to bring everything they had up from the cellar and keep it beside them, and like that we wouldn’t have fitted into one room.)

I had a small tin chest made of fine light metal, covered on the outside with coloured paper, rather like the boxes of tea you get nowadays. In it I kept the gold jewelry I got as a wedding present from my aunt and my family: beautiful Transylvanian goldsmith’s work, 100 to 150 years old. I also had some heavier gold, one or two precious stones and things like that, and on the top were three Chinese porcelain cups and saucers which I had got from János: he had brought them or sent them from the Russian front. The china was packed in soft strawlike stuff, that was on the very top.

A few days after the disappearance of the men we all collected our things and started to hide them... silver was let down into the well, more valuable things were hidden in the midden, jewelry was hidden in beds and I don’t know what else was done. I shoved my tin under the Yugoslav priest’s bed. I often went into his room to feed and nurse him.

Since the women didn’t want to be in one room, we split up. Evening came. I was sitting there, scared, in the room I shared with Mami. It was quiet; the fire was burning in the tile stove, there happened to be a lull in the shooting.

In came three Russians and told me in Rumanian to come with them. I knew exactly what they wanted, I don’t know how, but I knew.

I told Mami that they were taking me to the hospital to look after the wounded. Mami looked at me and said pleadingly: “Don’t go, my girl, don’t go. Don’t go with them because they’ll do you harm.” I told them that my mother wouldn’t allow me to go (I didn’t want to say mother-in-law). At which they pointed to the corner of the stove door which was strengthened with iron, meaning that they would hit Mami’s head against it if I didn’t go with them. (If I close my eyes I can still see that stove door.) They said that in Rumanian. In Hungarian I told Mami that there were many wounded and I had to go.

I put on my boots and tied my headscarf, then I untied it and then tied it up again, and then undid it and then retied it then again to gain time. As I stood there I heard something knocking on the floor: it was the heel of my boots, I was trembling so much.

Then I hugged and kissed Mami, and told her I would be away only as long as I had to help, she should think of the wounded. Mami looked at me and started to cry.

We stepped out into the L-shaped corridor. (It was in the middle of the L that the Russians met the men the day they took them away.) When we got to the middle of the L, I started to attack them wildly without a word. I kicked them and hit them with all my strength, but in the next moment I was on the ground. No one made a sound, not them, not me, we fought in silence. They took me to the kitchen at the back of the house and, with me probably trying to defend myself or attack once more, they flung me down so that I hit my head against the corner of the rubbish bin. It was made of hard wood as befitting a dean's residence. I lost consciousness.

I came round in the dean's big room. The window panes were broken, the windows were boarded up, there was nothing on the bed just the bare boards on which I lay. A Russian was on top of me. I heard a female voice coming from the ceiling. "Mummy, mummy!" came the shout. Then I realized that it was my voice, it was me shouting.

Once I realized that, I stopped and lay there quiet and still. The feeling in my body hadn't returned with my consciousness; it was as if I had become numb or gone cold. In the windowless, unheated room, naked from the waist down, I must have been cold too. I don't know how many Russians were over me after that or how many there had been before. As dawn was breaking they left me. I got up; I could only move with great difficulty. My head and my whole body ached. I was bleeding profusely. I didn't feel that I had been raped, I felt I'd been physically assaulted. This had nothing to do with intercourse or sex. It had nothing to do with anything.

New troops arrived, and I was pestered a lot, which I now found hard to take. I moved next door, where a family with five children were living in the woodshed. They were left in peace because the man had a leg in plaster and anyway a family of five children was something the Russians respected. There was hardly room for the seven of them in the woodshed. There was a pile of logs inside, and Uncle Mihály (the one with the broken leg) spread some straw on top and I lay on the straw, covered with blankets. It was a nice high bed. But whatever we did I could always feel the logs. That wouldn't have mattered; in war it isn't important that you sleep in a comfortable bed. The trouble was though that if it was quiet, red beetles would emerge from the wood and, since my body was warm, they would dash about all over me along with the lice. When there was shooting, the beetles hid away. So either I couldn't sleep because of the shooting, or because the beetles were living it up on me. Just as it didn't disturb the lice when we rubbed ourselves with kerosene, these bugs weren't bothered by the stench either.

After that I don't really know what happened. I was fed up with everything. I wasn't afraid of the soldiers any more, but I shuddered at the thought of being woken up by a volley of shots into the lock, and then in they would come. I

shuddered at the thought that at any moment they could break down the door. Those extra things, people constantly being taken away, the weariness, the filth, the illness which was within me, the fever—I don't exactly know what it was I couldn't stand any longer.

Maybe the last straw was when a young woman who was eighth months pregnant, took shelter in a barn from an exchange of shooting, and she got hit in the belly by a splinter. First her innards, then the baby fell out of her and the embryo struggled there on the ground while the mother watched screaming before she died.

That was unbearable. God doesn't exist. He can't if He can permit that.

And then one day when I felt I couldn't stand any more, I chose the concrete ring on the curb of the well as the place where I could bash my head in. Another time I looked for a big stone that someone could throw at my head and knock my brains out. There were no trains for me to throw myself under. And the only place with an upper storey was the manor house, and that was full of Russians. Perhaps I should have looked for a rope.

I want to relate the dream which has accompanied me ever since in various forms.

I am running away, the Russians are coming after me. It's as if my legs were made of lead, I can hardly run, but I must go faster and faster because they will catch up with me. A big leafy tree. I climb up it, I fall. Now they have almost caught up with me, I can see their faces, their expressions. I somehow manage to climb back up the tree. I cling on, I don't fall, but now they too are climbing the tree behind me. I climb out to the end of a branch, higher and higher, and more and more to its end, I fall and hit the ground. They too jump down, right behind me. I dash on till I reach a wall, I climb up the wall. Blood is streaming from my fingers. To get to the top I have to hang on to the cracks in the bricks and my nails are torn out as they pull me back. I'm running again, into a house. I dash to and fro trying to escape. I tear through attics, cellars, doors and windows. They catch up with me. I rush into a lavatory and lock the door. I know they will break it down, but I've got a moment or two's respite. I stand on the lavatory seat and put my hand onto the tank. I know there is a weight there, I want to get it out so I can dash it against my head and split my skull apart. But by then the door has been broken down; the weight is in my hand. A Russian comes towards me and raises his arm. I want to throw it at his head. At that moment I wake up sweating, I feel my heart throbbing even in my heels, I'm suffocating.

I've had this dream for many, many years. Now it is starting to recede. But I still wander about in houses trying to escape, and they still burst in through doors and climb through windows. I've just realized, as I write this, that I am restless if a door is wide open (who will come in through it to grab me, drag me away, throw me to the ground, or hit me). But I don't like locked doors either. What an illusion—the Russians taught me how to open any door with a crowbar—but I can't escape quickly enough if it's locked.

I poured some petrol into a bottle and I told Aunt Anna who had taken me in, that if the Russians burst in on us once more I'd throw this bottle into the

stove. There was a tiny fire alight day and night in the stove so that we wouldn't freeze.

"Aunt Anna," I said, "When they break down the door, stand behind it. Until it explodes the door will defend you, and when it does, run outside into the garden and lie down quickly in the snow. Take care to keep your face covered!"

Aunt Anna who was so good, a believer and pious, looked at me and said quietly, "I'm not going to stand behind the door."

In the company of Benő and Rózsika (who were also sheltering at Aunt Anna's) I set out for Budapest. In a cart, pulled by a borrowed horse which could hardly walk, and with a scrap of paper bearing Cyrillic script which Benő knew the meaning of. It was hard saying goodbye to Aunt Anna. She preferred to stay in the house with the Russians. They never harmed her, they liked her because she was old, and they sensed her gentleness and goodness.

We plodded on. Pushing and pulling the cart and the horse. There was shooting here and there and we passed ruins and dead bodies, though not many of the latter. Finally we reached Budapest. Budapest was in ruins, but we were surprised at the number of buildings which were still standing; we had imagined that everything had been razed to the ground. Sometimes we were stopped, but when Benő produced the piece of paper we were allowed to continue. We got to the place where the Margaret Bridge had stood.

At that time the Russians were building a temporary bridge. It was made of wood, the way we did it in Transylvania, by fitting together barrels and casks; it arched steeply. They were in the process of painting it. They wouldn't let us across with the cart, we had to stop and paint the bridge. I seem to remember they were painting it red, but I wouldn't swear to that. I took a paintbrush and painted.

I think it was March by then, but it was still cold. We had been going all day and hadn't eaten anything. I wanted to reach my mother by evening. We weren't allowed on the streets after dark. (There was a curfew.) I was quite good at Russian by then and I said I wasn't feeling well. I put down the brush and set out. They yelled after me threatening to beat me. But I answered them back in Russian and just went on walking. They were astonished and let me go.

In the meantime Benő and the others had somehow managed to go off in the cart. I set out in the direction of Wekerle Sándor utca. I looked at the buildings, some shot to pieces, others standing. By this time there were no dead horses or bodies in the streets. After Csákvár, Budapest appeared peaceful and orderly.

I found number 16 Wekerle Sándor utca. The back part of the building had burnt down. Everything was black, sooty and cindery. You could see right through the flats. I stood and stared.

The flat next door to Uncle Gábor's had fallen down, collapsed. It belonged to Auntie Grünberg who I was very fond of. Auntie Grünberg had had two rooms and a kitchen; the two rooms had been bombed and all that was left was the tiny kitchen. She lived in this kitchen for sixteen years in the hope that the state would provide her with a flat.

It ruined her health, she eventually received 16,000 forints (about £150 at the time) compensation and with that she moved out to the country.

I went slowly up the stairs. There was a bell at the door, the old bell. It was almost unbelievable. I rang. I don't remember how we met and who said what. There were a lot of strangers in the flat. They had taken in the people living in the burnt out part of the building.

There was no glass in the windows, paper was glued to the frames, but I remember being surprised that the table was laid with a white tablecloth. There was supper, a real supper.

We sat down and ate. I was full of lice and dirty, I had only washed my hands, it didn't occur to me to do more than that in the commotion that was in the flat.

My mother of course cried and was happy and hugged me. And I looked at her and was pleased to see her. I was glad they were alive, but not that glad.

I wasn't that glad about anything much and I didn't believe in anything much either. I was already carrying the disease which prevented me ever being able to have a baby, and I didn't know whether or not I had syphilis. I was pretty sure they had seriously infected me, and I didn't want to infect anyone.

We were sitting at the table. Tongue and tomato sauce. I looked on in wonder and ate in silence.

They were saying that the Russians had raped the women. "Did that happen where you were too?" asked my mother. "Yes," I said, "it did." "But they didn't take you away, did they?" asked my mother. "Yes, they did, they took everyone," I replied and went on eating. Mother looked at me for a moment and asked in surprise "But why did you let them?" "Because they hit me," I said and went on eating. I didn't consider the whole subject to be important or interesting.

Then someone asked light-heartedly and jokingly, "Many of them?" "I couldn't count," I said and went on eating. "Just imagine we had lice in the cellar," said my mother. "So did we," I said. "Surely you didn't get infested, did you?" asked my mother. "Yes, I did," I answered and went on eating.

Then we talked of other things.

After supper mother called me aside and said, "Don't make such awful jokes, my girl, they might believe you!"

I looked at her. "That's the truth, mummy." My mother hugged me and began to cry. Then I said, "But I told you that they took everyone away, that every woman was raped. You said that the women were taken away here too."

"Yes, but only those who are tarts. And you aren't like that," said my mother. Then she clung to me, "Say it isn't true!" she begged. "All right," I said, "it's not true, they only took me away to nurse the sick."

Tamás Majsai

Protestants Under Communism

In 1988 it became obvious that the safe and secure continuity of the Hungarian dictatorship had come to an end. This process led to confusion in church circles. At first they were afraid that they were confronted by a feint which might well end up in tragedy—something which the puppet church leadership really welcomed in their hearts—and their reactions were those of conditioned reflexes. The world was brought to a high pitch of excitement by the hoped for changes, to the surprise of the country, however, and as the spectacular culmination of their bankruptcy, the introverted way of recent decades in the churches continued: a petrified piety, an incomprehension of any kind of opposition—various techniques of self-limitation, far from moderating, seemed to have gathered additional strength.

Demands that the recent past be objectively discussed, that churchmen harassed for political reasons be rehabilitated, were cavalierly rejected by the hierarchy. "The church cannot travel along the ways of the world", "our business is to forgive and not to open up old wounds" were some of the arguments. It would be morally unworthy, so the argument ran, to exploit the straits in which the administration, particularly the

Church Affairs Office, found themselves. Neither did the emphasis on the importance of a "fertile dialogue" with Marxist ideology lessen. Statements continued to be made on the lasting worth of the agreements concluded with the state in 1948: the taboo on a discussion of a question that had started to fester remained in effect. The church press, centrally directed and true in spirit to the regime, remained silent. Critical issues were addressed—and only very rarely by churchmen—almost without exception in non-church publications. Moreover, many were the result of scholarly activities of a number of Hungarian clergymen living in exile.

The training in loyalty to the existing regime of churchmen proved one of the greatest successes of the communist system. Fear, though undoubtedly deeply rooted, was no longer a sufficient explanation in the years of the Kádár consolidation. The cause for this passivity must be sought elsewhere. One explanation might be the attitude which suggested that it was the business of the church to profit from détente and concentrate on the pieties and devotion. (These aspects will be discussed in greater detail later.) In any event it cannot be denied that the Protestant Churches, and especially the Calvinist Church, were the last and most loyal satellites of Bolshevism in Hungary. Thanks to the anachronistic and unworthy role of the leadership, they simply excluded themselves from playing a part in these great changes. (A comparison with East German Protestantism makes this amply clear, even bearing in mind the differences between the two countries.)

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A Chronology

Sixteenth century: *The Reformation spread rapidly through a Hungary divided into three after the Turkish conquest. Initially it was the Lutherans who predominated but in time the Calvinists gained the upper hand. Antitrinitarians proved strong in Transylvania, at the time far ahead of the rest of Europe in religious tolerance. By the end of the century, the majority of the population in Hungary had turned Protestant.*

Seventeenth century and first half of the eighteenth century: the Age of the Counter Reformation. Protestants suffer serious repression. Rebellion and political action taken to gain religious freedom are only partially successful.

1781: Joseph II's Edict of Toleration.

Eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth century: the Age of Reform. The establishing of the current structures of the Protestant churches took place.

1848: the revolution against Habsburg rule, in which Protestants played a dominant role. Freedom of worship proclaimed.

Second half of the nineteenth century: following the crushing of the revolution, Protestants were, for a time, subjected to restrictions. Normalization came after the Ausgleich (Compromise) of 1867. Liberal legislation on religion did not, however, put an end to the markedly privileged position of the Catholic Church or to discrimination against smaller sects.

*Twentieth century: up to 1945 a time of harmonious relations between church and state. The churches carried out central political functions, endorsing *raisons d'état*, nationalist irredentism motivated by the Treaty of Trianon and antisemitism. This is also the time when various inner mission movements engaged in the search for alternative ways.*

After 1945: promising signs of reorientation on the part of the churches; for a time political measures of a democratic nature were taken (thus, all denominations were declared to be of equal status under law).

From 1947: growing hostility to the churches and to religion. The structures of the churches were dismembered, leaders forced to resign, the churches eliminated from the the fields of culture and education, their institutions brutally destroyed. Ideological Gleichschaltung.

1951: State Church Affairs Office established as the agency of party church policy.

1956: attempts at renewal within the churches, makers of church policy of the previous ten years were removed or resigned.

From 1957: state supremacy was restored and given legislative sanction. Every area of church life was kept under firm control.

The 1980s: considerable relaxation of state influence and control, which came to an end in 1989.

Statistics: (figures are approximate in the absence of reliable data) 60 per cent Roman Catholics, 20 per cent Calvinists, 5 per cent Lutherans, 3 per cent Free Churches (Pentecostal, Adventist, Methodists etc.) 1 per cent Jews, 0.4 per cent Orthodox, 0.2 per cent Baptists, 0.1 per cent Unitarians, 0.1 per cent others.

No doubt good things were done too. Some individuals did a great deal in the interests of the Hungarian minority suffering under the Rumanian dictatorship, taking personal risks on occasion, especially in the early eighties, on occasion acting against their superiors. But even such undertakings were not without their flaws, which is just about generally true in those key cases that became institutionalized issues. Almost every time the tacitly tolerant attitude of the Hungarian communist leadership could be predicted—indeed there were instances where for tactical reasons it suited the communist leadership to surreptitiously pass the job to the churches. This was obviously true of work with social deviants that started in the mid-eighties, not to mention the charity organizations created to cope with the flood of Hungarian refugees from Rumania in 1989. It is worth mentioning that, where East German refugees in Hungary were concerned, before the intentions of the political leadership could be established, and clear instructions from the Office of Church Affairs were no longer available, the Protestant Churches did not do anything to help them. And it is significant that hearty, or at least formally good, relations were maintained to the very end between the clique that ran the Calvinist Church in Transylvania and Hungarian hierocrats.

More spectacular action was confined to a time when the end of the system could not be long delayed. Some joined nascent political parties or reform movements that supported the relatively small opposition. The following might be briefly listed:

a) The Calvinist Movement of Renewal (REMM), a citadel of protest within the Calvinist Church. Ministers of religion not enjoying a particularly high standing made up the bulk of the membership, plus a smaller number of laymen. b) The Lutheran Ordass Lajos Circle of Friends, named after an internationally known bishop, who had been the subject of a judicial frame-up in

1948, imprisoned and subjected to harassment. Those who took his name were unfortunately not able to achieve much. c) The silent dissatisfied who largely lacked specific features. They were headed by fundamentalist and pietist theologians who rejected the existing system primarily for theological and moral reasons. d) Finally, *Egyház és Világ* (The church and the world), a Protestant periodical founded in 1990, and the circle that spontaneously formed around it. Whatever their importance they did not have much influence.

The Calvinist Church

By 1989-90 the political system was in dissolution. So much so that church policy structures, the fruit of forty years, fell apart in a few months. The Roman Catholic Church got back on its feet, dissatisfaction grew universal and more articulate, and there was increasing pressure which made a political issue of religious freedom and church affairs. In 1989, still in the last days of the communist era, the notorious State Church Affairs Office, founded in 1951, was abolished. That year both church and state endeavoured to rid themselves of agreements that legitimated self-limitation and political control.

In that situation when major institutions suffered crises of confidence in quick succession, and free parliamentary elections were about to take place, the legitimacy crises came to the boil in the Calvinist Church. The leadership, deprived of a direct line to the Church Affairs Office, suddenly found itself an abandoned, insecure puppet administration confronted by a noisy but weak opposition and it accepted general church elections. Nevertheless, church members in general met the new opportunities with indifference. Nothing speaks louder than the fact that the former bishops found it difficult *not* to maintain their earlier positions. (Thus, the largest district reelected their bishop with

an overwhelming majority, despite his prominent collaboration with the old regime.) Since the intellectual prowess needed to carry out institutional duties was absent, and the lay leadership (to some extent owing to financial reasons) were defeated, the same clique, which had earlier faithfully served the communist party state, still controls this field. A further bizarre feature is that this clerical ancient regime, that had earlier held many a political office—as members of parliament, one even of the Presidential Council—now objected to the political activity of ministers of religion who enjoyed the confidence of church members on pastoral and spiritual grounds. Indeed they succeeded in clipping their wings, prohibiting what they themselves as holders of high church office, had practised a few months earlier.

As a whole, in the Calvinist Church, all that the changes of the second half of 1990 implied was a half-hearted attempt to deal with personalities. Nothing whatever was done about issues. These include the institution of episcopacy, alien to the spirit of Calvinism. This, since its character is far from organic, institutional and sacral, caused numerous catastrophic botch-ups in this part of the world. There was no thought given as to how ossified structures reacting according to the patterns of the past were to have the breath of life breathed into them.

The Lutheran Church

Things shaped somewhat differently in the Lutheran Church. Lajos Ordass, elected bishop in 1945, and soon to prove a leader amongst his fellow bishops, was morally unimpeachable and it would have been absurd to try and discredit him for his former official and personal links with the past regime, condemned as “capitalist”, “fascist”, and “bourgeois”, which was one of the most effective weapons in the

communist tactical arsenal directed against church leaders. (It should be noted that an exaggerated and uncritical identification with the pre-war regime was a political and moral burden the churches had to bear and that the replacement of office holders was often the most obvious method of establishing a *modus vivendi*.)

The Lutherans, being largely middle-class, met the nationalization of schools in 1948 with considerable antipathy, as they did the expulsion of the German minority who made up a considerable proportion of their membership. It thus proved more difficult in the Lutheran than the Calvinist Church to ensure that high church office was occupied by easily manipulated men of manifest leftish convictions. Owing to the initial greater resistance of the Lutheran clergy, communists with a Lutheran background delegated to high lay office were used as the instruments of bolshevization. In 1948 these people, who essentially were outside the church, negotiated the agreement with the state. The process of turning the Lutheran Church into a satellite was not smooth. One of the paradoxes of the situation was that, in the long run, the bolshevization of the Lutherans was more complete than in the case of any other denomination.

All things considered, by the time the 1956 Revolution was suppressed, the Lutheran Church had been degraded to the status of a liturgical workshop of the regime. The time-bomb only went off in 1984. Following instructions received from the Communist Party which wished to apply rouge and lipstick to its church policy, the megalomaniac Hungarian Lutheran leadership invited the World Federation of Lutherans to hold their assembly in Budapest. Seizing this unprecedented chance of publicity, Zoltán Dóka, a minister of the church, addressed an open letter to the delegates, detailing the arbitrary rule and spiritual terror. Dissatisfaction suddenly articulate, attention

abroad that could no longer be neutralized, a political leadership struggling for acceptance by Europe, and the process of political détente all ensured that the liquidation of the style of leadership that had dominated the Lutheran Church could not be obstructed. (The role of Lajos Ordass ought to be mentioned at this point. His rehabilitation and the turning back to him as a source, considerably helped to hold the opposition together spiritually.) As a result, the Lutheran Church saw microstructural changes already in 1987. The fact is however that, in terms of the *ius supremae inspectionis* (1957:22), the new leadership had to enjoy the confidence of the State Church Affairs Office; as a result, especially since 1990, their holding office has been the subject of acute controversy in spite of the undoubted integrity of the men involved. This points to a permanent crisis of legitimacy which can only be ended by the early convention of a General Synod of the Lutheran Church of Hungary. The "new" leadership, its self-confidence severely shaken, burdened by past commitments which it will find difficult to explain away, entrusted by those responsible for communist church policy with restraining the over enthusiastic and maintaining the search for consensus, now understandably endeavour to put off any clarification of issues. This, however, cannot continue much longer. In the last resort no more can be expected than in the Calvinist Church. Furthermore a policy of slow and quiet steps, proclaimed and practised by the new moderate leadership, enjoys considerable and widely based support within the church.

A number of measures were taken in 1989 and 1990 which could be the starting points for truly secular changes in denominational life. Denominations and sects which had earlier been illegal, subject to police harrassment, at best enjoying *ex lex* toleration are now registered without hindrance. Autonomous religious institutions may be freely founded. State

approval is no longer needed for ecclesiastical appointments. All pastoral work is entirely legal, there are no more areas out of bounds, such as prisons or hospitals. Church affairs and religion normally figure in the mass media. There are no obstacles in the way of religious education in schools; (a subject debated—outside the churches—for around six months. It was finally decided that religious education would be an optional subject, not included in school reports and certificates.) The public usefulness of churches, their social and therapeutic functions, are—with few exceptions—no longer questioned. The state (and church) rehabilitation of churchmen condemned in political trials started in 1990 continues. Legislation to compensate the churches for financial losses suffered and to create a financial basis ensuring independence from the state is being debated at the time of writing. This is a particularly sensitive question since one and all still remember that financial dependence was one of the manipulative instruments used by the communists in relation to the churches, setting one denomination against another. But every kind of financial arrangement, however good, conceals numerous dangers, such as unbridled demands by the churches, leaving out of account that things have changed irreversibly over the past half century.

To understand more deeply the present conditions of the Protestant churches in Hungary and the profile of their attitudes, it is essential to be aware of some major issues of church policy that developed during the past regime. In our presentation these problems will be focussed on in an analytical way.

The key issues of church life

By 1948 it had become clear, or could be suspected, that the Communist Party, endeavouring to seize political

power would no longer tolerate the churches as an enclave, particularly not as the only relatively intact and important counterweight that exercised a genuine influence over the masses. What is more, the Roman Catholic Church had the potentialities of a directly political force. It was led by Prince Primate Cardinal József Mindszenty, a man of martial velleities, steering a collision course. As a royalist he did not recognize the republic, and was ready to define himself as *homo regius*, the highest constitutional dignitary in the country.

There was a fundamental difference between the minority Protestant and the majority Roman Catholic reaction to the threat of brutal hostility towards the churches. The Protestants looked to Jeremiah 29 as a biblical paradigm. Like those in exile in Babylon, they obeyed the command to seek the peace of the city wherein the Lord had caused them to be carried away captives. Church affairs came to be dominated by men of the left, pietist in attitude, whose theology and terminology was best able to express the break with the past. These men, Albert Bereczky especially, thinking in terms of a theology of events, interpreted their situation as a just punishment for the actions of the church before and during the war. They used the metaphors of the narrow way and of Babylonian exile when talking of the times ahead. (The predictable future did not contradict such an interpretation.) It was characteristic that—in terms of an evolutionist philosophy of history—they tried to present anxieties as birthpangs, emphasizing that resistance might well lead to splits within the church.

Another determining aspect was that, lacking the support of the universal church organization of the Roman Catholics, the intransigent attitude of the Prince Primate was out of the question for Protestants. The traditionally hostile relationship between Protestants and Roman Catholics was also a determining factor. In a situa-

tion pregnant with tensions it manifested itself in a particularly inelegant form. Trivializing the need for a united front of the churches—here Catholics were guilty too—as well as securing petty advantages, and the desire to get one's own back, on repeated occasions prompted Protestants to unworthy gestures of demarcation. The Calvinists particularly excelled in submission. For centuries they had thought of themselves as *the* national church, feeling that the Catholics had obtained advantages against them in the course of history by exploiting given political situations. The Calvinists, with the pride of always serving the nation, succumbed to the temptation that they would most authentically fulfill their national role if, by avoiding confrontation with those in power, they warded off the danger of reprisals and thus protected not only their own denomination but the church as a whole. Few, however, were able to share this train of thought based on the Prophet, particularly because they could not discern much of a difference between the results of such self-limitation and meek acceptance of state demands on the one hand, and those of political repression on the other. Giving up the positions of the church without a struggle was also abetted by pietist notions which argued that educational, cultural and other functions (*volkskirchliche* in the language of German theologians), were not essential to a Christian life. This argument received outside backing from a theologian of the standing of Karl Barth. Thanks to Barth's earlier Hungarian links and his christian socialism, accepting some of the points of his middle of the road theology also meant joining the band wagon. Thus, he argued that the church belonged neither to the East nor to the West but was located above and between them. It was therefore not necessarily in opposition to a regime that might be hostile to the church. The Protestant churches, desiring to side-step challenges, further emphasized that commu-

nism bore none of the marks of national socialism, which had justified the active NO with which the Confessional Church, inspired by Barth, had met the latter. In addition there was the greater currency of leftist ideas at the time the world over, the misleading effect of the socialist idea at a time of total social collapse—particularly because of points of resemblance with the language of the Bible, etc. All this favoured those who urged the abandonment of *Volkskirche* structures, saying a painless good-bye to large numbers who were only nominally church members anyway, thus, by weakening Protestant immune resistance, carrying out the goals of a regime that intended to liquidate the churches.

The sterile ideological variant of loyalty came to full flower after 1956. At the time of the Revolution the *topos* "Revolt against the Word" was formulated by János Péter, a communist Calvinist bishop, and later Foreign Minister and Central Committee member. It was meant to express that good relations between church and state were beyond question and based on the Bible and the Word itself. On this basis the new leadership formulated a hitherto unknown rationalization of loyalty to the Communist Party and the state: the theology of service (*Diakonie* is the German term from which the Lutheran variant was derived), a dogma larded with verses from the Bible, against which there was no appeal and which was obligatory for everybody. The leading motive of this totally perverse doctrine was that the church, through faith, affirms "man-centered" socialism, as *de facto* implicit Christianity, which had come about thanks to God's will that shaped history, in succession to the old system, whose policies showed them to be enemies of the people. The church's duty could be no less than—like Christ—to serve with a true heart and all their might, if only by affirming the great teachings and deeds of socialism, putting no obstacles in the way of their

being realized. Those who argued this position emphasized that it was the business of the church to renounce the right to any criticism of the socialist experiment, which was good in itself, since that could only be described as destructive.

The professional classes and young people

Professional people were perhaps amongst those with least rights in Eastern Europe: socialist ideology defined them as "dependents", as "parasites" living on the working class. Though under multiple threat, they did their best to defend themselves, being reluctant to give up an identity which formally had no value. Those in power were well aware of this, and therefore they were subjected to special ideological constraints. A consequence was that professionals drew apart from the churches at great speed and in considerable numbers. The liturgical churches found themselves in a more favourable position than the Protestants. There sermons were at the centre of services and, owing to the deliberate degradation of theological teaching and the favoured selfsurrendering ecclesiological model, these had become intellectually empty. Furthermore, various perverted political messages (such as the Peace Movement, or the values of collectivization—it was advisable, and even compulsory to include them in sermons) were able to filter more easily into church services based on the Word.

Aware of the need for self-defence, the church itself did its best to alienate intellectuals adopting a critical tone. One of the consequences is that everyday church life remained largely without control; repeated concessions on matters of principle, as well as blunders of an intellectual and spiritual nature, induced a vicious circle of the abandonment of the church by professional people. Thus those

professional people committed to reform, who were the motor of the changes of the seventies and eighties, in their majority neither sought, nor would have been able to find, an opportunity for articulation within the church. Anti-intellectuality could also be discerned in the theological colleges when, e.g. contacts abroad were hindered for decades. The approval of the State Church Affairs Office was needed for all teaching appointments, resulting in largely unqualified people occupying most posts. Scholarly and intellectual standards were judged to be the marks of a sinful rationalism. Philosophy was eliminated from the syllabus of Protestant theologians. If their thirst for knowledge went beyond Marxist handbooks, they had to refer to the only accessible textbook covering the subject, a Catholic publication. This situation is still largely true. Thanks to falling standards in theological colleges, the image of the inferiority of the theological view of the world is entertained by young people. And all this in a hostile environment in which aggressive materialist propaganda ruled, where spreading religious views outside churches was prohibited, and in times where atheism was supported by the technocratic and scientific attitude of the age. It should be noted, however, that young people also stayed away from church due to ideological and political pressure, and due to traditionally orthodox ways of catechization that ignored modern psychological methods. For this the churches themselves are responsible.

The alienation of the peasantry

The years 1948-1951 were those of collectivization. The small and mid-dling peasantry, which had survived, and even been strengthened by the 1945 nationalization of large estates and the subsequent land reform, was liquidated. The ruining of the professional classes, in-

cluding the old caste of officials and civil servants, presumably did most damage to the Lutheran Church; the collectivization of land primarily affected the Calvinists. The crucial base of Hungarian Calvinism, some two-thirds of the membership, was made up of peasant farmers and in particular by the peasant burghers of the agricultural towns of the Great Plain. Destroying these people economically, subjecting them to persecution in their own country, largely damaged the ability of the Calvinist Church to maintain itself. That these people were alienated from the church—with the loss in prestige and the identity-vacuum which this entailed—did even more serious damage. In its alleged enthusiasm to serve the nation, the Calvinist Church found itself propagating collectivization as a higher mode of production, and itself urged the elimination of those declared to be kulaks from the ranks of its Elders. In this way the church assisted its own execution.

A great many of its ministers individually behaved much better, but institutional behaviour was nevertheless the defining character of the church as a whole. Naturally, there were a few in the leadership of the church who, exercising considerable caution, endeavoured—unfortunately mostly without results—to provide secret succour in particular cases. But they were not typical. (I do not know of a single official statement by any of the Protestant churches between 1948 and 1990, which, even to a modest degree, struck a critical note vis à vis a view expressed by the Communist Party State. It is not surprising therefore that the only spiritual capital these churches dispose over is that which, theologically speaking, is due to the grace of God. More secularly speaking: that and which remains from the past through a kind of inertia.) The moral loss suffered in relation to the peasantry is given dramatic emphasis if it is remembered that, since the 17th century, the Calvinists rightly claimed to be the rebel-

lious church that stood for the national interest and progress. At no stage could this Protestant role be identified with an imported political practice, rejected by the majority of the people, and this alone meant that past glory in no way shone on the way chosen in the communist era. (Objectivity, however, demands mentioning that a social sensitivity which had become part of its essence over the centuries, lowered its defences vis à vis political movements that employed social demagogy.)

It was a consequence of the sociological aspects discussed above that, while in more peaceful regions, *pace* secularization, the normal continuity of church life was not interrupted, one generation, now middle-aged, is disproportionately present; the old and minimally educated are not only over-represented but have turned into a factor which itself influences the religious and spiritual features of the church. The structures of the church were not able to keep in step—not by a long way—with other parts of society. Putting an end to this state of affairs will be an additional burden for the future.

The missing point of leverage

It makes things even more difficult that, even in a state of boosted hopes, a point at which renewal could be initiated, has not been found. The only thing offering itself so far is rivalry with the renewal attempts of the Roman Catholic Church, as it were as a counterpoint to the Papal visit of the summer of 1991 to Hungary.

In the Protestant churches as well huge forces are on the move to reconquer—at least in part—pre-communist clerical bastions once held in education, health care, the nursing of national traditions, liturgic presence at state functions, regaining real estate. Sober voices are seldom heard pointing out that one simply

cannot carry on where one left off forty years ago. And yet there are worthy issues aplenty, e.g. the national minorities, particularly the cause of the Gypsies who live midst truly catastrophic problems. These should be tackled in an institutional way, naturally not in nationalist terms, but truly as Christian service and love. A start could be made on a genuinely ecumenical attitude vis à vis the small denominations and sects, not to mention Jewry. Amid the present antisemitic overtones, also audible in the churches, a constructive clarification—which has so far not taken place in Hungary—of the relationship between church and synagogue, neglecting neither theological nor historical aspects, would have tremendous importance. Thinking over the present duties and situation of the church and studying the history of the recent past are other subjects. The 1956 Calvinist Renewal Movement had drafted a situation report on the eve of the Revolution which became known internationally. Nothing like that, bearing in mind principles and theology, has been attempted concerning the recent past. One might also mention the search for the desirable psychological and sacral forms of the renewal, and the elaboration of a constitutional and hierarchical framework that is closer to the Bible and Lutheran and Calvinist tradition, as well as all the other problems which have not simply been solved by the political changes.

Ecumenism

Finally, the *oikumene* also demands early, thorough and self-critical clarification on the part of the churches that share in the Protestant tradition.

Long-established antipathies and interests kept the Protestant churches in Hungary from changing their relations to each other. At the same time, the State Church Affairs Office, as part of a well thought

out strategy, exploited the ecumenical idea and diplomacy as a suitable net allowing it to control inter-denominational affairs, and as an instrument of foreign policy. They soon succeeded in ensuring that in Hungary, as generally in Eastern Europe, ecumenism stood merely for a kind of pseudo-action.

Within the country the ecumenical movement, as guided by the Church Affairs Office, rested on two pillars: making a Christian united front impossible on the basis of the *divide et impera* principle, and also making sure that interdenominational disputes were kept to the minimum desirable level, where they could be easily handled and did not cause any unpredictable surprises to the state. Thus the Church Affairs Office found it difficult to imagine a greater danger than a new denomination with which there were no well-oiled contacts and which was perhaps less hierarchical than the existing and known churches. As a result new denominations with a small membership were treated primarily as the concern of the police and the courts, and the old established small denominations were from the start organized under a hierarchical authority which was totally alien to their spirit.

It was Church Affairs Office policy to ensure that good relations be maintained at the top, and at the same time to have no contacts whatever and keep a distance between the lower clergy and lay churchmen. What happily coexisted were theatrical ecumenical ceremonies, mutual awards of honorary doctorates, etc. and more or less concealed hostile feelings, never made the subject of open discussion. These included a cunningly stimulated image of the Roman Catholic Church as the enemy. Thus someone who took a leading part in ecumenical activities conducted a secret and provocative survey on Catholic "machinations" related to baptism, or the employment, by the Calvinist Theological Academy, of a vulgarly anti-Catholic—who was anti-Lu-

theran as well to some degree—as Head of Ecumenic Studies. A propaganda barrage was directed against the various sects (some of them met with feigned friendliness at various ecumenical rituals, and yet one of the questions dealt with by the annual reports based on Calvinist Church minutes referred to the sects, in harmony with the desires of political authority); drawing room antisemitism was tolerated, as was antisemitic theology, the question was deliberately never discussed in a systematic way, etc.

Abroad the ecumenical activity of the Protestant churches had to serve the foreign policy of the Hungarian People's Republic. Indeed for that reason ordinary people showed scant interest in ecumenism, or else rejected it. Ecumenism to them looked just like another version of communist internationalism. In the fifties those active in ecumenism were in the service of the Bolshevik Party itself, and hence worked for the export of the communist world revolution. That was also the task of the Hungarian Church press organ—*Ungarischer Kirchlicher Nachrichtendienst*, a crudely militant lithographed publication.

The Hungarian churches were regularly represented at ecumenical functions by the same tried and tested "comrades". The same was evident in the church peace movement, in which prominent Hungarian churchmen played a role second only to that of certain hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Epilogue

Bearing in mind the immediate past, a certain cautious optimism appears to be justified in spite of the difficulties. It is up to the churches to encourage forces within them committed to moral and theological renewal which will in turn help mend dramatically damaged structures.

György Szücs

Sickle Amnesia

Symbols are never meant to be temporary. It is eternity that they aspire to and people struggling through the shadows of the everyday tacitly accept this aspiration, with or without some measure of identification. The majority probably consider symbols unimportant. When regimes change, the substitution of the new symbols takes place so quickly that one can only perceive the succession on the whole, but the different events melt into the medley of one great action. Finally, vague feelings are left and a rational approach becomes difficult unless one turns to certain dates and facts. When the historic moment comes absurd images of the future become anachronistic and ridiculous. Once devoid of meaning, they become both parodies and bizarre memorials to themselves. Since they still exist, in both politics and the arts, one can observe an interesting visual network that accompanies the political changes.

