

# NH Q

*The New  
Hungarian  
Quarterly*

Kodály — A Centenary Tribute

Gyula Illyés at Eighty

Development Problems of the Hungarian Economy —  
*Béla Csikós-Nagy*

Preparing to Meet the Challenge — *Béla Kádár*

Socialist Renewal and the Social Sciences —  
*Pál Zsigmond Pach*

Political Mechanism and Socialist Democracy —  
*Mihály Bibari*

Zoltán Jékely: a Poet of Time, Death, and Love —  
*József Tornai*

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88



# *The New Hungarian Quarterly*

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*This issue went to press on August 5th 1982  
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## POETRY, MUSIC, POLITICS

**A**s a rule the first article of an issue of *NHQ* is devoted to a subject of current political or economic interest; we have broken this rule in the past, most recently to celebrate the Bartók centenary, and do so again on the occasion of the eightieth birthday of Gyula Illyés. Gyula Illyés is a living classic. Why the whole country, critical opinion as much as the general reading public, consider him so is discussed by Mátyás Domokos who, asking what is a classic, pays special regard to the unusual fact that he is writing about a living man.

A literature which looks on its greatest living figure as a classic but does not really know how to back this opinion with arguments of sufficient force finds itself in a difficult position. Mátyás Domokos marshalls a considerable international apparatus which makes the Hungarian claim plausible and even credible, making particular use of a category which does not call for further explanation, that of maturity.

In our own way we endeavour to back, and illustrate, the argument by printing a small selection of Illyés's œuvre, bearing in mind that it is the work of more than half a century. Illyés is essentially and surpassingly a poet but this does not mean that he confines himself to verse. Like Victor Hugo, to whom I dare to compare him because of his passionate participation in all that concerns his nation, Illyés is a classic in prose as well as verse. We therefore here print both. The poems span the whole of his œuvre though they are naturally able to offer only a highly condensed picture of his greatness as a poet, notwithstanding the quality of William Jay Smith's translations which are worthy of the original. The prose we publish is typical of Illyés both in subject and tone. He goes into minute detail, thus heightening the irony, magnifying a commonplace event into a moral statement and political message.

Zoltán Kodály would have been a hundred this year in December, had



he lived to an even greater age. The world largely has to take our word about Hungarian poets and writers; the composers, however, find themselves in a more fortunate position. Mention Bartók or Kodály's name and all except the completely tone-deaf hear their tunes in the inner ear, keeping time with the throbbing rhythm. Few are aware that Zoltán Kodály means much more to Hungarians than anyone who was only a great composer could. "A centenary tribute" by Lajos Vargyas expresses this. All his life, but particularly in its final decades, Zoltán Kodály embodied the Hungarian national consciousness, even national identity, in the language of our times. Vargyas argues that there are artists in whose work the national character finds expression in such condensed form as in Kodály's. There is probably no one as obsessed by the sublime image of the nation's soul as Kodály. It was this obsession that drove him on his rural rides, from Pozsony to the Bukovina, to recover an unknown tradition that was about to perish.

József Újfalussy and János Breuer discuss Kodály's relationship with two other major figures of twentieth century music, Debussy and Benjamin Britten. Debussy had a decisive influence on Kodály's beginnings. Kodály found an ideal congenial with Hungarian folkmusic in Debussy's Latin clarity, as against the late-romantic German music fashionable at the time. Újfalussy demonstrates the intimate relationship between the two composers with the help of a number of examples. János Breuer includes a number of previously unpublished letters in his account of contacts between Britten and Kodály. The previous issue of *NHQ* showed in detail how close the links were between Kodály and musical life in England. Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears' visit to Hungary in 1964 initiated a new and important stage in this relationship which culminated in Kodály's participation in the 1965 Aldeburgh Festival. Kodály's world wide reputation includes that of being known as the greatest music teacher of our time. Klára Kokas, one of the most original practitioners of the Kodály method, evokes the Master's memory and discusses ways in which the Kodály method of music education furthers the intellectual growth of children, something for which there is no precise explanation as yet.

The celebration of a birthday and a centenary, but also mourning. Zoltán Jékely, the poet, died at 69, no great age. József Tornai calls him the poet of time, death, and love. He was a legend in his life, loved and respected by readers and fellow poets alike. Jékely wanted to be a Christian in the twentieth century, he felt that man was in the hands of God even now. Death, war, suffering, art, beauty, and time itself were thus the fruit of man's relationship to God. His prose is important as well, his fiction welded together the dreamworld of the poet and the acute observations of



one who lived amongst men. It is nevertheless in his verse that his true importance lies. We print five of his poems, written between 1936 and 1955, in Alan Dixon's translation.

Current Hungarian short-story writing is represented in this issue by Mihály Kornis's "Petition." I reluctantly describe it as a story since its interest lies precisely in the fact that it has no story in the usual sense of the term. Kornis, a young writer, uses the jargon of petitions submitted to the authorities to express his opinion on the seamy side of the recent past, that odd human condition characteristic of the mid-century decades of Europe and especially of Eastern Central Europe. This issue is even stronger on art than has become customary. József Vadas uses the National Arts Exhibition to chart the present situation of Hungarian art, and the latest work of the painter Jenő Barcsay, one of the greatest living Hungarian artists, is presented in detail. Nicolas Schöffer, a citizen of France of course, whose works were shown at a major exhibition in Budapest this autumn, tells in an interview with Endre T. Rózsa how Schöffer Miklós, the Budapest law student became, after years of study in Paris, Nicolas Schöffer, the kinetic artist.

One of the oldest and one of the youngest arts, those of the medallist and of the photographer, harmonize in a curious way. Julianna P. Szücs writes about an exhibition of medals cast to illustrate environmental protection. The world of nature, of landscape provides the subjects of István Katona's photographs. Unspoilt nature, and nature so often spoilt by man are here in tune thanks to two different kinds of art.

\*

Péter Rényi, the Deputy Editor of the daily *Népszabadság*, interviewed President Mitterrand in the Elysée before the latter's visit to Hungary. François Mitterrand, who spent three days in Budapest in the first week of July, is the first President of France to visit Hungary, and also the first to grant an interview to a Hungarian daily. Rényi who, in recent years has interviewed Helmut Schmidt, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Bruno Kreisky, the Federal Chancellor of Austria, and Olof Palme, the former Prime Minister of Sweden, in a highly personal piece, tells the story of the interview, discussing the apparent and real difficulties, and goes on to compare the four statesmen as subjects for interview. The interview as such, and the President's visit to Hungary, are worthy of wider attention both because of the bilateral and the international aspects.



Béla Csikós-Nagy analyses the problems of economic development in Hungary, making the 1978 changes in economic policy his starting point. He discusses the question of a new path of growth, the guiding role of the structure of prices, and the monetarization of the economy. This long and thorough paper does not disguise the difficulties. We are well aware that the Hungarian economy today enjoys a favourable press reception abroad and, what is even more important, that—to put it delicately—the banking world has not lost interest in Hungary in spite of the known difficulties. One of the reasons for the achievements and relative successes of the Hungarian economy is precisely that difficulties were never swept under the carpet. Béla Csikós-Nagy's article, as well as Béla Kádár's on various aspects of Hungarian foreign trade, exemplify this attitude.

Béla Kádár's article, "Preparing to Meet the Challenge," (of the eighties) is a fresh and frank survey of the present state of the Hungarian economy, its problems, its potentials, and the changes required from it if it is to significantly raise both the quality and the quantity of the exports on which the country's economic balance and the people's living standard so closely depend. The treatment of this highly topical subject is richly interspersed with relevant data from past and present, placing the development and performance of the Hungarian economy in an international context, which ranges from the pre-First-World-War period to the nineteen-eighties.

Two other articles are also linked, and not only because they are both based on papers given at the session of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences where, twenty-five years after the events of 1956, historians and economists, political and other social scientists surveyed the intervening years, their events and processes. Zsigmond Pál Pach, the Vice President of the Academy, in his key-note address "Socialist renewal and the social sciences" provided an overview of progress due to a changed economic policy, and the sound transformation of society, going on to discuss the role of historiography in studying and understanding our own age. Mihály Bihari's subject is political mechanism and socialist democracy. His is a genuine essay in every sense of the term, that is an experiment in a new approach in the study of socialist democracy, in terms of the forms types of separating and and bringing together the economic and political systems. By way of conclusion he outlines the conditions of socialist democracy in terms of a system of institutions. The paper aroused considerable interest and a lively debate when it was given. I am convinced that what Mihály Bihari had to say will offer food for thought to all those statesmen and scholars who meditate on the relationship between socialism and democracy.



Zoltán Halász, the deputy editor of this paper, recently spent a few weeks in Australia. Before he left I asked him to bear in mind that we would want an article on his experiences, but would he please resist the temptation to discover Australia, our magazine after all being read in places where they know the fifth continent much better than we do. What Zoltán Halász discovered instead was a small Hungarian world.