Visiting foreigners and returning exiles usually do not perceive the subtleties, they see the overall change. They notice that the once universal red star has been removed from public buildings, the hammer and sickle has become a negative image and on the (partly new) national holidays the red, white and green tricolore is no longer supported by the stronger red

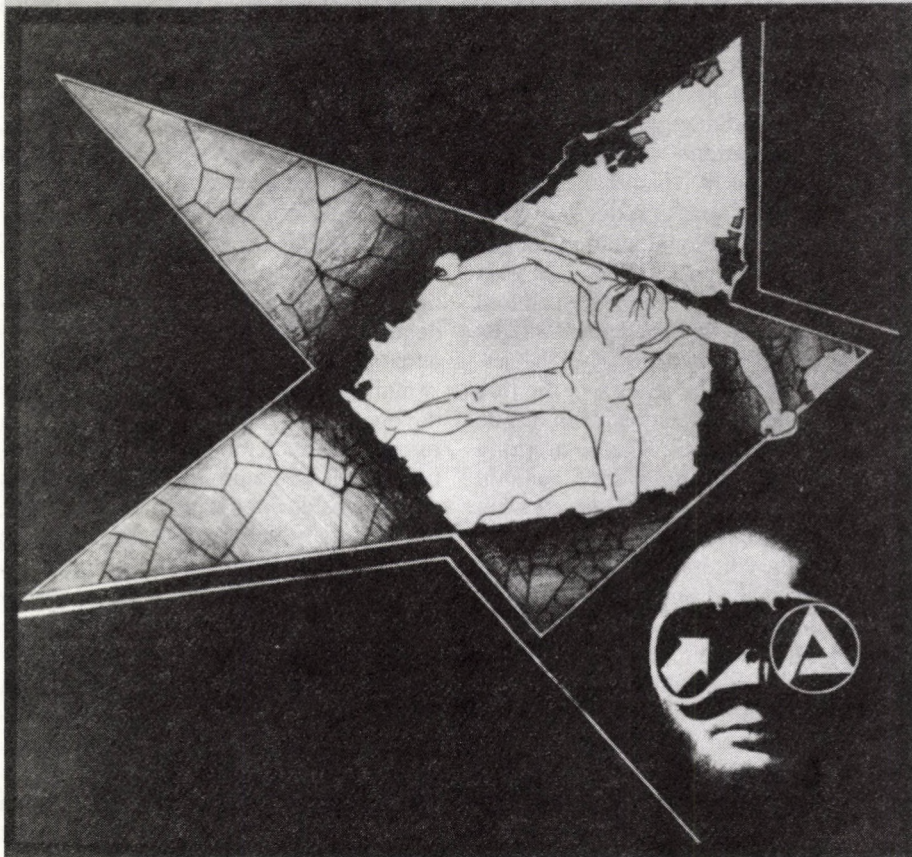
flag. In Budapest, coming down from Buda Castle they pass along Mártírok útja, but they may not notice the missing star on the façade of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, or the new, (that is, the old) pre-war name of the cinema, Atrium (instead of May 1st). The observant traveller notices that a sticker covers the old crest on the 2nd district branch of the State Music School, whereas the municipal authorities, which moved in later, have a regular enamel plate with the new crest on them. In official correspondence, the old crest was often simply cut out of the rubber stamps, at some places temporary stamps were made. Sometimes one could see both versions on the same document. The stickers soon separated from the plates and the faintly visible old image and the flapping new one is a metaphor of the whole transition.

What can one do with the relics of a vanished age? The Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), which was to win the elections, suggested a simple solution on one of its campaign posters (in the spring of 1990): beside the text calling for a spring cleaning one can see a half-open rubbish bin which contains a bust of Stalin, a holster and a book with Kim Il Sung on the cover. In the heap of rubbish all over the poster one can identify a photograph of Lenin, a copy of *Szabad Nép*, the party daily paper of the 1950's and some political brochures. The message is clear: a radical change is needed. The long suppressed impatience, the angry haste with which the old symbols (crests, memorial plates, statues and street names) were

György Szücs, an art historian, was one of the arrangers of *Posters of Change*, a 1990 exhibition at the National Gallery.



body happening performance photo film video music poems



Inconnu: Sheet from a portfolio, published samizdat in 100 copies in 1984. Inconnue are a four-member alternative art group founded in 1978.

disposed of, are indicative of socio-psychological trauma. Self-appointed candidates for various posts could make political capital of knocking down a statue which some months later would have been taken to a warehouse or somewhere else anyway. People craved for action, and if there was none, they created pseudo-action. Everybody wanted to be unique and original and to act without restrictions. If there is such a thing as political aesthet-

ics, it would do well to list actions which were empty and boring even at the time they occurred, since they were merely watered-down reflections of the real thing. There were some, however, which could be considered unique, since they did not use ready-made costumes and clichés.

The internationalism of recent decades inculcated a peculiar kind of shyness when it came to national symbols. The

national colours were only displayed on official holidays. In Ceausescu's Rumania, however, national consciousness found far more extreme expression. The red ties of the Rumanian pioneers were even hemmed with the national colours. The display of red, white and green did not become general in Hungary before the first Italian style pizzerias were opened. The next step was when a little band with the national colours appeared on the paper bag in which baker's ware was sold and the mass production of T-shirts with the national colours began (with "I love Hungary" or similar texts printed on them). *Reform*, the first tabloid in Hungary, was launched in 1988. Its editors framed each page with the national colours and the letter o in the title had red, white and green bands in it. The colours sold the paper. The next spring saw a huge crest, the royal arms, again in the letter o; the editors had sensed what the political barometer forecast. (It is typical that the editors of *Demokrata*, still privately published and in fewer copies than the commercially successful *Reform*, put a globe into their letter o. They had different ambitions and produced a paper of different quality.) The parties of the 1989 election were forced to realize that they cannot ignore the national colours. In the design of symbols, the display of national identity had top priority. This, however, suggested a similarity between the parties which simply did not exist. A lyrical flower motive became general: the rose was used by the Social Democrats, the carnation by the Socialists and the tulip by the Hungarian Democratic Fo-

rum (MDF). Red petals and green stem were a natural combination. The birds of the liberal Free Democrats (SZDSZ) used the same colours. It was only the Young Democrats (FIDESZ) who remained faithful to their orange, and they even called their paper *Magyar Narancs* (Hungarian Orange).*

The embodiment of the national colours is the flag. The 20th of August, originally St Stephen's Day, was a Soviet type Constitution Day from 1949 on. In 1988 the usual notice was posted everywhere: "On the occasion of 20th August, Constitution Day, the display of the national as well as the red flags by all residents, firms and public institutions is ordered by the City Council of Budapest." A number of outdated decrees, including the one on official holidays, remained in force till 23rd October 1989, the declaration of the Republic. The concierges themselves decided what had to be done, the extremely law-abiding displayed the red flag as well, the national one was sufficient for the others. During the forty years of communist rule, double flagpoles had been placed above front doors; now either two Hungarian flags were set in them or one was left empty, looking distinctly odd. The unofficial, but frequent, symbol was the flag with a hole, which originated in the revolution of 1956, when the Soviet-type crest (representing the hated period) was cut out. Hence the similarly modified red, yellow and blue flags which were seen at the time of the 1989 Rumanian revolution looked so familiar. (It would call for a separate study to follow the gradual transformation of the hole on the flag into the outlines of the country in the reports of Rumanian television, only to vanish soon.) Photographs which were taken through the hole abounded in the press of both countries.

The transformation of the Hungarian coat of arms was more complicated; there have been several variants over the last 150 years. The oldest type can be traced

* This is an allusion to Péter Bacsó's film *Witness*, a satire on the 1950's, in which oranges must be grown in Hungary in order to prove that everything is possible in socialism. The pathetic result is commented on as: "small, sour, but ours."

back to the first, the medieval Árpád dynasty: the left field has red and silver slashes, and the double cross on the right and the Holy Crown on the top have always represented continuity in Hungarian history. In the 1848–49 revolution, the Habsburgs (whom the nation was fighting) happened to be wearing the Hungarian crown. In 1849, under the governorship of Lajos Kossuth, the Austrian royal house was dethroned and, until the suppression of the revolution, the crownless, Kossuth crest was used. This was the variant revived in 1945 by those wishing to establish a democratic state, and by the revolutionaries of 1956. During the Rákosi era in the 1950s, arms more or less copied from the Soviet one were used. The arms, in complete disregard of heraldic principles, displayed a red star radiating its bright light on a hammer symbolizing the working class, and wheat sheaves, symbolizing the peasantry. János Kádár was to modify the arms. Hammer and wheat were substituted by a shield with the national colours under the star. This variant was then displayed for decades in all public offices and on all official documents. Consequently, there were two alternatives to consider in 1988: the more traditional arms with the crown, and the historically less burdened Kossuth arms which might be more fitting for a republic. Parliament accepted the royal arms, but for a long time there were plenty of people who wore both variants either on the lapel of their coats or left both stickers on the bumpers of their cars.

The red star—both as an element of a coat of arms and as symbol on its own—had pride of place in the communist world view. Everything, including crèches, cooperatives, factories and tractor works, was given the name Red Star. The fall of the symbol was all the more phenomenal. It was quickly removed from easily accessible places: the roundabout at the Buda end of the Chain Bridge had



Володя Ульянов

Inconnu: Samizdat handbill, 1985.

at its centre a huge red star made of flowers. One day, somebody placed a toilet bowl in the middle; the flowers were promptly arranged in another pattern by the district authorities. A similar rearrangement took place in front of a hospital. The red star on top of the dome of the neo-gothic Parliament building proved more intractable: the diameter of the star, lit from the inside, was 3 metres and it weighed a ton. First MPs had the lighting turned off themselves for good and, as part of the general reconstruction of the building, the star was soon removed.

The shrunk Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP), the Party not so long ago, kept the star in its emblem. The newly-founded Hungarian Radical Party (MRP), on the contrary, has an emblem in which two hands tear the same star apart. The man in the street has devised a wide range of methods to remove the star in the middle of all the arms on public institutions. The arms were most frequently sprayed with aerosol, but they were also smeared, stickers or used chewing gum were stuck on them, and in



Inconnu: Sticker in the police colours, silver and blue, for an underground exhibition held simultaneously with the Budapest Cultural Forum in 1985.

some cases, they were even smashed. All these methods were merely soft, and somewhat nostalgic, repetitions of the actions in 1956. Newsreels recorded the moment when, in 1956, the red star of the Soviet War Memorial on Gellért Hill was riddled with light machine gun bullets. The daily papers reported the breakneck feat of three workers who removed the star from Parliament. This is how history repeats itself. It is watered-down, however, since more and more is in quotation marks. On the jacket of the first legal Hungarian edition of Bill Lomax's *Magyarország 1956* (Hungary 1956) one can see a "falling star" (Ágnes Háy's graphics). In 1989, when the book came out, in Hungary this also referred to the date of publication.

Political erosion was often supported by various accidents or by actions the aims of which were intended to be completely different. The names of historic events and holidays are usually printed lower case in

Hungarian. There used to be two exceptions up to the early 1980s: the Great October Socialist Revolution and the Great Patriotic War. Ideology was defeated by the rules of the language in a long and hard struggle. At the same time, the expression "little October revolution" referring to 1956, became general in opposition slang. The significance of what happened to the statue of Lenin on Dózsa György út, the regular route for parades, became clear only in retrospect. To the amusement of passers-by, the statue was removed in 1988 for renovation. In the changing political situation, the authorities left the pedestal vacant for a while, then for some time longer, then for good. Grass grows now where the so mighty statue used to stand. The only evidence of its existence were a few pieces of marble and innumerable jokes. Now even the pedestal has gone.

The use of the hammer and sickle became increasingly rare as Hungary's relations with the Soviet Union loosened. In comparison to the 1950s, use of them soon became only occasional. Enormous posters and noticeboards were beginning to disappear as early as the 1960's. The hammer and sickle dominated the visual world in 1989-90, but this time as a negative symbol. The papers of the ex-socialist states published scathing caricatures. Book-jackets also tried to express visually the contents of the non-fiction works contained within them. On the cover of a book on Recsk, the most notorious Hungarian forced labour camp, a sickle-like moon shines in the night of hopelessness (Krzysztof Ducki). Its counterpart is *Malenkij robot*, the script of the documentary film made by the Gulyás brothers on Hungarians in Siberian forced labour camps. A hammer without a head is one of the tools jumbled up together on the cover. (István Faragó.)

The final, and lowest, point in the career of these symbols was when they were used at political and alternative art happenings, often at a meeting of the party which demanded their removal. In the spring of 1990, members of the

Zalaegerszeg branch of MDF wrapped up the local statue of Lenin and called this action a political happening. The following text was written on the symbolic parcel: "Contents: the Spirit of Communism, Sender: Hungarian Democratic Forum". In Debrecen, the statue of Lenin (with a graffiti "The End of Communism") was taken from its pedestal, but István Kiss's statue, the Proletarian, was roughly torn from its place. As could be seen on television, similar action was being taken in various other places, from Baku to Ulan Bator and from Prague to Budapest.

The participants at a conference held in Debrecen at that time felt it necessary to comment on the above events: "We, the participants at the conference 'Monuments in Hungary' call on the people of Hungary to prevent the senseless destruction of the monuments of the past decades, which are objects of great historical-documentary value. That is why we consider their preservation and accessibility important, irrespective of the artistic value they represent. We suggest that independent experts and the municipal authorities concerned decide together whether to keep or remove the public statues of the past."

According to the most ingenious of the ideas for the relocation of Lenin statues, those would be collected in the quarry of the forced labour camp in Recsk, as a memorial to those who once suffered there. The more pragmatically-minded wanted to sell the statues to Westerners, but in the end most of them were taken to museums or repurchased by the artist concerned.

The once untouchable symbols quickly degenerated into souvenirs which were sold for good money in markets. Western Europeans bought Trabants and pieces of the Berlin Wall, Eastern Europeans bought Russian military caps and pieces of the iron curtain barbed wire removed from the border between Austria and Hungary. There was a huge demand for a tin can

containing the "dying breath of Communism". The museums tried to get hold of the most important objects before it was too late. The Museum of Modern History (formerly the Museum of the Hungarian Workers' Movement) was happy to purchase a 25 metre piece of the fence mentioned above. The museum also obtained various elements employed in the funerals of Imre Nagy, the 1956 Prime Minister executed in 1958, and János Kádár, including the ribbons from the wreaths.

1989 was the year of funerals. Those who were executed after the revolution in 1956 and were buried in unnamed graves in Lot 301 of the Budapest Public Cemetery, Imre Nagy among them, were exhumed. The last honours were scheduled for the 16th of June, the anniversary of the execution of Imre Nagy. Following the visual design (by Gábor Bachmann and László Rajk, jr.), the enormous neo-classical building of the Múcsarnok gallery on Hősök tere was covered with black drapes and the bier of Imre Nagy and four other victims were placed on its steps. The rostrum for the speakers was connected to the black columns of the building by a long band resembling a flag with a hole burned in it. The art group Inconnu carved 300 wooden headboards for the nameless tombs. This pagan carved tomb marker, from the age of Árpád's conquest of Hungary, was a symbol which, at this time of change of symbols, could be accepted by all. Later, however, it was preferred by the "nationals" rather than the "liberals". Characteristically, these archaic wooden head-boards are in stark stylistic contrast to the previous or later happenings, room exhibitions or conceptual graphics of the Inconnu activist group.

The old, traditional requisites could be seen at the funeral of János Kádár, who died on the 6th of July 1989, on the very day when the Supreme Court declared Imre Nagy not guilty of the crimes for which he had been executed. This was the last hurrah of Party Headquarters.



Inconnu: Samizdat handbill on János Kádár shortly before he was replaced as General Secretary of the HSWP. Spring 1988.

There were national, red and black flags on the building, in whose lobby the coffin was put on display. The decorations of the deceased were displayed on a cushion and the leaders of the party stood in a guard of honour by the wreaths. The two funerals, inevitably juxtaposed because of their closeness in time, became a double seal on the termination of a period.

The activities of the Hungarian October Party (MOP) led by György Krassó and of FIDESZ belong to a special category. FIDESZ (Association of Young Democrats, the fifth largest party in Parliament) threw a "system-closing" party in the Budapest Sports Hall in February 1990. On this light-hearted occasion events took place at several locations; the leaders of the party formed a band and sang, and people could get their pictures taken with them in a huge group photo with an anonymous hole in it. Young people dressed up as policemen came up to people and those interested could take part in a "nostalgia-clubbing". The university club in Szeged took leave of the past in a similar way. They organized a "socialist realist ball" for the 7th of November. The requisites of the state party were exhibited, and artists performed original marches and poems. (It should not be forgotten that those trying to visit Lot 301 had their papers checked by the police and FIDESZ members sweeping the steet on the 7th of November, the official anniversary of the Soviet revolution, were arrested as late as 1988.) While the dynamism of FIDESZ was based on youthful spirits and professional expertise, MOP was trying to preserve its ideals of 1956 even after some of the comrades from the revolution had accepted the political rules of the game and Kádár's soft dictatorship, sitting in Parliament, wearing collars and ties. The political festival organized on the 20th of August 1989, united idealistic good intentions and serious irony. There was a political lottery, politician-stroking and slapping, falling stars and other amusements. Strange leaflets were often to be seen in town with texts like "For lack of an office the Hungarian October Party is holding its weekly meeting in the first and last cars of a train of the underground running between Déli Railway Station and Órs vezér tér at 7.30 on the 8th of February 1990. All passengers are welcome". After the death of

the party's founder, György Krassó, in 1991, the continuation of such near anarchist practices is doubtful.

The closest links with these "playful" political actions are to be sought in alternative music or neo-avantgarde cultures. In the case of alternative pop-groups, the mere choice of a name was often a twisting and desecration of a number of "academic" concepts as well as evidence of the emotional insecurity which characterized young people in particular. The straightforward and bold words and the strange posters of groups like Balkan Futourist, Trabant, Európa Kiadó (Europe Publishing House) and later of Aurora, Máynsi Kalapács (May Hammer) and Red Marinetti expressed a state of mind which was not particularly popular with the politicians of those days. The political changes were an affirmation of all the questions and problems raised in the words while driving the authors to further radicalization so that their songs would not become boring and out-dated. The withdrawal

of Soviet military forces from Hungary—hopefully the final one—has occasioned farewell songs, such as *Bye, bye Szása...* (Bye-Bye Sasha) and *Viszlát Iván* (See You Later, Ivan). The concert the popular Beatrice group gave in early 1990 had a complex set, in which the background consisted of huge portraits of Hitler and Stalin on the two sides of a red star. A rubbish bin with the words "Red Army" written on it was on the stage itself. The singer, who was wearing a rope around his neck, took a machine gun, a hammer and a sickle from the bin, while singing a medley of various marches of the working class movement, as well as his own songs.

**EUROPE
AGAINST
THE
CURRENT
AMSTERDAM**

1989

**group
INCONNU
Hungary**



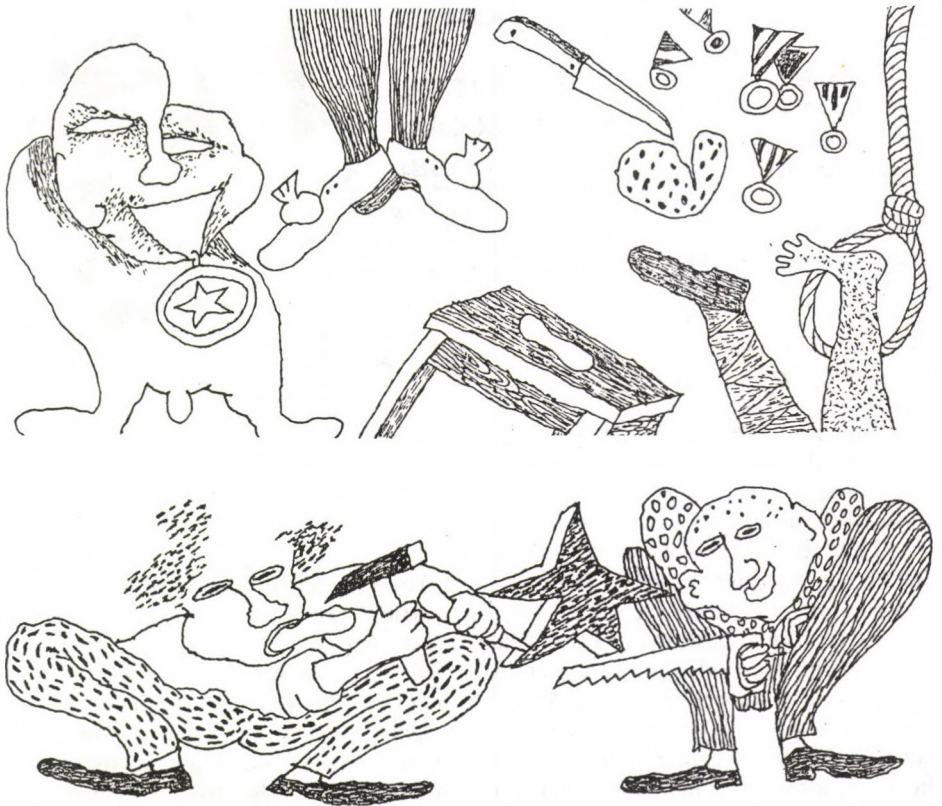
Inconnu: Sticker for an international festival of alternative art and politics. 1989.

More sensitive and sophisticated expressions were often overshadowed by harsh and straightforward ones. Balázs Galkó's action, *Vér és arany* (Blood and Gold) in 1990 was based on the historical coincidence that the day the Rumanian revolution broke out happened to be Stalin's birthday. The artist endowed the blood motive associated with distatorship with a positive aura. One had to give blood in order to be admitted to the action

which took place in the Young Artists' Club in Budapest on the 21th of December. The installation consisted of 3x3 video screens placed on each other, in each of which a premixed programme could be seen. Each programme was a typical genre: horror, action film, quiz, news and so on. In the middle of the installation, the artist himself was reading literary texts. One could glimpse a more ambitious way of reflecting on the world.

There are tracks of thought and un-verbalized emotions about the last few years in all of us. Politicians, artists (and the "political artist") shape and express these and each spectator identifies with the way of expression most to his or her taste. After the success of the Stalin-

Rákosi exhibition, the Museum of Modern History is planning a new one on the Kádár era. Pálma Baász-Szigeti's action, the burial of the hammer and sickle, is still in a state of preparation in Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfintul Gheorghe – Transylvania). Opposite the Kerepesi cemetery in Budapest, the resting place of the great sons of Hungary, one can see the towering building of the Social Security Institution. It is still the old arms which are offered for public delight in a huge stone frame on the corner of the building, with the visible imprint of the removed crest of the 1950s. Their place will soon be taken by the new arms with the crown. That is, the old arms with the crown.



Eitkeni Károly 91.

Iván Bächer

The Blue Danube

In fact, my father was supposed to die some time in 1944. My father did not die, however.

Thanks are due to at least seventeen people. First, to the Hungarian officer who let his forced labour brigade leave the Diósgyőr timber-yard, where they were working, when the frontline was drawing too near.

My father arrived in Budapest on the 4th of November, the day when Margaret Bridge was accidentally blown up. First of all he went to 17 Teleki Pál utca.

"*Armer Misi!*", cried the old maid from Vienna who had held the highly responsible office of a German governess (what we Hungarians call a *Fräulein*) in my father's childhood, first in Arany János utca, then in the Phönix House.

Aunt Stefi laid the table, lit a fire in the bathroom boiler, found some clean clothes and called Lajos.

So Aunt Stefi was the second one to save my father's life.

Lajos, my father's uncle, came the next day.

Lajos, who later worked for Radio Free Europe, was at one time chief sub-editor at what later became the extreme right-wing newspaper *Új Magyarország*. With the help of contacts he made then, dozens if not hundreds of people were saved in 1944.

So on the 5th of November it was Lajos who saved my father's life by taking him to the Hole.

Since a fair few literary people had enjoyed the hospitality of the Hole, a number of them have written about it—including Eszter, the daughter of a great poet, and Uncle Sándor, thanks to whom the Hole existed.

The Hole was an odd sort of locality in the house at 21 Kissvábhegy utca, of Emil Nagy, a lawyer and ex-Minister of Justice (Office: 7 Aulich utca). It was a 60 cm wide, 1.20 m high and 8 m long invisible passage under the terrace, which had presumably served some sort of drainage purposes and which, after removing a number of bricks, could be entered through a hole in the wall.

There was enough room for eight in the Hole and people would only stay until their papers were ready.

Iván Bächer is a free-lance journalist, son of the pianist Mihály Bächer.

So Dr Emil Nagy was the fourth one to save my father's life.

The fifth was Rudolf Steiner. He was the father of anthroposophy, and one of the best known anthroposophists in Budapest was the wife of Emil Nagy. Since Uncle Sándor was also an anthroposophist, he knew her very well and this is how the Hole came into being. Uncle Sándor would be naturally the sixth one to name, although he would firmly deny it if he were alive: he found all this self-evident and the soul is immortal.

Seven or eight days later, anyway, Lajos brought the papers for a certain Mihály Bálint. The person who had a key role in the preparation of these papers, Lajos's cousin, Zoli, was a Social Democrat and had ample opportunity to become familiar with the prison fare of two political systems: that of the period in question, as well as that of the one he so intensely wished for. My thanks are due to him too, since he was the seventh.

Furnished with perfect papers, my father moved from the Hole to Uncle Ali's Pension Renaissance at 21 Irányi utca. One of my father's best friends at the Református Gimnázium was Uncle Ali's son, nowadays an impressario in Paris. Tamás behaved like a hero or young blood (whichever you prefer). He was the one who got my grandfather out of the ghetto, he was a regular for lunch at the Officers' Club and often took my father too in his uniform without markings. The brazennes of this can only be appreciated by someone who was both a deserter and a Jew in Budapest in the winter of 1944.

Some dozen people were living in the Pension, of whom only a few were neither Jews nor deserters, nor Poles, nor Social Democrats nor Commies.

The house was full of pistols, guns, hand grenades but most of all of youthful, boisterous life. Sándor Csiky, the Pest County Chief Constable, must be thanked for that. He and Uncle Ali, who owned pretty large estates in County Szabolcs, used to sing maudlin Hungarian folksy songs together and they would go on singing in the living room for days on end.

So the eighth, ninth and tenth to be thankful to are Tamás, Uncle Ali and Mr Csiky.

Bandi, the nephew of the leading critic of the literary magazine *Nyugat*, and József, who would become the secretary of the Social Democrat politician who was to have an important role in the 1948 fusion of the Communist and the Social Democratic parties, had my father posted to the Máriaremete unit of the Gellérthegy Anti-Aircraft Battery.

Eight people (including four country lads) served there with the huge gun, which was complete with everything except for its barrel.

There was Iván, bearing the name of the most famous string quartet of the age, who came back on a visit from Connecticut last week and only told me now that he was an underground communist then. There was Gyurika, who died not so long ago and who had become a famous pianist in London. There was Lajos, who would become a confidential counsellor to the Greek Prime Minister who was ousted in 1990. And there was Mihály Bálint, and the four of them had a whale of a time in Máriaremete.

The four country lads were not dumb, so they are to be thanked too. (Fourteen.)

The soldiers from Budapest went on leave on the 24th of December. By the time they reached the City, Máriaremete had been occupied by the soldiers of the Red Army.

So they went back to the Pension Renaissance for a few days and when the frontline drew close, they moved to Lali's house.

Lali's parents were concierges in the Almásy Palace on the corner of Esterházy (now still Puskin) and Múzeum utca.

The aristocratic Almásy family had left for the West. The pretty building designed by Antal Gottlieb, an honest builder from the Józsefváros, was the headquarters of the Swedish Red Cross, which would leave a great number of papers, forms, documents and stamps behind when moving out of the building in early January.

Dear Swedes, thanks for everything!

At that time, however, the greatest merit of the palace was the well in its courtyard, which could be used all the time.

My father never paid any attention to the beautiful, darkhaired girl who was standing in line every day to fetch water for the cellar of 4 Baross utca, and who was to become his wife and my mother.

What my father remembers best from this time is the superb garlic rubbed fried bread made by the mother of Lali, a classmate in the Református Gimnázium.

If it had not been for the three members of the concierge's family, my father would not be alive today.

The group was well prepared: they had civilian clothes, Hungarian uniforms, they had papers with swastikas, and with Cyrillic letters, there were both Russian and German speakers, and—to be on the safe side—even one Yiddish speaker amongst them.

So when comrade Pongó rushed into the cellar shouting "The Germans are here!", they put on the Hungarian uniforms and Arrow-cross armbands and got out the appropriate papers without thinking.

To err is human. It was not the Germans who had come.

Lali's father, who had been a prisoner of war in the Great War, could set things right for himself and his family, but the tired, unshaven Russian captain insisted on taking the others: The young men were obstinate and to the utter bewilderment of the soldier, who at this point probably took most things without turning a hair, they declared they were not going. An hour later the captain was yelling, another hour later he slapped my father's face, and when the third hour had passed, he fired into the ceiling.

The desperate group was already beginning to queue up at the bottom of the beautiful, glass-roofed staircase, which is still to be seen today, when my father started to beat his chest shouting "Artist, artist!", seized the captain by the arm and dragged him up to the black Steinway still standing undamaged in the salon. The next moment the happy, carefree melodies of the Blue Danube Waltz filled the halls and escaped through the open windows.

So Johann Strauss is the sixteenth to be thanked.

There is perhaps no need to mention that all the people who appear in this story—Aunt Stefi, the Hungarian soldiers, Emil Nagy and his family, the Thúry, Schöpflin, Waldbauer, Erdős, Eskulist, Horvát, Török and Orosz families—risked summary execution.

Thank God, they all survived those difficult days. When Misi and the others ventured outside the palace to find out what happened in the *pension*, it was only the bullet-riddled corpse of the Russian captain that they had to step over on Kálvin tér.

Strangely enough, neither my father, nor the others, have ever doubted that the captain is one of the rescuers, the seventeenth.



Endre Tóth

Pannonia Christiana

We do not know who the first Christians in Pannonia were, and how the new religion reached this province of the Roman Empire. Up to the last third of the 3rd century all the written sources and archaeological finds are silent on the question. Then there appears a great Christian known by name. Bishop Victorinus of Poetovio (Ptuj, Yugoslavia) was the author of a great many exegeses of Holy Scripture, some of which have survived. His work was overshadowed only by St Jerome, who was also born in this region, in Strido, on the border between Pannonia and Illyria. Jerome drew largely on the work of Victorinus. Victorinus was a frequently used name in the central Danube region; the bishop was in all probability native to the region. He wrote in Latin, but his language shows signs of Greek. His position as a bishop of an important Pannonian town and his writings imply at least several decades of Christianity in the province. To presume that Victorinus had precedents and that his emergence was not an isolated accident in Pannonia is backed by the persecutions of Christians in the region soon after, in the reign of Diocletian. Several martyrs are known by name and their hagiographies suggest a Christian environment, Christian communities and a Church. Martyrs in the time of Diocletian were priests and bishops of communities and not individual Christians.

Endre Tóth is an archaeologist specializing in the Imperial period.

It is not surprising that little is known about Christians in the Danubian basin prior to the 4th century since before Constantine the Great they were not identifiable through any characteristic apparel or personal belongings. Their services, their assembly house or *ecclesia* had still no—or hardly any—permanent building or form. It was only from Constantine's time onwards that the *domus*, the house, was turned into a basilica, the hall of the Heavenly King, a building modelled outwardly on the public assembly hall. We know from Tertullian, the father of Christian literature in Latin, that it did not become a professing Christian to display finery or to follow pagan ways. Early in the 3rd century, Clemens Alexandrinus advised Christians who refused luxury and riches but had to carry seals for their daily work, to have them incised with emblems in keeping with the Christian view of life and morals, rather than with pagan gods, mythological scenes or arms. Clemens suggested that the dove, the vessel, the anchor, the lyre, among others, should be engraved on the seal-ring. Since these symbols were of neutral religious purport, they could be equally used by pagans and Christians, which makes it impossible to determine the faith of the interred from the grave-goods. The change came during the reign of Constantine the Great, with the use of the Greek Chi-Rho (XP) monogram for Christ, which was soon adopted by large numbers of Christians.

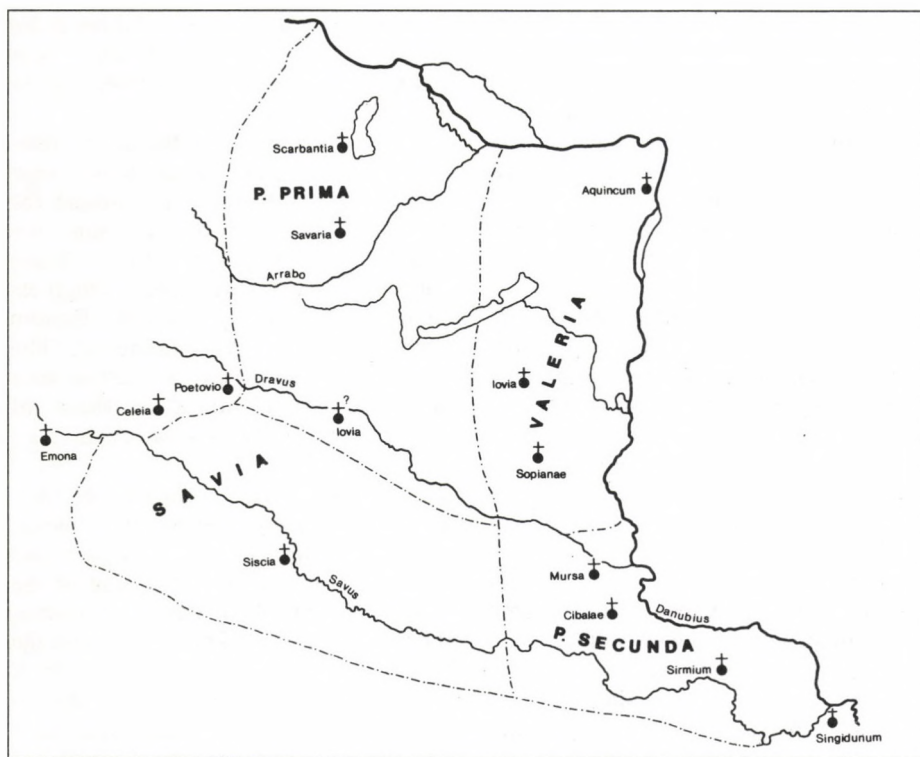
What has been written about Christianity in Pannonia before the time of Victorinus amounts to conjecture, based on what is known of the history of the

province and of the spread of Christianity as such.

Tradition and legend trace the beginnings in the central Danube region back to the time of the Apostles. These, however, are mostly late constructions for the time gap. In all probability the starting point is St Paul's phrase: "so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15.19). In the 1st century Illyricum covered the province of Pannonia as well. We do not know how far St Paul travelled in Illyricum or whether his preaching was successful there. He very likely stuck to the coast. We know that in the 10–11th century Epaenetus and Andronicus, whom Paul mentions (Romans 16.5, 7), were surmised to have been bishops at Sirmium in Southern Pannonia. In the 4th century Sirmium was an imperial residence, the largest city in the Danube region, the site of synods. It would have pleased the Christians in the Eastern Empire to be able to trace their faith back locally to apostolic times. Another passage (II Timothy 4.10) mentions that Titus had been active in Dalmatia; likewise we have no way of knowing whether Titus had any effect there or further north in Pannonia.

Gospel passages like these provided ample food for conjecture and we have much of traditional lore that tells of early Christians in Pannonia. Abbot Agnellus wrote about Apollinaris, the first Bishop of Ravenna (who, according to tradition, was sent to Ravenna by St Peter) that, as a prisoner, he was taken from Ravenna through Salona (Dalmatia) to Pannonia, and then carried southwards along the Danube, finally ending up in Corinth. Apollinaris's route may well be a legend but it could still perhaps be based on vague memories of early missionary activity there. The Christian community in Ravenna, which was rooted in Asia Minor, spread the faith in Dalmatia, which was on the way to Pannonia. A church near

Ravenna was dedicated to Demetrios, who was martyred at Sirmium, in late antiquity. That is evidence of a sort and so are the close links between Pannonia and Ravenna in the first century A. D. Veterans of the Ravenna fleet were settled in Siscia and possibly in Sirmium, too, in Pannonia when these colonies were founded. Recruiting for the Ravenna fleet took place in Pannonia as well and, after having served their time, some of the sailors returned to their native land with their families. It may well be possible that these contacts from the 1st century continued and exerted their effect in later centuries as well. At the time of the Christian empire, such memories were revived and they were surmised to have Christian conversion in their background. And finally, if one considers that the strongest cultural influence reached Pannonia from two directions, this might really have furthered missionary work originating from Ravenna. The earlier cultural stimulus came, with varying intensity, from Northern Italy, with Aquileia as a starting point, and much from the Po valley reached the province along the Amber Route. That was the route along which the merchants of Italy took the Isis cult to Savaria (now Szombathely), the most important Pannonian town on the Amber Route. The *Iseum* was the result. A possible Christian mission from Ravenna and Aquileia easily fits with this train of thought. The other route started in the East and mainly affected the eastern and north-eastern parts of Pannonia, as is also evident from archaeological finds. Soldiers from Asia Minor and Syrian merchants were mainly responsible. They brought along the cult of Iuppiter-Dolichenus, the earliest relic of which was found in Carnuntum, Pannonia. Syrian soldiers however had no contact with Christianity whatsoever but rather with various pagan cults of Asia Minor, which they maintained in their closely knit communities in Pannonia. The same holds



Late Roman Pannonia

true of the few Jews who must have been living in Pannonia, as tombstones bear out. It would be illusory to believe that in the 1st and 2nd centuries the scattered Jews in the European provinces of the empire would have been more receptive to Christianity than others. So to believe that the Jews in the border provinces, including Pannonia, were more easily evangelized is a romantic notion which sprang from a mistaken analogy with early 1st century Palestine.

All one can surmise is that, just as with other cultural influences, Christianity penetrated Pannonia from two directions: from Northern Italy through Ravenna and Aquileia, and from the Balkans.

It may be paradigmatic that the first known Pannonian Christian is a bishop

of Poetovio, in the second half of the 3rd century. The city was of key importance for traffic in the central Danube, even in the Middle Ages. People travelling from the Mediterranean northwards passed through the Dinaric Alps; Poetovio was where their road met that running eastward to the Danube and the imperial city of Sirmium, eastwards to the Mura and Drava valleys and Noricum, and another running northward to the Danube and beyond it the Barbaricum. Its geographical location, and the role it played in trade, made Poetovio an ideal taxation centre. It was the headquarters of the private army recruited by Gallienus and had major importance in the dissemination of the Mithras cult, although the *Mithraeums*'s reconstruction in the 260s by recently settled soldiers suggests a decline rather than the flourishing of the cult in

the city. That the temple of the mystery religion was not reconstructed by the locals but, as inscriptions reveal, by more conservative legionaries, who had been withdrawn from Dacia, is a clear sign of the spread of the great rival, Christianity. Finally, the presence of Victorinus makes it unquestionable that by the 260-270s a significant Christian community existed in the city.

We know more about the Christians in Pannonia at the time of their persecution under Diocletian. Many of the martyrs, some twenty of them, are known by name and so is the story of their passion. They were priests and bishops, which shows that they were the victims of the first edict of 303, which demanded that priests sacrifice in the Roman tradition. The geographical distribution of the martyrs is significant: most of them were executed in Sirmium, in Pannonia Secunda. So it seems that the edicts were carried out with greater severity in administrative centres, perhaps to set an example and intimidate Christians. This appears to be supported by the fact that in several cases Christians from other provinces were also taken to Sirmium, the imperial seat, and executed there, such as Montanus and his wife, Silvanus and Venustus from Singidunum (Belgrade). This was the time of the martyrdom of Victorinus, the aged bishop of Poetovio, Bishop Eusebius of Cibalae, Bishop Iraeneus and Deacon Demetrios of Sirmium, the latter becoming a great saint of the Eastern Church, and Quirinus, the bishop of Siscia on the river Sava. We hardly know of any lay martyrs, except a few family members, the seven anonymous virgins, and Syneros, a gardener from Sirmium. That the martyrs known by name are almost exclusively from the environs of the imperial city may also be due to the central registry being there and, that of all the Pannonian towns, Sirmium remained Roman the longest. There is no evidence of persecution north of the Dravus. The

bishop of Siscia was dragged through the province to the Danube and then back to Savaria, where he was executed, to serve as a deterrent only.

The martyrs were first buried in Christian graveyards, later mausoleums were erected above their graves; around the end of the 4th century their remains were taken to the city's basilicas. Some Pannonian martyrs were held in high esteem and their cult spread in the Eastern Empire (Demetrios, Iraeneus). The funerary chapels of several martyrs have been identified, including those of Synerose and Iraeneus in Sirmium.

In the provinces north of the river Dravus, Pannonia Prima and Valeria, most of the Christian remains were found in two civilian centres. The seat of the civilian proconsul of Valeria, Sopianae (Pécs) is the earliest known findspot: the first painted crypt was uncovered there in the 18th century and several more were subsequently found. Excavations have unearthed several hundreds of graves and dozens of sepulchral structures of different ground plans. But the Roman town itself remained hidden until quite recently, and even its site had only been surmised. The 4th century graveyards of Sopianae are marked by a great many smaller or larger sepulchral structures, surrounded by the burials and the painted crypts under the mausoleum. They convey the cultural influences that reached the province from two directions; the ground plan of the mausoleums above ground imitates those in Dalmatia and Northern Italy, while the painting in the underground chambers display old Balkan ways, with pagan images supplemented by Christian symbols and scenes. Such painted Christian vaults have been excavated in Silistra, Serdica, Naissus and other places, as well as in and around Sopianae. More to the north, in Valeria, there were fewer sepulchral chapels within one graveyard, and no underground vaults have so far been found. In Jovia (north of present-

day Dombovár) there were at least eight such chapels in one cemetery, in Ságvár, further north again, there were only three, and in the northern part of the province only one each.

Some vaults with relatively undamaged paintings have been excavated in Sopianae. The one excavated first even had a barrel-vault in perfect condition, complete with the medallions portraying the deceased. The main wall of this chamber is decorated by the Chi-Rho with apostles, possibly the two principal apostles rendering homage to it. The side walls show biblical scenes in rectangular fields. The subjects belong to the Fall-Redemption cycle. This is also the case in another burial chamber, with paintings of Adam and Eve with the Tree of Knowledge, Noah's escape from the Flood, the story of Jonah, Daniel in the lions' den and themes from Christology: the Virgin and Child, and the Three Wise Men.

The Sopianae paintings are not the only ones with biblical themes in the province. Typical finds of the region are small wooden caskets with figural bronze mountings, presumably from the two mints in southern Pannonia, in Siscia and Sirmium. The rectangular or round medallions often feature biblical scenes: Daniel in the lions' den, Moses striking water from the rock, the Marriage Feast at Cana, the raising of Lazarus. (The caskets were used to keep, or present, jewels, documents or liturgical objects.)

Savaria was the seat of the prefect of Pannonia Prima. Quirinus, the bishop of Siscia, was sentenced to death in the amphitheatre of this city; he was thrown into the Savaria brook from the bridge with a millstone tied round his neck. Both the amphitheatre and the foundations of the bridge over the brook have been found. But the building which was once thought to be his funeral basilica has turned out to have been the state room of the governor's palace, also suited to receive the emperor—a single-naved hall, 47m long and

16m wide, with marble panelling and mosaic flooring. Many old Christian gravestones have been found in the old Christian cemetery of the town, with the Chi-Rho and other Christian symbols, evidence of a flourishing Christian community. This is also apparent from the passion of Quirinus and the hagiography of Martinus (St Martin), who was born in Savaria and later became bishop of Tours. His father was a high-ranking officer of the palace legion stationed in Savaria. Martin was still a child when the family left Savaria and went to Northern Italy; later he served as a legionary in Gaul, and became the patron saint of the Merovingians, most honoured in the Middle Ages. Although the church dedicated to him in Savaria-Szombathely is a 17th century Baroque building, current excavations provide evidence of continuous ritual use. The site was used as a cemetery from mid-1st century to the 1960s, burials being held right through. In late Antiquity, a burial chapel stood there, which later, at the time of the Carolingian Ostmark, in the 9th century, was replaced by a stone building. The Hungarians first built a wooden church on the site, and in the 12th century replaced it with a stone church; medieval tradition called it the house where St Martin was born.

Martin was a failure in his home town. He succeeded in baptizing his mother, but his father remained a pagan, and the Arian priests ousted him from the city. This happened sometime in mid-4th century, when Pannonia played a prominent part in the history of Christianity in the Danube region, as a citadel of Arianism, which was supported by the emperor himself. When in 325 the Council of Nicaea condemned Arius, the priest of Alexandria, for denying the true divinity of Christ, he was exiled by the emperor to Illyricum, which resulted in the spread of Arianism in the province. We do not know about Arius's activity in the province, but he won over two priests, Valens and

Ursacius, who later became bishops and avid propagators of Arianism. Valens was active in Mursa in Pannonia (Eszék or Osijek, Yugoslavia), and Ursacius in Singidunum (Belgrade), and their activity determined the life of the region for several decades. In 350, when the legions of Constantius II defeated Magnentius, the rebellious rival emperor, in a bloody battle near Mursa, the news of the victory was brought to the emperor by the Arian bishop. After this his influence increased even further.

From the 360s onwards, orthodox Christianity gradually replaced Arianism in Pannonia. A unique relic from this time is the record in dialogue form of a theological dispute in Sirmium in 366. By the 370s, after the death of its leaders and the activity of St Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, Arianism lost more ground in the Roman Empire, though it flourished among the Gothic peoples.

Nothing much is known about the influence, if any, this theological dispute had on the Christian inhabitants. What may be the only likeness of Arius extant was found in southern Valeria (in Kisdorog, Tolna County), in the form of a brick incision on a gravestone in a Roman rural graveyard from the late Roman period.

The records of the martyrs, the Arian disputes and the signatures of the councils throw light on the organization of the Church in Pannonia. In the southern part of the province all the places of town rank were presumably dioceses, as is known for certain in the cases of Sirmium, Cibalae, Mursa, Siscia and Poetovio. Few records have survived from the territories to the north. The large Christian communities in the two civilian proconsular seats of Sopianae and Savaria lead us to presume they were dioceses. In Aquincum (north of Budapest) a double basilica renders the existence of the diocese probable; the diocese of Iovia is a certainty while the identification of the town itself is questionable. Records about

the diocese of Scarbantia have survived from 572, at the end of Pannonian Christianity. The example of Scarbantia shows that the Christian communities in the other towns in Northern Pannonia—at least those which still survived by the 4th century—were very likely also headed by bishops.

Martyrs, bishops, councils: the struggle between Arians and the Orthodox, theological disputes on the nature of the true dogma. Churches and mausoleums being built, more than once with ingenious ground plans, rich ornamentation, splendid interiors and biblical murals. The dead in crypts awaiting resurrection. Pannonia seems to have turned Christian. And yet, this is a deceptive image, which may be explained in part by the relative silence surrounding the pagans of the 4th century owing to the change in the nature of archaeological finds and, in part, by the interests of archaeologists, who have collected and studied the Christian finds with more intensity, seeming to have forgotten that such a fundamental religious change could not have taken place overnight. Even a thousand years was not enough for Europe to adopt Christianity. To put it in a simplified form, the process of the change meant that while Christianity ousted paganism as the state religion, the “lower” manifestations of religious life, divination and magic, folk customs and rites were to live on for another millenium.

By a stroke of luck, a group of finds has thrown light on one of the forms of folk religion of late antiquity.

By the 4th century, the typical custom of setting up domestic altars disappeared, and with it also went one of the most important sources for the study of pagan religion. But in southern Pannonia the custom seems to have given place to new ritual objects in the form of gold and silver rings which, based on their shape and the conditions of their discovery, can

be clearly dated to the late Roman empire. Their incised inscriptions express the religious feelings of the owners: they are dedicated to the god Silvanus. Rings from late antique graveyards in Transdanubia (Gerulata, Scarbantia, Savaria, Fenékpuszta, Iovia, Bogád), bear witness to the wide following the Silvanus cult had and the survival of a body of pagan beliefs. The name of the god is particularly interesting and highly revealing. It has long been surmised that this ancient Italian god, who had been ousted from the state religion had specific links with Pannonia; after Jupiter, the second largest number of inscriptions in the province are to him. After the Roman occupation, the original Celtic-Illyrian population found in Silvanus the god whom they could best identify with the principal deity of their own religion and whom they then honoured under his Latin name in the inscriptions of the altars they set up after the custom introduced by the Romans. Despite the spread of Christianity, devotion to Silvanus remained deeply rooted amongst the Romanized natives, expressing their basic desires and fears. At a time when it was no longer customary, nor commendable, nor a citizens' duty to set up altars to the pagan gods, the devotees of Silvanus in Pannonia still found a way to express their faith and, to be in a tangible proximity to their god, they wore votive rings dedicated to Silvanus.

The worship of Silvanus and the rite survived in the Christian 4th century as a logical counterbalance of the institutionalized religious life in the empire, with its strictly regulated ceremonies.

In the provinces the main manifestation took the form of the emperor cult which was intended to ensure loyalty to the emperor, in the upper echelons at least. This, of course, was not a religion that could satisfy the spiritual needs of the simple farmers of Pannonia or of the other provinces. Fertility rites—for man, animals and the soil, by

magic and good and evil spirits—were a living reality for them, as can be seen even from the few surviving relics. In Pannonia the embodiment of these beliefs, the figure most thoroughly Romanized was Silvanus, with his fertility and lethal qualities, his woodland ambience and his attendants, the travelling goddesses (the Silvanae, Quadriviae and Triviae). The end of the Roman religion, and the emperor cult made little difference to such things. Christianity, during the first period of its spread, battled mainly with the emperor cult and the gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon, and paid little heed to popular superstition. During the 4th century, Christianity successfully overcame institutionalized Roman religion. The Christian emperors also supported this—no doubt easier to attain—objective. Paganism of some sort necessarily continued in the 4th and 5th centuries and, indeed, lived on for many more centuries.

Starting with the 5th century, the Church Fathers, including Maximus Taurinensis and Martinus Bragensis, began to fight these superstitions. From then on, their rites could only be clandestinely practised. Finally, over the centuries, they sank into the underworld, becoming demons and devils, were secularized and lost any religious meaning. Silvanus, who in no way was a rival to Christianity, still survived in the Middle Ages, in Alpine valleys, as a diabolic figure or, more tamely, as a wild man of the woods, a good or evil spirit.

Though there were breaks, the history of Christianity in Pannonia is continuous from Victorinus in the late 3rd century to the late 8th century. The church hierarchy, based on towns, survived the end of the Roman administration and the flight of the population. Here as in other provinces, the church stood for relative safety in an uncertain world. After the disintegration of secular administration, it was the church, established in the reign of Constantine the Great, which integrated those Roman inhabitants

who had stayed on in a lost province. Priests and bishops negotiated with tribal chieftains. Not much is known of what actually took place in Pannonia, but St Severinus in neighbouring Noricum is well known. He lived at the court of Attila the Hun and later took Holy Orders. He displayed an extraordinary gift in leading the people of the marches and securing their existence with the barbarians. The bishops of the southern region of Pannonia were still remembered in the 5th and 6th centuries. Vigilius, the last bishop of Scarbantia (Sopron) in the north, attended a council in Northern Italy in 572 as a fugitive.

The first chapter of the history of Christianity in Pannonia ended with the collapse of Roman rule. The Christian population, from time to time added to by prisoners-of war of Mediterranean origin, survived the tempests of the great migration. Christian jewelry from the early Avar period indicates the religion of their owners. But from the late 7th century onwards, these must have disappeared. They were forgotten by the universal Church and became isolated among the Avars. Still, at the very end of the 8th century, when in 796 King Pepin of Italy led a campaign to the land of the Avars, the Patriarch Paulinus of Aquileia, who

travelled with him, recorded what must have been a surprise to them, that many Christians lived among the Avars, with uneducated, illiterate priests. By the end of the 8th century, these Christians of Pannonia again established relations with the universal (Frankish) Church. Churches were built and priests sent to the western part of Pannonia. But in 896, the Magyar conquest put an end to such efforts for another hundred years. A new start had to wait until Prince Géza and the baptism of his son, the future Saint Stephen the King.

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János Makkay

Herodotus Was Right

The ancient homeland of the Hungarians

The current crisis in the Baltic has renewed interest in the origins of the peoples of the region and their languages. Though comparatively few in numbers, these peoples are strikingly stubborn in their efforts to regain their liberty and preserve their own languages. The Estonians in the north, and the Latvians and Lithuanians in the south of the region, have been neighbours for at least four thousand years. Estonian belongs to the Finno-Ugric group of the Uralian languages; the other two languages belong to the Baltic branch of the north-western group of the Indo-European family, a close relative to the Celtic, Italic, Germanic and Slavonic languages.

Linguistically, this Baltic branch is the most conservative and archaic of all surviving Indo-European sub-groups. The maintenance of an ancient linguistic frontier in Europe, despite some occasional shifts, is a rarity indeed. The Finno-Ugric peoples and their languages were, and are, mostly west of the Urals; they stretch from Northern Scandinavia eastwards, from the Lapps to the Balto-Finns (Finns and Estonians) to the Volga-Finns (Mordvinians and Cheremis) to the Permians (Zyryans and Votyaks) and finally to the speakers of the

Ugric languages: Voguls, Ostyaks and the ancestors of Hungarians. The other branch of Uralic consists of the Samoyed who have, since ancient times, lived mostly east of the Urals. The original habitat of the Uralic peoples was forest lands from where, with the exception of the Estonians, they were gradually pushed northwards by southerners.

South of this once huge area, enclosed by Southern Scandinavia, the Southern Baltic region and the Caspian sea, there lived peoples speaking Indo-European languages for thousands of years: going from West to East, these were Proto-Germans, Proto-Balts, then Proto-Slavs and, finally, the Indo-Iranians of the steppes.

Current research shows considerable interest in Uralic prehistory. One of the reasons is that these approximately 25 million persons, including 16 million Hungarians, who speak the protofamily's languages must be the smallest linguistic family to occupy the largest Eurasian territory in proportion to their numbers, from Lapland to the river Ob and recently even to the Sayan Mountains. (Compare this with the two billion speakers of Indo-European languages.) Because of the low number of speakers (of the close relatives of Hungarians, 7,710 individuals spoke Vogul and 21,138 spoke Ostyak in 1970) and their geographical dispersion, these peoples have lived in isolation for centuries (Hungarians even for millennia). Their languages have thus drifted far apart. Hungarians do not understand a single word spoken by a Vogul or Ostyak. Another reason for the interest in them is

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the fact that, due to their geographic location, the Uralic language speakers attracted the interest of outside observers later, and became literate and were converted to Christianity even later than most of the Indo-European speaking peoples. Thus tradition, mythology and epic poetry have preserved a number of archaic features, which further South have either disappeared altogether or survive only fragmentarily. For instance, the first Estonian (and Latvian) book was printed as late as 1525 at Wittenberg, where Philipp Melanchthon, Martin Luther's friend, had been teaching Greek at the university from 1518. According to János Balázs, Hungarian, Estonian and Finnish students may have often met Luther and each other in Melanchthon's home around 1535, whilst "being quite unaware of their native idioms' relatedness (that is, of the idea of the Uralic family)." One of them, Georginus Sabinus (Melanchthon's son-in-law) evokes the inhabitants of the far North with the classic Christian-pagan contrast in a verse epistle in Latin distichs addressed to Cardinal Pietro Bembo:

*There is a savage race of rustics under the
North Star
that has as yet no notion of true religion
but worships as deities blue-green snakes
and performs unspeakable rites of ram
slaughter.*

The linguistic contacts (mostly loan-words) between the Finno-Ugric and Indo-European dialects help explain the inner development, especially the origins of sound changes, in the Proto-Germanic, Proto-Baltic and Indo-Iranian dialects. Despite millennia of contacts along the long linguistic border between the Baltic and the Southern Urals, few written records were set down by Indo-European speakers on their northern and north-eastern neighbours, even though they traded in furs, Baltic amber and Uralian ores, especially copper, with them. What

they knew about the northerners was shrouded in legend. For them, Thule was the northernmost part of the habitable world, beyond the north winds (Hyperboreans) in a region of six months of daylight alternating with six months of night (Pomponius Mela: *de Chorographia* 3,36). On the other hand, Herodotus in the 5th century B.C. is probably describing the Ugric ancestors of Hungarians when reporting on the Yugra people living west of the Urals. And Tacitus is sure that the Aestii (the Estonians) lived on the eastern coast of the Baltic. He describes their religion and customs and says they collected amber (*Germania* 42,2-5). Pliny the Elder tells us that a Roman knight went to the Baltic to obtain amber for the Romans in Nero's time, and that the largest piece of amber brought to Rome weighed thirteen pounds (*Naturalis Historia* 37,3).

After that, however, Finno-Ugrians failed to attract the interest of historians or geographers for almost a thousand years, except where events taking place on the steppe were concerned. In his *Cosmographia*, written in 1458, Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405-1464, elected Pope Pius II in 1458) does provide some authentic information. Referring to a monk from Verona who reached the headwaters of the Don, he maintains that the original homeland of Hungarians was that Yugria, and its current inhabitants (the Voguls and Ostyaks) are the linguistic brethren of the migrating Hungarians: "*quorum eadem lingua sit cum hungaris Pannoniam incolentibus.*" For the following three centuries, the number of sources grew as wildly as that of guesses based on them, until the two new linguistic disciplines: of Indo-European and Uralistic studies, came into being. These two feature some interesting coincidences.

Sir William Jones, an Englishman in the service of the East India Company, turned a series of apparent language similarities into an extraordinary discov-

ery in 1786. He found that the grammatical forms and vocabulary of Sanskrit bore a striking resemblance to those of Greek and Latin, so much so that "no philologist could examine them all three without believing them to have sprung from one common source" (i.e. from Indo-European). His discovery, however, was not properly systemized until some decades later, after the publication of works by Franz Bopp (1816), Rasmus Rask (1818) and Jacob Grimm (1819). The recently deceased János Balázs found out that those engaged in Uralistics had preceded their colleagues in the Indo-European field in drawing up and utilizing the still valid principles of comparative linguistics. The Hungarian scholars János Sajnovics (1735–1785) and Sámuel Gyarmathi (1751–1830) published their works in Latin: *Demonstratio. Idioma Ungarorum et Lapponum idem esse*, by Sajnovics in 1770, and *Affinitas linguae Hungaricae cum linguis Fennicae originis grammaticae demonstrata*, by Gyarmathi in 1790. (The *Demonstratio* appeared in 1972 in German and the *Affinitas* in 1983 in English.) The comparisons made by Sajnovics and Gyarmathi covered the whole range of Finno-Ugrian dialects (in the time of Bopp and Rask, Armenian, Kurdish and Albanian had not yet been identified as Indo-European languages). They also revealed some closely linked dialect groups (e.g., the Ugrian where Hungarian belongs). The methodological base for their comparisons was solid, as they applied the principles of regular sound affinities, grammatical elements and the origins of loan words. Aspects of chronological order were also employed, as were grammatical and material affinities (e.g., the plural k in Hungarian and Lapp) over and above structural and typological resemblances. Even Rask admits their precedence in passing when discussing his comparative list of 400 Greek, Latin, Icelandic, and Gothic words: later scholars might reject some of his

comparisons, he says, but even then there will remain 150 valid ones. And that is the number of comparisons that Sajnovics made in proving the relatedness of Lapp and Hungarian!

An important international forum for Uralistics is the conference held every five years in those countries where Finno-Ugrian dialects are official languages. As there are only three such states, previous conferences have been held in Budapest (1960, 1975), Helsinki (1965), Turku (1980) and Tallin (1970). An exception was the 1985 conference held in Syktyvkar (Komi = Zyryan Soviet Republic). The 7th congress was arranged in Debrecen, Hungary, 1990. The whole range of the congress is impossible to cover here, as there were 260 to 270 lectures delivered on linguistics, 104 on ethnography, 50 on literature and 80 on archaeology and history. Of the wide-ranging programme, two topics are worthy of wider international interest. One is the origin and proto-habitat of the Uralic peoples and languages. The other is the ethnogenesis of the Hungarian language and people as a dialect and nation that made a clean break with all their relatives (geographically closest to them are the Estonians at a distance of 1,000 kms). All this is worth reviewing through Indo-European prehistory, since Indo-European language communities became familiar with writing 3,000 to 1,500 years before Finno-Ugrian or Uralic languages, which may give rise to some interesting conclusions on the latter that were once their neighbours or had contacts with them. On the other hand, as the periods in question mostly precede the appearance of writing, pre-historic archaeology will also play a role in setting up a credible homeland-model.

The foundations of pre-historic archaeology were laid down simultaneously with those of Indo-European studies. The sources of the two disciplines are totally

different. There is even a difference between them, due to the history of their methodologies. Comparative linguistics and, especially, Indo-European studies had a multitude of written and unwritten sources on living and dead languages at their disposal as early as the 19th century; the accumulation of archaeological records started with antiquarians' titbits and stray finds, and remains a never-ending and slow process. When it comes to localizing a language's proto-habitat, both linguists and prehistoric archaeologists build on the currently (or seemingly) most thoroughly investigated area. Thus, as research developed, the first choice fell on the megalithic monuments of Southern Scandinavia; these were then followed by the lake dwellings in Switzerland. From the end of the last century, research focussed on the Corded Ware of Central Germany, and in the last few decades the Kurgan culture of the Southern Russian steppes has been examined. As regards Finno-Ugric studies, the examination of the Combed Ware in the Upper Dnieper—Middle Volga—Urals area was followed by that of the Bronze Age Fatyanovo culture. This is how small and confined areas came to have been proposed as the Indo-European or Uralic Finno-Ugric proto-habitat. Thus candidates for the Indo-European peoples' proto-habitat included Scandinavia, Central Germany, the Baltic area and, most recently, the Southern Russian steppes (of the Kurgan culture), and even Eastern Anatolia. Some supposed the Uralic proto-habitat to have been the Kama area, others opted for Lake Aral, the Altay Mountains, the Central Asian desert zone or the Ob—Irtis area further east of the Urals. Some interpretations located the confined protohabitats of both families far from their historical dwellings and looked for evidence of migrations. Such views are deeply rooted in old traditions.

The Biblical interpretation of origin supposed that every language was a gift of God: He gave man the language spoken in Paradise (this can be traced back

to the Sumerian Eden, which is usually now identified as Bahrain). From the Middle Ages to the 18th century, scholars (including the Hungarian Miklós Révai) took it for granted that Hebrew was the ancestor of all languages and that peoples and languages had spread across the world from the country of the Hebrews. The Indo-Europeans and Uralians (insofar as the latter were mentioned at all) were the descendants of Japheth, Noah's third son; Gomer was supposed to have been the ancestor of the Cimmerians and Phrygians, Ashkenaz or Magog of the Scythians, Madai of the Medes, Magog, through Nemroth and Thana, of the Huns and Hungarians, Javan of the Greeks and Thracians. Another Scythian theory was based on comments made by ancient authors and maintained that all Japhetic (i.e., Indo-European) language speakers, including Huns and Hungarians since the Middle Ages, were descended from the Scythians, that is, they were the descendants of Japheth. Thus the late 13th century author Simon de Keza did not actually invent the "Hunnish History" in his *Gesta Ungarorum* (1282–1285) but created it by a skilful synthesis of the Biblical and classical interpretations of origin. Both, however, pointed to an Asian proto-habitat in the East which, coupled with the principle of a confined proto-habitat, fitted nicely with "the new sources". Sanskrit was regarded after William Jones as closest to the Indo-European proto-language. Thus the common linguistic source was also to be found in the East, "back to the Ark of Noah whence issued the three great branches of humanity whose sons proceeded from Iran where they migrated at first in great colonies".

This made it possible for the Finno-Ugric Uralic proto-habitat to be sought in the East as well, north of the Indo-Europeans and in fact anywhere east of the Urals to the Himalayas. The presumption of a confined habitat was also

understandable. This, rather than any romantic daydreaming, was what led the Hungarian scholar Alexander Csoma de Kőrös to make his way toward Lhasa (1823), even though Professor A.L. Schlözer of Goettingen himself had earlier warned Samuel Gyarmathi that no ancient Finno-Ugrians could possibly have lived in Asia.

It was G.W. Leibniz (1646–1716) who rejected the theory of all languages originating from Hebrew: “In the Garden of Eden, conversation might have flowed in Dutch as well”, as he put it in 1710. The first substantial arguments against the Sanskrit theory and the Asian origins of the Indo-European family were expressed by R.G. Latham from 1851 on, in *Elements of Comparative Philology*. (London, 1862, pp. 611–612.) Latham placed the Indo-Europeans’ proto-habitat between the Baltic area and the Carpathian mountains. From these dates it is clear that Uralistics was in advance of Indo-Germanistics here as well: after Alexander Csoma de Kőrös had begun his search for the proto-habitat in Inner Asia (1819–1842), Antal Reguly conducted a survey of the speakers of related languages in the Urals area in 1839–1847, simultaneously with the Finnish linguist M.A. Castren.

Where the confined proto-habitat theory was concerned, change came much more slowly. It is, in fact, easy to see why that theory cannot be sustained: if, for a moment, we suppose the Indo-European proto-habitat to have been in Central Germany (or in Scandinavia, or the Balkans) in the third millennium B.C. and, say, the Finno-Ugric ancestors lived on either the eastern or western slopes of the Urals at that time, then the continuous and clearly strong contacts between the two language families cannot be explained. If someone wants to bridge that distance of 1,200 miles by saying that the two basic languages quickly dispersed into dialect continuities, that too is easy

to answer: between the two confined proto-habitats there are tens of thousands of archaeological sites with the memorabilia of hundreds of thousands of individuals. Where could all those people, supposedly speakers of neither proto-language, have gone without a trace, scattering before the rapidly advancing Indo-Europeans or Uralians who were initially small in number? Furthermore, there are no traces of linguistic sub-strata in those supposedly conquered huge areas, where non-Indo-European toponyma have not been found. Such names do appear in the southern, western and northern fringes of Europe. Thus it seems that Indo-European and Finno-Ugric speakers must have dominated the heartland from an exceptionally early period. The heartland here means the full centre of the European continent between the rivers Seine and Volga; the early period would be at least the beginning of the Neolithic Age in the fourth millennium B.C. or, more probably, even far earlier than that, the early Mesolithic Age (somewhere in the eighth to tenth millennia B.C.). The earlier date is supported by the backslip of time depth: this sophisticated term means only that archaeologists tend to date the appearance of some important processes (e.g., the spreading of agriculture) to earlier and earlier periods. There is also a new research model rejecting the confined proto-habitat theory; it attributes major importance to local processes and changes, against the earlier theories of migrations, dispersion and diffusion.

All the above points to a continuity of Indo-European dialects already in existence before the early Neolithic Age, within the aforementioned larger part of the European mainland between the rivers Seine and Volga, not yet having reached the seas either to the North or South. This continuity broke into two major dialect groups, largely along the line of the river Dnieper. The Old European dialects’ proto-languages were spoken west of the

Leonard Rix

Hungarian Rhapsody

(for Béla)

The subtle polysyllables
that constitute Hungarian
in all its tripping vocables
give joy to the grammarian.

Agglutinative suffixes
make abstract thought syntactical
while moving verbal prefixes
keep self-expression practical.

Its mere appearance on the page
may fill a man with faintness,
but very soon he learns to gage
its Finno-Ugric quaintness.

The place-names hint seductively
where one might long to stay:
I know a man who visited
Hódmezővásárhely;

This reflection was written by a scholar, English and Mancunian, who had fallen in love with the Hungarian language. Leonard Rix, in charge of English language and literature at Manchester Grammar School—a famous school in the North of England—now reads Hungarian.

river, and those of the Indo-Iranians east of it. The habitats of the other Indo-European dialects were south of that area, mainly in the Carpathian basin and the Balkans.

The ancestors of the Finno-Ugrians lived north of the ancient border at that time. Nevertheless, they could not take over the northern parts of their habitat before 14,000–8,000 B.C., when the ice sheet that extended as far down as the

line of Denmark-Berlin-Moscow gradually receded. The Proto-Samoyed branch was already situated east of the Urals then. As early as the beginning of this century, Finnish and Estonian scholars (thus, J. Ailio) have argued that the ancestors of the Balto-Finns and Lapps have lived in their present habitats from at least, or even before, the early Neolithic Age. This model of Indo-European pre-history firmly supports their claim. The Finnish

Who, born in *Székesfehérvár*
and raised in *Debrecen*,
would travel in his motorcar
through *Hajdúböszörmény*.

A dark heroic history
does everywhere invest
the bullet-pitted terraces
of battered Budapest

and likewise the vocabul'ry
of this most ancient race
is peppered with the memory
of many a distant place —

of Russian steppes and Finnish fjords,
Crimea to Siberia;
the Tatar hordes left tarter words,
the Turkic none inferior.

Both Slav and Teuton thesauri
were plundered by the Magyar,
and French and Serb enriched the store
to make it even baggier.

So lexically copious,
it never fails to offer me
delight in its ingenious
grammatical machinery.

scholar of German J. Koivulehto's view is a good example. According to the archaeological model, around 2,000 B.C. there was already a civilization extending (in the form of the already mentioned Corded Ware) across the Baltic area, coming from the southwest, territorially and culturally originating from the western (Seine-Dnieper) region of the Indo-European early dialectal continuity. North, in the Baltic region (more or less

on the territory of modern Estonia as well as north and east of it) there lived peoples making Combed Ware pottery (who may be identified as either the Finno-Ugrians or some groups of them—this is the ancient linguistic border that still stands). Thus it is right to postulate that what we have here is the border between the Proto-Baltic and Proto-Balto-Finnic languages. Accordingly, Southern Scandinavia might already have featured a Proto-Germanic

linguistic situation at the time. All this suits Koivulehto, who claims that in the Balto-Finnic language stratum some loan words of a very early Proto-Germanic and Proto-Baltic linguistic stage can be identified, whereas there are markedly few borrowings traceable to early Iranian dialects.

As regards Finno-Ugric dialects spoken east of the area, including that of the Proto-Ugrians, ancestors of the Hungarians, the situation is vastly different. Here the southern contacts with speakers of Iranian dialects were quite strong already in the second millennium B.C. This was demonstrated by János Harmatta. Such contacts were particularly frequent from the beginning of the second millennium B.C., when the inhabitants of the area, enclosed by the rivers Dnieper, Volga and Kama, started producing copper tools, using Uralian ore, that is, importing the basic material from Finno-Ugric territory! Then, in the first half of the first millennium B.C., some tribes speaking a southern, that is, an Iranian language—possibly Old Scythian—got as far as the lower reaches of the river Kama, probably exerting a considerable linguistic and cultural influence on the local Ugrians.

So today, by setting up an archaeological model (which might be called a diachronic concept of large cultural entities), that operates on cultural areas that are more extended in space and time instead of on the earlier confined proto-habitats, we can also answer the old question of whether the ancestors of Finno-Ugrians may ever have lived in Asia (either on the steppes or on the taiga or even on the semi-desert). We know that the Indo-Iranian peoples and their first descendants did not cross the Urals–Caspian Sea border until about 2,000 B.C. Only then did the spread of peoples speaking Indo-Aryan and Iranian languages start towards the East and South-East, Iran and India. Speakers of any Finno-Ugric dialect could only thereafter have taken over early Iranian linguistic elements (mostly loan-

words) from their neighbours living on the western (that is, European) part of the steppes: thus they cannot have lived in Asia themselves. This argument is supported by the fact that Samoyed, the eastern branch, contains only late Iranian linguistic features (e.g., the name of iron) that are certainly post-2,000 B.C.

Thus it is more than likely that the Proto-Ugrians, ancestors of the Hungarians, lived for thousands of years exactly where Herodotus puts his Yugria: in the forest region between the Urals and the rivers Kama and Byelaya. (This is just as Gyula László, the doyen of Hungarian archaeologists, suspected). This must have been the situation until as late as the sixth century B.C., held in place by the movement of southern Iranians northward (which brought strong Iranian influences onto the old Ugric languages). A dark millennium followed, with events that we know very little of. We know even less about the reasons for our ancestors abandoning their millennia-old life of hunting and fishing; we do not know from which time and for what reasons they decided to start migrating southward to the steppes. Yet that is exactly what happened: according to the slowly accumulating historical evidence, we can reckon on a population speaking Old Hungarian on the steppes (too) from the 4th–5th centuries A.D. They lived on the steppes where the first Turkish conquerors, the Huns had arrived around 375 A.D., after crossing the River Volga. This date marks the outset of that period in which the ancestors of the people speaking Hungarian were subjected to an extended Turkic influence. This existence side by side with Turkic-speaking peoples can be asserted to have been the cause of the ultimate break-away of the Hungarian language from its relatives and, some further (historically unmapped) centuries later, its arrival in the Carpathian Basin in the late 7th century A.D., at the latest. But that is another story.

Zoltán Fejős

The Politics of Exile

Gyula Borbándi: *A magyar emigráció életrajza* (A Biography of Hungarian Exile). Vols. I-II. Európa Kiadó, 1989. 520, 328 pp.

As everywhere in Central and Eastern Europe, the revolutionary changes of 1989 were accompanied in Hungary by a breaking of the dams of censorship, which has brought great numbers of banned works, books which had been published abroad but suppressed in Hungary, documents that had been hushed up and tampered with, opposition views, programmes and histories of the recent past, to the surface. In this wave, one of the leading state publishing houses brought out Gyula Borbándi's book on post-Second World War Hungarian exiles, first published in Berne in 1985, as the first discussion of the subject.

The author, who lives in Munich, left Hungary in 1949, and is himself a leading Hungarian exile. Between 1951 and 1984, he was on the staff of the Hungarian section of Radio Free Europe. In 1950 he helped found the literary periodical *Látóhatár*, and from 1958 to 1990 he edited *Új Látóhatár*, which enjoyed high prestige amongst political and literary Hungarian publications in the West. The book is the fruit of the experience, showing both the moderation and objectivity one would expect from a man of Borbándi's reputation.

For some forty years, Hungarians in the West were, pejoratively in their own language, called "dissidents". The word

denoted not just a political refugee but all those who left after 1945; it was meant to convey the stigma of having betrayed their country. Their crime was the mere fact of departure, which implied refusal to participate in "the construction of socialism". Every departure, even of those wishing to reestablish a family separated by the war, was attributed to political motivation. In the year of the change, one of the largest-circulation Hungarian dailies devoted an editorial bidding farewell to the term "dissident". The end of this usage, and of the concept it denoted, the article said, signified the end of an absurdity typical of a whole period—the ban on free movement (*Magyar Nemzet*, May 16, 1989). Although the 1970s brought gradual changes to official policy towards Hungarians in the West, and the agitprop machinery needed more neutral expressions, it was still not left up to the individual to decide whether or not he wished to leave the country. The euphemism of "fellow country men who had been swept abroad" was applied to Hungarians in the West—if they showed no hostility to the regime, or if they were of some use to it.

The author provides a politically centred discussion of the people who left for the West and of the communities and organizations they established. This makes the book an ideological history of the relationship between the Hungarians at home and abroad—the latter meaning the diaspora outside the Carpathian Ba-

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sin. "Official" bodies at home spoke of "dissidents", those abroad considered themselves "refugees", "political exiles". At least, as Borbándi points out, until the early 1980s, and let me add, because this is of great importance, this was true for the majority of those who explained their departure by political or ideological reasons. Bearing in mind his own story, it was only natural that Borbándi should treat the subject in this context. This is to his credit but it also limits him. On the credit side, his experience, the memories and documents assembled over many years, allow him to write of what he is best acquainted with and on which he has first-hand information. But it also has its drawbacks, because the social dimensions of the issue are neglected—the social stratification of the various waves of emigration and the reasons for their leaving the country.

After the war there were many who undoubtedly did have to flee but reasons cannot be narrowed down to this. Economic motivations were present not only in 1956 and the 1970s, although earlier politics seemed to dominate. Likewise, the author only raises the problem of adaptation in general terms and has practically nothing to say about assimilation. But it should be noted that Borbándi is not a historian of emigration, nor a sociologist. He is obviously aware that one could hardly consider everybody who went to the West as a political refugee. His limits should nevertheless be pointed out. An exclusively political viewpoint necessarily narrows the interpretation of the post-Second World War Hungarian diaspora in the West and even places difficulties in realistically appraising political events.

Borbándi arranges things around certain dates. The first three mark the major waves of leaving the country, and the last two the new positions taken by those who had left. "Forty-five is the beginning," he writes, "when the end of the war swept many hundreds of thousands of Hungarians to the West. Forty-seven marks the failure of democratic experiment in Hungary, the im-

pulse that set off the second wave of refugees and the institutionalizing of the exiles. Fifty-six is the year of the Hungarian revolution and the overture to the third great exodus. In sixty-three, after the years of retaliation, an opening towards Hungarian society and to the West followed, and a thawing of opposition among the exiles. Seventy-five brought the Helsinki conference, and soon after the Holy Crown of Hungary was returned to Budapest. The lessening of political activity could be sensed among Hungarians in the West concurrently with greater intellectual activity."