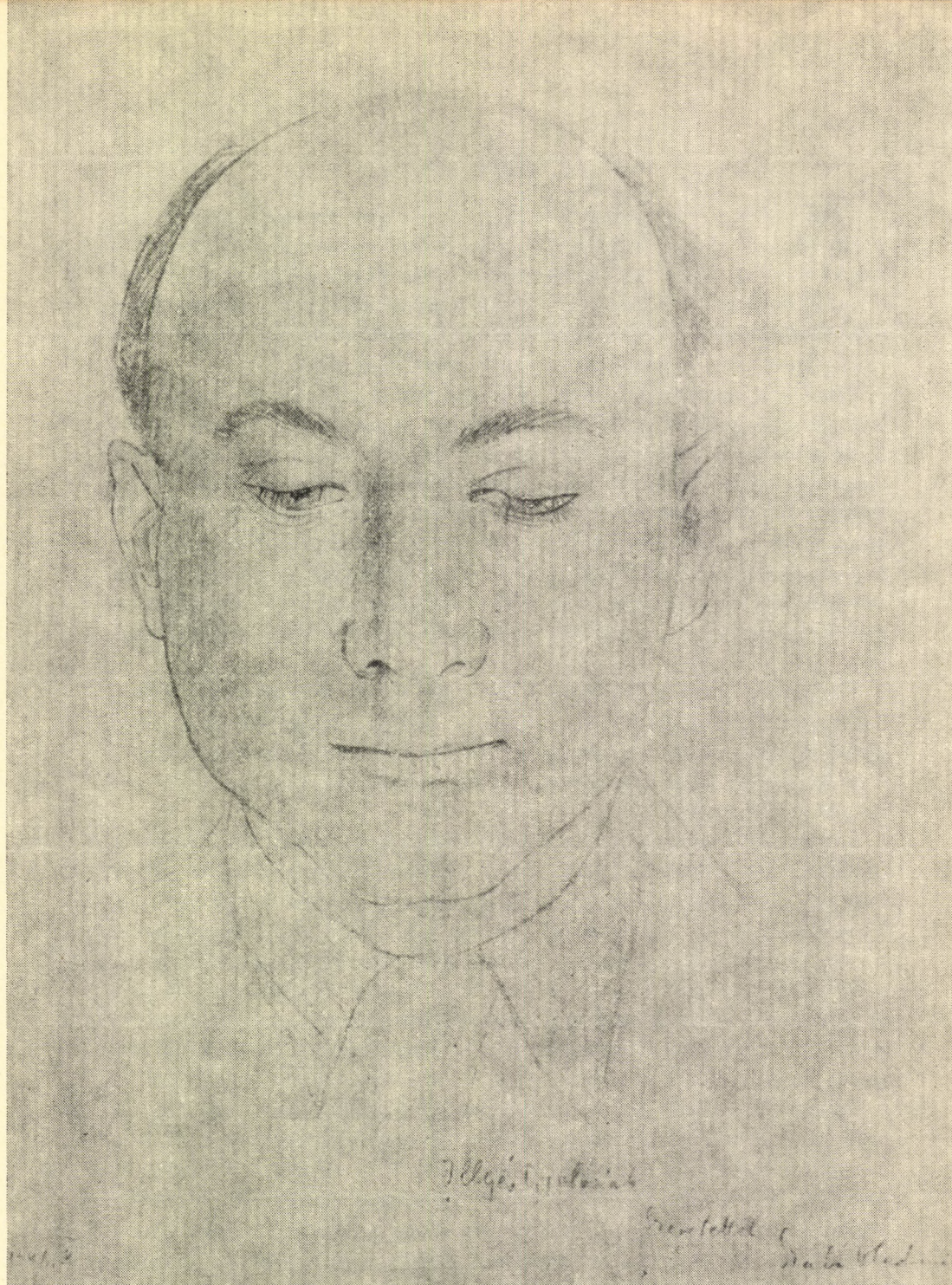
The Hungarian world, it seems, is not all that small. Two articles suggest that there is interest in things Hungarian in unexpected places. Mark Savin's "Edmund Wilson and his Budapest" is about much more than the great American writer's visit to this city, telling of the beginnings and the development of his continued interest in Hungarians and their language and literature. I spent a day with Wilson in 1966, at his home in Cape Cod (my account of the visit is in *NHQ* 52) and I can confirm what Savin said. Wilson was less interested in me as an individual than as a member of the genus he called Hungarian, more precisely in his own idea of what Hungarians are like.

The way Stephen Walsh who, I am happy to say, now regularly writes on recent Hungarian releases, discusses living Hungarian composers, surveying their work, explaining it, placing it in the European context, rises far above a mere critical notice of the records which are the ostensible subject of his article.

The present issue contains some of my own prose, of a kind that I have not previously published in English. This is nothing like the travelogues which used to appear fairly frequently in *NHQ* and even formed the subject of a book published by Macmillan of London, but a kind of autobiographical fiction, that is narrating actual events using the devices and organization of fiction. They are part of a series that bears the title Bitter-Sweet, stories of hard times in which bitterness combines with humour or human sweetness. I was persuaded that bitter-sweet in English had a Noel Cowardish sound about it which was alien to the mood of these texts. In Hungarian the association is with an enchanting line by Mihály Csokonai Vitéz, the great poet of the Hungarian rococo who is completely unknown abroad. I always listen to those paid to know better than me when it comes to questions of language, but I insisted on the contrast in the title, so bitter-sweet was turned into hot and cold. Something I have often said in these pages, that good translation is hard and thankless work, was thus brought home to me. But we cannot live without working.

THE EDITOR





GYULA ILLYÉS AT FORTY  
*A pencil sketch by Vladimir Szabó (1941)*



## GYULA ILLYÉS, A LIVING CLASSIC

by

MÁTYÁS DOMOKOS

**G**yula Illyés's first pieces were published in the beginning of the twenties in Hungarian and international classical avant-garde magazines. Since then, from over fifty published volumes and innumerable other writings as yet unpublished in book form, a many-sided artistic world emerges, whose every individual manifestation must always have been found astonishingly new, disturbingly original and exciting by his readers—to borrow the title of one of his late poems, each piece belongs to "the world of eternal works of art." The author himself is considered one of the truest, one of the most representative of Hungarian writers. His great fellow-poet and friend, Lőrinc Szabó, justly wrote of him in 1956: "All the citizens of Hungary—no, even the whole of our cultural life of the future, shall forever remain in his debt." He is instinctively and naturally thought of as a living classic by the literary and intellectual Hungarian public.

Illyés's pen does not bind him to any one particular literary genre. He has been writing poetry and prose, essays and drama, polemical pamphlets and literary sociology for six decades, expressing himself with the same passionate clarity in short newspaper articles, many-toned biographically inspired novels, diaries and philosophical treatises alike. It would be hard to determine which part of his own writing he considers the most important: the essays that celebrate the spirit, the variety, the expressiveness, the vividness of the Hungarian language; the journalistic pieces intended to shape, analyse or redress the historical consciousness of the Hungarian people while illuminating current questions of vital importance; the translations, the artistic virtuosity of interpreting, with unfaithful fidelity, the messages of foreign poetic worlds; or that which we consider after the French as the "attempting of the impossible," the expression of that which cannot be told except in verse. In other words, his is a universal literary



spirit, continually inspired, active in all literary fields, and producing work of lasting validity.

But what is the meaning of this *epitheton ornans*, on what is it based? It is based on the unity of the life and the work, on the artistic realisation of this unity. Yet is it right, is one entitled, in an aesthetic sense, to judge a work in the light of our knowledge of the facts of the personal life of the author, to place the facts of that life upon the precision-scales of the ideas professed in the work of art? T. S. Eliot, in his essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, emphatically declares that "the honest critic and the sensitive judge is not interested in the poet as a person, but in his poetry." Illyés himself is among those who object to a critic's vivisection of the personal life of the artist (he usually cites Maupassant, who wrote in a letter to a friend: "I don't like the public barging in on my life. . . . My life is my own. . . . Everything I have written belongs to the public, to the critics, is open to discussion and curiosity, but I do not want anything that relates to my way of living or my person to be cried from the house-tops.")

Illyés himself knows that the biography of a poet has always more to offer, is always richer and thus more enlightening than an ordinary, everyday biography, and is necessary for a deeper, more complete understanding of the poet's work—if he did not know it he would not have sown his œuvre with biographical references, examples and allusions. In art, as in life, experience lived is the most irrefutable argument if it has undergone a metamorphosis of sorts. Eliot knew this well, writing in his study of *Hamlet*, as if continuing the above-cited thought: "*Qua* work of art, the work of art cannot be interpreted; there is nothing to interpret; we can only criticize it according to standards, in comparison to other works of art; and for 'interpretation' the chief task is the presentation of relevant historical facts which the reader is not assumed to know." Which seems an insoluble task within the limits of an essay of determined length, since in the case of a Hungarian poet, because of linguistic and other barriers, almost every historical fact can be considered as unfamiliar to the foreign reader. This is why I am taking the liberty of outlining a rudimentary biography in order to characterize the nature of Illyés's classicism from the personal side as well.

Gyula Illyés is known throughout the world primarily as the author of *The People of the Puszta* (*Puszták népe*, 1936) since this, invariably moving autobiographical novel appearing in the guise of literary sociology is the work which has been translated into the most languages. (In New Zealand it became compulsory reading material as a guide to the true nature of



European feudalism.) He was in actual fact born on a "puszta," on the 2nd of November in 1902 in Felső-Rácegres, at a time when Hungary was still part of the Dual Monarchy. Though his mother had rocked his cradle in front of a mechanic's house, a large step away from a farm-labourers' dwellings, they were nevertheless inhabitants of the Transdanubian countryside, a bleak and dreary wilderness which, though Illyés has called it the "fairy valley" of his childhood, bears in reality little resemblance to the photographs found in travel agencies, embellished by commercial romanticism. (The Transdanubian *puszta* means the miserable dwellings of farmhands and labourers on big estates, while on the Great Plains it means the infinite flat steppe.) As a "young dog" his spirit and intellect were matured by the agitated years and bloody events of the First World War, and the self-imposed study of the French language was a first sign of that longing, that yearning after education, enlightenment, the radiance of European culture, which was to characterize his life. During the age of revolutions and counter-revolutions following the "golden age" of Francis Joseph, his Beatrice was the Goddess of Revolution, unattainable throughout the history of mankind, and as her romantically arduous teen-age knight he came into contact with the struggling Hungarian labour movement—as a consequence of which he had to escape to Paris when he was barely twenty, and remained there in exile for five years. After his return in 1926 he became one of the mainstays of the last significant Hungarian avant-garde magazine, the *Dokumentum*, founded by Kassák; then he joined the ranks of the leading contributors to *Nyugat*, a literary magazine of the highest standard, which revived Hungarian literature from the beginning of the century, expressing the direction, the spirit, the atmosphere of this revival in its chosen title—West. After the death of Mihály Babits, the editor of the magazine, Illyés became editor-in-chief of *Magyar Csillag*, which continued in the *Nyugat* tradition and became in turn a stronghold of European left-wing humanism, until forced to cease publication when German troops occupied Hungary. Illyés spent the last months of the war in hiding. In the post-war world he reorganized and edited the magazine *Válasz*, which was devoted to the cause of the village proletariat. Since *Válasz* ceased publication on official orders at the end of the forties, he has lived for his writing only, but his work, ideals and behaviour have always been the subject of invariably passionate debate.