The three great waves involved different social groups, though no single wave was uniform. From both the social and political points of view, there were considerable differences even among those who left the country at roughly the same time. Borbándi discusses this in terms of political nuances and oppositions. He describes the activity of the exiled politicians and their parties. He outlines with imposing clarity all the organizations, committees and societies, clearly distinguishing between their political positions. (A fuller inventory of the institutions, press and political literature of the exiles could perhaps only be drawn up in an encyclopedia or reference book.) He distinguishes between those who enjoyed wide support and others who only had few followers, between things that are still valued, and oddities that verge on the ridiculous.

The start was particularly heterogeneous. In the closing months of the war, the Arrow-Cross government ordered the evacuation to Germany of many civilians, a considerable proportion of the staff of government offices, institutions and enterprises. With the approach of the Soviet Army, their numbers were swelled by refugees and, later, by Hungarian prisoners-of-war in the West. Many survivors of the concentration camps also stayed in the West. Roughly until the end of 1946 a return home was still on the cards. Due to inadequate records and an

absence of systematic research, it is difficult to provide exact figures of how many of those hundreds of thousands who reached the West stayed on in the refugee camps set up in Germany and Austria. Using data which he himself considers to be highly uncertain, Borbándi speaks of "many hundreds of thousands" of refugees staying abroad. The number presumably was lower: more reliable estimates have put the figure for people leaving in the 1945 wave at around a hundred thousand. More precise data will perhaps only be available after a further examination of new sources.

From 1947 onwards, the Communist Party quickly and ruthlessly eliminated supporters of Western parliamentarianism from the political scene. Many leaders of the coalition parties escaped to the West. In the wake of the failure to establish democracy, politicians of all shades of opinion left, gradually rather than en masse, over five or six years. The refugees of forty-seven must have been at maximum a few thousands, but among them were the most active of the future leaders. It was their political standing rather than their numbers that mattered. Both the 1945 and 1947 waves were mainly middle class, with a high proportion of officers, civil servants, professional men, as well as tradesmen and artisans who had been marginalized by nationalization. For most of them the refugee camps led to countries overseas, and apart from those remaining in Germany, relatively few stayed in Europe. For the first time Australia became an important country of reception alongside the United States, Canada, Argentina and Brazil. The settling of the surviving Jews in Palestine, and later, after the setting up of the state, in Israel, is a separate topic which, for political and other reasons, greatly differs from the main subject of this book.

The politicians who left in the first two waves failed to form a government in exile, despite several attempts to do so.

Some hoped that Admiral Horthy, the former Regent, who was taken prisoner by the Western allies (though not charged with war crimes), would take the lead in organizing exiles. Horthy, however, withdrew from every kind of public activity. The monarchists placed their hopes in Archduke Otto of Habsburg, also to no avail. The MPs of the 1939 Parliament convened a "national assembly", citing the constitution and disregarding the actual political situation. They intended to form a government out of the national assembly, but this proposal, doomed to failure from the start, was blocked by the American military authorities in Germany. The Hungarian National Council, set up in the United States by the 1947 politicians, was on much firmer foundations, and for a decade it remained the highest political authority for Hungarian exiles. Although it was not recognized by anyone as a parliament in exile, nor was its executive committee recognized as a government in exile, the organization did receive political and financial support from the U.S. government. As the highest Hungarian representation abroad, it aimed, to use the cold-war term, to "liberate" Hungary. It stood for a society and government of democratic principles. Ignoring the extreme Right as well as the Left that had gone into exile before 1945, the Council embraced a relatively wide political spectrum, even including some Social Democrats. But the organization, formed and maintained with great difficulties, had no mass basis among Hungarians abroad, was divided by ideological, political and personal conflicts, and scattered over several continents. All those who took part in active politics, were engaged in creating bodies that reflected their own views. In the mid-1950s, the council lost its importance as a result of the international situation. The more so as its members, as borne out by the heated press debates of the time, did not realize that, while still maintaining ap-

pearances, the interests of the Western powers no longer really coincided with those of the exiles.

At the end of 1956 and early in 1957, approximately 200,000 people left Hungary. Borbándi points out that, compared with the two earlier waves, the one of 1956 was much more heterogeneous as regards its social background, qualifications, occupational pattern, and political orientation. As he puts it, "they faithfully reflected contemporary Hungarian society." Unfortunately, he offers no figures nor does he refer to sociological publications. The wide international reaction to the 1956 revolution had a positive effect on the settlement and assistance provided for the refugees. Geographically they were fairly widely scattered, most of them being received by the USA, but compared to the size of the earlier Hungarian community, the highest proportion went to Canada. The European countries also took their share. Major colonies were established in Switzerland, Britain and Scandinavia at that time.

The political spectrum the 1956 refugees represented was most varied, ranging from reform communists and supporters of "socialism with a human face" to various kinds of conservatives, and ex-Arrow-Cross members of the extreme Right. This explains why they were unable to create political representation and why no Hungarian government in exile was formed after 1956 either. Every faction had its "56-men", its own image of the revolution, and these they were unable to integrate within some kind of a supreme organization for the exiles. Many allied themselves with exiles they found in their countries of settlement. Those who had taken part in the actual fighting in 1956 in Hungary, and were called "freedom fighters" throughout the world, also joined opposing factions. An important characteristic of these 1956 refugees was that, as the author puts it, "one can find exam-

ples for every possible exile attitude among them," including even a rejection of politics.

The backbone of the Hungarian diaspora in the West today consists of these 1956 refugees (and their descendants). Apart from them, more attention is due to two other sections which, from the 1970s onwards, slowly but steadily joined the Hungarians in the West, not arriving in "waves" but individually. Little is known of them. Reliable information may perhaps surface now, after the changes in Hungary. They include both those who left Hungary over the past two decades and Hungarians from neighbouring countries. No exact figures are available, but Borbándi mentions their growing numbers. Their presence is not really felt in political life, as only a few of them consider themselves to be genuine political refugees. At the same time it is true that it would be hard to visualize the functioning of the most active organizations and cultural societies of recent years without them. Up till 1989, emigration for economic reasons was only possible legally for Hungarians from Yugoslavia; it was this motive that moved the majority of those who left Hungary illegally. Communal conflicts and the depressions due to membership of an ethnic minority also featured, particularly in the case of Hungarians from Rumania.

Borbándi sees the essence of the changes within the Hungarian communities in the West, which started in the early 1970s, in the elimination of political, and the growing weight of cultural activity. He provides a persuasive picture of this change, which in fact is more of a shift of emphasis, for cultural activity had always been present. A community, such as the Hungarians abroad, with its high proportion of professional people, displays a considerable penchant for things cultural, and, as the author points out, dilettantes are well represented.

Attention is given to the literary and

political press, and book publishing maintained under stringent financial constraints. In the post-1945 years alone, nearly a thousand newspapers and periodicals were launched. The diminishing opportunities of political action have naturally weakened the position of expressly political publications; thus cultural activity was pursued in the pages of *Új Látóhatár* and *Nemzetőr* (in Munich), *Irodalmi Újság* and *Magyar Műhely* (in Paris), *Katolikus Szemle* (in Rome), *Szivárvány* (in Chicago), *Bécsi Napló* (in Vienna) and *Nyugati Magyarország* (in Montreal). By the late 1970s, several new series of books were launched, including *Magyar Füzetek*, published in Paris, which became a forum of liberal opinion. Typically of the changes, Béla Király, who had been the military commander of the 1956 revolution, became a professor of history with a reputation in the United States. From 1977 onwards, he edited the *Studies on Society in Change* series, discussing the problems of Eastern European and Hungarian history in English. Borbándi's own work was first published by the European Protestant Hungarian Free University in Berne, and valuable books were also published by other publishers, such as Griff Verlag, Aurora (Munich), Vörösváry-Weller (Toronto), Püski-Corvin (New York), Occidental Press (Washington), etc. They also provided a publishing outlet for a growing number of authors in Hungary, who could not publish at home. They had the twin effect of strengthening relations between intellectuals and opposition politicians in Hungary and those in exile—another feature of the last decade. An important part was played by the regular conferences of Hungarian intellectuals in the West, in locations ranging from Holland to Lake Hope, Ohio, and from London to Buenos Aires. From the 1970s onwards, growing emphasis has been on Hungarian language instruction and all the problems of maintaining the sense of identity of the second

generation. Borbándi mainly reviews the controversies that have flared up around these issues, as for instance the arguments concerning the question whether the teaching of Hungarian in Sunday schools in the West should rely on institutional support from communist Hungary. Indeed, future scholars should examine to what extent and how efficiently various groups of exiles in the various countries have been able to maintain a consciousness of national identity and cohesion.

On the other hand, cultural activity has had its political aspects. All the references to this activity in the book are of political significance, whether they concern the publication abroad of what the opposition in Hungary has written, invitations to Hungarian writers, artists, scholars or scientists to lecture abroad, or the efforts to inform public opinion and governments in the West of the position of Hungarian ethnic minorities in the neighbouring countries. Suffice it to quote the last sentence of the book: "Intellectual accomplishments, if valuable, can also achieve or approach political goals."

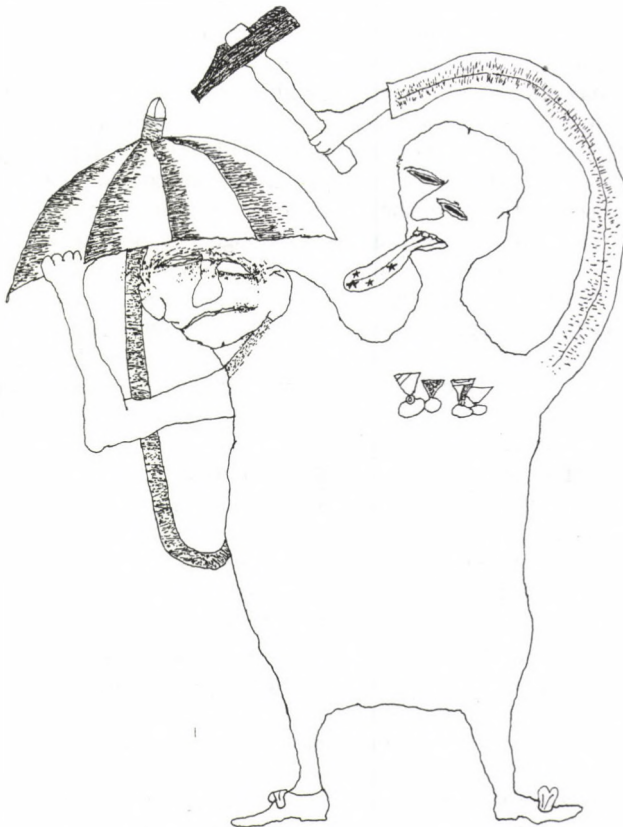
Although one may speak of a forging ahead in cultural activities, all the many papers, publishers, amateur theatricals, etc., which meanwhile have ceased to exist, all the cultural centres that have become silent, point to an uncertain future, a shrinkage in the scope of Hungarian life abroad.

It is impossible to give a brief characterization of the forty years of political struggle in exile, of major, as well as parish pump conflicts of which the author has so much to say with such understanding. What perhaps points beyond an insider's interest could, following Borbándi, be briefly formulated by asking what role Hungarian political exiles, all in all, have played in the past forty years. There can be several answers to this, depending on the ideological role one assigns to exiles. The author concludes that, compared to several other groups, Hungarian post-war exiles have

been less, successful: "as so far they have not achieved their main goal, and that is to change the conditions because of which they have come here."

By the time these lines "arrived home", those conditions have changed. Of course, not in the way most exiles imagined, nor due to their action. Let us not delve into how the author would have written if he had done so now, after the changes took place. But the Hungarian example also proves, as the author himself points out, that every kind of exile is necessarily in a

state of dependence and so, left to himself, cannot achieve political changes at home. This adds validity to the author's notion that in this region and in certain political situations, the only alternative open to refusal to participate has been "introversion and departure". If one gives its proper due to resistance, the political activity of exiles also deserves understanding. This does not absolve them of their errors and internal conflicts, but it points out their place in history. This understanding is what turns Gyula Borbándi's work into a remarkable political essay.



Ádám T. Szabó

A Hungarian University in Transylvania

A kolozsvári magyar egyetem 1945-ben. (The Hungarian University in Kolozsvár in 1945.) Compiled and edited by Béla Barabás and Rudolf Joó. Magyarságkutató Intézet, Budapest, 1990. 174 pp + map.

No discussion of the history of the Hungarian university in Transylvania is complete without setting the first university in the region into its context in time and place. The town itself has been multilingual from its foundation in the early Middle Ages through to our times: Hungarians call it Kolozsvár, Germans know it as Klausenburg, its late Renaissance Latin name was Claudiopolis. The first records, from around 1177, featuring clus- and culus- allow speculation as to the origin of the name which might be Slavic, Hungarian or German. The Rumanian name of Cluj cannot be dated any earlier than the 19th century, and the latest version, Cluj-Napoca (a Rumanian-Latin mix), derives from a 1974 presidential decree by Ceausescu. In point of fact, Napoca was an ancient Roman castrum, located where Kolozsvár's historical district is now; however, medieval records show that the name was never used by the German and Hungarian burghers of Kolozsvár. In the 1600s and 1700s, hun-

dreds of Hungarian and German students from the locality went to study at universities in England, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, and France. The first encyclopaedia written in Hungarian was published in Utrecht in 1653 by János Csere of Apáczta, a Calvinist pastor working at Kolozsvár. At that time a Rumanian-language Protestant New Testament (Noul Testament de la Balgrad) was translated at the Hungarian princely court of Transylvania and published in 1648 at Balgrad, the old Rumanian name for Gyulafehérvár, the Alba Iulia of today and of medieval Hungarian chancery Latin. Rumanian students did not travel West at the time, principally because their Orthodox faith drew them towards Constantinople and Russia. The situation changed in the early 1700s with the Habsburg-inspired birth of the Uniate church. Following that, hundreds of Transylvanian Rumanian students attended Western universities, mainly in Italy, where they discovered the close links between their language and Latin; Cyrillic script was gradually shed by Rumanian and replaced by Latin script (although the first postage stamps in 19th century Rumania still bore Cyrillic letters). Hundreds of books written by Transylvanian Rumanians were published initially by Hungarian printing houses, thus by the Royal Hungarian University

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Printing House of Buda, between the late 1700s and the mid-1800s, providing a degree of national consciousness for an ethnic group that was socially repressed and often humiliated. Even Gheorghe Sincai, a leading figure in the Latin Movement, a renowned theologian and scholar, was supported by Hungarian patrons, the inner-Transylvanian Czegele Wass family. The newly discovered Latin connection strengthened the national consciousness of the Rumanians, who successfully employed their Latinhood in their struggles. In this, they were supported by their Habsburg overlords who, in the true spirit of *divide et impera*, encouraged them to stand up to the rebellious, anti-Habsburg Hungarians.

After several attempts in the 16th and 17th centuries, Kolozsvár finally received an independent Hungarian university of several faculties in 1872, following the 1867 compromise between the Habsburgs and the Hungarian nation (see Gyula Bisztray, Attila T. Szabó and Lajos Tamás, eds. *Erdély Magyar Egyeteme* [Transylvania's Hungarian University], Kolozsvár, 1941, 47 pp). Beside general linguistics and German, the university continuously provided for intensive Rumanian studies from the time it was founded. Characteristically of the initially tolerant spirit, the Hungarian professor G. Szilasi (later to become a member of the Rumanian Academy) published some essays on the ancient nature of the Rumanian language in Dacia in the 1874 issues of the Kolozsvár periodical *Erdélyi Múzeum*. In another work, written in Hungarian, he regarded those peoples as "the living defensive column of the Emperor Traian, the bulwark of Roman civilization". It was only later, in articles written in Rumanian, that he claimed that bulwark was needed "against the barbaric Asian intruders". This was a clear reference to the Finno-Ugrian Hungarians who (like most Indo-European peoples of Europe) had arrived from the East but who

had early (around 1000 A.D.) assimilated themselves to Western Christendom through their civilization, commerce, Latin writing and even through the dynastic ties cultivated by the House of Árpád. Partly as a consequence of this and similar such attacks, "Asian Hungary" took a tougher stance at the beginning of this century, its tolerance turning into an intolerant, defensive nationalism; this caused serious damage to its neighbours as well as to itself. In terms of language, however, this heightened Hungarian national passion affected the Yiddish and German-speaking urban population rather than Slavophones or Rumanians. Despite growing Hungarian chauvinism, the cream of Rumanian youth, while studying at Hungarian secondary schools and universities, did refresh their command of their mother tongue through their home roots. A list of them would include Octavian Goga, who was to become Minister of Education, and later Prime Minister, the author Liviu Rebreanu, Professor Nicolae Draganu, Gheorghe Bogdan-Duica (who maintained a stance in support of Hungarian culture even in the poisoned political atmosphere of the 1930s) and the historian Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940) who, in an article in the Bucharest periodical *Neamul Romanesc* in the spring of 1919, openly supported maintaining the Hungarian character of Kolozsvár University. He was murdered in November 1940 by members of the Iron Guard. His message, that collecting evidence of each other's cultural inferiority is not the way to Europe, should still be heeded.

The policies of King Michael, exiled by a coup in 1947 and still forbidden entry into his native country, a ruler in sympathy with Western democracy, meant that, in 1945, a middle of the road solution seemed to be resolving the problem of the university. The Paris Peace Conference (1947) had not yet settled the new map of Europe, and Rumania found it advantageous to play the role of friend to ethnic

We Want the Borders to Spiritualize

I am very optimistic. We are in charge of youth and I do believe that these two universities here in Transylvania will work for the friendship of the Rumanian and Hungarian nations.

We have a lot to do. We want the borders to spiritualize all the way from the river Leitha to the Black Sea. The old autarchy in the economy is neither materially nor spiritually valid any longer. We shall facilitate travel for the individual. There must not be a compulsory passport system. I am happy to see everything coming from Budapest in the way of democracy. My conviction that these two nations must find friendship was not born yesterday... It is our conviction of old that life is only worth living in peace.

I am aware of the huge quantity of misery, trouble and hardship. I also know that all of us who advocate and exercise these two nations' rapprochement are labelled traitors by reactionaries. Yet we do not mind the hard work or the label of traitors, for our conscience and aims are clear.

Please believe that I know very well what goes on in the heart of someone who comes from an ethnic minority. I did myself. I know what every word and gesture might trigger in the soul. This is why the very idea of minorities must perish forever; this is why we speak of co-habitant peoples. Please try to make light of the initial difficulties. We shall do our best to deal with the tasks before us. I am convinced that within a couple of years we will have forgotten all difficulties and may be proud of this great Hungarian academic institution of Transylvania.

Prime Minister Groza on October 27, 1945, at the Hungarian University of Kolozsvár

minorities in cultural matters. At the time, separate Hungarian and Rumanian universities, theatres, opera houses, radio stations opened at Kolozsvár. An accord on starting a Hungarian university there was possible because, until late 1947, Rumania was more or less a constitutional monarchy (though the presence of Stalin's troops cast a shadow over the Bucharest parliament).

Such are the outlines of the historical background against which this volume prints 55 documents, mostly minutes of meetings, letters, memoranda, speeches on organizing and re-organizing university education. A detailed Preface (pp. 1-17) and an even more detailed Introduction (pp. 18-44) provide a sketch of the period and a description of its characters' possible motives. These documents, written in 1945, point toward the

illusion of a new Europe and of cultural solidarity. That solidarity had many roots, all in the same soil: that of anti-national socialism and humanism, an occasionally naive feature of these regions. The level of honesty in the utterances of illusion-chasers and the way history intervened in their plans is something else again.

Kolozsvár's Hungarian university had to face daunting practical difficulties. In fact, not even the livelihood of the teaching staff was certain. According to the minutes of the conference held in the Chancellor's office, the teaching and technical staff of the new university depended on matriculation and examination fees. Matriculation cost 50,000 leis per person, and students were supposed to bring their own bedding. Thus the university began almost as a self-supporting organization.

It was not the fault of Petru Groza and many others that his thoughts of 1945 (See Box) remained hollow words. In the late 1940s and early 1950s an "anti-Marxist views" witch-hunt was mounted against some outstanding scholars; they were then booted out of their jobs and homes. The Marxist chairmen of those investigations were themselves to become victims of a similar witch-hunt, this time nationalist in character.

In 1956 the university was still able to publish a 664-page memorial volume, *A Kolozsvári Bolyai Tudományegyetem 1945–1955* (The Bolyai University of Sciences of Kolozsvár 1945-1955) with Rumanian, Russian and French summaries. However, on the eve of Hungary's 1956 revolution, Rumanian authorities tried to put an end to the independent Hungarian-language history courses. Following the revolution, three teachers were dismissed on charges such as listening to foreign broadcasts (Radio Free Europe), ideological contamination and the like. The year 1958 saw a trial of some other teachers accused of sympathizing with the "Hungarian Counter-Revolution". According to the prosecution, they were bourgeois humanists who, in late 1956, after the crushing of the Hungarian revolution, had read out verses by Hungarian poets in the Házsongárd graveyard of Kolozsvár. The crusade against the Hungarian university did not abate. In February 1959, Rumania's communist youth leader, Nicolae Ceausescu, directed that Bolyai University be taken over by Babes, the local Rumanian university; the institute then became the Babes-Bolyai University according to the Communist Party's directive. The poet László Szabédi, Professor of Hungarian Literature, Zoltán Csendes, the Vice Chancellor, and the latter's wife committed suicide after coming under psychological pressure from the Securitate, some of whose techniques were reminiscent of the Gestapo in the 1930s. Under the auspices of "socialist fraternity", those

protesting in Hungary against the dissolution of Kolozsvár's Hungarian University were convicted by Hungarian courts for raising the issue internationally.

Some data on the significance of dissolving Bolyai University and creating the Babes-Bolyai University can now be published in Rumania as well. In 1959, at the time of the Ceausescu-directed takeover, 385 of the teaching staff were Rumanians and 272 were Hungarians. The Rumanian contingent had increased by 83 persons, the Hungarian had decreased by 201. A similar situation prevailed at Marosvásárhely (Tirgu Mures) the scene of the bloody clash on March 19, 1990 in which the writer András Sütő was almost beaten to death. In 1945 a Hungarian Institute of Medicine and Pharmacology was founded at Marosvásárhely/Tirgu Mures, since Bolyai University had no such faculty, whereas the Rumanian Babes University had one. Of the students at Marosvásárhely, 91 per cent were Hungarians in 1965/66, 35 per cent in 1987/88, and 29.9 per cent in 1988/89.

There are some examples that reassure. For instance, Finland has always endeavoured to maintain its Swedish-speaking tertiary education, while developing high-quality Finnish universities. Finland's oldest private university, the Swedish-language Abo Akademi was founded in 1917, at the time when Finland became independent. At the University of Helsinki, even native Finnish lecturers must be able to speak Swedish well enough to lecture and examine students. That university is genuinely bilingual. With a Swedish population of about 6 per cent, Finland is officially a bilingual country. The proportion of Hungarians in Rumania is, even by official figures, around 8 per cent. Finland is an independent country of high cultural and living standards; Rumania is not. Yet, Rumania may become one, once she recognizes that Europeanness depends on behaviour rather than ancient origins.

Pál Juhász

Agriculture in Crisis: the Political and Economic Pressures

The years 1990–1991 would have shaken the economy, including the agricultural and foodprocessing sectors, even if no political changes had taken place. The international economic and political situation triggered a crisis in the division of labour established in the '60s which by the '80s was well rooted in Hungary. Though the agricultural sector will certainly continue enjoying special attention, its conventional divisions and ratios, along with the organizational structure of its enterprises, not to mention the attitudes and aspirations of the farmers, have now become clearly impossible to maintain.

Producing half as much again as domestic consumption, Hungary's agriculture and food processing exports ensured the supply of the Soviet energy and raw materials needed to produce metallurgical and chemical goods. The metallurgical and chemical industries contributed products that, along with the remainder of the agricultural surplus, could be sold to the West and thus helped keep the manufacturing industries alive. Those industries, in turn, needed Western imports

of twice the value of what they could sell to the West. This is how the agricultural surplus promoted a vicious circle wasteful of both energy and capital.

This practice became impossible to pursue as the formerly socialist countries' system of trading had fallen apart. The peoples of the member states were no longer willing to tolerate a *l'art pour l'art* economic system which, directed by its own obsessions and ignorant of changing internal and outside needs, had exhausted all its resources. Indeed, operating it needed increasing sacrifices just to stay afloat.

By 1990 Hungary found that its sales of wine, of preserved and fresh vegetables were being endangered by the diminished Soviet willingness to supply energy and the uncertain future of the East German market. Furthermore, Western customers, carefully cultivated from the early 1980s on, could not absorb the ever increasing production of food: the result was a vast overproduction of primeurs, raspberries and geese. The change of direction in manufacturing made much of the country's wool production superfluous. Increasing competition and troubles in the Arab markets made it difficult to sell poultry and cattle. The cuts in subsidies cut the profitability of exports and drove milk prices upwards.

Since the beginning of the twentieth agrarian interests have shifted every twenty-five or thirty years.

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The decline in the consumption of milk brought about considerable overproduction. Actually, those symptoms would have been far worse if the drought had not adversely affected the harvest of 1990.

The crisis of overproduction was accompanied by one of structure. The latter meant a rearrangement of price ratios. Hungary's greater openness and the cuts in subsidies have opened the agrarian scissors (mostly owing to the rising price of chemicals) and forced the cost inputs for meat and fodder to come nearer to those prevailing on West European markets. Rising even faster as a result of the drought, the increase in grain prices could not be passed on in meat prices. And that had affected even pig raisers by the autumn of 1990.

Hungary's domestic price system was formed earlier in a way that prevented the prices of wheat and maize from creating a specific rent due to soil and climatic conditions favouring grain production: relatively cheap fodder was meant to support stock raising. Thus a live porker's price equalled that of 11–13 metric cwt of maize against the 7–9 metric cwt usual for competitors on the world market. (This is how it was possible to maintain extremely high production with a lower than customary, but still considerable, export subsidy.) The main argument for this meat-oriented economic policy was that it was better to export meat than grain, for that would mean marketing products at a more advanced stage of processing and embodying more labour. As always with cost inputs that ignore market realities, this backfired in time. The cost and subsidy inputs favouring meat production made it possible for wasteful, less efficient and more careless fattening, fodder producing and meat processing systems to survive than those of competitors. An extra burden is imposed by the fact that those vertical organizations (e.g. cooperative pig farms) which apply technologies subordinated to the needs of end users operate well only at first glance. Based on oversized slaughterhouses, the meat processing industry is unable either to produce quality

or to cut costs. Under such conditions, the changing of inputs will necessarily lead to the collapse of much of the industry and of many producers. The nightmare of bankruptcy might trigger off further price rises that will be checked only by true market conditions. The inescapable reshuffling of price systems is a manifestation of the deep structural crises brought about by the discord between market requirements and the technological and management system of the food processing industry under a planned economy. The industry produces sophisticated or more highly processed goods at relatively higher costs than raw products. It cannot restructure production fast enough to follow market changes. It develops special or top quality goods too slowly. The time of an agriculture squeezed between food processing and traders, vegetating in the dual system of oversized processors and under-sized farms, has passed.

In the red because of the agrarian scissors, the lack of subsidies and the crisis of overproduction, the producers expected the government to provide guidelines and intervention to help them survive. Those aware of the structural uncertainty hoped for a possible restructuring, an idea of a future to aim for. However, the arena of politics has been dominated by legal problems and the question of the ownership of land. The clash between opposing views here paralysed the government.

Miklós Németh's reform-communist government was appointed in 1989 with the job of beginning to reform the institutions and management of the economy. Its first package included legislation opening the way to reforming the system of cooperatives and the structure of agricultural enterprises as well as that of land ownership. Naturally, that legislation contained some hypocrisy, some superfluously included or maintained limits, dark corners and fudging of issues. Yet it suggested a future, one in which enterprises embracing both agricultural and non-agricultural activities would be broken up and thus the

The Agrarian Political Tradition

Since the 15th century Hungary has supplied cattle on the hoof, wine and cereals to South, West and North European markets. In the twentieth century seeds, vegetables and fruit were added to this list. For that very reason changes in agriculture, and competition on the markets for its products, have been of prime political importance. In the accelerated economic development of the 19th century, agrarian interests had a key role in determining the transport system, the food processing industry and the production of equipment for both.

Agricultural production was more or less equally divided between large estates of feudal origin and peasant farms; as a result, since the beginning of the twentieth century, the focus of political forces that represented agrarian interests shifted every twenty-five or thirty years. There were times when a tariff policy that served the stability of the existing social order (and thus primarily the interests of large estates) and the monopolization of export outlets, were stressed; at others, smallholder radicalism which was at odds with the estates was in the ascendant. One of the most popular political notions of the thirties and early forties was that of a Garden Hungary. That looked to the expansion and cultural renewal of labour-intensive, commodity producing (largely for export) smallholdings as a means to compensate for raw material shortages due to the territorial losses after the Great War, as well as putting an end to unemployment and rural deprivation.

This was not, however, the direction of development of the communist period (1949–1989). The agricultural cooperative model moved on from the system of large estates. The notion of Garden Hungary re-emerged in the liberal communism of the seventies and eighties as the licensing of household plot farming for market production.

Political forces dissatisfied with socialist agrobusiness now revive the ideals of the smallholder movement, even though small holding—which now involves 40 per cent of Hungarian families—is no longer primarily a peasant concern but includes many employed in industry and the service sector. The re-establishment of peasant proprietorship is looked to as a means for the renewal of rural ways of life, and as a defence against unemployment, which threatens once again.

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independence of different sectors would make it possible to create vertical structures, including classical agricultural cooperatives, structured according to business logic. That legislation facilitated the turning of agricultural cooperatives into communities of owners. It encouraged the nationwide network of large agricultural estates to disintegrate and to start pursuing individual goals in different ways, according to local conditions and economic opportunities. The political groupings stirred by enabling legislation, the state of the economy and the political changes of

1989 pushed something new into the limelight in that autumn: the questions of the market and ownership of land.

During the 1990 election campaign, land became a symbol of agricultural policy. There were three kinds of views:

- 1) those in favour of liberalization, without changing the ownership situation of 2/3 of Hungary's arable land in the hands of large estates, and 1/3-held by cooperative members (the Socialists, the agrarian lobby)

- 2) those who wanted the property relations of 1947 reinstated, restoring former

proprietors and their heirs to their rights (Smallholders Party)

3) those who wanted to change the proportions of ownership in favour of those using or wanting to use the land (SzDSz, MDF)

Those who held these three views engaged in bitter feuding—and that feud grew into a key electoral issue.

Miklós Németh's government was kept under pressure by the increasingly acute problem of land ownership. This is the reason why Parliament took the decisive step of opening up a market in land, lifting the barriers in the way of privatization and eliminating the limitations of the rights of registered owners (mostly retired cooperative members) as early as January 1990. Now land could be removed from the cooperative, sold and inherited without restriction.

The new legislation did not trigger off a wave of detaching land or individuals from cooperatives. Different surveys of intention indicated that, except for those areas replete with specialist cooperatives, no movement of privately owned land could be expected to take place even in the autumn of 1990. Apart from fear of changing their lifestyle and (in many places) their leaders of old, people did not and do not want to exercise their newly won rights because the crisis in supply creates an even more risky situation for private producers than for agrobusinesses. It is not worth risking the low but steady income provided by the cooperative for the sake of some individual adventure whose outcome is doubtful.

Nevertheless, two new forms for privatizing land were initiated:

1) highly trained and qualified professionals in agriculture, earlier achieving only second or third rank status in large agricultural estates, attempted to break out by acquiring land and starting enterprises,

2) the common land of cooperatives was distributed among members. Though both spectacularly set new precedents, they were significant only in a handful of villages. The first form turned the established opposition against anti-reprivatizational

liberalization that took the inequalities of the past as its starting point. The second antagonized the Smallholders' Party. So the new and freely elected Parliament meeting in late May 1990 set out to amend the Land Bill again, urged by the Free Democrats, even before the new government was formed.

The SzDSz intention was to establish controls over the privatization of real estate, so as to prevent the men of the old regime from snatching property through different devices. Their proposal was enthusiastically taken up by the Smallholders, who demanded a ban on all trading in land, fearing that if cooperative members purchased some of the commonly owned land, the old owners or their heirs (who had usually left the cooperative as well as the village) would be unable to reclaim their property. Together with a few Smallholder and MDF members with links with village life, the SzDSz endeavoured to have the June 1989 and January 1990 legislation amended, in order to facilitate the reforming of cooperatives by simplifying the rights of mass exit and the procedure of removing land. That would have helped those small villages which wanted to break away from merged cooperatives and those activities wishing to become independent. It would also have opened a channel for families wishing to increase their holdings by buying land. Many MDF leaders joined the loudest of the Smallholders in attacking this proposal. They feared (not without reason) that it would be the cream of the cooperatives that would be first to exercise the rights to leave the large cooperatives and form new ones of their own. Left without qualified management, the abandoned cooperatives and their membership would simply deteriorate.

The morbid situation of having to fear that qualified managers and staff would quit their cooperatives was due to the orators and the small-town organizations of the Smallholders; to them the old leadership in the villages during the period of

forced collectivization was one and the same as the modern management of large estates, some of which had been formed under market conditions; a campaign of hatred against cooperatives and those who ran them was started. The long-established caste system and the surviving patriarchal style of top management in quite a number of cooperatives undoubtedly justified such Smallholder criticism. Yet the campaign was basically unfounded, for it ignored the fact that, in the 1970s and '80s, cooperative management was replaced almost to the last man by technocrats who served local interests with business-like attitudes and who wanted radical changes. (Of course, these latter are also looking for ways to renew the structure of large units rather than to destroy them.)

The various groups whose existence depended on the cooperatives went into a growing panic in the summer of 1990 when a number of successive Smallholder manifestos on the Land Bill were circulated. Apart from managers, these include the staff of machine pools, stockmen and other staff concerned with animals; in short, there are villagers who work for wages and others whose small plots took shape on land owned by large estates and who thus lived in a powerful symbiosis with the service sectors of the large estates. Unusually, these smallholder drafts dealt with ways of reinstating the heirs of former owners rather than discussing the conditions of using, leasing and consolidating land. This posed a danger to those linked to cooperatives, not only because most of the land would have been returned to people far removed from agriculture in every sense, but also because the lack of a clearcut structure for leasing and users' rights would have kept the users of land in a permanent state of uncertainty. Beside the threat of distant owners and heirs removing an annual Ft 25–30bn from agriculture in the form of rent or selling-off prices, another danger was the impossibility for those individuals and communities using land to plan, not know-

ing if and when their tenancy would come under threat from the owner.

The ownership of cooperative members was questioned and the legitimacy of their leadership attacked right at a time when the crisis of overproduction and the necessity of finding new markets and new forms of processing became generally recognized. The fastest lane out of this crisis seemed to lie in the speedy establishment of joint companies with foreign traders and food processors who would undertake to market the products, renewing or creating winemaking, fast-freezing, fruitjuice-making capacities with their Hungarian partners and, to some extent, even providing working capital for production. A large number of separate negotiations in this direction began as early as the winter of 1989–90. However, the freezing of the real estate market and, even more, the questioning of the legitimacy of the very management conducting those negotiations made the conclusion of actual deals impossible. Even the managers themselves abandoned, for the most part, their efforts to find solutions, feeling that they should take care of their own future instead of that of their firms or communities. They sought for individual opportunities within the Smallholder plans (usually successfully), and some of them launched a public counterattack on the new political line.

A paradox ensued. The widening of business opportunities and the opening of new business channels would have required Hungarian agrobusinesses to find partners who could ensure the production of larger quantities of homogeneous goods. Moreover, foreign investors would have needed the possibility of using real estate as security for their investment. (It was especially German economists and politicians working on the *land* (member state of the federation) level who emphasized that they had climbed out of their crisis by selling or pawning a third of their homeland to Americans.) Yet political uncertainty immobilized those very persons who

might have organized marketing and made that particular demand of investors impossible to meet.

Even the Ministry of Agriculture could do little in easing the hardship caused by the crises in overproducing and in payments. Owing to tensions within the ruling coalition and tensions accompanying the reorganization of government offices, the Ministry was unable (or afraid) to undertake the maintenance of the price systems by intervening on the market once the price of bread cereals was decontrolled. This inaction increased the non-interest in producing wheat. The Ministry's inability to clarify its foreign trade licensing system and the rules of access to the quotas, increased hysterical reaction in the pork, poultry, milk and vegetable markets. When the state budget was modified in the summer of 1990, the Ministry of Agriculture consented to cuts in state subsidies granted to exports and producers working in unfavourable conditions, without surveying the likely effects. This caused unexpected financial difficulties to a large number of producers and temporarily undermined the interest in producing for export.

A result of all this was that the financial pressure on agriculture intensified. The crisis hit the small producers harder than the large units. The private investment drive that had started in the spring petered out. The number of those fearing the collapse of the large agrobusinesses exceeded the number of those who perceived future opportunities for themselves in such a collapse.

Searching for a lost future

After the energy sector, agriculture provides the slowest net capital return. Its infrastructure (of farms and equipment, private roads, silos, services, advice and administrative systems, trading structure, etc.) may be shaped only through long-term plans, stretching over generations; equipment and technology determine labour patterns for decades. Pig farming has three-year cycles, cattle cycles

are of seven to eight years. Even planting and sowing ratios need a perspective of several years. Hungary's agriculture now lacks a set of co-ordinated goals outlining its future and the aims of its restructuring, not to mention the legislation regulating its framework. Inevitably and necessarily, the agricultural economy is entwined in the political system and involves constant lobbying. Because of the intricate character of the system, coordination ensuring production is almost more important than the efficiency of the system within an economic cycle.

The agricultural dilemma is of great political interest since over a third of Hungarians are involved as full- or part-time producers. Furthermore, everybody has a real interest in food. The shape of the landscape is also affected. Its future cannot be decided on without considering the prevailing situation.

The political problem underlying the Smallholders' views on agriculture is that it would have forced too many people making their living within the present agricultural system to make radical changes to their way of life, making the operation of many sub-systems impossible. The economic goal that accompanies the overview of the Smallholders' Party also has two clearly unrealistic elements:

1) Agriculture is unable to sell more labour than it does today (nor can it do so at today's level either) as the European markets for labour-intensive products (mostly in market-gardening) are operating at full or excess capacity; the fast progress of competitors in Poland and Bulgaria only exacerbates this situation. (The production of special produce is possible only under certain geographical conditions and by certain socially determined groups.)