This much should have become clear from this bird's-eye view of the author's life (which is also the reason why I thought it worth giving): though Illyés has lived through seven forms of government, which, in historical terms, can be divided into at least a dozen extremely distinct,



at times sharply contradictory periods, he is among those who can have the rare satisfaction of never having had to rewrite or disclaim a single line of his life-work in this ever-moving, ever-changing East-Central European world. This is the constant moral co-ordinate of his living classicism; to this he owes his permanent, large reading public—and to this consistent moral attitude, characteristic of the whole of his œuvre, he has owed the outbursts of jealousy and “foaming hatred.” His œuvre has thus weathered the storms of changing opinions and turbulent passions, from which it would appear that he has found a conscientious solution to the objective moral dilemma which haunts the modern artist (and not only in Hungary). Thanks to the moral integrity of his personal life his work bears the stamp of authenticity without having to resort to spectacular-romantic gestures or wild heroic scenes; it nevertheless safeguards his work from moral wear and tear.

However, Gyula Illyés is originally and ultimately a poet; moreover, a poet of avant-garde instigations. In Paris as a young man he had been part of that company of poets who had begun to form a new French avant-garde which counted among its members Aragon, Eluard, Crevel, Max Jacob, Breton, Cocteau, Desnos, Vaillant-Couturier, Malraux, Supervielle, and the pope: Tristan Tzara. Not only had he been part of the company, he had also written and published hair-raisingly modern poems in French. Is it not sacrilegious, or to look upon things from another angle, can it not be thought old-fashioned pedantry to speak of “classicism” in the case of a poetic œuvre emerging from the cascade of the permanent revolution of modern poetry—a poetic œuvre which has remained loyal to certain fundamental laws of that poetic revolution? And what can, after all, be considered the criterion and possibility of classicism, in a process whose single invariable trait is undefinability and permanent uncertainty, a trait which, to all intents and purposes, connects modern poetry with quantum physics?

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Let us imagine (if we can) that an unprejudiced, uncommitted, critical mind sets out to write the precise and true history of the newest epoch of European poetry. It is clear that we must imagine the impossible: the “perfect critic,” who, with infinite knowledge and an all-encompassing gaze, is capable of bringing order and method into the chaos which began in the middle of the last century, in the summer of 1857, when Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal* was published. This chaos dates back more than a hundred years and is invariably called “modern poetry” by general agreement



throughout the world (as if its inspiring Muse were related to those beautiful ladies who have a past but are ageless). If this ideal critic wished to penetrate the theoretical clouds surrounding this chaotically swirling modern poetical world from its cradle, his pragmatic passions will find that the process originates—paradoxically—in Hegel's aesthetics, who predicted the death of poetry from his professor's desk at the Berlin university, irrefutably asserting that art shall step "from the poetry of the imagination into the prose of thought," because poetry is "that strange art in which art itself begins to disintegrate," to be replaced by the prose of scientific thought.

The outcome (which seems to be a malicious trick that history plays to demonstrate how unsuccessful futurologists and theoretical soothsayers and prophets of the spirit are) is well-known by all. Contrary to Hegel's gloomy prophecy (and probably without his knowledge) Rimbaud completed the revolution in contemporary poetry within the "inner age of imagination and sensibility" (Hegel) with the categoric imperative of *Il faut être absolument moderne!* Instead of decaying, poetry began to flourish, a phenomenon which we can bear witness to even today. Bear witness to—and endure. Because parallel with the birth of never before experienced, gloriously new poetic worlds, a symptomatic Badness is becoming ever more apparent, a badness more ignominious than the predicted painless death: it is the general, almost irredeemable discrediting of the modern poetic word, of modern poetry. To be aware of this it is unnecessary to attend the arrival of the ideal critic of one's imagination. No humble but honest commentator of modern poetry can turn a deaf ear to the loud complaints of the reading public (complaints whose validity, if he is not tone-deaf, and if his honesty is stronger than his snobbishness, his own reading experience will affirm). Our contemporary poetry, especially its neo-avant-garde, reflects to a lesser and lesser extent those vital historical, social, moral, and metaphysical problems of our age that fill human existence with almost unbearable tension and anguish and upon whose precise artistic description and implacably truthful artistic interpretation the spiritual life, the future—the very existence of humanity—may depend.

It is not so long ago that Fernand Léger, the man who transformed the everyday mythology of the twentieth century into modern yet timeless universal images, the brilliant painter friend of Apollinaire, Max Jacob, Reverdy, Cendrars, Cézanne, Henri Rousseau, Picasso, and Braque, defined the fundamental problem and test of modern art as that of "being free yet not losing contact with reality." It is this, the contact with reality, that seems to have been lost in the all-inundating silt of contemporary modern poetry; this is why it leaves unanswered the agonizing questions



of contemporary man, why it remains silent in the face of the agonizing emptiness. For how can it give heed to Max Jacob's counsel, according to which "modern poetry is the world in man," if it is unable to retain its contact with these two fundamental realities? If its aimlessness must be compensated for by fashions, fads and theories, if it has lost the significance of its freedom by not knowing what to do with these two realities, with man and the world in the widest sense of the word, in which the surrealism of dreams is as real as history, politics, or love, or the facts, passions, interior and exterior excitements of the intellect which the human heart can still wish to see as the possible material of modern poetry, as in the times of Virgil, Dante, or Baudelaire. . .

Artistic freedom perceiving reality in a new way: classicism cannot be imagined without it. But what is the hormone of this classicism? For simplicity allow me to quote Eliot once again: "If there is one word on which we can fix, which will suggest the maximum of what I mean by the term 'a classic,' it is the word *maturity*." This maturity, one must add, is the artistic method of handling, of manipulating, reality and all poetry incapable of attaining that maturity with creative originality within the historical period of the language and civilisation in which it appears is unavoidably devalued and discredited in the eyes of humanity. "Maturity of mind: this needs history, and the consciousness of history," adds the author of *The Waste Land* in *What is a Classic*. "Consciousness of history cannot be fully awake, except where there is other history than the history of the poet's own people. We need this in order to see our own place in history. There must be the knowledge of the history of at least one other highly civilized people. . ."

For Gyula Illyés this maturity of the spirit, the original artistic contact with reality and the consciousness of history in Eliot's sense of the word, was achieved during the five years of exile in Paris between 1921 and 1926. The weekdays spent in physical labour and as a trade union activist, the holidays spent on the terraces of the Dôme, the Coupole and the Flore in the company of the young revolutionaries in art made him familiar with the history of another, widely cultured people, made it part of his destiny. And the history of France, according to Illyés, "is principally characterized by striving for lucidity." It was through this lucidity that he was able to recognize his poetic material and his own place in history. It is almost symbolical that the most significant pieces of his first volume of verse, *Tough Land* (Nehéz Föld), published in 1928, which attracted immediate attention for its originality and modernity, the pieces which reflected Hungarian conditions according to the harmonics of the most modern French



poetry, were all written in Paris. Bewitched by the surrealist word-cinema, it was nevertheless without volition or intention that the image of *The Sad Field-hand* (Szomorú béres) arose in his mind and was put to paper immediately—on a bench on the Ile Saint Louis, opposite the Palace Lambert.

"Actually, the reason why I am grateful to Paris," declared the eighty-year-old poet recently, "is because it was upon my return from there that I discovered—the world. I could have gone back, I had the opportunity. But it was with my Paris mind that I realised that this material, this place was mine; that if anywhere, this is where I must work . . . If I hadn't have gone to Paris, I would never have understood it." And however strange it may sound, this is how the "Hungarian abyss," *The People of the Puszta*, the awe-inspiring, incendiary book dealing with the life of the field-hands, enriched by biographical elements, was born—and could only have been born—out of the most typical avant-garde gesture and passion. Gide's *Voyage au Congo*, published a little earlier, encouraged and stimulated him to describe the "natives" of Central Europe, the suffocatingly hopeless life of tens of thousands living from hand to mouth in virtual serfdom: the life of those who "are to suffer corporeal punishment only until the age of forty," because, later, a telling off was enough to bring tears to their eyes. (Let me repeat that this was in the first third of the twentieth century, in the centre of Europe!) "I am more or less Gyula Illyés's fellow-countryman," wrote Mihály Babits, one of the leading figures of the artistic revolution which revived Hungarian literature. "But I read this book, full of incomparably rich and authentic experiences, as if I was reading an exciting travelogue about a so-far undiscovered continent and its natives, as if I myself were part of the expedition—all the more sensational and exciting as the continent chances to be the land of my birth." And the most shocking discovery—one may safely say its avantgarde novelty—for Babits as for every reader was that the people of the puszta are—servants; since "the puszta," writes Babits, "exists in our imagination as the idyllic land of freedom."

In Illyés's case the moment of creating modern poetical contact with reality coincided with the historical moment in Hungarian poetry when, to quote Babits, "the phoenix of Hungarian populist poetry was reborn." This same moment arrived throughout Europe, in the lyrical poetry of the twenties and thirties from Esenin to Lorca, as though poets from Leningrad to Granada had suddenly become aware, through the secret channels of inspiration (originating in Burns perhaps) that twentieth century civilisation would efface the old, traditional peasant way of life from the



sociological map of Europe. The poets who belonged to this layer of society by birth felt it their mission to sing the swan-song of this disappearing world and human culture. Illyés himself wrote his poems in awareness of this: "A hundred dead peasants had to sing | furrowed brows bent over ploughs | that I should one day join their host | and open my mouth in song. | Fly high, my words, | cry loud, my memories, | shout out, my people | I am singing your song." (*Three old men*, Három öreg 1931. Prose translation.)

The most general "material" co-ordinate of Illyés's living classicism, of the maturity of his handling of his poetic material is this sociological reality. It is from this that he derives the concreteness of his poetic language, images and perception, whose inspiring sentiments and passions are fed by the primary human experiences of childhood: the continuous, nostalgic attachment to the world of the poor. "We were simple poor people" he wrote, describing this attachment in the prose volume *Like the Cranes* (Mint a Darvak, 1942) in an almost biblical idiom in the beginning of the forties, "and like the sage wanted nothing from life except simple living. . . My childhood in the puszta—with its mysteries and hardships—was more unhappy than happy. . . but if we were happy sometimes, it was because we were poor, because all the people around us were poor, that is, workers; that is, manual labourers. . . The secret of what life was could only be discovered through them. They are still in contact with what creation was for. Contrary to all appearances, I must maintain that only the poor know how to live, they alone know what life is, they alone can identify themselves with it. . . The most valuable spiritual part of humanity can be found in the infinite host of the poor." Stronger than the determination of his origins, stronger than the recognition of his poetic material, it was this conviction that led Illyés to join the ranks of those writers who acted as the spokesmen for the poor, for the Hungarian village proletariat. From the middle of the thirties he was one of those writers who ruthlessly and realistically depicted village conditions between the two world wars. What they did, politically speaking, was to defend human rights with the devices of art, in the spirit of Helsinki, but preceding it by forty years.

The unbroken contact with social reality and his own Voltairean spirit luckily safeguarded Illyés from treating the "divine" people or its synonym, the poor, as a myth. "It was not poverty, but the poor | that I praised to my heart's content," wrote Illyés at the end of the Second World War, on the eve of the great changes which would radically transform the aspect, the structure and the hierarchy of Hungarian society. "I profess—let there be an end to poverty!" writes Illyés in *One Year* (Egy év, 1945); but also



"Change, but without changing"—in other words, let the poor preserve the "most valuable part of their spiritual selves," their old, high moral standards in spite of the temptations that are the trappings of power.

Once again he recognized the impending dangers as a revolutionary poet, as the avant-garde, the "vanguard" of artistic and social revolutions should. He recognised the impending dangers of the preconditional interdependence of the instinct to tyranny and the instinct to servility which resulted in the numerous human, political and historical dramas of the fifties—and which provided him with material for his plays. *The Minion* (A kegyenc), an adaptation of a nineteenth century play, for example, clothed this century's lust for power in the garb of Roman history. It was first presented at the Vieux Colombier theatre in Paris at the beginning of the sixties. And if the classicism of Illyés has a political co-ordinate, more complex than that which is concerned with the tactics of everyday politics, it must be looked for he resolves the dilemma of political action and morality. It can be found in the conviction that man cannot be disloyal to the moral inheritance which entitled him to take part in the formation of history, an inheritance acquired and created through much suffering and pain. To this he cannot be disloyal even if his social circumstances change, even if he is under the spell of a certain goal.

Through the unrestrained contact with the realities of the century, Gyula Illyés's life-work, especially his poetry, is capable of dealing with subjects which resolve the schisms apparent in modern lyrical poetry since Mallarmé. His is the poetic synthesis of all the opportunities offered by European avant-garde and Hungarian classical traditions and it presents, in poems, be they in prose or in classical form, that philosophical reality or awareness of life that was brought to light by the end of the twentieth century. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that in our days it is to this that Illyés's classicism, his artistic, moral and intellectual maturity owes its most exciting results. But this was inherent in his poetic nature from the beginnings in Paris. Because Illyés has always been "a poet of many instincts," as his contemporary, László Németh diagnosed him. "There are some poems of Illyés which make me say that folk-songs shall never grow out of date," he wrote of *Tough Land* (Nehéz föld) in 1928, in a review of Illyés's first volume. But folk-poetry is only one of his impulses. Another is Horace and Virgil, via the poems of Hungarian romanticism. He can diffuse the atmosphere, the enthusiasm of Latin lyrical poetry in the form of avant-garde vers libre. The third poetic impulse of this rational poet, Voltaire-like in spirit, against all obscurity in poetry, was that faculty of abstraction of which László Németh wrote: "his most concrete images are



somehow full of intimations of metaphysics." Over and above the images, his poetry on the whole—in fact, his inspiration—is full of "metaphysical intimations" and since the end of the fifties he too has been leading (as his master, Babits did "as the fisherman of an eternal current") a new poetic crusade into "Nothingness." These existentialist poems are naturally not the revelations of a dogmatic philosophy: they express the mysteries of philosophy, the agonizing ecstasy and drama of thinking. The single worthy—or, if you like, distressing—metaphysical question for Illyés, the question which emanates the atmosphere of philosophy in recent poems, is the question of Non-Existence. In point of fact it is a question that almost corresponds to the problem of suicide raised in the essays of Camus. But the difference is enormous. Illyés does not wish to provide the unavoidable metaphysical questions of existence with solutions of a metaphysical nature. He prefers to give earthly—materialistic—answers. Illyés's crusade into Heidegger's Nothingness, his struggles with the thought of death, with the agonizingly absurd question—Can death be defeated?—are concluded, through his original approach to the problem, in a manner new to modern Hungarian and European poetry. His materialistic conception of the universe leaves him without a God, without transcendence—without the possibility of belief in survival which gave solace to Christian humanity through hundreds of years, providing them with the final meaning of life, a recipe written on the pages of the Bible. Illyés, however, does not worship the idols of his own materialistic convictions. He asks his own questions, starting from the premises of a new state of existence. He is capable of discerning the changes wrought in the collective consciousness—and the collective subconscious—of humanity towards the end of this century, the consequences of which are evident: the world has lost its gods, the world has lost transcendence. But the consequences of this loss are not as obvious, as if we were afraid to reflect upon the life we are living. Yet if there is no God, if transcendence has gone like a dream, then the new, non-metaphysical interpretation of death lays the duty of giving an entirely new interpretation of life on the poet. The mission of the poet, as the late poems of Illyés affirm, is to keep these questions alive—to help man find his new place, his new "consciousness of existence" in a life without God.

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What is the meaning of life, and can it have any meaning if death awaits us as the end, inevitably but totally senselessly? This question was planted in the consciousness of ontologically orphaned man with unbearable poignancy by the existentialists. Illyés does not accept the question as



a starting point because he is an existentialist; he feels with an acute poetic instinct that the existentialists, Camus among them, have simply given a definition to that distressing, instinctive feeling which in the absence of a rational, that is, an acceptable and reassuring answer, can lead to the most varied excesses in the practical and moral—and historical—way of contemporary living; all this is due to the devaluation of moral norms and restraints based on old metaphysical illusions. Life has become dull, mass-produced, hopelessly manipulated. "Life is not worth the effort it takes to sustain it"—this is perhaps Georg Büchner's most bitter thought, voiced by the disenchanted Camille Desmoulins in a play (*The Death of Danton*) written some hundred and fifty years ago. Georg Büchner's bitterness today is a general experience and a general item of evidence. Yet it is this degraded, defenceless, pointlessly but skillfully tortured and subdued life that seems the most important, the only value in the eyes and consciousness of the world, a value whose hedonistic sustenance thus justifies any means. "Only the apes suffer" in front of the mirrors of their conscience, says Büchner.

Illyés knows that this question—which on a philosophical level cannot be considered the concern of many—is at the same time an ever more absurd practical contradiction. For the most part it is unformulated or unconscious, but nevertheless poisons every minute of our lives in the form of mass anxiety, and is thus one of the most vital problems of our life today. This is the reason why Illyés the poet accepts the superhuman and absurd challenge of the question. The intellectual poems of his most recent period indicate that his answers are not limited to metaphysical solace, nor to the moving expression of the sufferings of the solitary Self under the depression of passing time, as often happens in the better examples of modern lyrical poetry. Illyés would like to find a communal answer to this most personal, yet most general question, an answer which counteracts the consciousness of certain defeat—of death—by-passing the earlier metaphysical beliefs and illusions of historical man.

At all events, this is the most delicate question of poetry and of Existence, and it is a sure sign of Illyés's maturity—of his classicism—that to deal with this most agonizing and most harsh reality of our time, he is courageous enough to be a modern poet who is not ashamed of being intelligible. That which cannot be expressed by human words, which, as Montaigne wrote, is "as hard to perceive as a flash of lightning"—that is where Illyés is at his clearest. This poet, who at a certain point in time incited a whole class to find a new place in society, who later urged a whole nation to a new conquest, would now, in the most personal and most deeply concerned messages of his latest poems, urge the whole of humanity to create a new



kind of domesticity for themselves—he urges on humanity which, he says, is always “on the road,” its mode of existence being a procession of caravans. “The host of humanity marches on,” he writes, unfolding one of the basic metaphors of his œuvre, “marching since the beginnings of time. It drags itself along jungle paths and in marshes, then invents the wheel and travels in waggons, and soon the waggon can roll without its team of oxen. And at all times there are some who travel above the procession; they are those who seem to fly. They are conscious of something, of a certain goal. I am not thinking of the ‘vanguard,’ or the ‘pioneers,’ nor of the ‘leaders.’ Those whom I am thinking of rarely voice their thoughts; they can be seen only in rare lucky moments. Nevertheless, they are the true leaders. There are but a few of them and are to humanity what salt is to goulash: without them the whole world would be just about bearable.”

The instigator of Illyés's continual attraction to the notion of the road is probably the recognition of a primeval modelling principle. The story of art has portrayed human life, the realization of human destinies from the beginnings of time—from Homer to the Gospels and the various legends on the quest of the Grail—always on the road. Cervantes sends his hero on a journey, as do the authors of the great epics, as does Goethe his Faust, as do the authors of Bildungsromane and the great Russian, English and French novels of the last century and this. (Kerouac's *On the Road* even emphasizes the conscious return to the myth and metaphor of the road in its title.) Literature expresses and realizes the “space-time” of human destiny in the metaphor of the road. But who is Illyés thinking of when he speaks about the true leaders of the procession? The fact that anyone who can offer a worthwhile human goal, belief—or at least a hope—may become a leader of the procession adds to the mystery, the beauty but also to the truth of the metaphor. And at least a volume of Illyés poems render probable the assumption that “surveyor” poets who bear the true knowledge of the meaning of the journey, of the relation between road and destination, are also among the leaders.

To be the vanguard of the procession as an intellectual, to be a true leader—this characteristically avant-garde virtue has been the historical role and tradition of Hungarian literature for centuries. To understand this the foreign reader must be aware of the historical fact—or, rather, of that series of events—which led authors from the sixteenth century onwards to sound another note on the lyre of Hungarian poetry, a note that is rarely heard in the poetry of other, luckier nations. (There are exceptional situations, such as that which made Aragon feel it his self-evident poetic duty to write on *La Nuit de Dunkerque* instead of on Elsa's eyes.) This note is the



voice of the poet deeply concerned about the fate, the future, the survival, the existence of his nation, of those who speak the same mother-tongue. During the Middle Ages Hungary was a flourishing, prosperous, militarily efficient nation; which began to decline in consequence of the defeat at Mohács and the Turkish invasion. No longer self-governed, broken up into three large areas, the nation was left to fend for itself with no institutions of its own and its people lived in a perpetual awareness of death, ready to fight for survival, against annihilation. There were many periods during this decline when the maxim of Count Széchenyi, the most significant figure of Hungarian romanticism, pointed to the single perceptible manifestation, the single historical form of Hungarian national existence. The maxim was: "In its language a nation lives." During the Turkish occupation of Hungary the poetry of Balassi, Zrinyi, the romances and lays of protestant preachers, the university plays and the encyclopedias all served to preserve the national consciousness of the Hungarian people from the strongholds of the language. After the Turks had been driven out, the literature of the Hungarian enlightenment and romanticism performed the same role, counteracting the Germanizing politics of the Habsburgs. But this poetical role did not end with the appearance of Endre Ady and his companions, the founders of modern Hungarian lyrical poetry. In a sense it culminated in their work, in Ady's prophecies about the future of the Hungarian people, about their dispersion, the forced Diaspora, which history confirmed with terrible force after the fall of the Monarchy. Every third Hungarian-born person out of fifteen or sixteen million now lives anywhere in the world, from Alaska to the Cape Province.