2) It is not true that private farming is always more efficient than large unit farming. Certainly, the dualism of supplementary farms which are integrated into the whole system by efficient and qualified entrepreneurs and based on part-time

employment may be more efficient than the forced symbiosis of the existing large agricultural units; yet this is true only if independent private farms are neither too small nor too close to each other. The principle of agriculture employing the population of villages cannot be put into effect simultaneously with that of having rich entrepreneurs as farmers. If villages become smallholding peasant communities, they will become poor.

Another point often emphasized is that small producers and private farmers today make up 45 per cent of the added value (incomes) in agriculture on slightly over 10 per cent of the arable land. It is not emphasized, however, that such small-scale production soaks up three times as much labour as that performed by agricultural employees on collectivized land. In other words, small farms do not produce the same value as large ones, even with three times as much work. Naturally, more rational ownership relations, a better structuring of the available space and, above all, a higher level of integration and of servicing firms would result in a considerable boost to the productivity of small farms, but it would also have the same result for larger farms too.

Its basis ties the MDF to the agricultural workers and agrarian entrepreneurs of the present rather than to the heirs of former peasants. Pragmatism imposed by the duty of governing discourages the MDF from endangering economic processes even more by sudden changes in the agricultural system. Its election manifesto proclaimed ideas vastly different from those of the Smallholders: the MDF intended to provide land for enterprising villagers (thus excluding those who had quit the land from any compensation). Yet the problems arising within the coalition made the MDF refrain from openly opposing the Smallholder-inspired Land Bills. The MDF stalled for time and left the battle against the Smallholders' ideologues to the opposition parties. The counterattack was conducted by the SzDSz in Parliament and

by the Agrarian Association (initiated by radical reformers but later becoming a party for the best of the agricultural cooperatives) in the villages. The parliamentary opposition disseminated the guidelines for a different kind of agricultural reform, while the Agrarian Association harped on the dangers inherent in the Smallholders' programme. The beginning to this conversation of the deaf only increased the uncertainty of those in the agricultural sector and paralysed rational reforms.

Finally the government asked the Constitutional Court to comment on the constitutional character of the Smallholders' regulatory principles. In turn, the ruling of the Court provided the opportunity of laying down the foundations of a possible future agricultural policy. It clearly pointed out that

1) the compensation of former landowners may be constitutional only to such an extent as other former property owners (filing claims against the state rather than cooperatives) will also be compensated:

2) cooperative common property is owned by the cooperative members. (Even though Act 3 1967 on land expropriation was unconstitutional, for example, it produced valid changes in ownership as long as it was in force. It is the security on property that forbids the retrospective modification of property ownership.)

With the ruling of the Court, there is no further barrier to the cooperatives changing their structure, to members' ownership becoming real and the dissolution of enterprises. Yet it is now even clearer that the laws initiated by the Németh government are insufficient to control the reform, while the new government has put off forming any new principles for legislation. Still it can be hoped that, after a compromise among the ruling parties involving general though partial compensation, some room for manoeuvre will open up. A model for reform can be created, followed by new regulations for the agricultural market and cooperation. Without that, we will not even have a fighting chance of overcoming the crisis.

Éva Várhegyi

A Giant Step for Banking

The Hungarian banking system has seen considerable changes since reforms started four years ago. It is, however, still shackled by its heritage. This is manifest both in the confined scope within which banks have to work and the structural problems of individual banks.

The two-tier banking system, established in 1987, created the conditions for managing the economy using monetary instruments and for distributing credits out of commercial considerations. In recent years the direct distribution of central bank funds was gradually replaced by monetary controls based on interest rates policy and market transactions.

As the number of banks grew and direct state intervention in the operations of banks diminished, business considerations theoretically had priority over others. At the same time, the banking sector came to play a steadily diminishing role in financing the economy. The reform of the banking system unfortunately coincided with the need for a tight monetary policy in the interests of servicing the foreign debt. Since the burdens of keeping alive lame-duck state enterprises and financing the growing costs of previously heavily sub-

sidized housing invariably rested on the state, opportunities for the commercial banking sector remained highly restricted.

The declining real value of bank resources and the persistent demand for new credits by state firms handicapped commercial banks in their desire to be businesslike. In addition, the bank reform left the biggest banks that play a dominant role in financing the economy with a credit portfolio heavily burdened by doubtful and bad debts owed by loss-making state firms.

The scarcity of credit sources and the heritage of bad debts still hampers

the effective operation of the banking system, regardless of the fact that their institutions have been modernized. Competition between over thirty commercial banks is mainly for scarce credit sources, and other aspects, like the standard of services and the security of operations, have a minor role.

Even the scarce credit sources are heavily segmented. This hampers both capital flow and competition. Large enterprises take their custom almost exclusively to the four biggest commercial banks, and there is a further carving up of the market according to the industry concerned. Because of their restricted capital, small and medium-sized banks can offer their services to small businesses only. Individuals and small businesses mainly choose the savings banks and cooperative banks which have many and widely dispersed branches.

That the structure of the banking system reflects the distortions of the Hungarian

The Banking Act tries to square the circle of monetary policy and fiscal autonomy—but substantial foreign capital is needed for growth.

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Financial institutions with foreign participation

Name	year of foundation	equity capital million forints	foreign share (per cent)
<i>A. Commercial banks</i>			
1. Post Office Bank	1988	4,000	16.25
2. Inter-Europa Bank	1989	2,807	22.50
3. Creditanstalt	1990	1,400	75.00
4. Leumi Credit Bank	1990	1,300	50.00
5. Gen. Banking Trust	1922	1,000	50.00
6. Citybank Budapest	1985	1,000	80.00
7. Unicbank	1986	1,000	45.00
8. Central-European Credit Bank	1988	1,000	68.40
9. BNP-CC-Dresdner	1990	1,000	74.00
10. European Commercial Bank	1990	1,000	50.00
11. Nomura Hungarian Investment Bank	1990		66.00
12. Hungarian Investment and Merchant Bank	1990	1,000	100.00
<i>B. Specialized financial institutions</i>			
1. Kulturbank	1990	1,000	100.00
2. Investrade and Banking Corp.	1989	\$100 M	50.00
<i>C. Off-shore banks</i>			
1. Central European International Bank	1979	\$30 M	66.00

enterprise sphere is another problem. Just as there are monopolistic giant firms and tiny ventures unable to compete with them, so too competitive medium-sized banks are absent. A few dozen large firms operate the bigger part of capital available and it is they who use up the bulk of bank credits. Up to recently, the largest commercial banks could help themselves to central bank refinancing loans, regardless of their creditworthiness.

At the same time, small and medium-sized firms, which, as a rule, are more competitive than big enterprises, have to rely on their own capital for new investment or make do with the more expensive loans available from small banks. Small

banks, set up for clearly defined functions, can hold on to their restricted market positions in competition with the large general banks by diversifying their activities. But lacking supplementary sources, this leads to the loss of some of their clients. Experience shows that the best option for them is to finance expansion with the help of foreign capital.

The big banks, which dominate the Hungarian corporate sector, suffer from the crippling financial problems of this sector. The insolvency of East European markets is causing serious liquidity problems to the large state firms which are unable to switch quickly and easily from Eastern to Western markets. This entails a

slackening of the general payment discipline, producing losses for creditors. The mutual dependence of large banks and enterprises is exacerbated by the particular ownership structure of the banks. Besides the state, which has a 40 per cent stake in the biggest commercial banks, their main shareholders are precisely those companies which owe them the most.

The above problems show that the modernization of banking institutions has not solved the problem of the interdependence between banks and large firms, and this hampers the efficient operation of banks. A number of conditions for their efficient operation are in effect absent.

One of these is that the power large firms hold should be weakened by privatization and decentralization. The process has already started but will probably take a long time to get off the ground. What also has to be done is to weed out and restructure—with state assistance—the inherited bad credit portfolios of large banks. Later, uniform legislation will be needed to steer the development of the Hungarian banking system into dovetailing with European practices.

1991 is a year of new legislation in Hungary. Much new economic legislation is required to establish a free market economy. Two bills of outstanding importance from the point of view of the operation and development of the Hungarian banking system are awaiting the approval of parliament this year: the National Bank Act and the Banking Act.

The law regulating the legal status, objectives, relations and structure of the National Bank of Hungary derives its importance from the fact that monetary policy must break out of the subordinate role it used to play. It must become an aspect of economic policy with a considerable amount of autonomy.

Although the role of monetary policy and the National Bank has much increased over recent years, a proper legal framework makes

this process independent of personal power relations. According to the bill, the central bank would be given complete independence in interest rate policy; exchange rate policy would rest on the joint decision of the government and the bank, as long as current foreign exchange controls apply.

An important element of the bill is that it puts a limit on central bank loans granted to the state. This forces the government to adjust the deficit to the amount of credit available on the money market.

The autonomy of the National Bank is increased by the fact that its president is appointed for six years by the President of the Republic. This makes central bank management independent of changes in the government.

The drafting of the Banking Act started before the new government took office. Its fundamental aims are to bring closer the conditions of foundation and operation of Hungarian banks to European practices that will prevail after 1992, and provide for an appropriate transition until stricter norms are introduced.

Although the banks concerned and their association were given the opportunity to comment on the draft of the new law in the preparation stage, attainment of the dual aim did not prove easy.

One of the key questions was the institutional structure of the banking system. Many people believed that in view of existing Hungarian conditions, it would be easier to adopt a German-type universal model, but the drafters of the bill, referring to unfavourable experience with the German model, opted for a banking pattern on the lines of the Anglo-American system. (Since the 1989 Securities Law barred credit institutions from trading in securities directly, all drafts of the Banking Act were drawn up with that in mind.) The handling of investment funds and trading in securities consequently are beyond the scope of authority of commercial banks. According to the latest draft, if they want to engage in such activities, they have to set up

special institutions for the purpose, with 25 per cent ownership at most.

Although there are arguments in favour of not allowing banks which essentially lend borrowed money to pursue operations that involve different or bigger risks, institutional regulation of that sort might discourage banks from going into investment banking and fund managing. Such services are currently not provided by the market.

The other key question is the ownership structure of banks. Decisions concerning the most appropriate size of state and foreign ownership in Hungarian banks are crucial, especially for large banks. The various early drafts of the Banking Act had given special protection to the state's stake in commercial banks; in February, however, a compromise was achieved. According to that version, the general rule of a maximum 25 per cent holding per investor, will apply to the state as well, although the state will be given a few years' grace to sell off excess shares. Special legislation may provide for the state to have a bigger stake in a particular financial institution. This provision gives the state the possibility to have its own financial institution perform specified functions. The State Development Institute and the National Savings Bank carry out such functions.

The law remained neutral regarding foreign ownership in Hungarian banks and left it to the discretion of the government to grant permission in individual cases, within the 40 per cent limit set for the whole of the banking sector.

This latter global limit turns into a formality the normative set of criteria, on the basis of which the licences are granted and which, in any case, is susceptible to errors and subjective judgement.

The government's effort to leave the management of the banking system to the discretion of the licensing organizations rather than to spontaneous market processes, is reflected in all the drafts of the Banking Act. Legislation wishes to protect

the interests of depositors not only by creating strict controls, matching the international standard, and insisting on their observance as well, but also by retaining the authority of the Banking Inspectorate, the National Bank of Hungary, and if foreign ownership is also involved, of the government, to license the foundation of new banks. Although there are a number of normative regulations to facilitate licensing procedure, and the whole process is surveyable by the applicants, subjective judgement still has a wide scope.

The licensing system sets the rules mainly for those institutions which enter the market as newcomers. But the provisions concerning minimum capital and capital-adequacy hit the already operating financial institutions rather hard: specialized financial institutions, which make up the bulk of small banks in Hungary, must have a capital of at least 500 million forints.

This latter more or less corresponds to the rules that will apply in the single European market after 1992, but the minimum capital requirement nevertheless led to much controversy.

Several of the existing medium-sized banks fail to meet the requirement of 2 billion forints minimum capital, set for full-service commercial banks, and it seems rather dubious whether the four years' grace given to them for capital accumulation will be sufficient to muster the required sum. It seems puzzling why Hungarian commercial banks, which operate on a confined market, are required to have four times the capital of 5 million ECU (about \$500 million) stipulated for international commercial banks in the directive of the European Community.

The same EC directive even permits, in justified cases, member countries to allow a lower capital limit of 1 million ECU, for domestic credit institutions. The Hungarian Banking Act permits the same for savings banks only, and demands that specialized financial institutions, which make up the

core of the small banks in Hungary, have a capital of at least 500 million forints.

The savings cooperatives, which have a capital of 10–15 million forints and collect deposits in small villages, pumping them into the national capital circulation, would be unable—even through reasonable mergers—to multiply their capital 6–10 times.

The National Bank Act, the Banking Act and the Auditing Act, which is designed to make the Hungarian accounting system conform to West European practices, help the Hungarian banking system to move abreast with European processes. But in addition to the legal framework and the rules that enforce changes, a more determined economic policy is also indispensable. The only way to keep the law and to efficiently control its observance seems to be to allow banks to change their owners. If bank decisions continue to be influenced by current distorted ownership conditions, neither the security nor the efficiency of bank operations will improve.

If a favourable change is to be achieved in the ownership structure of the banks, both the stake of the state and the cross-ownership of banks and corporations must be reduced or eliminated. A condition for both is acceleration of the privatization process and its extension to the big banks.

If the state is to improve the efficiency of the capital market, the state must not

interfere with the flow of credit through large banks by using its ownership rights. On the other hand, the privatization of large state firms, and their simple decentralization in some cases, will loosen the mutual dependence between banks and the large firms that own them. Temporarily there will be an increase in cross-ownerships because, lacking other investors, the new owners will be predominantly the banks which finance them (the process has already started). This process will subside only when the number of domestic investors grows and the readiness of foreign investors to invest in Hungarian firms increases.

Foreign capital may come to play an important part in the privatization process of Hungarian banks, too. European requirements, also reflected in the Banking Act, and the capital standards of the Basel Directive in particular, are a serious challenge to the large Hungarian banks which are forced to write off losses. It seems probable that they will only be able to satisfy the capital adequacy requirement through substantial capital growth. In the absence of liquid domestic funds, they will need foreign capital.

Competent Hungarian authorities, when judging applications by foreign investors for involvement in Hungarian banks, will not be able to hold them off much longer, if they really want to make Hungarian banking system part of the European system.



Géza Pernecky

Art in the Sixties

Hatvanas évek. Új törekvések a magyar képzőművészetben.

(The Sixties. New Trends in Hungarian Art). Catalogue to the exhibition at the Hungarian National Gallery, 14 March–30 June 1991. Képzőművészeti Kiadó–Magyar Nemzeti Galéria–Ludwig Múzeum, Budapest, 333 pp.

In my twenties, in the early 1960s, I was a fairly well known art critic, a member of that lucky age group in Hungary which started their working lives in the Krushchev years.

We turned our backs more or less openly on Marxist dogma and the language and terminology of our criticism was fairly similar to that being used in the West. We felt we had escaped Marxist cliché. Then came the tightening of the screw that followed the 1968 Prague Spring, and I left Hungary and have lived in Cologne ever since. As a conceptual artist, my name features in the hefty catalogue the city's *Kunstverein* published five years ago on a retrospective exhibition of the German art of the 1960s.

Therefore, when I happened upon a similar exhibition of Hungarian art, entitled "The Sixties," in the Hungarian National Gallery, when I was home at Easter, I felt it natural to try to compare the two displays, as a sort of interview with myself, as it were. How "European" can the attempt at a breakthrough in Hungary in the 1960s be taken to be? And how successful has the National Gallery been in

documenting this period in a scholarly manner and conjuring up its climate with the help of some witnesses of the period?

The catalogue is large, (333 pages) with the usual list of the works on show, a great many illustrations and about 25 articles and recollections. But you look in vain for a bibliography in this promising volume—is it possible that the Hungarian art of the 1960s had never before been assessed either in contemporary reflections or in later studies?

A walk through the halls, catalogue in hand, leads to further instances of misproportion. According to the editors, four years' work went into preparation; yet the few rooms surrounding the stairway on the groundfloor of the National Gallery house a selection that is haphazard rather than a representative retrospective. The principle seemed to be to provide a little of everything. Indeed doubts can even be entertained regarding the "everything".

The organizers obviously wished to illustrate the breakthrough of modern art, and rightly so, I may add. But I missed, for example, the renaissance in Hungarian graphics, without which such a breakthrough was unthinkable. The same holds true for the work of artists who, having rejuvenated traditions (the vanguard of the Vásárhely School), in the first half of

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the Sixties recreated one of the most important conditions for modernism: the right to fully spontaneous and free work, committed only to their own selves.

It is not easy to compare this, for instance, with the 1986 Cologne exhibition of "The Sixties". The Cologne catalogue had an interesting subtitle: *Kölns Weg zur Kunstmetropole*, and the title page also listed the major stages along this road: the first happenings in Germany, the establishment and success of the *Kunstmarkt*.

In the Hungary of the 1960s there obviously was no place for similar demands for a *Kunstmetropolis*, and the struggle modern art had to wage was for its mere existence, or a minimum of recognition, and not for the hope, beyond moral victories, of a commercial success that would yield huge profits. Nonetheless, apart from these large differences, there was something common in the situation in Germany and Eastern Central Europe—a marked regression as compared with France or the English-speaking world, a time-lag of several decades. It reflected an overall decline which started in 1933 and which had modern art as one of its first victims in the regions east of the Rhine.

By the second half of the 1950s and after an enormous push in the '60s, art in Germany had overcome these difficulties. The countries in Eastern Europe, pinioned in the stocks of the Warsaw Treaty, tried to loosen the shackles imposed by official policy on the arts and did achieve some success. (The Poles led the dance, while Czech cinema, literature and art made essential progress along the road that led to the Prague Spring.) The cracks in, and then the final failure of, socialist realism, and the setting off by modern art along the road leading to institutionalized culture, commenced precisely after 1960. The second half of the Sixties was characterized by an imposing acceleration of this process.

The foreign visitor to the Budapest exhibition is fortunate to find one of the most important summary studies in the

catalogue in English translation too. Written by one of the masterminds of the exhibition, László Beke, "The Hidden Dimensions of Hungarian art of the 1960s" unfortunately gives little thought to these historical relationships. There are only a few casual sentences about the battles fought with official cultural policies, without any mention of the people and institutions (mostly museums in the country, like those at Székesfehérvár and Pécs), which in a span of barely ten years achieved the state of affairs in which the "soc-real" (socialist realist) portrayals of happily smiling workers disappeared. Instead, in 1969, the Műcsarnok art gallery paid tribute, indeed with government and party support, to an international celebrity of Hungarian birth, and mounted the largest ever retrospective on Vasarely.

Beke presents the Hungarian development of the 1960s as if it had been an organic part of the contemporary international scene and guides the reader to look for a possibly complete and varied manifestation of all the various -isms and modern endeavours typical of the period, here in Hungary too, which he happens to be visiting. So that he gets the impression of being in a small Western European country or one of the states of the USA, with a fairly cosmopolitan taste in the arts.

Viewed from an excessively sterile artistic standpoint, such an overview may even be sound; it mentions all the -isms, coupling them with the most important local names. Still, one lacks the geographical and political dimensions behind the works, the life of a society struggling with specific problems under a totalitarian system, the pretended or real results achieved by the institutions, and the price they had to pay for allowing the various isms to surface in spite of everything—in short, all that without which history is narrowed down into an adulterated review of works of art.

I do not intend to tire the reader with a

review of the lengthy interviews with the artists and the literary, mediapolitical, and even scholarly essays in the catalogue. Suffice it to mention that most were not written for the exhibition and were thus not intended to describe, nor indeed to treat, the background to the material on show. The explanation for the National Gallery's failure to take on the job might lie in the acceleration of events, with all its unexpected crises, creating an atmosphere in Eastern Europe which has fully disorganized scholarly work as well. The contributors gathered up a handful of manuscripts from the archives and published them. The only surprising and truly praiseworthy achievement of Ildikó Nagy, the editor of the catalogue, has been to include a study by Mihály Vajda (a philosopher fairly widely known, particularly in the German-speaking world). Though not an art historian, Vajda gives the only competent general survey of the dilemmas of the 1960s in Eastern Europe and the position cultural history occupied in them.

Vajda approaches the subject from the aspect of the international debate on post-modernism, instead of sticking to the now stale arguments and academic dogma of this debate, he soon finds his own tone. According to him one of the sociological, psychological and artistic concomitants of exhausted modernism was to become institutionalized. The avant-garde grew out of its adolescent clothes. It grew into an authority, turned into a museum piece, an article of consumption, a bank treasury, a representative power. This is not only evident in the astronomical prices 20th century artists have fetched but also in the retailing of modernist concepts and ideologies into consumers' articles. Vajda gives a witty example for this when he speaks of the bankruptcy of the "fight against alienation" slogan. What he has in mind is not the terminology of primitive Stalinist pamphlets, but that of the intellectual left throughout the world, includ-

ing the avant-garde artists, who were convinced that the progressive spirit would conquer all evil, including, of course, political terror. The 1960s were the last decade when it was still possible to believe such nonsense.

For, to their utter disappointment, the leftists have had to recognize that society, grown rich in the meantime, started to use the moderns simply as garden furniture, making themselves comfortable in them and enjoying life. "How fine it is to become alienated," one could hear from these cane-backed armchairs. And let me add here what Vajda has not touched on: that this tendency was even present in Kádár's Hungary. A statue by Henry Moore stood in front of the Unesco Palace in Paris and another before the Chancellery in Bonn. The powers that be must therefore have felt a strong inclination to exchange the statue of Lajos Kossuth in front of the Hungarian Parliament for a Cubistically abstract Moore configuration, to produce an effect of even greater "consolidation". "What matters is to have no revolution"—this could have been the slogan to go with it all. Who on earth would have remembered meanwhile that, in the first decades of the century, Cubism had promised changes that would outdo the French Revolution?

The Cologne version of "The Sixties" centred on Action Art, which flourished in the German speaking countries (as for instance the Muehl Group of Vienna) and the Cologne history of "happening" (represented mainly by Vostell and Beuys). A similar exhibition mounted in London would in all probability give prominence to trends boosted by the Institute of Contemporary Art, mainly to English Pop Art. The American version of Pop Art would dominate an exhibition in New York, but there it would appear side by side with Fluxus, Rauschenberg's stage designs, and Allan Kaprow's happening art. All these examples stress a

tendency in which the various decades are dominated by the triumph and relatively brief flourishing of one or another of the -isms. Art in these countries is more "professionally specific", which means that an exhibition would document immanent artistic problems, and the best endeavours at solving them rather than the history of art in a broader sense.

The situation would be different if it came to "The Sixties" in Denmark, Belgium or Spain. There the concept of "national art", the aim at completeness, and local colour, would certainly be given more space. Now, as I have already mentioned, the organizers of the Hungarian "Sixties" also aimed at such a harmonic, autotelic overall picture. I do not know, of course, whether a professor, just arrived from Los Angeles, would have seen the same features in the exhibition. And, if this professor had by any chance also been familiar with Mihály Munkácsy and the realists, whether he would not have spotted traces of the heritage of these Hungarian painters with a hint of academic painting, even in the Hungarian abstracts—the jet-dark background, the heavy, sultry atmosphere breathing the dust of the Great Plain, or a taste for detail, with an anecdotal flair.

A vital question for Hungarian art is to what extent it still depends on the institutions which in the 19th century were mid-wife to national art: the German academies of art. How strongly can this old heritage still be felt even behind the moderns—how far have these canvases succeeded in going beyond the Munich of the 19th century?

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the 1960s in Hungary was that the struggle waged with political provincialism, a "socialist realism" shaped after its Soviet prototype, by and large coincided with Hungarian endeavours to rise above its own artistic provincialism, the heritage of German Academicism. This explains

the otherwise perhaps surprising circumstance that memories of German Expressionism can hardly be discovered in the paintings of "The Sixties" now on show, not even as a "relic style". As early as the mid-1930s, Hungarian modern art had sought links with the École de Paris to replace a Weimar Germany that had gone for ever. The best example for this was the Szentendre School in that small town near Budapest. Both the representatives of this school, half-Surrealist and half abstract, and the old masters, standing close to the Abstraction Création group of Paris, are represented at the exhibition as the "traditional moderns".

The young in Western Europe and in the United States, the representatives of Pop Art, "happenings", or possibly conceptual art, however, have rebelled precisely against this elderly generation, the authority of late Surrealism and lyrical abstraction. But in Hungary the situation was completely different. Here the "old men" (the art college teachers) were still committed to post-Impressionism. So the group rebelling against them emerged not with Pop Art, nor even in the colours of the École de Paris, which preceded Pop Art, but with a kind of home-made admixture, a post-Impressionism "turned savage" by surrealist inserts. It was from this so-called sur-naturalistic trend that, around 1967, some of the young artists withdrew and oriented to the New York School, which at the time was in full flower. In a grotesque turn, it was the most influential representative of this "American" school, László Lakner, who, after a few years, went into exile in Germany and scored his greatest success there precisely with his book still-lives (for example the early Goethe edition). It is true, of course, that Lakner applied large dollops of irony in painting these pseudo-academic pictures. The fact, however, cannot be denied.

Such tiny "slips" best show the inner uncertainties of the Hungarian moderns.

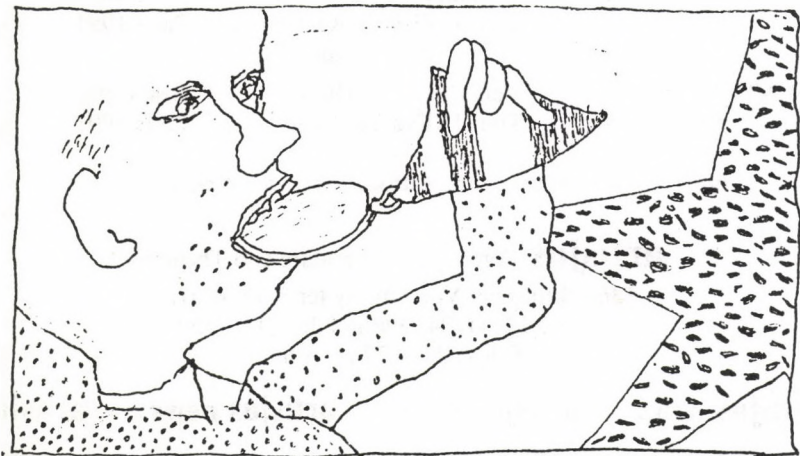
This may also explain why the current exhibition of "The Sixties" also highlights artists who at the time could not get across (partly, of course, due to the strict censorship of the day), as for example the three-dimension works by Gyula Konkoly, or Sándor Altorjai's collages and paintings of a wry bitterness or desperate humour. Alongside this tone with a bent to the grotesque, individual talent was evident in the early maturity of a few young painters: Ilona Keserű's lyrical painting with its full-blooded colour, Tamás Hencze's atmospheric constructivism (an almost impossible but highly qualitative border line case), or Krisztián Frey's art, which blends Twombly's sensitive style with colours of German *informel* painting, and which has remained practically unknown.

This overall picture still shows many strands which bind it to "national painting" in the old sense as well, as art in Hungary still remained principally a case of national emancipation and only secondarily an autonomous discipline. But let me add that this does not matter. These young people, who in the 1960s were members of the Industrial Design Group (the name came from the club room of an architectural bureau), which would deserve a much more detailed review, were

the first to realize what even the Szentendre School had failed to: that modern art had ceased to be a ghetto in Hungary.

This process had already taken place once, in the decade of art nouveau at the turn of the century, and then again, with the help of the following generation, the Hungarian constructivists, who burst into the international avant-garde. Who have now made use of the freedom they regained? The narrow scope of the exhibition does not really allow the fact to come through that it was the artists who in the late 1960s sought for a road to the international underground evolving in the late 'sixties—to Beuys or to conceptual art, already counted as "problematic", and to action art, which also had a political overtone.

This circle centred around Miklós Erdély, an artist who qualified as an architect but found his real place in the vicinity of the modern schools of philosophy and literature, and made his films, texts, pictures and objects, all with paradoxical messages, from this position. His provocative force and fermentative influence can still be strongly felt in Hungary, five years after his death. His pupils include the artists who have shaped the course of the last decade and who will provide the material for an exhibition of "The Eighties".



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Gergely Hajdú

The History and Geography of Fate

István Vas: *Azután* (Afterwards). Szépirodalmi, 1991, 810 pp;
 Alaine Polcz: *Asszony a fronton* (A Woman at the Front). Szépirodalmi,
 1991, 197 pp; Nándor Gion: *Börtönről álmodom mostanában* (I'm
 Dreaming of Prison These Days). Fórum-Szépirodalmi, 1990, 234 pp.

Hungarian literature has many periods when the memoirs written proved more interesting and lasting than the novels. It is no exaggeration to compare what the generation of István Vas produced, as well as writers born in the previous decade, with what was written in the 17th century, the golden age of the form. (Tibor Déry and Gyula Illyés, the authors of the most important memoirs, are frequently mentioned in those of István Vas.) Although the first volume was not published until 1957, Vas has actually been writing his monumental work since 1943. No wonder then that his concept has changed in the meantime. Finding linear autobiographies too boring, he has tried to tell his story in "concentric circles". The first volume was to have described the scenes, the houses and streets where he lived till September 1939, later volumes would have described his attitudes to money, politics and poetry. He had to recognize fairly quickly that—being a poet—everything in his life gained significance by being inseparable from poetry and from love, the impulse that often affected his development as an artist. Therefore, he returned to the tradition of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*: the section *Nehéz szerelem*

(Difficult Love) bears the subtitle *A költészet regénye* (The Story of Poetry). The structure, however, could be better defined as reticulated, since it so often recalls events already reported, and so often anticipates those to come. (Thus, when mentioning the writing of a series of articles in 1935, Vas refers to the problems the anti-Comintern tone of the articles was to cause in the 1950s.) The further one gets in the story, the more important a knowledge of antecedents becomes. At this point some knowledge of literary history proves useful as well. The book contains essential information about the literary life of the given period and provides far more enjoyable (and accurate) description and analysis of contemporary literary debates than scholarship, with all its preconceptions, usually does. (Biased as he sometimes is, Vas only recalls the views he had in the past; he has never been influenced by what the present demands.) The artistic value of the "novel" lies in the process by which he turned away from the values of his father, a well-to-do businessman, and how he broke from the avant-garde when it began to damage his poetic development. The crucial factor was his much loved first wife, Eti. It is on her death due to a brain tumour in September 1939 that the fourth volume ends; hence the title, *Azután* (Afterwards), for this, the next volume.

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This is the story of the war years up to March 1945, when Vas had to confront both the failure of his private life and his persecution as a Jew. Since literary life scarcely flourished in those years, its role in this volume is smaller. In style this volume is plainer, but through the web of motifs and the use of headlines on the margin, this and the previous books turn into an organic whole. The description of the age and of the subtle changes in the general atmosphere is entertaining; all the same, the main interest lies in the "novel", the story of a euphoric and traumatic emotional confusion.

The author was in love with two women at the same time. This banal situation is brilliantly analysed, partly with the help of some of the poems he wrote at that period. (The title of the volume he published in 1947 is *Kettős örvény*: Double Whirlpool.) Marika Kutny was as brave as she was beautiful, a romantic soul who never behaved romantically. Piroska Szántó, the talented painter, is a witty talker and more exciting personality. Unconsciously he must have wanted to keep both, Vas now suspects. Naturally, he did not see the problem as rationally then, he loved both with one love. The more harmonious his relationship with one, physically or emotionally, the worse with the other. The most obvious symptom was that he was always suffering from impotence with one or the other of the women.

Vas's analysis is of course too subtle for a summary to encompass. He provides an exceptionally interesting study on how women (including relationships of minor importance) have influenced his character and how their 'successors' reacted to the changes they brought about in him. His hidden desires and emotions were often revealed to the poet himself in his dreams or in the words of his poems and even in his translations (of Goethe and Dante). His reconstruction of the above tells us much about the psychology of the creative process.

Interstingly enough, he is influenced not

only by Freud but also by Jung and Karl Kerényi, by the then fashionable theories of myth. Sometimes he even resorts to another fashion of the 1940s, the occult. Associating it with fascist ideology, he consistently denounced it. In practice, however, he often lets the *Zeitgeist* take over.

His inability to choose as well as his guilty feelings over betrayal eventually drove him to attempt suicide. This happened after the Second Jewish Law, a law which enacted provisions similar to those of Nuremberg in Hungary: he could not keep his job and his relationship with the Christian Marika was a violation of the law. The most frightening event was his call-up to forced labour (not simple unarmed military service, more a fair chance of freezing or starving to death in the occupied Ukraine). He recovered from the poison he had taken and a diagnosis of 'schizophrenia' got him off labour service, something which would have been impossible without certain connexions of his family's. Even so, Vas had to feign madness. The psychiatric examination is perhaps the most memorable scene in the whole book. Vas's answers to the doctor are no further from truth than any poetic metaphor is. The poem he recites, *Önelemzés* (Self-Analysis), is about guilt and the fear of death, and the motifs are taken from his dreams. Given Vas's situation and style, the poem is remarkably logical. Yet, in the context of the examination it sounds unmistakably schizophrenic. That dangerous game is perhaps eloquent proof for the accuracy of Freudian theory when it interprets poetry as functional regression.

Given an insoluble private problem and a hostile turn of history, a successful suicide attempt would have been more logical; what happens later emphasizes the absurdity of the accidental. After the German occupation (on the 19th of March 1944) and the beginning of Arrow-Cross rule (on the 15th of October 1944) the paper certifying him unfit for military

service became worthless. A series of rescue attempts followed: he was trying to save himself, his friends and parents from Auschwitz, their possessions and property from being confiscated and—most difficult of all—his mind from the demoralization of hatred. In that chaos nobody could ever be sure whether the risk his or her actions involved was reasonable or not. They did not know when they were being heroic and when irresponsible. Marika saved the poet's life several times over, once even from the Hungarian secret police, which was by then under the direct control of the Gestapo. (Piroska, both Jewish and a communist, was hiding in a village at the time.) Vas owed much to new friends, two young novelists (who, as it happens, did not think much of Vas's literary work), Géza Ottlik (1912–1990) and István Örley (1913–1945). Quick and abnormally intensive friendships were among the features of this period: "People from before turned into phantoms: if someone had not been seen for a week, his existence was becoming doubtful..." Vas spent the most dangerous months, up to the Soviet capture of Budapest, hiding in Ottlik's flat.

Vas, Marika and the Ottliks survived the siege of Budapest and the arrival of the Soviet army without major harm done, that is the men were almost, but not actually, taken prisoners of war and the women were almost, but not actually, raped. Vas does not try to minimize the atrocities, his depiction of the Russian soldiers with their surprisingly great respect for artists is still consistently objective. It was nevertheless purest luck which saved him: the portrait of Stalin on the cover of a French biography, which a drunk Russian officer kissed as he would an icon.

He was able to survive the war, but the 'double whirlpool' would not release him. He tried to 'pass Marika on' to Örley in a complicated manoeuvre, a half-hearted attempt at breaking up. Unfortunately, the 33-year-old Örley was killed in one of

the last air raids. It is with the news of his death that this volume ends: the partners stand there as disappointed partners in crime. One month later Vas married Marika. They divorced in 1951, and he chose Piroska in spite of his friends' strong disapproval. (Piroska Szántó has become much better liked by writers since then; in addition to being a talented painter she has also turned out to be a writer of wit and grace.) But then this will be the subject for volumes to come — the eighty-year-old author is planning to bring his memoirs up to another historic moment, the 4th of November 1956.

A laine Polcz (the wife of Miklós Mészöly, the writer) is by profession a psychologist who specializes in the care of terminally ill children. Her essays on this subject are well known; here, however, she has written her memories of 1944–1945, the triple adventure of marriage, war and death. In comparison to that of Vas, her work may seem crude, since she lacks some of the writer's skills: the choice of the best expression or between the neutral and expressive tones is sometimes problematic. She slurs over certain events with "I cannot write of this" or its equivalents. On the other hand, she is able to evoke her emotions of that time very precisely, even if they are not logically explicable. The authenticity thus achieved is not spoiled by authorial commentary. She is not ashamed of her naiveté at the time. So instead of using the 'facts' of history text-books, she refers to historical events through contemporary gossip (such as a folk version of Rumania's switching sides) and explains various things that are by now common knowledge, for instance, what a machine gun looks like or what well-known Russian expressions mean.

The nineteen-year-old from Kolozsvár in Transylvania was ignorant of both sex and warfare. She received the first warning when she married her first husband János, her

childhood sweetheart. János, an editor in peace-time, had already spent three years on the Russian front, returning with his nerves shattered. A heavy drinker in spite of his hepatitis, he was living in a state of continuous suicide. He was violent with his wife whom he abused and cheated on, even infecting her with gonorrhoea—still not enough to disenchant her. Alaine was a born victim: no wonder she was to experience war in its cruelest forms.

The couple fled to an Esterházy chateau, Csákvár, in Transdanubia, which was supposed to be safer. This proved to be a mistake. The air raid in which they were caught at the railway station as they were about to leave Kolozsvár was so heavy that they thought that all they would be leaving behind would be ruins. The Germans, who showed little respect for the chateau being under Red Cross protection, dumped the refugees, including Jews, French PoWs and the secretary of the Papal legate, into a forester's lodge. The Papal legate's secretary was theoretically entitled to diplomatic immunity, which was ignored by the Russians for a change. The Christmas of 1944 marked the beginning of three months of Soviet attacks and German counter-attacks. János soon became a PoW. Alaine survived these months with her mother-in-law, first in the forester's lodge, then in a village rectory, a crowded cellar, and finally in the house of an old peasant woman. (See the extract on p. 46.)

Even more horrible than artillery fire, starvation, freezing, lice, and disease was the violence of Russian soldiers. The author not only saw and heard civilians being robbed, taken prisoner, killed or mutilated, but was herself raped dozens of times. (This was often done with such violence that on occasion the victim's spine was broken.) Moral considerations do not keep man from what he is physically capable of—we know that all too well. The vehemence of the Russians is nevertheless surprising; neither the age of the victim nor the risk involved seems

to have been relevant; thus only three days of pillage were allowed and a number of soldiers (though not many) were shot for going too far. Venereal disease could also be taken for granted. The taking of such risks cannot be explained by instinct only, bearing in mind that German soldiers were rarely guilty of such behaviour, in Hungary at least. The Russian custom of using the floor rather than the bed also makes one suspect that, for the Russian soldier, rape was a ritual which, for some vague psychological reason, was a symbol of personal survival.

In spite of their discipline and seemingly rational behaviour, it was the Germans Alaine was more afraid of. "When they said you would be shot the next day, you could be sure it would be done". The Russians would joke and sometimes they even displayed a surprising, childlike goodwill.