In one of his studies Ortega writes that life is "continual endangerment, foundering on the open sea." The fundamental historical experience of the Hungarian people until the most recent times has been a series of shipwrecks upon the always stormy seas of East-Central Europe. The historical role of Hungarian lyrical poetry was not only determined by the fact that poets were existentially bound to the collective historical destiny of the nation, but was determined to the same extent and with the same intensity by the fact that the consciousness of the Hungarian people was existentially linked to the life-boats of its literature and poetry. This defined the spiritual and moral character of Hungarian lyrical poetry for centuries; this is what made Hungarian lyrical poetry sensitive towards national, social and political problems. An interest like this can only exist in countries where literature was forced into "résistance" for some length of time. This is one of the central "nerves" of the historical Hungarian lyrical sensibility. And it can be dissected out of four lines of Kölcsey's poem, now our national anthem,



with the precision of anatomical sections: "The hunted hid, but in his den | a sword was tended to pierce him. | He looked around, but could not find | a home within his country." (Prose translation.)

This *poesis hungarica* nerve running through Illyés's poetry also developed through his meeting with a European mentality and art in his youth. Towards the end of the sixties he wrote: "The outlook, the artistic and social attitude that gave new colour, a new appearance to the conditions that I found at home was formed in the environs of the Sorbonne, in the literary cafés, at student debates and lectures for workers... This was why I was capable of seeing clearly the tragedy of Hungary and later of portraying it with the scope that Western artistic and political views had given me... and it was then that I recognized the true voice of Hungarian literature. The greatness of the language, its force of expression, but also its difficulties, which brought home to me with benumbing forcefulness the duty of the Hungarian poet, the duty of all humanists in this country. Above all the duty of those who are able to see local problems with the lucidity of a whole world. This is why, though I have always tried to express my thoughts as clearly as possible with the most modern devices, these thoughts were in point of fact the thoughts that had always haunted the authors of classical Hungarian literature. This may seem contradictory to some. But if I can throw a light upon the two influences that have governed me, I believe I can clarify my 'spiritual image.'"

This is the historical co-ordinate of his maturity, of his classicism and because of this there are some who (with the emphasis given to what is a little out of date) speak of him as "the last bard," the "last European national poet." Yet Illyés's poetry is in fact one of the most magnificent examples in modern art of the fact that personal problems, the problems of a nation and the problems of the world may easily be reconciled within a single poetic œuvre, since their conciliation is not simply a question of content but also of poetic attitude, and is realized according to the extent and quality of the poet's talent. Especially in an age which, one must admit, has not drawn a lesson from Voltaire's *Candide*, an age in which persecution, oppression and discrimination are not confined to politics, be they evoked by racial, national, religious or intellectual prejudice: they have become a general, universal state of existence. And they are what, if one is to preserve the vestiges of one's self-respect, poetry must exercise its right of veto against.



GYULA ILLYÉS

POEMS

*Translated by William Jay Smith*

THE SAD FIELD-HAND

The sun has hardened my crust of bread;  
Tepid is my flask  
And heavy and slow my sun-warmed blood.  
Seated amid the steam of my worry and my sweat,  
I watch the silent fields pitch around me.  
It is noon.  
Deep in the woods the wind and the future repose.

The overseer passes in his carriage.  
My weary hand lifts my hat;  
I am covered with ash and grime,  
The gaze of my cattle refreshes my heart.

Beyond the dust, beyond the trees,  
Beyond the spread of clouds, the froned dust,  
There where the indifferent sun reels on its way  
Lie distant cities with illuminated squares wheeling beneath the stars,  
And seas, floating islands, and flaming mountains of gold,  
Of all these I have heard—  
Of heaven and earth bursting with riches,

and yet

I remain here, irresolute, at the center of an alien field,  
A stranger for whom no one waits, and who, in the autumn,  
His work completed, in the shade of a haystack,  
Will without a word sink down to join the impassive earth.

1928



## AT THE TURNING POINT OF LIFE

Night envelops us: clouds rest, darkness drizzles—  
outside, the branches are bare and glittering wet;  
as the wind sweeps by, they let fall their tears—  
youth is passing.

Before my window two swallows dive, dip down,  
almost hand in hand like fish at the bottom of the sea.  
One is love, I thought, and the other, secret hope.  
All that accompanied me flees, quietly retreating to a truer homeland.

And now in her loose robes, with large, disproportionate  
limbs, monster Melancholy sits down beside me,  
drawing my head to her moist breast,  
and mocks me: Weep if you dare, weep, unhappy one. . .

Mourn if you have anything to mourn for! Examine your life:  
Around you autumn rain pours down and mist covers the wooded hills;  
frothy, filthy water rushes toward you down the sloping road  
where once with sinister intent you led your beloved.

Like prayer beads drops run down the windowpane.  
O you nimble minutes, seasons, centuries!—Autumn twilight covers the  
paper  
over which I lean as to a mirror, twilight that soon will cover my young face.  
Through trickling drops I watch the brown trees swing, reaching into the  
mist.

1930

## ON THIS EARTH

Caressing your young body  
my hand, through that body,  
caressing the world,  
the entire earth,  
all creation.



In the heavens the pock-marked moon,  
 that Sahara of the Milky Way,  
 seemed to me neither distant  
 nor indifferent  
 to the call of my arms.

I did not think any more of myself  
 simply because I was able to despair  
 on a divine scale—

My presentiments went beyond everything,  
 beyond the cold frontiers,  
 farther than the mind can reach—

I was also able to build a house  
 with a feminine ambience,  
 with light more durable than starlight,  
 in its bed and at its window.

## PUTTING THINGS IN ORDER

The thin blade of the sword on which I absently fell—taking pains that its point touch my heart—that gentle blade has pierced me through and through. And then? Everything fell obediently into place. The landscape turned cold. Leaves contracted like the hands of misers and, emptied, fell. A careful wind came, even returning for bits it had left behind. Towards evening a ship passed but by that time the entire area had long been barren stone. And the last natives, what purpose do they serve? The same as the bedouins one sees with their camels in those pictures of the Egyptian pyramids: to give a sense of proportion to the lingering and now cosmic sadness.

## BEFORE THE JOURNEY

Curled up onto themselves old men nestle in their beds  
 like foetuses; and the poor body,  
 which in its weakness longs simply to be cradled,  
 recalls how it was when healthy.



And it dawns then on the body that it is not alone;  
 a gentleness, rising as from its earliest home,  
 a warmth of almost universal power comes over it,  
 mysteriously womanly.

Will this new power send, as did that other once,  
 through the fluid of its arteries,  
 salts, calcium, hopes, genes (for an existence beyond this)?—  
 that's what old men wonder.

And they grip their knees like paratroopers on a plane  
 about to jump, and who, before they descend,  
 worry (though not permitted to) whether the wings on their back  
 will open—and, if so, to what end.

1974

### CHERISHED TREASURE

You may, of course, suspect a bugging device in my glance, as well.  
 Or in Mrs. Kovács's false teeth, so slyly hidden away. But who is interested in "secrets" any more? My poor ones! Obviously with my modernized eardrums I can know you in and out. With the Chairman's secretional allergy and the hangman's *libido*. *Voilà*: There is no place to hide anything. And what use would hiding be anyway? Since the miser Harpagon's most cherished treasure is in our extended palms, in the wide country handshakes of old kinfolk, and the light of the world in the bright switch-button tips of little tots' noses as they rush home from kindergarten.

### THERE WILL BE NO WAR

As N. N. was awaking one day at dawn, he could see the misty outline of a huge gorilla approaching his bed. Yet the creature's incredible height of more than eight feet, its six enormous fangs and a grin exceeding all human or animal proportions and with it an expression of absolute devotion to slaughter—all were so dreamlike that N. N. laid his head back on his pillow and closed his eyes with relief. His faith in the world was unshakable. The next morning—was it the following day or the following decade?—the sun found him there bleeding and torn to pieces.



## AFTER A WORLD TOUR

In any of the few minutes left of life, I can command the sea to rush up to my feet. I do not have to step aside from the highway; it immediately provides a small boat meekly or flatteringly like the beggar extending his palm or his tin cup, the sheepdog its paw or the lady her little consenting hand. And so I journey off accordingly, standing on deck, my hair flying, a smile of voluntary exile on my face, looking forward, not backward, and humming a tune, a good old sea chantey, having emptied every glass.

With wind-swept face I have been drawn to dine with my ancestors. The question "Where have you been today?" becomes rarer and rarer. I would like to speak of the islands and of my instructive adventures, of my distant friends and of their advice, but I could transform those remote overseas tongues into this one only with a stammer, and hence will announce only with the wave of my hand: I have been to the same place today. And I empty one final glass. Always about to depart.

## A WORLD IN CRYSTAL

Each leaf on the tree's become  
a transparency of crystal,  
brown and purple porcelain,  
ivory in places.  
The trees hold forth their  
tiny Japanese cups;  
they do not move for fear  
a single one might fall.

The orchard's filled with light;  
everything there trembles:  
it's a shop that offers lamps  
and crystal ornaments.  
"Take care," my heart tells me  
in secret, "not to break  
some sparkling object there  
with your clumsy gesture."



And yet what perfect pleasure,  
 what pure childish joy  
 it was to shake the trees  
 and to remain beneath  
 that shower of gold; and then  
 how wonderful to drown,  
 to die within that light  
 and colour pouring down.

Now furtively I stroll  
 among the cherry trees  
 with their Japanese red tea  
 service of porcelain.  
 All detachable beauty  
 causes me pain. I live  
 in fear for all the fragile  
 values of this earth.

A transparency of crystal  
 exists not just in trees,  
 transparency is all:  
 faces, hearts of air—  
 all transparency—  
 tell me, will you, how  
 well in autumn wind  
 will fragile being fare?

The wind has not yet risen;  
 creation and the garden  
 stand clearly in the light.  
 All the more painful now  
 to watch, as here and there,  
 from high in a still tree  
 —and in what deathly silence—  
 a crystal leaf drifts down.



## THE CUSTOMS MAN

by

GYULA ILLYÉS

**T**he Customs Man is suspicious by profession so I find it natural that even my polite nod of greeting is acknowledged with a hint of mistrust as I slide my two suitcases over to him on the wide and endless tin-plated counter which separates us and at the same time divides two countries—two worlds. No ordinary bench, this. It is a tangible, touchable piece of those Morse-like, dotted lines which indicate the boundaries between peoples and states on the map. I am fully aware both of its importance and of its mystery. My nod is bashful. This, I can tell, makes a bad impression on the Customs Man. He is a sandy-haired, long-faced man addicted to his work body and soul. He inspects not my smile, but my face, comparing it with meticulous care to the likeness in my passport, which he holds in his hand. I attempt to resemble my inanimate likeness and so I drop the smile, like an unnecessary piece of clothing, from my face. "Anything to declare?," asks the Customs Man. He appraises me through straw-coloured lashes. His nose—for at this moment I begin my scrutiny of him—is a little lopsided, that is, it does not run parallel with his gaze, but tilts to the right, towards my suitcases. Because of the tilt the sudden, ludicrous thought strikes me that this nose was not bent out of shape in the womb, nor the stormy Charybdises through which we come into the world, but was distorted here, from plying his trade, through nosing about continually. I conscientiously state that I have nothing to declare. Or, rather, as if under the influence of having come into intimate human contact with that nose—which reminds me of the unforgettable nose of a girl I used to cherish in my youth—to

"The Customs Man" is the first chapter of *Franciaországgi változatok* (France, with variations), published by Nyugat in 1947. It is about Illyés's first trip to Western Europe after the Second World War. It is a sort of sequel to *Hunok Párizsban* (Huns in Paris, 1946) in which he described his sojourn in Paris in the twenties.—*The Editor.*



satisfy my conscience even further I state that as far as I know I have nothing to declare. Your wallet, please—says the Customs Man, reaching unaffectedly towards the inner pocket of my coat and pronouncing his “je” as “che”—another symptom of our familiarity. I hand over my wallet.

My wallet is full of photographs that I am reluctant to show to even my most intimate friends, photographs that I honour myself with only in the serenest moments of confidence. My wallet is furthermore full of short, usually hastily scribbled notes which I suspect the uninitiated would immediately recognize as excerpts from the diary of a lunatic. Apart from these my wallet contains money—in two currencies, at that. The Customs Man thoughtfully inspects Mariska’s photograph, then, even more attentively, F.’s. This he turns over to look at the back. Then he carefully commences to sort out the notes and memos jotted down on scraps of paper and sheets torn out of a notebook. Most of these are pencilled scribbles and some of them have been smudged illegible. He cannot suppress a disapproving shake of the head. Then he lifts out the money with a practised hand, the whole sheaf of notes together. “How much is there?,” he asks, holding the thin sheaf between two fingers, darting a glance at me which reminds me of my father’s reproving, mournful gaze. He never tired of reproaching me for not knowing to the penny how much money I had on me, and for forgetting to wind my pocket watch every day.

“Six hundred,” I answer, with a shade of uncertainty, “six hundred and a hundred and sixty.”

A searching glance.

“A hundred and sixty. A hundred and sixty-five perhaps . . .,” I say, still under the influence of that cherished memory, which in days gone by would have forced a rambling confession out of me, a redoubled effort of unburdening my soul.

The Customs Man counts the money—six hundred and a hundred and sixty-four—then slips my wallet into the outer pocket of his coat and, as if goaded by his sniffly nose, now turns his eyes towards my suitcases.

“Nothing to declare, then.”

Of this I am no longer completely certain. So I anxiously watch his hands, which seem to me more practised by the minute. I have the feeling that that wary nose has already sniffed out all there was to be known. I have the feeling that the prominent nose and those nimble, sandy-downed hands are somehow independent of the rest of his body and conjoin to form a separate creature—a superb fox-terrier. I have the feeling that not only the two hands—the vigorous little front legs of the dog—but the nose, too, is at work in the corner of my suitcase. A scratching, scrabbling



sound is heard, then the pile of laundry—exactly the straw above a fox-terrier burrowing for rats—is lifted here and there. Then suddenly the whole pile is tipped out—the dog is in high spirits. The nose is raised.

The front legs paw at a folded pair of socks and then unfold them. I am startled to find I would hardly be surprised to see a bomb, or all the riches of both the Indies roll from out of their depths. Just what is it that one is forbidden to take across the border? My assurance is now in the past, so I straighten my back firmly and try to look stern.

The only secret that the socks give up is that they have been worn for too long. In addition, a humble hole is revealed. I, too, cast a condemnatory glance upon the offender. My chin is raised still higher, though I can hardly suppress the nagging urge to apologize, to explain: I've been travelling for two months now, it is almost three months since I left my home, the cozy world of darning needles and large slabs of washing soap behind! But all human contact is at an end with the Customs Man. He is my judge and I stand accused. I am obviously guilty. So I am naturally full of remorse. "I should have gone to a psychoanalyst after all," I tell myself, "all the sins and omissions I have ever committed and rashly forgotten have now risen from the neglected depths of my subconscious."

A crumpled shirt is lifted above our heads and unfurls like a ship's signal flag. Another shirt appears. Meanwhile, handkerchiefs rolled into balls are shaken free and take wing—as if at an auction, a fair-sized crowd has collected around us. From the next bundle two long legs descend: yes, they are a pair of drawers. Yes, I do possess a pair of drawers and I admit the fact before the world, without mentioning the extenuating circumstance that they are my first pair, thrust upon me by-the-by here in the West, to safeguard me from the Geneva cold which, according to the locals, spreads treacherous damp fingers from the ankles upwards to attack especially the knee-joints with lasting and detrimental effects. Those chocolate balls are not chocolate balls but pills for my indigestion. And that is ointment for my ears, in case they should start aching again. And that, yes, that is the heel off my shoe. No, that is not alcohol, that is my hair-lotion, I do hope he won't try to sample it by mistake. Or, what do I care, let him taste it if he will, let him knock it back, all of it, and may his tongue be covered by an inch of hair. My complaisance is rapidly decreasing.

Unmasked I stand, my digestion, my knees, my slowly reddening ears exposed, laid bare. What can save us from looking foolish? The courage to give an immediate account of our absurd situation. To be the first to see the joke and be sure to get the first laugh.

The next object held up for inspection is a book: Blaise Pascal's *Provin-*



*ciales*. Thumb pressed firmly to its edge, the Customs Man leafs through it with keen interest, then turns back to the ninth chapter—the one on the sinful comforts of life and the true veneration of the Blessed Virgin—some pages have been left uncut, these he peers into with even greater care. My own book is next to be raised, the book I have compiled with the utmost devotion, the fruit of three long years of zealous research, an anthology of French literature from the *Chanson de Roland* to Marcel Proust. He deems it worthless, like the previous. He looks disgruntled, his stubborn silence another sign of his displeasure. He rattles, then opens a small box. My face lights up—my spare collar-studs found at last! His brow, however, darkens; he throws back the box with visible disparagement. The gesture dampens my enthusiasm; I feel that I have somehow been shamed and my remorse, so far vague, undetermined, begins to assume its shape.

Let me try to explain the feeling. Not only do I feel that I have committed grave omissions in the past—omissions that are now forever beyond redemption—but that I still do not meet the requirements. In this very moment I am not what is expected of me. This troubles me. No good beating about the bush: I am not Jack the Ripper nor am I a ferocious profiteer bent on undermining the economy of France with fiendish audacity. But what can one expect from a battered unpromising suitcase such as mine, a suitcase, shall I say, lacking the smallest sign of talent? I almost wish it did look more promising. The mechanism of the subconscious is a mystery. I would almost be content to see two tons of Egyptian cigarettes, Michelangelo's *Moses*, or that atom bomb roll out from between the folds of my overcoat, see it roll out and explode, and blow up this station, this city, Europe, the whole world, no, the whole damn universe. Man is full of mystery, I mean we don't even know what is unlawful in our own selves. I feel unlawful from top to toe. These thoughts too are obviously unlawful thoughts. I look at the Customs Man anxiously.

Finally he speaks, but his voice is still stern.

"You shave with a cut-throat," he says, asserting, not questioning, after unwrapping a small packet of tissue-paper.

"I shave with a cut-throat," I answer, subdued, again restraining the urge to explain that by doing so I am merely following my father's example, falling into the sinful habit at the time when a single razor served the whole family—the razor, for that matter, the one he found in the package.

"How do you hone its edge?," he asks, by-the-way, continuing his rummaging.

His question startles me and so disconcerts me. I who have borne the



rapid fire of cross-questioning! I strop my razor on my belt, this is why I have worn a belt since my adolescent years. But can I admit to my crime? Actually, the belt I am wearing is the same belt and for the same reason.

"I strop it on my belt," I answer, staring candidly between those corn-husk-coloured lashes.

"Follow me," he replies, glancing back at me coldly.

He raises a small flap on the long, tin-plated counter—the mysterious border—and invites me into the region behind the counter. He is inviting me into his homeland. I look back at my open suitcase, lying there disembowelled, my shirts and socks flung haphazardly on top, like a stuck pig on the butcher's bench, guts and entrails exposed, the quartering left off for a minute so the slaughterer can toss off the compulsory glass of schnapps as a toast to his success. The Customs Man is on my left. We are walking in France.

Approximately at the centre of the great glass hall there is a little square cubicle without windows or roof. The Customs Man is leading me towards it. My gaze involuntarily falls upon his chin. Is he leading me there because he wants me to shave him? But this is only the first thought that comes into my head. Memories attract each other not according to the weight they carry, but according to their shade; not by their content, but by their surface. I have walked between men in uniform along prison corridors, walked pensively knowing that a firing squad may be waiting for me at its end. Another psychological mystery: I regain my tranquillity from the thought. We step into the little house contained within the enormous building. My companion turns to face me.

"Empty out your pockets onto the table."