When things became a little quieter, Alaine escaped to Budapest, where the fighting had ended by then. She met some relatives and told them what had happened to her. "After supper mother called me aside and said, 'Don't make such awful jokes, my girl, they might believe you!'" However, hypocrisy could not remove the physical effects: untreated gonorrhoea was followed by tuberculosis, peritonitis and pleurisy, which soon had her in hospital in her native Kolozsvár, where it was "peaceful and quiet, with well-dressed people and no sign of war". As it turned out "Kolozsvár had been under fire for a single day..."

After the humiliating experiences of marriage and war, there followed an elevating one: that of dying. Pain suddenly became remote, earthly things seemed insignificant. "This liberating, light feeling [...] filled me with a strange happiness and calm", she writes. "It was not indifference or apathy, rather the recognition of another dimension of time." After a full recovery (though she had become infertile), this experience determined her

future. Hence her choice of psychology and thanatology. Bearing in mind the number of times she was nearly killed in the course of the events she relates, the choice seems to have been inevitable and cruelly predestined. The same goes for suffering, which could have been avoided if, instead of fleeing, she had remained behind. This continued in peacetime. Her husband returned safe and sound and they spent some years in the old, loveless way. She reports: "...I am like a closed box and they are curious what is inside." War did not change her life, only highlighted what was essential.

Alaine Polcz's writing can evoke a disturbing sense of determination, relying more on intuition than the skills of the craft, and this is what endows the book with a more than documentary value.

Since successful autobiographies that encompass certain moments of history are ultimately about the human condition, certain novels use personal fates to examine the alternatives of behaviour in a historical and geographical situation. If they can realize this and no more, and they examine problems of existence rather than of essence, these novels, whatever their public success, cannot be considered too valuable.

Most of the works of Nándor Gion have been successful. Here a curious habit on the part of Hungarian readers plays a part. The average reader knows little about the literatures of Hungarian minorities in foreign countries. Books published in small editions are hard to obtain, sometimes even hard to understand without a knowledge of the local circumstances or of the literature of the national majority. Attention is therefore focused on single writers. For most people Nándor Gion is *the* Hungarian writer in Yugoslavia, as András Sütő is *the* Hungarian writer in Rumania and Lajos Grendel *the* writer in Slovakia. It is of course the media that more or less determine the choice, the grounds for

which are mysterious. A representative writer does not have to be either the most photogenic or the most talented one. It would be a mistake to presume from Sütő's political role that that was of the essence.

The reception of Gion is apparently made easier by his formal conservative-ness. His latest novel, as all the others, is set in the village where he was born, the people are the young just hanging around some time after the prolonged Eastern post-war period, the *vitelloni* of neorealist films. They work hard at their studies and write dilettante verse at the university and are hoodlums and bootleggers at home. The war was apparently the last time when something happened here. It has left its mark on everything, the land and morals.

The protagonist, Lajos Kiss, causes a fatal accident when drunk, and is therefore sent to prison. Soon his friends, continuing the bootlegging, make it there too. Lajos's situation becomes delicate because of a rival gang, but he finds a job as second receptionist at a seaside resort belonging to the Ministry of the Interior. He finds himself back in the town prison because of his involvement in a sex scandal through a girl with a gold tooth selling newspapers he had met on the beach. It would have fallen hard for him if he had not been released with the help of the wife of a judge, another acquaintance from the coast. Finally he becomes a teacher in a Hungarian village school, which, though idyllic at the moment, might be closed down any time.

The plot is far from sophisticated, there is nothing strikingly new about its symbols and its ending is fairly didactic. What makes the book worth reading nevertheless is that it is a novel of a tale. After the realism of its opening, the style becomes closer and closer to that of a tale. The dreams of the superstitious protagonist refer backward and forward: they can relate to what is heard and experienced during the day, but they also anticipate his future. He begins to compose romantic tales out of his daytime

experiences and dreams; it is with these tales that he manages to win the girl with the gold tooth and to get from prison to the conspicuously prison-like outside world so quickly. The inauspicious is effective in the end: the last sentence of the novel is identical with the title.

Unfortunately, it never becomes quite clear why the protagonist's development has been described at all, why it is worth talking about "zemstvo affairs" —if the world is simply a parody of dreams. For that matter, I'm dreaming of somewhat better novels these days.

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Mária M. Kovács

How the East Was Won

Timothy Garton Ash: *We the People. The Revolution of 89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague*. Granta Books, Cambridge, 1990. 156 pp.

Was it a revolution that took place in Eastern Europe in 1989? Arguments based on analogy, definitions pulled out of a hat will doubtlessly prolong debate over this question; examining the reality is more profitable. In the words of Timothy Garton Ash, 1989 was "the year of truth"; the communist dictatorships collapsed and the peoples of the region set up representative, democratic regimes by means of free elections. We take refuge in the ambiguity which, incidentally, Garton Ash himself considers as the main characteristic of political life in Central Europe. Why then do we have to worry after the fall of communism, whether the new regimes were brought about by revolution or not?

The greater part of Timothy Garton Ash's journalism written between 1984 and 1990 revolves around this question. For it is the willingness to engage in concepts that sets his work apart from run-of-the-mill journalism. He musters metaphors and historical analogies in order to provide a frame for the eyewitness accounts. Garton Ash is not the ordinary Kremlinologist, nor the superficial west-

ern traveller, who in his travels among the natives will work the morsels of information he gathers from sly functionaries of the Central Committee or the Politbureau into imposing towers of theory, solid and confident paradigms and scenarios which are ultimately and ignominiously refuted by reality.

Garton Ash is a different type of author, a patient and empathetic observer of the seventies and eighties, an explorer of the deeper processes. There is something pleasantly old-fashioned about his qualities as a writer, some continuity, in the best sense of the word, with that British tradition which endeavours to present foreign cultures in their entirety. His way of looking at things is unusually autonomous in western journalism, free of the irrelevant fripperies of the western right and left. Furthermore, in Garton Ash independence does not lead to some vague political relativism; on the contrary, it leads to a firm rejection of the Europe Yalta defined and to a merciless criticism of the communist dictatorships. His sympathies are hardly in doubt; he focuses his attention on Solidarity in Poland, Charta '77 in Czecho-Slovakia, and the democratic opposition in Hungary. Through his writings of over a decade, it is probably no exaggeration to say that he has done more to give the West a more faithful picture of the individual figures of the opposition and their political thinking than all the press reporting on the region taken together.

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His book is for the most part a chronicle of the opposition movements and, of course, of those euphoric or awesome moments when opposition figures found themselves as leaders of countries or of parties, ministers or members of parliament.

Garton Ash does believe that a revolution took place in 1989 in the Eastern bloc. In Rumania it was one of elementary force; "...angry crowds on the streets, tanks, government buildings in flames, the dictator put up against the wall and shot." (p. 20). But he recalls the doubts of the East European intellectual he has talked to as to whether the term revolution can be applied to popular movements in the other countries simply because they were spontaneous, on a mass scale and effective. "Should popular movements which, however spontaneous, massive and effective, were almost entirely non-violent, really be described by a word so closely associated with violence?" (ibid). Yes, he answers, "This sudden and sweeping end to an *ancien régime* and the fact that it occurred in all the countries of Eastern Europe within the space of a few months, may justify the use of the word 'revolution'" (ibid). Still, a further argument is that the change occurred with reference to the people, even though the word 'people' carries ambiguities. It was a revolution because, at least in Poland, Czecho-Slovakia and Hungary, the leading figures knew not only what they were out to bring down but "they had a startlingly clear idea of the constitutional order they wanted to build, not just of what they wanted to destroy." Finally, it was a revolution in a stylistic sense too because "these events, in their rhetoric and street theatre somehow belonged to earlier centuries, not to our common-marketed world." (p. 21).

The historical parallel, the author suggests, is evident; victory for the revolutions of 1989 (just as those of 1848) was assured by popular support and the political goals of the revolutions were

set, now as then, by intellectuals, playwrights, philosophers, engineers and conductors. "The sociology of the opposition forums (New, Democratic, Civic), parties and parliamentary candidates was distinctly comparable with that of the Frankfurt Parliament or the Slav Congress at Prague. *Hundert zwanzig Professoren...*" (p. 136).

Just as in 1848, says Garton Ash, the common denominator of the revolutions in each of the countries was ideological. Communism might have been dying for some time, yet it did not expire until the truth had been spoken about it. Dictatorship only ceases to exist from the moment when it is declared defunct. That could not have passed off peacefully if the communist ideology had any sort of reserves, if the members of the communist elite had believed in their right to rule.

But the East European revolutions had another common denominator in the sense that they had set themselves similar aims. All of them were bourgeois revolutions, since in effect they all put forward its classic programme, namely civil rights and the right to private property. They did so in such a way that ordinary people and the political theoreticians all expected something very similar of the revolution: national, regional and professional associations independent of the one-party states, institutions characterized by tolerance, civility, authenticity and democracy—in short, the right to enter the world of the middle-classes, the bourgeoisie.

Why this stubborn adherence to the word 'revolution'? Why this interpretation which, in the countries concerned, or in Hungary at any rate, is not urged by the opposition itself? It would appear that Garton Ash is arguing here against the dominant West European view (not without its supporters in the East), a view which seeks to explain the great change of 1989 primarily through the "Gorbachev factor", through the change in the Soviet imperial stance, through the primacy of

foreign policy, compared to which all the other factors are negligible. This he does in order to make room on the stage, at the side of Gorbachev, for the other men of 1989, the leaders of the local revolutions. He links the disconnected train of events of the eighties and tips the balance between internal and external politics in favour of the former, as if he wanted to reestablish the continuity between the first revolution of the eighties, the Polish revolution of 1980/81, the struggles of the East European dissidents, and the change of 1989.

Yet, no matter how attractive the consistency with which Garton Ash treats the changes in the East European countries, his construct is debatable for a number of countries. One of the considerable merits of his book is that his admirable eyewitness accounts offer the reader the facts which themselves help loosen the rigour of his construct.

The question revolution/non-revolution is an important element not only for the interpretation of the past but also for a forecast of the future. The context is the sources for legitimacy that can be drawn on by the power elites replacing the communist elites. What do they themselves think of the processes that catapulted them into power? Are they the inheritors of the revolution? Are they the depositories of "the will of the people"? In other words, may there not be the spectre of another, a second revolution lurking behind the new "democracies"? What can restrain the new establishments, professing revolutionary legitimacy, from the temptation of repudiating the new democratic rules of the game once they are confronted with their first serious crisis? The genuine leaders of genuine revolutions always have a potential political capital to draw on and to proclaim, sooner or later, the second phase of the revolution, the crack-down on those of the ancient regime and then on their former allies. This too is part and parcel

of revolution; it is this that makes it important to see where, when and to what extent one can speak of genuine revolutions.

Garton Ash begins his chronicle in Poland, with the first free elections. He is right in thinking that the most psychologically surprising thing today, with hindsight and in the knowledge of Solidarity's sweeping victory is the extent to which the leaders of the organization lacked confidence in the outcome. "They must have known they would win. But they didn't. I sat with an exhausted and depressed Adam Michnik over lunch that Sunday, and he did not know. I drank with a nervously excited Jacek Kuron late that evening, and he did not know. Nobody knew." (p. 25).

Putting aside the author's construct, the claim that it was a revolution that took place in Poland in July 1989 must be questioned. Let us glance at his excellent analysis of the power Solidarity represented in July 1989. On the day of the elections, the organization looked back on a past of eight years but had undergone substantial changes in the intervening period; "... there was none of the exuberant dynamism of Autumn 1980, when an estimated three million people joined the newborn union within a fortnight. In mid-June, after two months, its membership was still estimated at between one and a half and two million, and no one imagined it would reach the ten million of 1981." (p. 34.) In 1989 Solidarity was no longer the same revolutionary organization it had been nine years before; it had become the heir of a revolution that had failed, for all that the heir was held in tremendous esteem. The dismay of its leaders was well-founded: the relative passivity of what had been the grass roots of the union was giving cause for anxiety. As it turned out, the real antagonist of Solidarity in 1989, at the moment of the breakthrough, was not communism but the skepticism of its own members. Here

is what Garton Ash has to say about the July elections: "There was only one opponent that Solidarity did not defeat. He might be called, by analogy with General Winter, General Abstention. All sides in the campaign had agreed on one thing: that everyone should turn out to vote. Yet the final turn-out was very modest: just over sixty-two per cent... my own straw polls suggested that the main reason was a deep tiredness and disbelief in the capacity of any political force—red, white or blue—to reverse the country's desperate material decline." (p. 31).

Although Solidarity won the elections, effective power (the army and the police) remained in the hands of Jaruzelski. Secondly, Jaruzelski had in his pocket the agreement reached at the round table that he would continue to be President of Poland. All the outcry after the event was in vain, and so was Solidarity's landslide victory; in vain did some of its leaders protest that General Jaruzelski's name had not even been mentioned at the round table discussions; "if it was not explicitly mentioned this was because any schoolboy could see that the post had been designed for him. That was the deal." (p. 37).

Solidarity stuck to the agreement. They did not declare Jaruzelski's overthrow, although this would have been within the rights of the parliamentary majority according to the letter of the concord. "The only reason that he won was that seven Solidarity-opposition members of parliament deliberately cast invalid votes, so as to ensure his victory, while several more abstained. Many Solidarity supporters were furious. But the political brains of the movement argued that this was the best possible result. Jaruzelski had to be elected. That was the deal, and the organs he led, Party, army, police, still held the real power in the land. (One of the best of those political brains who in the circumstances had best remain nameless, anticipated precisely this result. 'If it looks as if the president will not get the necessary

majority,' he said, 'some of us just have to get 'flu.'" (p. 39).

When, finally, on August 24—and with Gorbachev's blessing—the majority of the communist deputies voted for the new Prime Minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the political creation of the 'year of truth', 1989, was crowned. A joint government of the former prisoners and their former gaolers came into existence, which until the election of Walesa as President, maintained political stability in a country in serious economic crisis. Strictly relying on Timothy Garton Ash's account of the events, this reviewer feels that the annals of 1989 remind her of the classic models of the 1848 revolutions much less than of the work of a compromise attendant on a failed revolution (to be compared perhaps to that of the Compromise of 1867 in Hungary). In Poland there really was a revolution, but in 1980/81 rather than in 1989. The second revolution, if there is going to be one, is still to come.

In Hungary the change was not forced through by popular demand, not even indirectly as in Poland. Characteristically—as Garton Ash himself notes—both the Polish and the Hungarian turning point had their immediate antecedents in May 1988; however, in Poland it was heralded by a strike, in Hungary by a Party Conference. The process here took place at higher levels all the way through. Indeed, this may well have been the reason why so many different embryonic political movements were present in the process, in contrast to the polarized situation in Poland. Since none of these movements had broad support at that time, popular demands did not tie the hands of the political actors. The new political groupings arose along the lines of opinions and preferences within the intelligentsia. This is borne out by the conduct of the round table negotiations. The opposition was divided so much so that one influential group among the parties (SzDSz and

FIDESZ) did not sign the agreement reached at the round table, since the agreement, contrary to a previous accord, contained provisions concerning the election of the country's president; it was feared that this might lead to a commitment to elect a communist president in the same way as in Poland. It was actually thanks to this division that once, and only once, the country stirred itself: in a referendum held to decide the manner of electing a president, the voters toppled from power the Jaruzelski of the Hungarian compromise, the reform communist Imre Pozsgay, thereby giving the Hungarian compromise a somewhat different aspect. Which, adds Garton Ash, was based on a correct appraisal of power relations since, as early as the autumn of 1989, the Communist Party had been in the last throes of its dissolution. It was in this way that the situation arose that Hungary had a multi-party system before it had democracy, and the country thus went to the polls with a political spectrum already in existence.

If this is how it happened, then it is worth comparing this chronicle of events with Garton Ash's thesis that claims that the intellectual policy-makers of the revolution not only opposed communism but had some homogeneous vision of future arrangements, a vision with which the masses too could identify. In reality, what they all had in common was no more than resistance to communism, a resistance not without nuances, as each of the parties represented various standpoints concerning the work of the compromise and concerning the Communist Party too. (As the clash which, explicitly or implicitly, revolved around Imre Pozsgay bears out). The opposition itself was of more than one mind; on the other hand, the voters in the referendum split almost evenly in their support for the parties.

Indeed the division through the dissident intellectuals concealed downright

ideological differences. Garton Ash states correctly that there was some degree of consensus regarding constitutional rule among the parties of the opposition but, on the most vital issues, the antagonisms were of a stale, anachronistic, ideologically overstrained character. At the moment of burying communism, the rabid antiliberal rhetoric of the Hungarian past was revived without any apparent relevance; so too was the vision of the country's downfall, harking back to the 20s, the years after the Hungarian Soviet Republic and the antipopulists' hysterical rejection of stick-in-the-mud provincialism and jingoism.

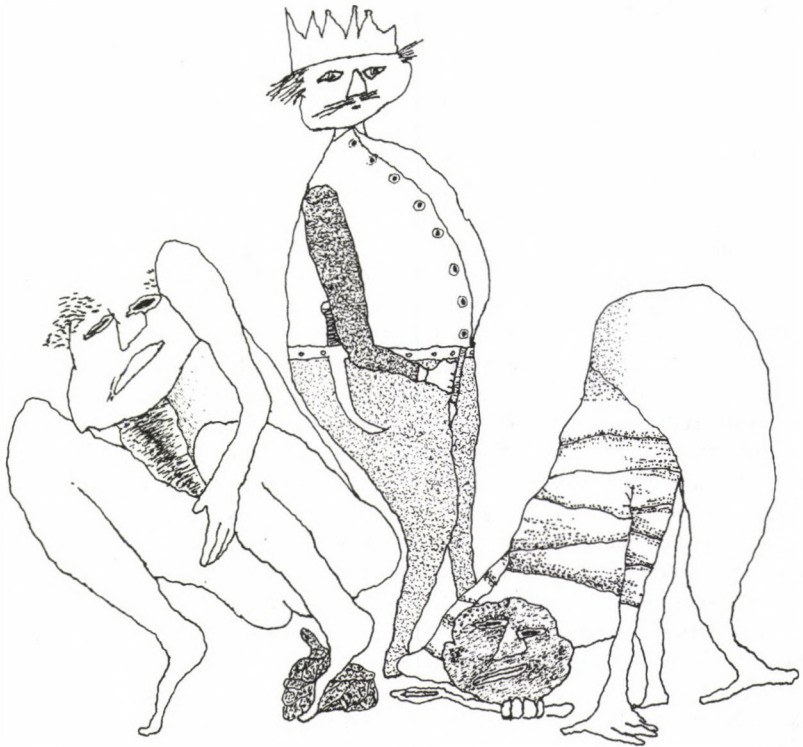
By the same token, it is hard to discover any of the ideological common denominators that Garton Ash seems to see linking the revolutions of Eastern Europe, among, say, the Czech Civic Forum and the largest new Hungarian party, the populist conservative Democratic Forum. What we see today instead is that much of the problem of our foreign policy stems in no small measure from the lack of a common language when these countries try to address their conflicts.

On the subject of foreign policy, Hungary and Poland seem particularly opposite cases in weighing up the importance of "the Gorbachev factor". One can go along unreservedly with Garton Ash's claim that one characteristic of "the year of truth" was the complete fragmentation and pulverization of communist ideology. It is also true that there was present in all the countries of Eastern Europe what Garton Ash calls "the Tocqueville factor": that psychological state in which the establishment loses faith in its own legitimacy, thereby itself contributing to provoking change. The real question, however, is to ask what was that legitimacy which so spectacularly eroded, to what extent was it possible to speak of any reserves of communist ideology after '56 in Hungary, '68 in Czechoslovakia and '81 in Poland? Can anyone seriously entertain the notion

that in 1981 General Jaruzelski had smashed with military might a ten million strong Solidarity Workers' Union in the spirit of some 'ism', and a decade later, had lost his faith in the communist legitimacy of his action? Surely it would be more correct to speak, not of communist legitimation derived from ideology, but of a legitimation derived from an enforced adaptation to the Soviet power centre, which had completely collapsed by 1989? Is the "Tocqueville factor" of 1989 the same thing as the "Gorbachev factor?" We might try to falsify the thesis. When in the autumn of 1989 it seemed more and more likely that the communist parties of the GDR and Czechoslovakia were resistant to the erosion of the "Tocqueville factor", "the Gorbachev factor" went into action with a certain harshness and under its own steam. Garton Ash quotes Gorbac-

hev's speech of October 7 in East Berlin: "Life punishes those who delay," he said, addressing his words to Honecker, and gave the signal for the start of the removal of the East German leader. (p. 65).

Garton Ash's book achieves its purpose remarkably well: he gives us a close-knit and yet many-sided account of "the year of truth" in four countries of Eastern Europe. I hope it is not a sign of Hungarian pessimism, to which he himself refers to frequently, to say that I cannot share the author's interpretation of revolution and feel that it contains something romantic. "Unhappy is the land that has no heroes," is flung at Brecht's Galileo. Garton Ash's book gives us the rejoinder: "Unhappy is the land that has need of heroes." We should fervently hope that the age of heroes, with or without revolution, is no more—at least for a while.



László Péter

The Chequered Course of Economic Reform

Iván T. Berend: *The Hungarian Economic Reforms 1953–1988*.
Cambridge University Press, 1990. X.+347 pp. £ 40. Soviet and East
European Studies 70.

The reform of Hungary's monolithic economic system has attracted international interest for many years, yet Professor Berend's is the first comprehensive book on its history. Hegel, who wrote that the owl of Minerva flies at dusk, would not be surprised. We understand processes better when they are over; so it is befitting that Hungary's leading economic historian should write a comprehensive account of the chequered course of economic reform just after the fall of the Kádár regime and the collapse of the one party state, events which opened the door to the dismantling of a system based on state ownership.

When, in the 1960s, the idea of economic reform was being aired in Eastern Europe, the economists no less than political leaders took for granted that the future belonged to socialism and that the state was to remain in charge of the economy. (At that time economists in the West too believed in the efficiency of the mixed economy and were infatuated with the idea of state planning). Ordinary people knew better. A popular joke in Eastern Europe defined socialism as an unremitting struggle with difficulties which would not have arisen but for the establishment of socialism itself.

Today it all looks different. The reforms searched for an answer to a conundrum: how could market conditions be

restored without dismantling the command economy which had obliterated them. Now many economists in the East and West regard the reform plans as so many recipes for the production of hot ice.

This is not, of course, the view taken by the author. A leading reformer, and until recently president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Professor Berend published in late 1988 *A magyar gazdasági reform útja*. The present volume is a translation from the Hungarian with a new short conclusion added.

Berend's work is, however, far from being an apologia for the reform course. The book is based on meticulous and impartial scholarship, it is convincingly argued and its assessment of the course of reform is balanced but unflattering. The story is one of *ad hoc* adjustments, spurts and stoppages, half measures and backtracking as well as the introduction of some effective measures based on rational economic calculation. The intelligentsia and the public were as much divided on the desirability of the reforms as were the party and the government. The egalitarian expectations of the population as well as Marxist dogma and external pressure obstructed change.

The author identifies three phases of the reforms. The first started in the mid-fifties, the second, a decade later, and the

third in 1979. But only the middle phase, the years between 1966 and 1968, the author insists (rightly), produced genuine reforms. The measures introduced in the other two phases amounted to minor adjustments only.

The need for action occurred shortly after the rigid centrally planned economy with its fixed prices, wages and production targets showed signs of strain back in 1951. A plan for a major overhaul of the system was worked out by economists shortly after, and because of, the October Revolution in 1956–57. But it became sidetracked after the regime succeeded in consolidating itself politically. Between 1958 and 1964 the tinkers prevailed, although agriculture was an exception. The introduction of household farms reduced food shortages, allowed a slow rise in living standards and stimulated interest in reintroducing elements of the market in industry.

After extensive debate, both within the party and in public, the economic mechanism was changed in 1968. The reform was narrowly economic, there was no question of combining it with any political reform. The private sector (which actually diminished between 1960 and 1966) was not allowed to expand. The adjustment of property relations and private activity received a very modest place in the reform (p. 189). Nevertheless, services improved. In state industry, production targets were abolished, the enterprise was given some autonomy, price and wage control was loosened. The measures created the minimum conditions for ensuring (or at least simulating) a market situation, with a profit motive and incentive (p. 176). However, the built-in-brakes remained powerful. The firm belief in full employment and other values of socialism induced the policy makers to introduce only the first phase of their intended reforms with 'multiple checks, balances and compromises'. The government also retained 'informal' centraliza-

tion, particularly in investments. So the market was only 'partially rehabilitated', and 'the market, simulated with regulators instead of a real market, could not, after all, produce the mixed system expected from the reform and thought to be ideal' (pp. 190–1).

For all these limitations, the reform improved productivity and helped the consumer. Once again, it was in agriculture where the reform generated the enterprising mentality which led to a lasting improvement in supplies. The cooperative farms were allowed to develop non-agricultural auxiliary activities, food processing and the like.

After the reform's first phase had been carried out, preparations were made for its second, more ambitious, phase. These came to nothing. The already implemented measures created social tension. (How far did the partial introduction of the intended reforms exacerbate these tensions?) The new income differentials conflicted with egalitarian principles. The reformers were put on the defensive because, as their critics saw it, the new mechanism bred 'unjustified private incomes' and caused the 'spread of bourgeois attitudes and habits' (p. 224.) Meanwhile, a cold wind was blowing from Moscow and the neighbouring countries. Now the informal central controls were strengthened and in 1974–75 leading reformers, including Rezső Nyers, were removed from their party and government posts. The leadership misread the consequences of the oil crisis and was hooked on a policy of high growth. The new mechanism failed to adjust the Hungarian economy to world prices. Economic deterioration was then remedied by the running up of a high dollar debt, the servicing of which became the central problem of the government from 1978. (It still is.) The anti-reformers were given the sack and the reformers picked themselves up.

At the beginning of the 1980s the whole Eastern block was in economic turmoil.

The Hungarian Model, as it was now called outside (but not yet inside) Hungary, gained acceptance even in pre-Gorbachev Moscow. There were now heated debates in Hungary on how to 'reform the reform' and what kind of social and political reforms should accompany the economic measures. But no comprehensive reform was put through in the 1980s, only some corrective measures. The price system was made more realistic, the service sector was decentralized, and trading restrictions on firms were relaxed. Private activity (in small scale business) was given more scope, the 'second economy' was legalized and 'work teams' (on the analogy of the household farm) were introduced in the state sector.

In late 1986 (after Gorbachev had launched perestroika) the party reformers got the bit between their teeth and accepted a blueprint worked out by experts, for comprehensive institutional change. This *Turning and Reform* combined political and economic reforms. Although the party leaders had eventually accepted the programme in principle, nothing was done before the ousting of Kádár in May 1988 and the collapse of the party state in the summer of 1989. Hungary's new democratic government inherited the old communist command economy.

What are Berend's views of the country's economic prospects? In the short conclusion, written last year, the author argues that the reform of the economic system was discredited because monolithic state ownership could not be destroyed while "the party state remained in place". The country is now moving

towards a new system. "However, the traps and dangers are quite daunting". The "restoration of budget, foreign trade and balance of payments equilibrium" has to be carried out in conditions of rising inflation and falling living standards. Furthermore, there are conflicts with some of Hungary's neighbours. Yet Hungary is still "strongly dependent on its socialist neighbours". What began in Hungary was "a fundamental change in the concept of socialism". The new system will be neither traditional capitalism nor a "semi-reformed traditional socialism". "Mixed ownership, a market economy and strong social guarantees" will be combined. Is it a programme of gradual change towards what used to be called the mixed economy? If so, Berend may turn out to be right. The new government and the elected parliament may not have the political courage to abandon mixed ownership and embrace traditional capitalism by a radical dismantling of the whole etatist economic edifice.

Nevertheless, this reader hopes that the etatist edifice will be dismantled and capitalism will be established in its 'traditional' rather than in its mixed form. The market can be established at one fell swoop rather than piecemeal—as Berend's book among other things, demonstrates. The government should tackle inflation, balance the budget and relinquish the power of fixing prices and wages. Above all, the state should not own business firms. State owned enterprises do not behave (anywhere in the world) as if they were subject to market conditions. If we believe the opposite, we are back to the making of hot ice.

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László Ferenczi

The Revolutionary and the Statesman

John Lukacs: *The Duel, 10 May–31 July 1940. The Eighty-Day Struggle Between Churchill and Hitler*. The Bodley Head, London, 1990, Ticknor and Fields, New York, 1991. 258 pp.

On the first of the two dates in the title, 10th of May 1940, Hitler begins his onslaught against the West: Great Britain is forced to retreat from the continent, and France capitulates. That same day Churchill is appointed Prime Minister, but not because of the German offensive. At the news of the attack, Chamberlain puts his foot down and refuses for hours on end to resign as he promised the day before. Chamberlain's fall was due to the Nazi campaign in Norway which, however, was also a defeat for Churchill who, although accepting full responsibility for it, suffered no damage to his reputation.

On the second date, 31st of July 1940, Roosevelt decides to let England have the destroyers she had been asking for so insistently. The decision has no immediate military consequence; its psychological and diplomatic significance is all the greater: the United States has taken an important step from neutrality towards war. The same day Hitler resolves to invade the Soviet Union. In the future, Great Britain will not stand alone. Roosevelt's decision and Hitler's determination call

forth the great coalition. For this to be created, however, the Battle of Britain has still to be won.

The eighty-day "duel" is the story of decisive weeks. After the French *débâcle*, England was left to her own devices but continued to resist; since she resisted, she found allies with whom the war could be won. Those eighty days demonstrated that England was able to hold the fort by herself, those days made Churchill into the legendary hero, who was not to be deterred by the ensuing air raids either. On May the 10th, 1940, Churchill, in the eyes of many, is a heavy drinker, an unreliable man, a braggart; after July the 31st, he is a genuine leader. Between May 10th and July 31st 1940, the U.S. Ambassador in London, Joseph P. Kennedy, regularly informs his President that England will soon sue for peace. This is an opinion held not only by Kennedy, from the outset against the war, but also by William C. Bullitt, the U.S. Ambassador in Paris, an out-and-out and active anti-Nazi. Bullitt misunderstands Churchill who, after Dunkirk, fails to send the Royal Air force into action over France. Bullitt thinks that Churchill thus wishes to play his "trump" at the armistice talks that are expected to begin soon; he gives this opinion indignantly in his reports to the President. On July the 31st 1940, Roosevelt, when or-

László Ferenczi is author of books on Voltaire, Paul Eluard and 20th century Hungarian literature.

dering the delivery of ships, already knows for sure that England will resist. The war continued to be waged not only on the battlegrounds but psychologically as well, and here, during eighty decisive days Churchill vanquished Hitler.

As his epigraph Lukacs quotes Huizinga: "The sociologist etc., deals with his material as if the outcome were given in the known facts: he simply searches for the way in which the result was already determined in the facts. The historian, on the other hand, must always maintain towards his subject an indeterminate point of view. He must constantly put himself at a point in the past at which the known factors still seem to permit different outcomes. If he speaks of Salamis, then it must be as if the Persians might still win..."

The reader of this excellently written book, knowing that Churchill defeated Hitler, is still afraid that England will capitulate. Lukacs has succeeded in what few historians can do—he has recreated the past.

Hitler made serious blunders, he fundamentally misunderstood England. He did not believe that, in the case of an invasion of Poland, England would declare war on Germany, and he thought that, if the British army was once driven off the continent, England would beg for peace. But could he have calculated differently after Munich? Munich remains a symbol of shame, cowardice, and capitulation. Forced to the fringe of British political life, Churchill proved to be a prophet: since they had opted for shame, they could not avoid war. (Churchill's prestige grew after Hitler had marched into Prague in violation of the Munich agreement.) Since the world could not really avoid war, there are very few among those who admire Churchill whose views on Munich differ from his, namely, that the Munich agreement was necessary. According to Raymond Aron (*Le Spectateur engagé*, Paris, 1981) and the American historian of Hungarian birth,

John Lukacs, England obviated catastrophe by signing.

In Aron's view England in 1938 was defenceless. The production of aircraft sufficient to decide the Battle of Britain was not achieved until the spring of 1940. Lukacs also points this out and adds that the dominions, in 1938, reluctant to support England, were ranged on her side by 1939. Aron does not take seriously the German generals' anti-Hitler intrigue, of which Chamberlain also had knowledge. Lukacs does not even mention the plot. Obviously not because he has not heard of it, but because he thinks it unimportant. Lukacs regards as erroneous Churchill's views that in 1938 the Soviet Union was an ally of the West. Churchill stated so in the first volume (published in 1948) of his work *The Second World War*.

Lukacs is perhaps too categorical. George Kennan thought that Hitler intended the occupation of the Rhineland in February 1936 to "test" the Franco-Soviet Pact concluded a little earlier. From France's inaction Stalin drew the conclusion that he could not rely on the French if they did not act in their own interest. He let Litvinov speechify in the League of Nations, but secretly he sought a possible accord with Hitler. This accord, in the view of Aron, was made possible by Chamberlain when he guaranteed Poland's independence in April 1939, since this let Stalin know that England would fight alone, that the Soviet Union could remain neutral in a European conflict.

Therefore, Lukacs differs from Aron and the common view regarding Munich. The dispute continues and can hardly be clarified satisfactorily. But would Czechoslovakia have resisted, as Lukacs supposes, for two days only even in case of war? The fact is that by 1939 the highly developed Bohemian arms industry already served Hitler. But it is also true that the Munich Agreement was received with general relief, all the way from Jean-Paul Sartre to Leonard Woolf, Virginia

Woolf's husband, a leading member of the Labour Party in Britain.

Lukacs repeatedly emphasizes that Churchill understands Hitler, and this is a prerequisite for the decision of the "duel". In an earlier book of his (*Confessions of an Original Sinner*, 1990) the author of *The Duel* evokes his adolescent impressions: "The democratic statesmen of the West were all satisfactorily anti-dictatorial, progressive, opposed to Hitlerism, etc., but somehow something was missing. Chamberlain, Daladier, Blum, Attlee, Hoover, Hull: Conservatives, Radicals, Socialists, Republicans, Democrats: I thought even that their reactions to the Hitler phenomenon, expressed by their rhetoric, were somehow unconvincing and unsatisfactory. [...] There was an exception to them: Churchill". (p. 20.)

On the day after Dunkirk, Guillaume Ferrero, the Italian historian in exile in Switzerland, writes in a letter that the Western leaders, Chamberlain and Blum, fatally misunderstood Hitler and the nature of revolutionary states, since they were thinking in 19th century categories. Barely a few hours later, General De Gaulle, not long before appointed Under-Secretary for War, called on Field Marshal Weygand, Commander-in-Chief of the French armed forces, at his General Headquarters. De Gaulle describes their conversation in the first volume of his memoirs. His conclusion was that Weygand did not understand that Hitler's was not a conventional war.

The reason why *The Duel* is so fascinating a book to read may be that the author's personal experience shines through all its pages, although the adolescent Lukacs certainly could not have known of most of those events. In *The Duel* Professor Lukacs narrates the world events that determined his youth. In *Confessions* he comments on Irving Kristol's reminiscences (published in 1977) as follows: "There was the unbridgeable

abyss between my path and that of the New York intelligentsia. In September 1940 my generation in Europe was divided between devotees of Hitler and devotees of Churchill, or between partisans of Pétain and partisans of De Gaulle. These New York intellectuals were divided between devotees of Stalin and devotees of Trotsky." (p. 26).

At the age of sixteen, the author of *The Duel*, living on a Hitler-dominated continent, was a devotee of Churchill and a partisan of De Gaulle.

The eighty-day duel abounded in dramatic events at the front and far from the theatre of operations. On May 15th Churchill arrives in Paris and is shocked to learn that, despite all rational foresight, there is no such thing as a French strategic reserve. Even the Germans are surprised at their spectacular success, so Hitler as well as his OKW (High Command of the Armed Forces) are worried. Then, before Dunkirk, Hitler orders the advancing German tanks to halt, and the British Expeditionary Force escapes. This is a decisive moment of the war. Not even Lukacs can guess the reasons for Hitler's order. Like so many historians before him, he too looks for a number of possible explanations. Rundstedt had let Hitler know the day before that his armour was much reduced in strength, and Hitler was afraid of unnecessary losses. The success of the German land forces overshadowed Marshal Goering's Luftwaffe, the only fighting service which Hitler considered to be definitely national socialist and which he intended should deal the enemy the final blow. The sight of a routed army was supposed to demoralize the home front, Hitler thought; for this reason he decided to allow the evacuation of the British land forces. He only wished to humiliate England and compel her to make peace, he did not want to destroy her because the disintegration of the British Empire would only have profited other powers and not Germany. Even

weeks after Dunkirk, Hitler felt sure that England would sue for peace. The possible explanations are of different types, and Lukacs seems to believe that Hitler had no rational motives in mind when he ordered his armoured division to halt. Lukacs is probably right in thinking it would be wrong to ascribe the miracle of Dunkirk exclusively to Hitler's mistake.

Lukacs's book does not contain much by way of new material. There is nothing new in what the author stresses so strongly, namely that Churchill's far from secure position as head of government was shaken at the end of May. Lord Halifax (whose name as a potential Prime Minister had come up before Chamberlain's resignation) would have been ready to take Churchill's place and to inquire after the German peace terms. What is new is that the writer's keeping an eye on coincidences and interplays presents the events with great plasticity.

Churchill gives orders for the destruction of the French Mediterranean fleet, and Washington interprets this as England's determination. Contrary to all expectation, the Republican Party nominates Wendell Willkie as their presidential candidate. Willkie is an anti-isolationist and an Anglophile; President Roosevelt can thus more easily, without running any greater risk in domestic politics, proceed to deliver destroyers to Great Britain. These were paid for by U.S. access to British naval bases; Lukacs regards this—probably with reason—as the first sign of the disintegration of the British Empire. Lukacs likes to probe into certain puzzles, thus for instance, Churchill, on several occasions, invited Lloyd George to accept a government post. Lukacs mentions that Mrs Churchill was relieved when Lloyd George refused. The British Prime Minister of the second half of the Great War is severely handled in *The Duel*. Lukacs practically agrees with Hitler, who saw in Lloyd George a possible adversary of Churchill and a supporter of compromise.

Soviet Ambassador Maisky remembers the old British politician differently. After the French débacle he was told by Lloyd George that England would continue to resist on her own and under any circumstances. It is not likely that Maisky's memory failed him, but it is possible that Lloyd George did not show his cards.