I empty my pockets out and surprise even myself by the variety of my many possessions. Once more I am granted the pleasure of recovering things given up for lost. The bit of an eraser burrowed deep in the breast-pocket of my coat, L.'s much-searched-for address in Rome, though of no use to me now (I've just come from Rome). There is something obscene in the way the Customs Man watches my gestures. We are alone in the room. He has closed and locked the door. An inventive mind is always ready to meet a challenge. I am startled to find that from this moment I know exactly how a seventeen-year-old virgin feels upon being hauled off into the sailors' cabin. The thought almost makes me smile. I find instinctive relief in the certitude that I am a good deal taller than my host. Undaunted, he nods his head towards my tie. I am to take that off too and put it on the table.

L. N. is right—after a certain point there is only one way of defending



oneself against human meanness—against human degradation—and that is to step out of the role of the victim and assume that of the observer. I prefer not to pass judgement upon the Customs Man and because of this he becomes even less important in my eyes. He is nothing but a gear in the works however hard he tries to spin.

And I still shan't identify you with your country, I think to myself.

He steps closer to me to check whether I have spoken the truth or not—he goes through my pockets once again. I patiently endure this insult to my honour. And I still shan't rank you with Charles Baudelaire, I think to myself. He runs his hands along the seams of my coat, smoothing both my arms with his palms. He repeats the process with my thighs, knees, and shins. He examines the cuffs of my trousers, then—as though suddenly inspired—examines them once more. Napoleon's crown and sceptre are not hidden there either. I am to turn. He now fondly strokes my back, lingering for a while upon collar and shoulder-pads. While doing so, he suddenly comes to life. He makes a declaration.

"You are Hungarian."

I confirm his statement.

"The Americans, the Turks, and the Hungarians all cheat at the frontier."

I stand mute, one among the endless line of the many sons of the three nations. I can't help wondering what kind of Americans, Turks, and Hungarians he has ranked me with, who can have gone before me.

"Sit down. Take off your shoes."

But he seems to want to add something. He stares engrossed and for some length first at one foot, then at the other, as though faced with a difficult choice. Then, with the resolution of a water-diviner, he points his finger at my left shoe and pronounces:

"That one."

I hand over my weighty footwear, resoled especially for the journey. He examines it with the thoroughness of a person who has been fascinated by the mysteries of shoe-making all his life—or who has never seen a shoe before in his life. Then he hands it back. The shoe slips into my hand toe foremost and, as my fingers close around it, an unexpected idea flashes through my mind, probably evoked by the subjective memory of my palms, that it would surely be my bounden duty as a man to wield my shoe, fitting my palm like a club, and bring it down on the Customs Man's nose, to pound his head to smithereens, to pulverize this room, the enormous hall built around it, the whole firmament. The defence of freedom



and human dignity must begin somewhere. But I soon realize that this would be the wrong way to go about it.

"Would you like the other one too?" I ask, remembering now that I am a Christian.

The other—unaccountably, almost offensively—is waved aside. He is satisfied with the one cheek. But he strokes my left foot, stockinged ankle and sole, with maternal tenderness. As he fondles my foot with solicitous care, fingering my toes one by one, I wonder what would happen if he were to ask me to open my mouth, if he were so minded as to stick a finger down my throat, in my ears, or some other part of my body? If he were to demand that I lie down on the table because he wished to cut open my stomach with the enormous pair of scissors hanging on the wall? I do not know the limits of his power, therefore the limits of my own—the limits of my personality—are clouded in my consciousness. For a moment I feel that I have ceased to exist. I feel—while proffering my leg—that I am a concept, a mere symbol. A symbol like the fact of our being together here, our strange relationship. I am aware of the strength of symbols. Would it not be my duty, if only for the sake of that symbol, to kick him in the face? In the face, no, in the gob, kick him hard enough to make that head fly from its neck, break through the wall of that room, that hall, make it fly up to the clouds, into space, to become an ominous moon in an alien stellar system? But he is only part of the symbol. The essence of it all—the obvious lunacy of this world, the eventual mastering of that lunacy—cannot be reached through him.

He now draws back a little, inspecting me from a distance of a couple of feet as a painter would, eyes half-closed, to get an impression of the whole after tinkering at the details. This gives me the opportunity to examine him in the same way: in preparation for the act of creation. A sudden idea flashes through my mind, another psychological experience. I'll have you yet, I think to myself, why, I've got you now! Inspiration is often identified with the revenge of the soul. I consider this a rash judgement. The readers of my book-to-be will attest that in the moment of inspiration my soul was free of all vulgar passion. I thought only of my object. Thus we inspect each other, each the hunter, each the prey. He too is searching for the essence of things. But he is not satisfied.

He approaches the table, his gestures reminding me of painters sorting through their tubes of paint. His face is troubled; he is rummaging through my papers. Has he found the missing tone? He picks up a torn-out sheet of a notebook, the one on which the writing is the most smudged. He lifts it to his eyes. He gestures me to come closer.



"What is written here?"

I wouldn't mind knowing that myself.

"Some notes," I say.

"Read it. But I must call your attention to the fact that I can have it verified."

"It is written in a foreign language. In Hungarian."

"I can have that checked also. Translate it."

I would like to ask him whether he wishes to have it translated in rhymed verse—for after some considerable effort I manage to make out the scribbled words:

*However small the village, you are sure to find  
the girl destined to be your own . . .*

I have never translated a single poem of piece or prose that I have written into a foreign language. Out of modesty perhaps, but also because I am aware of the difficulties of such a task. It needs a special gift. My blood runs cold when I think of the shameless impudence of my youth, of the time when I was bold enough to write innumerable pages in a foreign language, offhand, just like that. These days I have not the heart nor the courage to even attempt it. But my sad plight forces me to begin again, so clearing my throat I continue to translate the poem, word for word, servilely and profanely throwing rhyme and metre to the winds:

*However small the village, you are sure to find  
the girl destined to be your own,  
the cherished friend, the ancient foe,  
the celestial oceans of youthful dreams . . .*

"What does it mean?"

I will slap your face, I think to myself. One has to begin somewhere. I'll slap your right cheek, then your left, then you'll get an upper-cut on that dumb chin of yours that'll take you right out of this room, this hall, this whole . . . But there I stop my salutary reverie, waking up to the fact that this has been said before. I answer him—for can one suffer a greater insult than that of being asked the meaning of one's poem—I answer him with cheerful tranquility.

"This is a poem."

He looks at me. He too is beginning to realize that we are simply not made for each other. But this only whets his pathetic obstinacy even further. He has invested no slight effort in me.



"The Americans, the Turks, and the Hungarians are all cheats."

I can have no objection, though I, alone perhaps of the fairly substantial host of Americans, Turks, and Hungarians, have clearly not cheated. So we can both maintain our points of view. I am no doubt the exception that makes the rule. Or perhaps I cheated by not cheating, so becoming the biggest cheat of them all.

He motions me to put my belongings away. While I am doing so he continues to appraise me with the thoughtful eyes of a painter inspecting his handiwork. Perhaps it is still not too late to make some improvements. He shakes his head. He is sad, probably full of doubt and self-reproach. What negligence can he have committed? I know how hard it is to reach the stage of doubting one's own abilities. He contemplates me despondently.

"Why are you travelling to Paris?"

I am going to steal the Eiffel Tower. On the stroke of midnight I am going to dig an enormous trench at Charenton and I am going to divert the Seine from its course, make it by-pass Paris and flow straight to Saint-Cloud, which is, incidentally, a much shorter way! But before I do that I am going to tie a rope to the Ile St. Louis, and the Cité too, and tow them to the sea, across the oceans, up the Danube, the Sió, the Kapos and the Koppány to Tolnatamási, and you just see if you can find it! I thought of all these details only later, as an *esprit de l'escalier*—but though the gist of it flashed through my mind I only said:

"I want to see how things are going for the French. I consider myself their true friend."

But I cannot do anything for his dispirited shake of the head.

We step out of the cubicle and return to the tin-plated counter. I bundle together the remains of the slaughterer's handiwork and do my best to cram it all back into my suitcase. I knead the stubborn pile with my fists but to no avail—it seems to rise and swell the way my mother's dough used to of a morning. Suddenly my blood runs cold: my fingers touch upon something metallic. I pick it up and can tell without looking that it is a Swiss twenty-centime piece. Another, a final psychological mystery: my fright is transformed into infinite joy. A never before experienced flow of exultation, of gratification, pours over me. And I wish to enhance this feeling! I take the coin and place it before the Customs Man on the tin-plated counter without a word. I have never bought human dignity so cheaply. He looks at it disdainfully, unconscious of what he has just bestowed on me. Never mind, at least you'll never know what you've lost.

As if the coin were the only obstacle to closing it, the suitcase finally snaps shut. I can shut and lock its companion too. Gripping the handles



of both I feel as though two old and dear friends had taken me by the arms; between them I walk contentedly towards my train.

It is ten o'clock, I shall be travelling all night. I ensconce myself in a corner of the compartment, pull the brim of my hat far over my eyes and attempt to arrange my worn-out limbs and—by force of habit—my thoughts, which I feel are just as weary.

I think about the brotherhood of man, about the lunacies of a nation, about socks with holes in them, the different ways of shaving, about the necessary protection of the national economy, and about the dangers of too much power—or, rather, about the pitiable lovers of power—just the usual thoughts about such matters. Because my thoughts are nothing out of the ordinary I do not ponder over them for long. Instead, a metaphor begins to take shape in my mind. Boundaries are like the skin of a fruit upon the body of a nation. The skin I have just bitten into was not very tasty. It was rough and tough, like the skin of a medlar or a renett; spit it out, then, and see what the flesh tastes like—let's see if it's as sweet as the renett that used to be my favourite treat as a child.

*Translated by Eszter Molnár*

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## ZOLTÁN KODÁLY: A CENTENARY TRIBUTE

by

LAJOS VARGYAS

Perhaps no Hungarian artist or thinker has been as obsessed by a superior image of the national spirit as Kodály was. It was an obsession which compelled him, when exploring Hungarian villages from the Pozsony region to the Bukovina, to discover unknown traditions which had almost been allowed to go to waste. That is why he sought out yellowing papers for what they preserved of the atmosphere of by-gone times: he wanted no less than to connect all the colours of the national spirit into a great, universal, synthetic image. In the ancient German myths Wagner had seen the national character's rich world of vital force, Kodály saw it in the living folk tradition, in the richness of the popular mind and in the richness of folk music.