Lukacs does not confine his narrative to those "eighty days". He mentions the antecedents just as—particularly in the two concluding chapters—subsequent events. He points out several times that Hitler would have been glad to avoid any conflict with the United States. Yet, after Pearl Harbor he declared war on America. Lukacs is of the view that this was inevitable because of the German-Japanese pact. I do not think this is quite convincing. Japan refrained from attacking the Soviet Union both before and after Pearl Harbor. Acheson's memoirs give evidence of the embarrassment which, in the hours following Pearl Harbor, confused the State Department with regard to relations with Germany; the situation was ultimately clarified by the German declaration of war. Finally, it is worth mentioning that on the 10th of August 1940, ten days after Roosevelt had delivered destroyers to the British, Churchill wrote to the Prime Ministers of Australia and New Zealand, telling them that he did not preclude the possibility of Japan attacking England and the dominions but she would not attack America, which then might remain neutral.

Hitler regarded Frederick the Great, not Bismarck, as his real model, Lukacs writes. The Fuehrer talked a lot about him, particularly towards the end of war, when he was expecting a repetition of the miraculous events of the Seven Years' War, when Prussia found herself facing a grand coalition, but it broke up in time for Frederick the Great to be saved. The grand coalition of Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union also

broke up, but only after it had defeated Hitler's Germany, says Lukacs. It is a pity he does not add that the Prussia defying the mid-18th-century great coalition is one of the most dangerous myths of modern history. For, in the Seven Years' War, Prussia had a powerful ally in England (even if her army was not to appear on the continent, as it did on so many occasions before and after that time). This falsification of history began with Voltaire who, however, when writing his autobiography, carefully enumerated the causes of the war between France and England but later, forgetfully, he spoke only of the King of Prussia.

In the epilogue Lukacs repeats one of his earlier statements: "...to ascribe the evil acts of men to 'abnormality' does not only obscure our necessary understanding of Hitler, it also obscures and damages our necessary understanding of human nature itself."

Lukacs compares Hitler and Churchill several times. His final summation is: "Hitler was a radical. Churchill was a traditionalist [...] Their duel was a duel between a revolutionary and a statesmen."

The Duel is an interesting, even exciting, book by an outstanding historian. A historian who, however, has also written here, as he has done in almost everything he has published, a couple of paragraphs by which he virtually manages to deprive his whole argument of credibility:

"Let us now turn to Churchill's political progress, if progress that was, to the tenth of May.

"A year before, Churchill held no political office at all. Two years before that he was, by and large, a discredited politician, shunned and distrusted by the majority of his own political party, the ruling party in Britain. The reasons for this were both general and particular. Generally speaking people in Britain thought Churchill to be impulsive, erratic, wordy,

unduly combative, a maverick, perhaps a publicity hound; in one word, unsteady. (This was the Churchill who had Charlie Chaplin and Albert Einstein visit him and let himself be photographed with them.)"

It is Lukacs who put this last sentence in parentheses and thereby emphasized it. The fact that Churchill let himself be photographed with Einstein and Chaplin indicates to Lukacs that the British statesman was "unsteady". It is a commonplace to say that there is no disputing about tastes; this same fact is to me a proof of Churchill's sense of class. I should also point out here that when, in the 1960s, Chaplin's memoirs were published in Hungarian, a few young devotees of his were disillusioned by his boasting that he had been highly praised by Churchill. To them I replied that this was rather proof of Chaplin's sense of class.

To be quite frank, I simply do not understand Lukacs, and I do not feel like philosophizing. He might sum up in five lines—more vividly than I can—why the Conservatives regarded Churchill as "unsteady". Because he had twice changed parties; because he had held cabinet posts far too long before, and his failures had put his own party in embarrassing situations (he was blamed for the party's election defeat in 1929); because he had never denied that he wanted to be Prime Minister and had often treated his colleagues high-handedly; because it was he who had ultimately broken the General Strike of 1926 and, owing to his universal unpopularity, it was more comfortable to get rid of him (he was not asked to stay when he stepped down from Baldwin's shadow government in 1931); because he had been intolerant and exceptionally quick to apprehend (this latter virtue of his is pointed out also by Lukacs in a different context). As for his unpopularity with the left-wing, that is another story.

Bob Dent

Turn-of-the-Century Excitement

János Gerle—Attila Kovács—Imre Makovecz: *A századforduló magyar építésze* (Turn-of-the-Century Hungarian Architecture). Szépirodalmi—Bonex, 1990, 288 pp.

I am a relatively recent convert to architecture in the sense that until a few years ago I wandered around barely looking at buildings, and never thought about who might have designed them, how or why. Being in and writing about Hungary has changed that. Now I am a keen observer of my built environment, or at least I try to be.

It was with some interest, therefore, that I noticed the publication of this particular book on Hungarian architecture. After all, Budapest, where I have been living for nearly six years, is very much of a turn-of-the-century city. The unification of Buda, Pest and Óbuda in 1873, the bombastic Millennial celebrations of 1896, which marked the putative 1000th anniversary of the arrival of the Magyars in the Carpathian Basin, and the general advances in industrial and commercial development of that time all contributed to a fantastic building boom which shaped, to a large degree, the present-day look of Budapest.

Furthermore, the period up to the Great War was a time of great experimentation and creativity in Hungarian architecture. There was a movement—the term is not too strong—to develop, on the back of

Art Nouveau so to say, a specifically Hungarian architecture. "I have always pursued the distant ideal of creating a Hungarian national style," wrote the 'father' of the movement, Ödön Lechner (1845–1914)¹. His follower, Béla Lajta (1875–1920), echoed the sentiment in 1904: "Houses and other pieces of architecture in Hungary speak French, German, Spanish and English, but not Hungarian. The visitor from abroad should find houses here that speak Hungarian and those houses should teach him to speak Hungarian."²

Of course, as in any movement, there were arguments as to what actually constituted a Hungarian style. Lechner looked to the East and what he considered the Indian roots of Hungarian culture. This he combined with folk art decorative motifs. The mixture is perhaps best exemplified by his Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest (1896). Others thought that 'Hungarianness' lay not in folk decoration, but in traditional forms, style and materials, Transylvanian, wooden, 'peasant' styles of architecture were taken as the starting point. The architect who came to stand as the figurehead of this side of the movement was Károly Kós, who died as recently as 1977 at the ripe old age of 94. Although Kós began his career in Budapest, he spent most of his life in Transylvania, which, since 1920, has been part of Rumania. In the Hungarian capital, however, a sample of his work

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can be seen in the central square of the Wekerle estate in Kispest, the design and building of which Kós directed in the years just prior to the Great War.

Between these two poles there was a whole range of styles and mixtures, sometimes emphasising folk decoration, sometimes traditional form, and sometimes both. A visit to Kecskemét, 85 kilometres south-east of Budapest, confirms this. Here the traditional 'rural' elements of the so-called New College (1911–1913), designed by Valér Mende and Lajos Dombi, can be compared with Lechner's decorated Town Hall (1893–96) which stands nearby, and with Géza Márkus' colourful 1902 'Ciffra' Mansion in typical Art Nouveau style across the road. Also nearby is János Zitterbarth's synagogue (1862–71) which pre-dates Lechner in its eastern orientation. Together these, and other buildings make the centre of Kecskemét a veritable treasure of architectural styles.

For me an additional attraction of the period was the discovery of the immense influence in Hungary of the English Arts and Crafts movement, and of the ideas of John Ruskin and William Morris. In 1900 one of their followers, the British graphic artist Walter Crane, had an exhibition at the Museum of Applied Arts. Testimony from Kós and others confirms the impact of Crane's exhibition and accompanying lecture tour. In the first two decades of the present century the artists Sándor Nagy and Aladár Körösfői Kriesch (the latter having written a book about Ruskin, Morris and their circle) organized a colony of artists and craftsmen at Gödöllő, a town to the north-east of Budapest. The colony, which was based on the lines of rural simplicity, even in the manner of dress, very much akin to English experiments such as the Edward Carpenter circle near Sheffield in the 1880s, attracted painters, tapestry-makers, weavers, book-binders and glass-makers, who were often employed to design and furnish the interiors

of the buildings the turn-of-the-century architects were commissioned to produce.

What a find then, to discover this new work on the Hungarian architects and their buildings of the pre-Great War period.

A brief description is in order. The book is essentially a work of reference covering 170 architects and 400 locations spread throughout the area of pre-1920 Hungary. The main section covers the architects in alphabetical order, and gives biographical data about their studies, travels, personal contacts and fields of activity. Their main works are listed, giving the present-day address, plus information about the buildings—original function, present use, etc. Occasionally quotations from the architects are given.

There follows a lengthy section of locations of buildings by alphabetical order of towns, giving present address and function. In the cases of Budapest, Kecskemét, Szeged, Arad, Marosvásárhely, (Tirgu Mures) Nagyvárad (Oradea) and Temesvár (Timisoara), there are also accompanying maps to aid location. (Of these, the last four are now in Rumania.)

Finally there is an index of names and a bibliography.

The whole work is beautifully produced, and well constructed with excellent cross-references between locations, architects and illustrations, of which there are more than one thousand throughout the book. The abundance of these pictures, together with the fact that this is not a work of essays or analysis but essentially an encyclopaedic, reference volume, makes for a publication which, with the aid of a dictionary, can readily be used by non-Hungarians, be they specialists or 'simply' tourists. (I love playing, for example, 'spot the building'. With so many illustrations, and so many turn-of-the-century buildings in Budapest and elsewhere, this book provides pleasure and education at the same time—a rare phenomenon!)

An additional, invaluable aid for non-

Hungarian readers is provided by János Gerle's introductory essay which is translated in full into both English and German. This fascinating and informative article is worth careful study.

János Gerle and his colleagues should be congratulated on this publication, which clearly has involved much detailed, painstaking and time-consuming work, as well as much enthusiasm. The result is the most comprehensive guide to its subject matter and will no doubt be a 'bible' for years to come.

It is not only with a view to the past, however, that turn-of-the-century architecture can claim our attention, since parallels can be drawn with certain contemporary 'movements'. Thus Imre Makovecz, Hungary's leading exponent of 'organic' architecture, admits to a close affinity with the pre-1914 era. The affinity is "not stylistic or formal, but historical, since at the turn of the century Europe had its intellectual revolution which was stopped by the Anglo-American mega-politics of the First and Second World Wars."³ He has a similar attach-

ment to the Arts and Crafts movement, which "was also a European intellectual movement which wanted to influence industry and have a wide social scope."⁴ Today Makovecz spearheads an architectural association which has the aim of revitalizing villages and small towns. Its name appropriately, is the Károly Kós Association.

The 'European' reference above may seem strange. How does something which aims at being 'Hungarian' also strive to be 'European'. The creative (or destructive) tension which can emerge between the pull of these concepts is something which is surely at the heart of Hungarian culture and indeed politics today. But it is not new. Consider the following: "(it) was an era of choice and opportunity: the task before it was the creation of a modern Hungary. The need to gain a foothold in modern Europe and to participate in a new phase of social and intellectual development was at stake." A future historian writing about today's Hungary? Maybe. The lines were actually written about the turn-of-the century.⁵

NOTES

- 1 Quoted by Gerle in the present work.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Interview with the author.
- 4 Ibid.

- 5 Lajos Németh, "Art, Nationalism and the Fin de Siècle" in Gyöngyi Éri & Zsuzsa Jobbágyi: *A Golden Age. Art and Society in Hungary 1896-1914*. This work (published by Corvina in English) is a most useful complement to the volume under discussion.

György Kroó

A Giant in Lilliput

Alan Walker: *Franz Liszt. Volume 2. The Weimar Years, 1848–1861.*
Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1989, 626 pp. \$ 39.9

This second volume, following *The Virtuoso Years 1811–1847*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1988 opens with a double portrait of the Liszt of the Weimar years. The jacket is a reproduction of an oil painting by Richard Lauchert of an extraordinarily lean, solitary man with tormented features and burning eyes, the man of the world holding a top hat, the court artist; the frontispiece is the familiar oil by Wilhelm Kaulback—an idealized creative artist, eyes raised to heaven (or into the future), self-confident, determined, victorious. Both date from 1856: Alan Walker confronts the two characters. The 28 illustrations also include an 1849 photograph by Louis Frisch which shows Liszt with hardened features, a worn and resolute face marked by the ordeals and fatigue of the virtuoso years. Another photograph was taken by Franz Hanfstaengl in Munich in 1858, the year Liszt was compelled to recognize that the hopes he had attached to Weimar and a musical Renaissance of the like of the age of Goethe and Schiller would never come true. Apart from these telling portraits, the other illustrations are equally

illuminating—of locations, of historical and musical events: they and the facsimiles add to the unique documentary basis of the book.

More important is the narrative itself, as it enables the reader to come to terms with Liszt, the props, the ambience and the period. The author correlates, comments on and enlivens carefully collected documents, several published here for the first time. The reader is touched by the spirit of place, can empathize with the principal motifs of the narrative, see the actors and, by the time the book is put down, the reader too has become a companion of Liszt's thirteen Weimar years.

Walker keeps track of the major connections, proceeding along the highways of life and the spirit, while he remains aware of the sanctity of detail. He achieves a meticulous precision in his narrative and a psychological credibility. Examples of this scholarly meticulousness include the Wittgenstein-Iwanowsky Family Tree (between pp. XVII and 1) or again the chronological table which, (this, according to the author, is only a "preliminary attempt to document his work in this area") "gives an overview of Liszt's activity as a conductor between the years 1840 and 1884" (pp. 285-95). An example of masterly psychological interpretation and grouping of small facts is his analysis of the reasons for the deterioration of the relationship between Liszt and Wagner; this takes into account all the

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elements of the process and looks back upon the signs of deterioration appearing over some two years from a point of departure in 1861 (pp. 543–47).

Professor Walker digs up the path of Liszt's life in Weimar, inch by inch examining each footprint. He does not proceed along a dark tunnel, for everything is illuminated by the light of the results and queries in Liszt studies to date. This makes it possible for him to treat his huge material with absolute sovereignty. The clearest indication of this is that, through the very title of the Prologue, he dares suggest a conclusion which, after perusing more than 500 pages, the reader will necessarily draw from the facts encountered: the title is "A Giant in Lilliput." He anticipates the essence of the thirteen Weimar years.

In a dramatic confrontation, Walker summarizes first the contrast between the life of the travelling virtuoso pianist and the life of the fledgling conductor taking up residence in a small town. Then, striking the balance of the years that follow, he arraigns provincial public opinion hostile to modern music, the Calvinist Hofprediger castigating the concubinage of Catholic aliens, the permanent pecuniary embarrassment of the court and the eternal loneliness of the genius on the one side, and the positive features on the other.

It was here Liszt wrote his most important orchestral works, here he established and developed himself as a conductor and embarked on master piano teaching. So far a proper perspective was made impossible by facts intentionally neglected by biographers: one can cite the deficiencies in the biographical volume *Liszts Leben und Schaffen* by Peter Raabe, the curator of the Liszt Museum in Weimar, which for a long time was accepted as the standard work (this disregards 2,000 letters to Carolyne and suppresses his liaison with Agnes Street-Klindworth), and deficiencies and distortions in other biographies. Professor Walker now presents new sources (Adelheid von Schorn, Adolf

Stahr, the *Weimarische Zeitung*, etc.) and the material in the Vatican archives he himself discovered, concerning the proposed marriage of Liszt and Carolyne Iwanowska. Nonetheless, Walker still argues that no biography can be considered as final before a definitive thematic catalogue is drawn up, together with a complete edition of Liszt's correspondence and his music. We may add, however, that with Walker's work (and this can be safely said after the first two volumes) Liszt's biography has reached a standard which goes far to meet modern musicological demands.

At the same time it remains an open question whether it is possible to discuss a life's work taken out of its context. Though Walker is of the opinion that in Liszt's case *Schaffen* and *Leben* (work and life) cannot be separated and that "Liszt's biography [...] forms a vibrant whole, with life and music engaged in constant, creative dialogue", and his method allows him "whenever the life results in a body of work, to 'stop the clock' and look at that work", the descriptions concentrating on the works are relatively episodic and less organic. "A biography cannot be all things to all men," Walker writes. "It is pointless to turn to such a genre in search of detailed information about holographs, sources, watermark evidence, or in-depth musical analysis." This is very true, and one may even add the recognition of modern musicology (Dahlhaus) that every work of art is a closed world carrying its message within itself. Because of this I think that the threads of the relationships between *Leben* and *Schaffen* should be knotted together in terms of the aesthetics of programme and music, and not in terms of composing technique and form.

Walker divides the material of *The Weimar Years* into four books: New Beginnings, 1847–1848; Court and Kapellmeister, 1848–853; The Years of Maturity, 1853–1857, and Gathering Storms, 1857–1861.

Book One tells the story of the meeting of Liszt and Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein, her earlier life and her travels of 1847–48, linking the narrative with a description of Liszt's piano suite inscribed *Glances de Woronince*. This is followed by the description of Liszt's relationship to the revolutions of 1848–49 in Europe, the Hungarian Revolution and its suppression by the Austrian general Haynau. Walker relates this in minute detail, with a thorough knowledge and empathy that no Liszt biography so far has displayed. The concise analysis of his elegy, *Funérailles*, in which Liszt digested the "theme" as a composer, is introduced by information that is new to readers both in Hungary and abroad. The narrative continues with a graphic, lively description of the Altenburg, the Weimar home of Liszt and Carolyne, which, in the epigram of Hoffmann von Fallersleben, "*ist nicht eine Burg der Alten*". Here the reader is given a more detailed account of the environment already referred to in the Prologue, whose envy and spite were to be typical of Liszt's Weimar years throughout.

Book Two starts out from the intellectual relationship between the "new Athens" (Goethe, Schiller) and the "new Weimar" (Liszt: "Let us allow talent to function freely in its sphere..."), introducing the grand-ducal family, the financial position of the court, and the documents that had turned Liszt towards Weimar first in 1837, and in a concrete form in 1842 (pp. 95–98). It supplies figures on the court orchestra (the number of permanent members never surpassed 45 in Liszt's time), describes the musicians, instruments, the singers, the financial circumstances of the musicians, reveals details of Liszt's salary and his duties, informs on his relationship with the Grand Duke and Baron Ziegesar, the theatre intendant. It goes on to group Liszt's struggles in Weimar around some major problems and events, including the visit

of Wagner, the revolutionary for whom a warrant was issued in 1849, the production of *Tannhäuser*, the Goethe festival in 1849 and the Herder Festival of 1850 (Walker considers it important to clarify the relationship of Liszt, who thought of himself as a Hungarian, to German culture), the first performance of *Lohengrin* in 1850, the 1851–52 plan for the Goethe Foundation, the first guest performance outside Weimar (when Liszt conducted Beethoven's *Ninth* at the Ballenstadt music festival), the Wagner Festival in 1853, and the Berlioz Week.

But what one perceives is not so much the sweep of events as the nexus of problems. The author writes about family matters, Carolyne's illness, the financial settlement with her husband, and the confirmation of their daughter, Marie. He presents some of Liszt's important visitors in Weimar: Hans Christian Andersen, Bettina von Arnim and Anna Liszt, assesses Liszt's relationship with Clara Schumann and also reviews what he was composing during the period. Here it is not so much the work of revision concerning the piano pieces of the *Glanzzeit* that catches the reader's attention, nor even the summary review of the literature on the B-minor Sonata, as the study on Chopin and the fact of the parallel origin of Liszt's works that have close connections with Chopin's style and genres, or Liszt's interest in the organ ("Ad nos ad salutarem undam") and organists (Gottschalg, Winterberger), which emerged simultaneously with his studies of J. S. Bach (his piano transcriptions of the six Preludes and Fugues). Walker provides ample documentation for the reason of the break of half a year or so in Liszt's conducting after June 1853, which paves the way, as it were, for the story of his final disappointment and the abandonment of conducting that was to come five years later.

Next there follow the most interesting chapters of the book: the presentation of Liszt's pupils (Bülow, Tausig, Klindworth,

Bronst, Bruckner, William Mason, whose *Memories of Musical Life* serves as a major source, Cornelius, Reubke and Alexander Ritter) and their relationship to Liszt, with what is known as the "Raff Case" treated as a separate subject (the question of who in fact orchestrated Liszt's orchestral works during the composer's first Weimar years, and of how he studied orchestration in general). Finally, there comes a dispassionate account of the love affair between Liszt and Agnes Street-Klindworth. There is perhaps not a single page among the sixty devoted to these topics which does not bring something fresh, new data, hitherto unknown documents, references and contexts which have been overlooked.

Book Three starts out along a chronological thread: matinées in the Altenburg, Liszt's circle of followers, the "Society of Murls", the visit of Brahms, the Karlsruhe festival, Liszt meeting his children in Paris, his encounter with Wagner in Zürich and Basle, discussion of their friendship, the Rotterdam Music Festival in 1854, more noted visitors (Anton Rubinstein and George Eliot) in the Altenburg, the second Berlioz Week, guest appearances (at the thirty-third Lower Rhine Festival in Düsseldorf, in Brunswick and Berlin). The chapters that follow again concentrate on various problems: Liszt the Conductor, Liszt and the Orchestra, the War of the Romantics, The Scribe of Weimar. And, as if the author were following a musical form (a b c d e a), the closing chapter again deals with events: Liszt directs the Mozart Centenary Festival in Vienna, 1856; Weimar visited by Johanna Wagner, Berlioz and Marie Lipsius, nineteen years old on her first visit, who will edit 13 volumes of Liszt's correspondence as La Mara; Liszt conducts Beethoven's *Ninth* in Magdeburg; the first performance of the "Gran" Mass on August 31 1856; Liszt celebrations in Pest; the symphonic

poem *Hungaria* in the National Theatre at Pest; a new phase in the Liszt-Wagner relationship (Wagner's Open Letter to Carolyne on "Liszt's Symphonic Poems"); the Berlin première of the B-minor Sonata; the fiasco of *Mazeppa* in Leipzig; Liszt's long illness, and the clash between Liszt and Hiller at the Lower Rhine Festival in Aachen.

But to return to the problems Walker so clearly presents in the individual chapters. Liszt the conductor can virtually be seen on the podium, while the typical critical response to his appearances and his own views on the duties of conductors are thoroughly covered. We understand from his declarations in a letter to Pohl that his technique as a conductor was closely linked with the style and interpretational demands of the new works he presented or promoted (late Beethoven, Berlioz, Wagner and, naturally, his own work). "These works, to my mind, demand [...] a *progress* in the style of execution itself, in accentuation, in rhythm, in the manner of phrasing and declaiming certain passages, and of distributing light and shade. This establishes, between the rank-and-file players and the *musician-in-chief* who directs them, a natural link which is quite different from the one cemented into position by an imperturbable beating of time. In many cases, even the rough, literal maintenance of time and of each continuous bar (1, 2, 3, 4/1, 2, 3, 4) clashes with the sense and expression. There, as elsewhere, *the letter killeth the spirit*, a thing to which I will never subscribe, however specious in their critical impartiality may be the attacks to which I am exposed. For the works of Beethoven, Berlioz, Wagner etc. [...], I see less than elsewhere what advantage there could be [...] in a conductor trying to go through his work like a sort of windmill, and to get into a great perspiration in order to give warmth to the others [...] In my opinion, the real task of a conductor consists in making himself seem superfluous.

We are helmsmen, not oarsmen". Added to all this there comes the catalogue mentioned already, which lists the programmes, scenes and dates of Liszt's appearances as a conductor, and the documentation of his virtual abandoning of conducting after 1859 (apart from one or two appearances annually). The catalogue also reveals the startling fact that Liszt championed Berlioz and Wagner—one may say it was he who brought their genius to the attention of the world—but they, conductor-composers, never conducted a single work of Liszt's throughout their lives.

The chapter Liszt and the Orchestra, central to which is a table which surveys Liszt's Weimar orchestral output, is equally exhaustive. Although Liszt's principles on modern music are tackled here, the essence is a detailed outline of the genre of the symphonic poem: the date of the origin of "the unique title which describes a unique genre", the purpose of the famous prefaces, the relationship between music and programme, the form, which is based on the metamorphosis of themes, and finally Liszt's quest for orchestral colour. Most of Walker's excellent comments are related to this quest; his perceptive examples open the door—even if only for a moment—to Liszt's composing process. (His symbols for tempo rubato for the woodwinds, as "gentle crescendos and diminuendos of rhythm", the orchestra as a complex of chamber ensembles, the question of repeats and cuts by the composer, the principle that "beautiful things must be repeated".) Next comes a descriptive analysis of the Faust Symphony. People who like the word *Zukunftsmusik* (the music of the future), at the end of the chapter can at last learn the origin and exact meaning of the term as it was used by Liszt and Carolyne between 1850 and 1859; later, however, they replaced it with the term "new German school".

The War of the Romantics chapter

scrutinizes this new music (which in Liszt's own words, meant "the renewal of music through its more intimate connection with poetry"). It offers a systematic examination of the relationship between Liszt and his great contemporaries (Schumann, Joachim, Brahms, Wagner, Hanslick), but beyond personal differences and differences in taste, he centres the whole question on the 19th century interpretation of the sonata form and the sonata cycles. The final conclusion had to be what Walker emphasizes: Weimar was not merely *one* of the important scenes of Liszt's life and career: while he lived in the city, it was the centre and the site of musical development in Europe.

Of no less significance is the chapter entitled The Scribe of Weimar, which surveys the writings of Liszt's Weimar years. The most significant finding is that about two thirds of Liszt's literary output appeared during this period. Walker enlarges on the autobiographical significance of these writings, as they also reveal much of Liszt's mind. For the overwhelming majority of the works authenticity can be considered as proved, though the question of authenticity has been a recurring problem in the Liszt literature. Walker gives a detailed list of Carolyne's role in the 2nd edition of the Chopin book (1879) and the 2nd, Hungarian edition of *Des Bohémiens*, the book on the Gypsies (1881); and summarizes his opinion on the authenticity of Liszt's literary works under these six points:

"1. Liszt himself chose the topics of his books and articles. The latter usually arose out of his daily work at the Weimar opera house.

2. He employed assistants to help him with his research.

3. He dictated much of his prose.

4. He revised all manuscript texts taken down from his dictation (including those portions provisionally sketched out by Carolyne), before they were copied out afresh for the printer.

5. Liszt himself checked the proofs.

6. He signed the finished articles, often referred to them as "mine", and held himself responsible for the results."

Those interested in the human side of the artist rather than the work of the composer, will in all probability most enjoy Book Four. Here they will find Walker's gift as a writer in its fullness. The chapters Liszt and his Children, and The Death of Daniel Liszt are sensitively and finely written. The author explores the secret motifs of the relationship between the father and his two daughters and son with a sensitive and insightful touch. This is why these chapters directly affect the reader's emotions (and have also deceived some critics, who here suspected Walker of idealizing his Liszt portrait), but in fact they only express the poetry of facts. Their informative force is fascinating and provides a key to the understanding of the composer's character in minor and major contexts. I do not think that both the children and their mother have hitherto been brought so close to the reader or the web of family ties presented with such empathy.

The narrative continues with the unveiling of the Goethe and Schiller statues, the Händel festivities, the performance of the final version of the *Faust* Symphony, and the débacle of the Dresden premiere of the *Dante* Symphony. Dark shadows settle on the friendship between Liszt and Wagner. The machinations of the new theatre intendant, Franz von Dingelstedt, are described and the history of the fiasco of Cornelius' *The Barber of Bagdad*. The reader is led through a vivid account of what Liszt had to live through: the gradual rejection of the music he stood for and the process whereby Liszt the artist fell out of favour at the Weimar court. Against this background one gets a more profound insight into the part Liszt's songs played

in his life and work. The Tonkünstler-Versammlung [Congress of Musical Artists] was convened for the 25th anniversary of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. (It quickly grew into the Allgemeiner Deutscher Musikverein, which appointed Liszt its first president, a post he was to hold for twenty-five years). The day before there was a full-scale production of *Paradise and the Peri* in honour of Robert Schumann, the founding editor, but the new editor's, Brendel's, keynote and conciliatory address to the congress was misunderstood and inflamed the supporters of the "Old German School", including Brahms, to open opposition. Of Triumph and Tragedy, Walker suggests through the title of the chapter. In fact, the last 50 pages contain less and less sunshine; from 1859 onwards, Liszt no longer appears in public in Weimar, and the marriage of Princess Marie makes his marriage with Carolyne totally impossible.

Brand new documents for the first time tell the history of Carolyne's divorce and of the frustrated marriage. They make for essential reading. The last pictures are dark ones: Liszt lives alone in Weimar, and the Princess is waging a losing battle in Rome for their marriage. Liszt draws up his will, he seals up the Altenburg and leaves Weimar. The appendix includes the texts of the wills of Liszt and Carolyne, the file from the Vatican Archives on their attempt to marry ("And they show conclusively that it was not the fault of the Catholic Church that Carolyne did not marry Liszt"), and the hitherto unknown birth certificate of Daniel Liszt. No inconsiderable discoveries, these.

Alan Walker's biography is without doubt a seminal work, outstanding amongst the Liszt studies of our time.

Dezső Legány

More on Liszt

Adrian Williams: *Portrait of Liszt—by Himself and his Contemporaries*. Oxford University Press, 1990, 746 pp.; *An Artist's Journey—Franz Liszt*. Translated and annotated by Charles Suttoni. The University of Chicago Press, 1989, 287 pp.; Maurice Hinson: *The Pianist's Guide to Transcriptions. Arrangements and Paraphrases*. Indiana University Press, 1990, VI-XXI+159 pp.; Maurice Hinson: *Liszt. Piano Music from his Early Years*. Alfred Publishing Co., 1940, 41 pp.

Adrian Williams, who edited *The Liszt Society Journal* between 1976 and 1987, includes a vast range of material in his book. This reflects the work of many years and a thorough knowledge of Liszt and Lisztiana. The work comprises the contemporary notes and correspondence of people who remember Liszt or who were under his influence. Hence it will be of use to Liszt scholars, those concerned with the history of 19th century music, and to the general reader. Williams resists the temptation the huge material at his disposal offers and, in a chronological order, never includes more than what is necessary for each year. One must agree with his decision to sum up the early years, between 1811 and 1822, in a single chapter, as it is hardly likely that much more will become available about this period. This is followed by a year-to-year presentation; here orientation is helped by every page being headed by the relevant year. Some of the main motifs in Liszt's life are given—in smaller print—

between the recollections for each year; wherever necessary, information on the persons mentioned, as well as the less well-known individuals quoted, and the Liszt works referred to in the quotations, is given in foot-notes.

A careful reading of these recollections of each single year reveals that some of the material cited comes from at least 80 daily newspapers and periodicals (with exact references) which the author has not even included in the extensive bibliography of 404 items. The aim was obviously not to overburden the bibliography at the expense of those reminiscers known by name. The majority of the quotations are taken from dailies and periodicals in English and will be new even to specialist readers. Some are from the French, German or Italian press. Press quotations, unlike those from individuals, are not numbered. They do not feature in the Endnotes either, in which Williams gives a page reference for all the quotations, numbering them year by year.

The last two chapters are an Index of Liszt's Works, and a General Index (pp. 727–46). The first includes the works by Liszt which are mentioned in the book, with references to page numbers. To facilitate the finding of a relevant work in the

Dezső Legány's *Liszt and his Country 1874–1886* will be published by Corvina later this year.

list of Liszt's works, in the section The Life, Williams includes the number of the work in the late Humphrey Searle's list and in the notes Searle compiled for the Liszt entry in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music*.

Adrian Williams's is an extraordinarily valuable work, edited with great skill and scholarship.

I know of no other work, in any language, which provides so much hitherto unknown information about Liszt's life as a whole and his standing amongst his contemporaries. I am in a position to judge since I endeavoured to provide something similar, in Hungarian, in my *Chronicle of Hungarian Music* (A thousand years of music history in documents). Both musicologists and the general public have every reason to be grateful to Adrian Williams.

Charles Suttoni, an American musicologist, has made his name in Liszt studies by an extremely easily accessible and concise treatment of more than 6,000 Liszt letters, including all the information anyone could desire regarding their publication. His list appeared in the *Fontes Artis Musicae*, 1979, No. 3, and an updated version was issued in the special number of the *Journal of the American Liszt Society* in June 1989, under the heading "Liszt Correspondence in Print. An Expanded, Annotated Bibliography".

In this, his latest work, the Introduction is followed by 17 long letters—practically essays—by Liszt, written between 1835 and 1841, with a short Epilogue by Suttoni. The five Appendices that follow print one letter each from George Sand, Heine and Berlioz to Liszt, and then comes one of Liszt's early writings, dated 1843, "Religious Music of the Future". The volume ends with Suttoni's views on "Liszt as Author", a Bibliography and an Index. The frontispiece and the plates between pages 132 and 133 include interesting pictures, some of them hitherto unpublished.

What really matters are the 17 letters—veritable essays—Liszt wrote in French more than 150 years ago, which are given here in English translation. Although all of them were published by Liszt in the *Gazette Musicale* at the time, they have since been forgotten. One of Liszt's biographers, Lina Ramann, collected a great many of Liszt's literary works published in various places, and issued them in German translation in six volumes between 1880 and 1883 as *Gesammelte Schriften*. In the second volume she included twelve of these seventeen letters. Chantavoine in his *Pages romantiques* published thirteen of the seventeen writings in 1912 in their original French, but he omitted whole sentences and even paragraphs. The 17 essays have only been published together now, by Suttoni, in English translation. In them Liszt himself describes his life between June 1835 and early 1841, his experiences, his views on the most varied subjects, and his activity. They are addressed to various persons, and, intended also for the press, to the general public. His reports reflect an extraordinary familiarity with French literature, poetry, philosophy and social thinking.

As Suttoni points out in his Introduction, the young Liszt was strongly stimulated by Saint-Simon, Ballanche, Lamartine, and finally Lamennais. Lamennais, a Catholic priest, expressed many new ideas in his review *L'Avenir*, following the French revolution of July 1830. This had a profound effect on Liszt as well. According to Lamennais, humanism and social progress are the open gates through which humanity will progress towards the religion of the future. It was undoubtedly under the influence of Lamennais's *Parole d'un croyant* (1834) that Liszt wrote in the same year his "Religious Music of the Future", which Suttoni has included in English as an Appendix (pp. 236–237). It reflects the spirit of Liszt, still a young man, but already an innovator. In some ways these

ideas form the background to his late church music, while at the same time they anticipate his letters, which he started to write somewhat later. Ballanche, also a devout Catholic, argued that human evolution was God's will. This influence is best felt in Liszt's essay, "The Perseus of Benvenuto Cellini" (pp. 152-57). Fortunately Liszt had an open mind, which prevented him from being overwhelmed by the influence of any of the four. This is why he did not take Holy Orders, though he had felt a vocation in his youth, and became rather a priest and prophet of art.

In the manner of the introduction, Suttoni writes succinct notes to each of the letters. He heads every one with a chronicle, a chronology of Liszt's activities and places of residence, a context for the given letter. The letters are dated from the most varied places: Geneva, Paris, Chambéry, Milan, Bellagio on Lake Como, Venice, or again Venice when he returned from Vienna, Genova, Florence, Bologna, Rome, San Rossora, and finally Nonnenwerth, an island south of Bonn in the Rhine where Liszt went to after Hamburg and Copenhagen. They cover a wide range and the point of view is that of the highly educated Liszt.

The many Italian references in this excellent book, which has filled a great need, would deserve an Italian edition as well.

Maurice Hinson, the American pianist, music historian and university teacher, edited the biannual *Journal of the American Liszt Society* between 1977-1986. He held many master courses, and gave concerts and recitals in the United States and many other countries, including Hungary. His writing is primarily directed at would-be and active pianists, even the most eminent. The two works reviewed here are of such, expressly professional reference.

Like Hinson's earlier works, the two-volume *Guide to the Pianist's Repertoire* (1973, 2nd, rev. and enl. ed. 1986), *The*

Piano in Chamber Ensemble (1978), *Music for Piano and Orchestra* (1981) and *Music for More Than One Piano* (1983), *The Pianist's Guide to Transcriptions* too, is an indispensable compendium.

Hinson classifies works into three categories, marking them Int (Intermediate), M-D (Moderately Difficult) and D (Difficult). The Library of Congress in Washington keeps track of more than 150,000 transcriptions, arrangements and paraphrases. A transcription stands closest to the original work, a paraphrase offers the freest treatment of the original, with the arrangement being between the two. In the Preface (IX-XI) Hinson mentions that he agrees with Paul Hindemith, according to whom "An arrangement is artistically justified only when the arranger's artistic effort is greater than the original composer's". In selecting the works, he has adhered to four conditions he set himself regarding the works he includes in the alphabetic list of the composers: 1) only works already published, 2) only those didactic pieces of real artistic value, 3) generally works by well-known composers, and 4) works for solo piano or piano duet (one piano, four hands or for two pianos), and a few pieces for one hand (e.g., one by Géza Zichy). He gives pride of place to the greatest transcribers: J.S. Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Busoni, Liszt, Rachmaninoff, and Ravel. But while holding himself to this general principle, he has still managed to include many minor composers in his list of transcribers. Liszt stands out as the great master of transcription. The letter G followed by a number after Liszt's works and transcriptions indicates the place where the relevant piece features in the Liszt list in the New Grove. Besides the composers and the transcribers, the titles of the transcribed pieces are also given in alphabetical order, followed by the form of the transcription (for solo piano, piano duet, etc.). This again is followed by the name

of the transcriber and the publication data—publisher, date and number of pages, if possible adding the length of performance, and finally the grade of difficulty.

On the face of it the volume would appear to be a dry compilation. In fact it is backed by a huge quantity of work and provides easily accessible and precise information on the main issues. It is not meant to be read through, but will be perused by many who will greatly profit from it whenever drawing up a concert programme or teaching material. Hinson has called attention to a great many valuable works that have sunk into oblivion and are now being revived: he is thus helping to extend the range of piano recitals. The book closes with a unique bibliography of the subject.

The volume of Liszt's early piano music was issued by the Alfred Publishing Co. (Van Nuys, CA) in 1990, with an introductory study of thirteen pages, in several parts, and nine piano pieces Liszt composed between the ages of 11 and 17 (pp. 14–41). It is an expressly educational publication, meant for young people of the same age bracket, prompting them to try their hand at piano-playing and composition. This is also the aim of the short introductory studies ("Foreword—Liszt's Youth", "Liszt, the Young Pianist", "Keyboard Style of the Young Liszt", and "Liszt, the Young Composer"), the suggested order in which to learn the

pieces (which is not the same as the order in which they are given) and the information on the origin, stylistic context and manner of performance of each work. The pieces hardly provide the thrill of discovery, but never before has a collection of so many early Liszt works appeared together to help young students. Therefore the collection points far beyond the intrinsic value of these early pieces. A thorough and extensive search was needed to collect them. The first piece, "Variation on a Waltz by Diabelli" (1822), appeared in 1824; Nos. 2 and 8—a "Waltz" (1823) and the piece Busoni calls "Scherzo in G minor" (1827)—are from Volume I/13 of the *New Liszt Edition* published by Editio Musica, Budapest, in 1984 and edited by Imre Sulyok and Imre Mező. Hinson took the five études Nos. 3–7 from the 1952 Editio Musica publication of Liszt's *Études en douze exercices* dated 1826, in which they feature as Nos. 1, 3, 4, 7, and 9 among the twelve Études. Finally, Hinson took "Zum Andenken", which Liszt presumably wrote in 1828, and in which he arranged Hungarian works for the first time—a composition each by Bihari and Csermák—from another Budapest publication: *Liszt Ferenc magyar stílusa—Le style hongrois de François Liszt* by Zoltán Gárdonyi. Hinson always gives precise references to sources. One can only hope that this publication will obtain wide currency so that these early Liszt works will reach and impress the young music students of our day.

Paul Griffiths

Hungaroton and Quintana Records: June 1991

One long-term effect of the Mozart bicentenary will surely be a wider appreciation of previously neglected areas of the output, including the sometimes dazzling music of the teenage composer. Examples arrive on one of the first releases from Quintana (QUI 903015), featuring the excellently alert, sensitive but unaffected period-instrument ensemble Capella Savaria under Pál Németh and the outstanding soprano Mária Zádori, who shows a rare combination of freshness of tone with superlative technique. She has no problems with the castrato display piece *Exsultate, jubilate*, producing a beautifully agile and pure-toned performance. But this and the late motet *Ave verum corpus* (an intimate performance, pointing forward very directly to Schubert) are the only familiar items on the record. The programme begins with the little Passiontide cantata *Grabmusik*, which Mozart wrote when he was eleven, and which sets a German dialogue between soul (the baritone Klaus Mertens) and angel (Zádori). There is also a charming German sacred song, "Kommet her, ihr frechen Sünder", which Zádori sings delectably. Probably associated with another Passiontide cantata or oratorio, this is a fully mature piece, dating from 1779, and it is perhaps the chief discovery here.

However, it is also good to have these attractive performances of two lesser known Latin works. The short and simple offertory *Sub tuum praesidium*, soprano duet dated to 1773, has had its authenticity questioned, but there is no doubt about the B flat *Regina caeli*, which Mozart wrote in May 1772, a few months before *Exsultate, jubilate*, and which a reference in the letters suggests may have been intended for the wife of Michael Haydn: the main movement is a soprano aria with chorus.

Michael Haydn himself is represented by a recording (Hungaroton HCD 31022) of two masses: the Requiem for the Salzburg archbishop Sigismund Schrattenbach (1771) and the St Francis Mass commissioned for the emperor's name day in 1803. The fourteen-year-old Mozart would presumably have been at the Schrattenbach obsequies, and it has been suggested that his own Requiem, though written twenty years later, draws on the memories. This is hard to judge. There are intriguing points of similarity, but they could easily be explained by the fact that the two works not only share the same text but also come out of the same tradition; certainly one should not expect anything very Mozartian from a composer of the younger Haydn's dogged ways, nor anything reminiscent of his brother's late masses in the other work here. During his last years Michael Haydn worked on a second Requiem, for the empress Maria Theresia, but this he failed to finish, and it was the Schrattenbach Requiem that was sung at his brother's funeral, three years after his own death. The St

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Francis Mass, which also contains few musical surprises, shows how easily the rococo style could slide towards the Biedermeier: a particular example is the "Et incarnatus est", scored for the soloists, solo cello and continuo. These are imposing performances, without any pretensions to "authentic" style: Helmuth Rilling conducts the Hungarian Radio and Television Chorus and the Liszt Chamber Orchestra.

In the year before Michael Haydn wrote his Requiem, his brother probably composed his op. 9 string quartets, described by László Somfai in his excellent notes for the new recording (Hungaroton HCD 31296-97) as "the first genuine string-quartet cycle". There is not much doubt that this was the first cycle of string quartets Haydn planned as such, but it is not quite so easy to accept Somfai's implicit suggestion that the great tradition of quartet writing begins here: Hans Keller's is the more persuasive view, that the set includes one major work, the D minor quartet, standing out from a lot of boring music. And the Tátrai Quartet seem to be of the same opinion. A great deal of the playing is rhythmically dull and coarse-grained in sound, and the awkwardness of the first violin part is sometimes exposed; though the leader does show a nice sense of style in his restrained vibrato.

Also from Hungaroton comes a volume mopping up some of Liszt's more obscure choral pieces (HCD 12748). The range is wide, in date and function. There is an enthusiastic patriotic cantata, *Hungaria*, written as a shout of solidarity with the 1848 revolution, and therefore unperformed until after the composer's death. Also banned, at least initially, was *Hungarian Royal Hymn* of thirty-five years later, unimpeachable in its call for divine blessings on the Habsburg monarch but unacceptable at the opening of the Budapest Opera House, for which it was written, on account of its use of the Rákóczi march. *An die Künstler*—like *Hungaria*, a single-movement cantata for soloists, chorus and orchestra—sets lines by Schiller on the holy and sublime calling of the artist: it dates from 1853. The last work here is *Septem sacramenta* for soloists, chorus and organ (1878), a work close in date and style to *Via crucis*, though without as much harmonic anguish: the subject is, after all, the receiving of grace through the seven sacraments, which are evoked by selected liturgical texts. All four works are strongly projected by various soloists with the Male Chorus of the Hungarian Army, the female choir Jeunesses Musicales and the Hungarian State Orchestra, conducted by István Zámbo.



Tamás Koltai

Reviving the Middle-Class

When the Hungarian theatre between the two wars comes up as a subject, a hundred people out of a hundred will first mention the name of Ferenc Molnár. Molnár was the most successful playwright of the period, the only one to make his name internationally, and his reputation has lasted. It outshone that of his fellow writers, several of whom are not in the least unworthy of comparison. One of them, Dezső Szomory, is a major playwright, and although there was a time when those in charge of cultural matters tried to ignore him and Molnár, the two playwrights are again being featured in tandem in the repertoire of the Budapest theatres. Indeed, the P.G. Woodehouse version of Molnár's *Play in the Castle*, (*The Play's the Thing*) is at this this very moment being performed as the debut piece by Budapest's new English-language company, the Merlin Theatre.

Molnár and Szomory were contemporaries, and both had a middle class background. Molnár, once a Budapest journalist, became the pampered favourite of the middle-classes; Szomory spent his youth in Paris and was over forty when his play was put on. Molnár was spoiled by fame: the first night of a Molnár play was a major social event. Szomory lived in haughty solitude in his tower room, which had

become a legend. Molnár left Europe for America and died in New York. Szomory met his death in loneliness, in Budapest, during the siege.

They were rivals in their own times; though that probably is to overpraise Szomory, who always felt that Molnár was snatching glory from him; Szomory, too, had his share of acclaim, but there were times when he suffered humiliating fiascos. Molnár tickled the bourgeois frivolously, while Szomory opened their eyes to their own decadence. Not surprisingly, audiences adored Molnár and did not always frantically applaud Szomory. But Molnár's worldwide success can have another explanation too. Aladár Schöpflin, the noted critic, touched on this when he commented that Molnár's plays, "translated into a foreign language, scarcely show their Hungarian origin". Szomory, on the other hand, is almost untranslatable, for his own special trait, his subtle, sinuously over-flourished art-nouveau stage idiom, cannot be conveyed in translation.

Molnár remained a manufacturer of plays, a fabricator of intricate parlour games; Szomory wrote plays for greater stakes. Molnár was juggling, Szomory was intoxicated with writing. Molnár is reliable, Szomory unpredictable. Molnár has a technique of his own, Szomory has a style of his own.

A virtuoso example of the Molnár technique is his *Play in the Castle*. Two writers of operettas are spending the summer in an elegant villa at the seaside with the young

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composer they are backing. They arrive unexpectedly so as to surprise the musician's fiancée, a fashionable young actress, who has been staying for several days in the villa. The surprise misfires; Annie, the starlet, has been flirting with a former lover, an ageing lead from the National, in the neighbouring room and their goings-on can be heard through the wall. Turai, the experienced playwright, now resolves on a daring strategy to rescue both the dejected composer and the approaching premiere of their work. In the hours that remain of the night he writes a one-act comedy, presenting it as a play by Sardou, and the following day he has it performed by the guilty couple. The frivolous dialogue overheard the previous evening sounds now as if it had been part of a rehearsal. This is more difficult than it would seem, as the dallying overheard by the new arrivals could not conceivably have been staged at the time. So the words in praise of certain curvacious lines now refer to a ripe fruit. The trick comes off, the young and naive composer believes the lie, and there remains no obstacle in the way of a happy ending.

Molnár, to some extent, presented himself in the figure of Turai, who juggles with plays and can turn the most workaday theme into real theatre. He even allows his characters at the opening of the play to discuss what a good opening for a play should be like. At the end of the second act, he has them rehearse three closing scenes to show how an effective ending should be written. (By so doing, he also provides himself with an effective ending.) The technical trickery for the most part conceals the fact that, beyond the basic idea, it is the dialogue rather than the dramatic structure that is witty. The play within the play, the sham Sardou, does not exploit the opportunity for a little parody. Molnár was not writing for connoisseurs but for members of the middle-class of average education who were easily satisfied. They are satisfied with having a

good laugh at the expense of the dallying seducer, on whom Turai wreaked his revenge by including endless, tongue-twisting French names in every sentence of the part assigned to him.

The Vígszínház, which was the home of Molnár in the 1910s and '20s, his prime years, has now revived the comedy, creating splendid sets with the money the sponsoring bank provided. The setting itself has become the protagonist: it receives loud applause as soon as the curtain rises and it acts out the production by itself. Miklós Szinetár's production does not lack conversational elegance, but the acting scintillates less than the author's technique. It is short on uncontrived, easy irony. There is only one moment that brings something unusual: in the play within the play, the actors are required to kiss each other, and this kiss turns out to be much longer and more passionate than it should. This is an embarrassing moment, which reveals the lie that lies behind the play and the juggling—the "technique", that is.

Molnár's early play of 1909, *Carousel*, (*Liliom* in the original) was such a huge success that it was turned into a musical in America. Dezső Kosztolányi, his contemporary as a writer, and a fine critic, compared the story of the suburban ruffian, the barker of swings and roundabouts in the fun-fair, to Schnitzler and Jules Renard. Yet, the story itself reeks of kitsch. *Liliom*, the proud, self-sufficient aristocrat of showmanship, loves the little servant girl Julika, but he is unable to show his feelings. He intends to steal some money for the sake of his child to be, or to go to America, where there are jobs in industry. His plan misfires and, before the handcuffs are clapped onto him, he commits suicide. But the "heavenly clerk" forgives him so that he can perform one good deed. *Liliom* can return to earth for one day, on the sixteenth birthday of his daughter...

Sentimentality has left its mark on the performing tradition of the play. What detracts from the legend of the Budapest

City Park is that it has itself turned into a legend. From the very outset the play was treated as the poetry of slum pavements and not as theatre. But a 1981 production, which reassessed the dramatic concept, changed the convention. László Babarczy's 1981 production made no attempt to wring tears, it did not believe in a slum fairy tale, in the saving grace of a rogue with a set jaw. Babarczy replaced legend by reality on the stage, and also by the deeper reality that lives in the minds of the characters. Now the new production in the Miskolc National Theatre, directed by Árpád Árkosi, returns to the original, somewhat tawdry "Brummagem goods". Among the motley houses and personal objects, the foliage is of paper and Liliom is carried to heaven in a balloon. It is as if the whole thing had been sketched out in a market booth, everything is stylized, imaginary, with the emotions as naive and childish as in a fairy tale.

Molnár's *Carousel* in its day had two famous principals, Irén Varsányi and Gyula Csontos. They also were the leads for the premiere of Dezső Szomory's *Little Györgyi, Dear Child* in the Vígszínház. But what a difference between the parts! Little Györgyi, the seventeen year-old drama student, is in love with a boy just meant for her (a drama student, of course), but she has to marry the Vienna industrialist twenty years her senior.

The critic József Czimer writes about the play: "What makes a lady? What trials has a young woman to go through, in mind and body, before being sold by her parents and purchased by the husband, to become elevated to the rank of a female member of the upper middle-class? The play is about this—not a tragedy, merely a somewhat vicious form of doom. Little Györgyi, the unruly 'dear child', finally learns to appreciate the purchase price that has been paid for her radiant and restless youth, and if her illusions must be destroyed, let them be destroyed by her own hand, in a resolute and supercilious manner".

The play is full of affectation, of ecstatic declamation of irony. In the Vienna hotel, a week before her wedding, Little Györgyi, in the furor of the moment, gives herself to her lover, sneaking to her like a thief, half-mad with passion and suffering. The engagement is still being celebrated, and the family—garrulous, loud and vulgar—are present after their own fashion. There follows the honeymoon, with more meddling attendance, with some more flirting and another tolerant glance from the taciturn "strong man", the grand scene with a revolver and threats—but no tragedy. Everything remains as it was, Little Györgyi takes up her place in the Vienna mansion, her former lover is to find a job in her husband's factory, and in a somewhat more distant future, let us say in a year, there may be some new flirtation, possibly a new lover.

The production in the Pest (the smaller house of the Vígszínház) lacks the sarcastic portrayal of the middle class, the irony hidden in the stylized prose. The director, Géza Tordy, has treated the material as if the play had come from Molnár, not from Szomory. He reduces the roulade and tendril ornamentation of Szomory's words to average drawing-room conversation. The effect is further reduced by miscasting, and a far from average author and his play receive a misleading presentation.

Orphans, a play by the third outstanding middle-class author of the period, Milán Füst, offers a typical contrast to *Little Györgyi, Dear Child*. Szomory's words bubble over in torrents; Füst is reticence itself. In *Orphans* nothing happens on the surface, everything takes place in the depths, almost as with Chekhov. The Hungarian theatre of the time was not prepared for works like this. Füst wrote his first play, the mournful, naturalistic *Hapless Ones*, inspired by a news item in 1923, eleven years after Szomory's *Little Györgyi* and Molnár's *Play in the Castle*. Although its value was recognized by the

cream of his fellow-writers and Kosztolányi even recommended the play to the National, in a box-office-centred theatre everything was against it from the outset, compared with comedies presenting the life of high society or at least the upper middle-classes. The dramatic oeuvre of Füst, who died in 1967, was condemned to the desk drawer by the narrowness of the theatre of the day.

Together with several other of his plays, *Orphans* only came to light posthumously. It is a sketch rather than a completed whole. Eveline, the "companion", uses gentle force to marry the retired ministerial chief councillor—and that is the plot in its entirety. The councillor's grown-up daughters, who after the death of their mother, urge the father to regularize this relationship, now become gradually alienated by the aggressive presence of the newcomer. One of them escapes by a marriage, the other by a suicide attempt. The father, too, becomes vague and grows old in the new situation. Vague, suffering people, unable to communicate, live together in common solitude.

Péter Valló, who directed this play in the tiny Radnóti Theatre, uses pallid colours, working with dull lights and Chekhovian moods. The small space increases the intensity of the acting and although here, too, the casting is not always the most suitable, stylistically at least, it is a uniform production.

The generation, or even atrophy, of the bourgeois theatre can be followed through the century—and in the current repertoire. The 1905 best-selling novel, *Tales about a Typewriter* (by István Szomaházy), was turned into an operetta by István Békeffy and Lajos Lajtai in the late 1920s. This corny

story of a love affair between a managing director and a typist has now been revived in the József Attila Theatre. Here the poor quality of the material is annoying.

A revival of something first performed fifty years ago was staged (just like the original) at the National, or more exactly, the smaller house of the National, the Castle Theatre. János Bókay's comedy, *I Love Four Women* was a typical box-office product of the day, with a measure of social content or, rather, a semblance of it. A young, destitute engineer is offered a contract by the managing director of a furniture factory, and to provide himself with social weight, this jobless careerist has his wife act as a secretary, maid and mistress as well, for the manager. It is not an edifying story, and what is even worse, bad jokes take the place of any elaboration of the situations. What is sad is that the revival took place in the National.

Symptomatic of the degeneration of the bourgeois theatre is the "tuneful soldier pageantry with flowers", *Take Your Hat Off to the Soldier*. This Mihály Erdélyi operetta was premiered in the early 1940s, when Hungarian army units were fighting in the Ukraine. The verses that link the scenes of all this inanity were intended to inspire the "heroic soldiers" off to battle and victories. Soon after the production was staged, the Second Hungarian Army was destroyed on the Don. The revival takes place in the same theatre as the premiere half a century before. The production by the Budapest Chamber Theatre treats what was once patriotic pathos with ironic criticism, and has naturally changed the ending: instead of a victorious return it presents tragic destruction. This is not the revival of a stage success but the conjuring up of an historical failure.

Gergely Bikácsy

Innocents and Murderers

György Fehér: *Szürkület* (Twilight); Péter Bacsó: *Sztálin menyasszonya* (Stalin's Fiancée)

It is as if a slow reconnaissance aircraft were to land on a clouded-over landscape. The camera scans the bleak and uninhabited wooded region. The sun is unknown here, wind and rain prevail. Where the path turns stands a stone cross; further on sluggish smoke rises above some small and ugly scattered houses—people live in this greyness. Their faces could have been shaped by the indifferent rain and smoke and not by the hand of God, so dully hopeless they look. A murder has been committed at the stone cross.

György Fehér came fairly late to his first feature film. He has long been known for his highly individual television adaptations of the classics and has always been held in high esteem within the profession. Now, amid the bustle of market-oriented films and film makers striving for box-office success at any cost, he has directed a calm, taut and very beautiful film—which is drawing only small audiences. It is a cruel and slow film, providing no consolation, no ease whatever. The crime rests as heavily on the audience as it does on the investigators. The audience is not to encounter either the victim or the murderer for *Twilight* is about something else—perhaps about the permanence of crime, perhaps about the dark beauty

of all forms of stubborn and vain human struggle, or perhaps about twilight itself, from which there is no escape.

The hope that radiates from *Twilight* is despairing but sober, pinning its faith only on the contemplative human mind. Or perhaps it has no faith, yet there is a stubborn persistence on human logic and an esteem for hopeless human struggle. Nothing metaphysically profound is said in this film, no one quotes apocalyptic revelations under the threateningly dark sky. God pays no attention to this world, not even in the form of punishment.

Even the detective heroes of *Twilight* do not care for a spiritual interpretation of capitalized Crime: it is not from a moral angle that they find it almost natural, as it were, and their desire to catch the culprit has the stubbornness of a bull-dog. During the course of the film this professionally inspired obstinacy slowly grows into an obsession. Their experience is not of much use here, the know-all impotence of the professional turns into a delirious amateur quest. The growing sense of failure and defeat ennoble this hopeless pursuit, beautifying it somehow or other.

The film doubles the investigator in Dürrenmatt's story, which serves as the basis for the plot. These two men, stealthily watching even what the other does or intends to do, have a strange, tense effect. The older one (played by Péter Haumann) is everywhere present, lurking and examining not only the suspicious sites, but is

Gergely Bikácsy is NHQ's regular film reviewer.

found even under the window of the parents of the murdered little girl, listening to their dreadful sobs and the silence of his fellow-detective. Everything is numb in this film: the forest wreathed in fog and rain, the villagers ready for lynching, the unknown murderer, the two investigators working with less and less human logic. Occasionally they look each other in the face, for minutes at a time in the middle of the forest. At other instances a car suddenly stops in the lane, but nothing happens—it is simply the older of the two, sitting lost in thought, his hat over his eyes. The younger moves in, like Dürrenmatt's protagonist, next to a petrol station, with a little girl playing ball, as the bait. He, too, sits around for long moments, watching the child.

There are only sham clues and sham suspects. They interrogate a pitiful peddler, who has been hawking razors around the villages. Haumann has an occasional scornful smile, the "professional" interrogating the peddler (Gyula Pauer) in a derisive and provocative ex officio manner; the peddler is grinning. A ghastly grin it is—the wicked and dirty grin of the innocent. The silence, the gestures unaccompanied by words, the rare—but all the more terrible and inarticulate—screams and moans pervade the viewer's bones. The rain keeps falling and seems to crumble and wash away this faltering search for the truth. The wreathing smoke brings no hope either, it shrouds the landscape as if everybody here were a Cain whose sacrifice is refused by Heaven.

Instead of a religious prompting, one may rather feel an "existentialist" impulse in this film; but let us not make it easier (or perhaps more difficult) for the film historian of the future. Let us take the film for what it is—a spectacle. And this black-and-white, excessively angular film does have imagery all of its own. It opens by presenting the two detectives: two heads enveloped in darkness in a car. For a long time they have no faces. The car

stops, but as in an early Bresson film (or in a late Bresson film), the camera does not follow the alighting passengers, it stays put with gaping nonchalance. Instead of faces, we see the wipers of the car. Another passenger gets out, but he, too, remains faceless. As if by accident, the camera for a long while shows the people at knee-height.

Of course there is no question of an accident. The camera (the director and the cameraman) are held by the logic of the spectacle. The protagonists search for the essence of an event, its truth, its reason, its secret and explanation. The film itself is perhaps seeking for the reason of every event, even for the secret of the world. For the camera in *Twilight* it is inadmissible for things and images to have centres that are easy to find. There are no close shots of the "centres" of objects and sites to "illustrate" them, as it were, in a leisurely and customary way, inertly for the spectacle, justice and thought. Things have shifted in the world, nothing is in place. It takes a Marlowe to find the criminal. In that case the camera always shows what is expected by the viewer. There is little formal bravura on György Fehér's part, his is a calm cinematic idiom. But it is an apparent calm, as is the calm of the detectives. In the last scene, for example, the Haumann figure examines a car that has crashed into a tree. He leans into it: the car is empty, full of shards of glass. Among them he spots the spiky chocolate ball they call the "hedgehog", which belongs to the murderer. Slow steps are heard approaching; somebody stops at the car. Everything will come to light in a minute. The camera moves upwards with paralyzing slowness, but not to reveal the face of the newcomer, the solution to the mystery: this remains hidden for several more, chilly moments. In more pathetic (or more art-oriented) decades this was called creative courage—perhaps justly so. No matter, this shot was the greatest moment at the last Hungarian film review.

The current season does not favour art. György Fehér—whether or not out of an inner inspiration—has cut down his slow and taut film. I am unable to decide which is the better and more complete version. From the point of view of the market, it is of course of utmost importance how it can be sold and distributed. Nevertheless, the muse of cinematography is finer and truer than is the market, and for her (and for anyone who likes film) *Twilight* remains a gift no matter whether it turns up at Cannes or in the cinema round the corner.

I read a short story by Mahfuz in Hungarian translation some time before he was awarded the Nobel prize. It is about a mentally deranged young woman who has to be escorted by someone, a soldier, a policeman, possibly a servant, taking her from one hospital to another. The policeman loathes the woman and finds his duty embarrassing and tiresome. He would like to shake her off somehow, but cannot do so as they are sent from one hospital to another. Finally he realizes that he has slowly become accustomed to her.

It was a simple but breath-taking story. Yet, it was not widely popular with readers. I dwell on it not only because of the story but also because Péter Bacsó's film, as his films for quite some time now, is principally aimed at captivating audiences. German co-production allows one to hope for wider distribution. (This was recently the case with Makk's *Hungarian Requiem* as well.) One should perhaps forget all these external circumstances and only consider the result, what actually appears on the screen. However, on the screen, too, the director uses clichés and simplifications. Indeed, his simplifications are intended to meet the expectations of the presumed average Western European audience.

A leading director like Andrzej Wajda did the same when he filmed *The Devils* with the same intention. Only there it was

Dostoevsky who provided the raw material for the plot, while here it is only one Tiendryakov.

Tiendryakov's story gives the impression of an anecdotal, sharpened parable, interesting but lacking in depth. In that memorable Mahfuz story, the protagonist was the soldier accompanying the mad girl, since the insane already are out of the range of the X-rays of art; here the lunatic girl is, somewhat externally, placed in the foreground, surrounded by the inhabitants of an Ukrainian village in 1934. I do not wish to belittle Tiendryakov's story and I do not agree with those sharp, even indignant Hungarian critics who have gone for Bacsó's film. Anecdotes do have a place in literature, and the anecdote is able to express a great deal about man and his world; films with a similar object also have their justification. However we, even as contemporaries of the Western viewers and living just a little bit nearer the Ukraine, are somehow still more closely familiar with fear, knowing it from within. (So much so that we feel sulky over the forcedness and shallowness of the Russian story.)

Tyrannical concreteness is always an amazing quality for a moving picture. The parable and fairy-tale quality of the story disappears when the mad girl becomes animated, with her yellow hair, red gums and gibbering giggle, believing herself to be Stalin's fiancée. All the background puppets of the story are animated as well, as a collection of wax-work figures. Played by flesh-and-blood people, who have to take on the character of puppets in a wax cabinet. This "embodiment" here is embarrassing. An anecdotal tale related in the spinning room or at a camp fire would come over much better in an animated film.

Bacsó is fully aware of all this. The idiot, played by Juli Básti, is exempted from being looked upon as a human being, since the audience is not in the cinema in the capacity of a doctor or a nurse. The rest of the characters are intended as model types, social parts, and are hardly indi-

vidualized at all, only to the extent that caricature is. Their behaviour symbolizes various grades of fear, villainy and stupidity. There is nothing new about satire in art—suffice it to mention *The Inspector-General*, just to remain in the Ukraine. In that the wax-work figures of dreadfully distorted idiots writhe on the stage. But here again one comes up against the same scarcely penetrable wall as before. Literature, the drama, can portray a parable, a face elevated into philosophy, more easily and more naturally than can film. Gogol's idiots and puppets rise a couple of centimetres above the stage and continue to writhe there. As the dregs of an unredeemable world, they are down-to-earth naturalists and philosophically symbolic at the same time. The more puppet-like they are, the better.

Cinema has never yet achieved something similar. Here the distorted figures are only themselves and they are disturbing if they have to be taken seriously. Photography knows no Goya or Daumier; its material is not suited for this. (There is good reason why of the many film versions of *The Inspector-General*, the most interesting is Martin Fric's Expressionistic experimental work, in which the director did not pay much heed to realism in the traditional sense of the term.)

Bacsó, however, wants to be both realistically representational, and a caricaturist reducing people to tears of laughter, all in one. He moved into a deserted village and turned it into the Ukrainian village of a stage set. The camera mostly looks about in the main square, or in the open parlour of the inn with its boarded floor. It is as if we were watching a TV play, the usual medium for such stationary camera shots. The puppets step up before us and do what the anecdote prescribes them to do, never for a moment turning into genuinely individualized characters. If one looks at it like this, and there is no other way to look at, Bacsó proves to be a correct, even ingenious narrator; all the

scenes and supporting characters have their function, presenting narrow-mindedness and shifty cowardice in a watchable manner (though, of course, without any surprise to come). All that, were it to stay at this level, would be a meagre business, crying out for some puppetry.

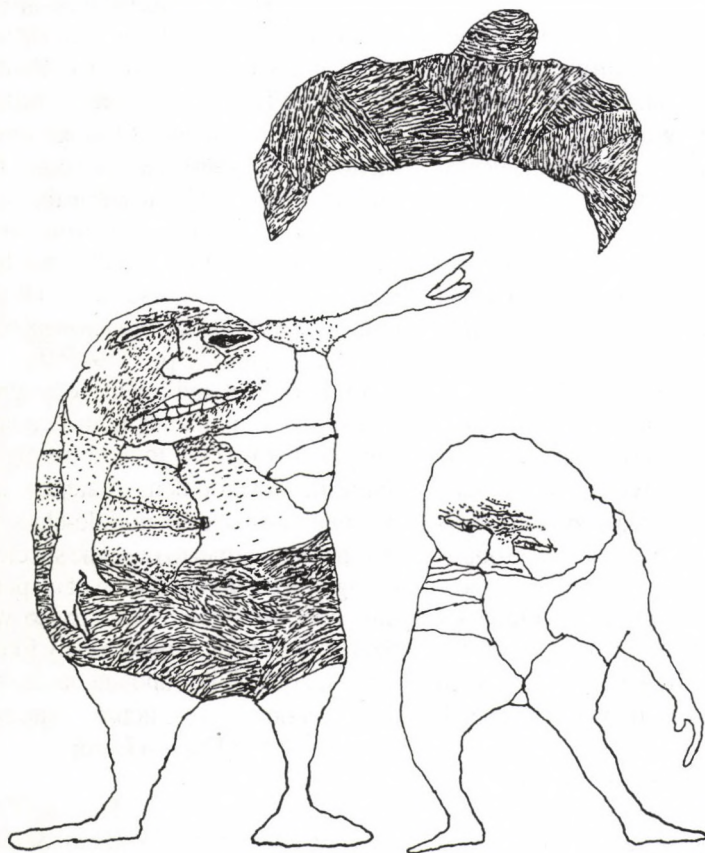
But the film does have another level as well. By the second half, the tone attempts to turn more gloomy, devoid of humour; the grotesque shocker tries to turn into harassing reality. The idiot girl is grilled in a cellar, and later, after she has been released, she produces real victims; anyone she points to as a spy in her stuttering gibber is dragged away. A young ex-convict, who has even sheltered her out of pity, kills her, partly out of pity, and partly because he wants to protect the whole village.

The scenes of the interrogation unfortunately lack authenticity, as even stylization cannot make one forget that Stalinism was dull and stupid in quite a different way. Instead of tragicomic colour, the screen is sadly shrouded in fairly cheap and glaring features. But in the last third the director has succeeded in creating taut and dramatic moments when he succeeds in turning the girl, and not the others, into the background. Here he also tries to present a dramatic hero. Of course, this calls for the acting of György Cserhalmi. He is able to gaze from the window of the inn upon a muddy, real world, the scene in which his one and only life is set. This world is to become picturesquely dreadful and exotically ridiculous only later, in the eyes of the outsider, the movie-goers of Vienna, Munich and Paris. Cserhalmi seems to have passed freely from another film (another reality) into this one. This performance may count as a stylistic lesion, but here it reinforces the film as a whole, even by underlining the lopsidedness of the whole concept of the writer and director. (Worthy of a special mention among

the numerous subsidiary parts is the waitress played by the German actress, Nina Petri. Her short scene with Cserhalmi around the middle of the film is worth the price of the seat.)

Bacsó has often said, and almost all his films try to prove it, that life, reality knows of no pure comedy and pure tragedy. Everything is blended in reality; humour and tragedy, pathos and comedy are intertwined in our workaday world. This is how it is in life. So it is too in some masterpieces, from Shakespeare to Chekhov. But are these things really intertwined in real life? Rather they appear side by side, in a free medley, a happy and alarming confusion. Only real art is able to blend them.

It makes me smile when some of the critics and writers, having seen *Stalin's Fiancée*, flew into a purificatory temper better suited to the pamphleteering pen of Solzhenytsin. The poet Endre Ady once wrote with lenient severity that the trouble with Ferenc Molnár was not his talent but his morality as a writer. But even this comes as a rather elevated parallel. The Hungarian cinema, with the possible exception of its great period in the 1960s, has hardly come up to a level where it would be justified to use allusions to artistic credos and examples of Ady's stature. It is also true that Ferenc Molnár was more wisely aware of the limits of his lavish talent.



Szibrai K. 30. VII. 48.

Foreign Capital and the Middle Class

Sir—The selection of articles in the Spring 1991 issue of your journal (*NHQ* 121) were extremely enlightening and provocative. However, I would like to comment on some of the assertions contained in Iván Szelényi's piece entitled "East of Germany". One of Szelényi's major contentions, that foreign investment in Hungary will block the development of domestic accumulation and a Hungarian middle class, is questionable. To begin with, the evidence for this argument—the case of Chile in the nineteenth century—is hardly applicable to Central Europe in the twentieth. Professor Szelényi should note that nineteenth-century foreign investment in less developed countries (LDCs) was based on the creation of extractive industries, to gain access to raw materials. Modern direct investment in Central Europe, on the other hand, is primarily interested in the local production of manufactured goods in order to tap the pent-up consumer demand that exists there. Therefore, the notion that foreign investment will seek to obstruct a middle class in Hungary is doubtful, as such an economic group is necessary for foreign investors—there must be a large sector of the population with sufficient income in order to buy the goods being made by these foreign-owned firms. In fact, the creation of jobs through an influx of foreign capital will more assuredly lead to the promotion of a middle class than would restrictive government policies on outside investment.

This argument is borne out by evidence far more convincing than that

which Szelényi provides. In fact, one of his examples—that of Taiwan—*refutes* the very argument Szelényi is trying to make. As Stephan Haggard notes in his recent work, *Pathways from the Periphery*, by the mid-1950s Taiwan experienced major economic problems as a result of its autarkic economic policies. Only by dramatically reversing this course and encouraging foreign investment was Taiwan able to solve its balance-of-payments problems and the decreasing level of its gross national product. Furthermore, both Taiwan and Korea, who have been major recipients of foreign investment since the 1960s, exhibit some of the most rapid economic growth in the world and "a more equitable distribution of income than do those LDCs that have restricted outside investment". (Robert Gilpin, *The Political Economy of International Relations*, pp. 249-250).

In short, Szelényi's cause-effect relationship on this matter is inaccurate. I suggest that he look toward the area of domestic development strategies as a potential obstacle to middle-class formation, rather than to raise the specter of foreign capital as the source of all potential economic woes. Contrary to what Szelényi believes, if used wisely foreign investment will be fundamental to successful economic restructuring and equitable growth in Eastern Europe.

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The Political Language of the River

Sir—The series of articles published recently on the Bős (Gabcikovo)—Nagyymaros project (*NHQ* 120) prompts me to write a few brief lines on the symbolic value of rivers and the environment, and their political role in opposing totalitarian regimes. Behind modern day political action, there is a mythological role which rivers fill. Despite the different ethnic origins of Magyar and Slavic peoples, there are remarkable similarities in the treatment of water. The geographical regions that Slavonics penetrated, and Magyars later invaded in the ninth century, were characterized by vast expanses dominated by rivers, forests and lakes. Against this landscape both Ugric and Western Slavonic mythologies remained in a primary mode focusing on spirits and shamanism, rather than on a hierarchy of deities.

Waterways such as the Danube became important trade routes as early as the so-called Dark Ages, and during Mediaeval times they became important focuses of urbanization. For example, the city of Prague was built on, and expanded around, a series of bends in the Vltava (Moldau). Later still, rivers opened up vital national markets and aided the development of a new relationship between town and countryside. In Braudel's¹ "long 16th century" the frontier between the Rhine and the Danube became a classic example of a "cultural boundary" separating the "original" Christian Europe from the more marginal "periphery" conquered by the religion at a later date. This left Hungary outside the core of Western European elite culture.

But the river has come to possess a meaning beyond its physicality, its mythological symbolic power and economic relevance. The prime example of his "nationalist" connection is Bedric Smetana's "My Fatherland", where the Vltava/Moldau is given even greater status than the Vysehrad castle which looms up during its course.

But how does the river counter Stalinism? In Tadeusz Konwicki's novel, *A Minor Apocalypse*,² in which the author is called upon to set himself on fire outside of the Communist Party headquarters in Warsaw, the Vistula is contrasted with the decaying, collapsing structure of urban Stalinism and the mind-washing sloganization of banners announcing, "We have built socialism", which adorn the city.

"...I was looking in the direction of the Poniatowski Bridge, which had unfortunately collapsed a few hours back. It was no great catastrophe, there were other bridges. Anyway, I was looking toward the Vistula and I could see the blackened tops of the houses on the shore, I could see the poisonous mouth of the river, the beaches of Prague, and the tangled, yellow vegetation of Grochow and Goclawek, a large raggedy meadow which had not surrendered. But it was slowly sinking as the jampacked city encroached on it more and more with every year".

"There was a festive, peaceful air by the aging Party building, which was showing cracks at various spots. Security agents disguised as traffic policemen were loitering apathetically by the corners of the building. An

enormous banner reading WE HAVE BUILT SOCIALISM was fluttering on the building's long wall."

STALINISM
(urban fabric)

- decaying
- stagnant
- sloganized
- observationist
- poisoning
- superhuman
- ordered
- artificial
- secretive
- expansionist
- crowded
- lying

The central character, during the course of his last day, meets ("Hope") Nadezhda and his feelings towards her are regulated by the two opposing paradigms; nature expresses itself in sexual desire, whereas the artificial regularity of the Stalinist structure reflects as a mere chemico-biological exchange between two bodies. As such the Vistula provides a link with the world as reality rather than the artificial and unnatural order which is driving him to his death—as a political process. At the same time the river is also a symbol of the yearning for rurality.

With regard to Bős, the river represents postproductionism, people, nation, history, and cultural differentiation (with the Slavonics on the other side). It counters industrialism, governments, the "end of history", and anti-culture. Thus the use of the river as a nationalist and political, as well as ecological weapon reverses the role of nationalism in the balance between governments and people. Nationalism

Through these two juxtaposed images we see a typology of what the two symbols stand for.

RIVER
(ecological fabric)

- ongoing
- in motion
- natural
- neutral
- poisoned
- human
- disordered
- genuine
- at face value
- occupied
- spacious
- truth

is no longer mindless sloganization, it is a weapon of the people against totalitarianism. The stereotyping of the countryside as passive and reactionary—the Stalinist extension of Marx's "sack-of-potatoes" theory is also contradicted by the Bős incident, and observations by Raymond Williams³ and Immanuel Wallerstein, concerning the progressive characteristics of rural population, are strongly backed up.

Finally, Bertalan Benyó⁴ has shown why the Bős incident does not advance the market as a solution to Central and Eastern European problems. No one can blame the Austrian company for its involvement with the schemes—given the market economy, if they hadn't done it someone else would have done. As Benyo himself says, "For a real democracy, planners must submit themselves to the control of society as a whole".

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NOTES

1 Fernand Braudel: *The Perspective of the World: Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th century* (Book 3). Collins/Fontana Press.

2 Tadeusz Konwicki: *A Minor Apocalypse* (English trans.). Faber and Faber, 1983.

3 Raymond Williams: "The city and the world", in: *What I Came to Say*. Hutchinson Radius, 1989.

4 Bertalan Benyó: "Market failure" in: *New Ground*, No 25. Summer 1990.

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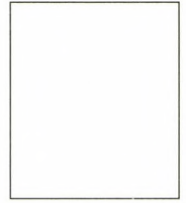
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They were saying that the Russians had raped the women. "Did that happen where you were too?" asked my mother. "Yes," I said, "it did." "But they didn't take you away, did they?" asked my mother. "Yes, they did, they took everyone," I replied and went on eating. Mother looked at me for a moment and asked in surprise "But why did you let them?" "Because they hit me," I said and went on eating. I didn't consider the whole subject to be important or interesting.

From Alaine Polcz's Second World War memoir, p.44.