From the beginning the aim of his life was to express the popular mind. For him folk music meant not just musical inspiration, elements he could incorporate in his creation of a new style, but a communal experience to be assimilated so that it could be restated through his art in the unity of a large artistic conception. Thus it was for him no mere subject but the centre, the goal of his composing.

There are several stages to this. When he treats a song individually, or as a choral adaptation, the musical setting goes beyond the usual concept of piano accompaniment. He enlarges its spiritual contents, increases its effect. Consider the *Folk Music of Hungary* series: the poetic imagination, the sheer musical invention of these musical settings. But at the same time they are compositions which identify themselves with congenial sympathy with the songs adapted and with the folklore as a whole.

This applies even more to his choral adaptations. *Anna Molnár*, or the extremely suggestive *Transylvanian Lament* are examples of the feeling for and the intensification of the content and atmosphere of the folk-songs involved.



Yet Kodály was not content with adaptations. The individual song is always a piece torn out of the folklore, distilled from thousands of folk-songs and situations which contain a particular human world in all its emotional complexity. To grasp as much as he could of this world, to give the most complete image of it was his ambition. He never ceased to declare, as an ethnomusicologist, that folksong can only be understood by those who know it in real life, within its numerous contents; this he demanded in art too, namely to paint popular life around the song in its totality.

His cyclical choral works are linked from several folksongs. *Songs from Karád* and *Mátra Pictures* are genuine genre-pictures each song completing the other and rounding off the image they separately give of popular life. In *Songs from Karád* the whole story of an outlaw is narrated: in three or four songs we see the outlaw, first making merry, defying the gendarmes, then begging mercy of the judges, parting from his sweetheart; after this, in contrast, we hear the voice of ordinary people as they make love, joke, express their carefreeness through the song of the swineherd and others of similar atmosphere—in all, the rich diversity of village life. It is not programme music but a poetic representation evoking the reality of peasant life.

The most beautiful example of this form of genre piece is *Mátra Pictures*. The four themes of this chorus contain all of popular life, all of its peculiarities. In the ballad of Vidróczki, the outlaw, heroic and tragic elements, the mysterious atmosphere of the gloomy mountain is joined with the solemn and exultant moments of day-to-day life. From the dark colours we move to another world: after the parting from the sweetheart, the home-sickness, the grief and the tenderness come the outbursts of joy; the composition expands exuberantly. The individual songs evoke a country, a people and the moments characteristic of their life.

This was still not the solution Kodály felt to be definitive. For in these choral pieces, it is still only the power of the imagination which makes the listener feel something of the colour of the life of the people; it is not life itself which explains these songs in their contexts and atmosphere of joy and sorrow, pranks and fear of death, different individuals in different situations. However large the two choral works are, they can only show glimpses of a few chosen elements, a few characteristic features. For someone to show all of popular life, of necessity he has to present it through the theatre.

Kodály's first attempt at this was *Háry János*. The libretto, an imitation of the naive world of the folk-tale, offers an opportunity for the composer



to portray authentically all that is alive in the world and imagination of the people.

His next step accomplished a real solution. Kodály's framework for the *Spinning Room* is a background to the songs in which all life takes place. In this case the story, the drama itself was made to fit the songs. In other words, he achieves a modern form of theatre and, with it, a modern form of musical drama. It is not reality which he wishes to present on stage since it can only be artificial when sung and played, rather he presents us with an abstracted background for the music. The function of this stylized background is simply to explain each song through the context it derives from. Jokes, pranks, merry-making in the spinning room, love, parting and death are colourful or grotesque images, though mainly expressive of sorrow. For sorrow is the dominant mood of the whole piece, or as János Arany has it—A little joy mingled with a lot of sorrow—and at the end exultation is released.

The shifting proportions in mood and feeling organize the piece into a whole with two enormous supporting pillars, the lament and the wedding-celebration of the finale. In the lament, a harsh cold scream, the primal fear of death can be felt. The grief, the sorrow, hitherto felt but not expressed, is given an added significance by the shadow of death, the bewilderment of the man having to come to terms with it. This dark shadow broods over the entire play, over the separated couple's almost inconsolable grief in the last scenes until they are released in the happiness of their reunion.

The composer underlines all this with lines such as: "My God, after all my sorrows, I beg you, give a little joy! . . . My God, I beg you, let me live together with the one I love! If you cannot give me my love, My God, take from me my life!" And then the relief and wild joy burst out. And if the lament, the vision of death was so terrible, so horrifying, the finale is so exultant that it nearly breaks down the walls. The *Spinning Room* is rightly ranked along with the *Te Deum* and *Psalmus* as one of his great compositions, the best that Kodály created in the genres based on folklore.

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The same effort to create a national musical language led him to the ancient dances of Hungary. These forgotten tunes lived on only through the instruments of Gypsy musicians and evoked past ages and the art-music particular to old Hungary.

He found the theme of *Galánta Dances* in an old transcription. The



themes of *Dances of Marosszék* derive from living traditions, from instrumental pieces which preserve the heritage and were played by Transylvanian Gypsies and peasant musicians; in this case tradition had kept alive music from the past centuries which had sunk into oblivion. His *verbunkos* in *Háry János* or in the *Spinning Room* follow in the tradition of Liszt: he, too, wanted to raise the *verbunkos* to the status of art-music. Yet Kodály stood on firmer ground than Liszt in resorting to this form of music: he was lead by his extraordinary knowledge to find what is truly original and typically Hungarian in the *verbunkos* and in the music of the ages preceeding. He gives the work an historical atmosphere: what the investigator discovers, the artist expresses.

In order to judge correctly an œuvre which is so greatly indebted to folk-music, some characteristic features should be discussed. Kodály is not looking for himself through the act of composing, he does not express himself through self-revelation from the inside, as the lyric Bartók did. Kodály is an epic.

His invention prefers to cling to what is exterior. There is no question of an inner world aspiring to manifest itself or to seek opportunities for expression, sometimes through exterior elements, as in the case of Bartók; but exterior things reveal the experience in him—a text, a theme, a tradition of style, a world of peasants. That is why most of his original works are vocal: songs, choruses, and orchestral choral works.

The extent to which the epic-inclined master had a lyrical gift is best shown by his songs. Kodály is one of the very few who found the song a natural medium. His forty odd original songs possess a distinct melodic line. This melodic sense along with all of his language of vocal music, from the song-like choir parts to the declamation of the solo in the *Psalmus*, results from the new vocal style which was formed out of folksongs by Kodály together with Bartók. It is art-music melody—reflection of the folk-song style in art. It is declamation which derives quite simply from the spirit of the language. After a long period of foreign influence, it rehabilitates the language.

A composer as vocal as Kodály had to arrive at a renewal of vocal music. Kodály's activity here is the richest of all; this part of his art became public property in his own country. It seems that he himself felt most at home in it, returned to it again and again, cultivated every feasible genre of it: children's choirs for 2 or 3 voices, singing practice pieces, secular and ecclesiastic choirs, folksongs of original theme or adaptations in inexhaustible variety. He consciously connects with the great vocal culture of the 16th century. These works unite the serene melodic material inspired



by folksongs and the spirit of the Hungarian language with the polyphony and the strict leading of the 16th century.

For him they meant a cultural and social weapon, the means to a great cultural and political end. Kodály wanted to lead the masses of the people to musical culture, help them to understand and love art. He never stopped proclaiming that the singing voice, that choir singing is at everybody's disposal and offers an opportunity of artistic experience even to those who have no talent for playing an instrument. Everybody can participate in the joy of music-making. That is why he dedicated so much time to music-teaching in schools, to make note-reading a common skill; that is why he composed so many school-singing practice pieces from the biciniums to the four-part choral works. This communal ambition inspired several great composers—think of Bach's *Inventions* or Schumann's *Kinderszenen* to mention the most conspicuous. In Kodály it was present to an extraordinary extent. He wanted to lead the whole nation out of musical darkness and pass them to the great experience of high art. That this feeling of a national need resulted in a world-success only proves that it is a general human value.

In his non-didactic choral works an extreme richness of style is revealed. From the modern point of view an unknown direction, he tried diverse paths, started on diverse roads, and arrived at successful solutions along almost all the ways. Leaving aside the adaptations, there is great variety among the works of original theme: there are poetic compositions with a lyrical atmosphere, rich in colourful tunes such as *The Aged*, there is the ethereal and pictorial *Norwegian Girls*, there are nature-portraits such as *The Evening*, the reverent *Tantum Ergo* and *Ave Maria*; nature in her mysteriousness in the *Mountain Nights* alternates with such pieces as the *Ode to Ferenc Liszt* and the *Hymn to King Stephen* and the soul-stirring motet the summit of his choral-art, *Jesus and the Traders*. In an image chosen by himself out of the Bible, the composer must have entered into the spirit of Christ driving the merchants from the temple.

Every composition required a different technique, a different approach. The homophonic-harmonic *The Aged*, and, partly, *The Evening* affect by their rich colour scale, by the atmosphere-creating tones of the chord. In *Jesus and the Traders* a whirling polyphony alternates with the serene, soft solo and chord parts which snap with anger and then with the repressed piano-undertones. But whatever the character of the composition, they are all, even the homophonic pieces, as one in that their vocal leads are easily singable and easily distinguishable.

He established a special polyphony in the folksong choruses. The folk



tune dominates the other voices for which he uses totally different yet in themselves solo-like accompanying tunes, often without words, sung only on one syllable. To the folk-tune all the others are merely accompaniment—segregate like in homophony—yet in the independent melodic line of the accompanying voices, the polyphony is perfect. Think of the scene with the begging outlaw in the *Songs from Karád* or of the roaring sea and its moaning accompaniment in the *Transylvanian Lament*. He first found this technique with the wailing female choir in *Psalmus* which accompanies the solo. Here the advantages of the two styles unite: polyphony's song-like leading voice, in itself enjoyable, and the homophony's transparent clarity.

\*

All this is realized to the highest degree in his orchestral choral pieces: in the *Psalmus* (1923) and in the *Te Deum* (1936). The latter is maybe his most mature composition. The melodic line of the voices, the tessitura is so song-like that its singing provokes an almost physical satisfaction. Moving scenes follow one another: the mob throwing themselves to the ground and pleading in fear, the cherubim and seraphim chanting the praises of God, cool halls with doors flung open, and the stiff white group of martyrs shining forth; widening fortes with colossal heightening out of the mystical pianissimos, as if the gates of Heavens were in fact open. The largeness of invention, the high degree of technical knowledge and the rich poetic imagination raise it among the masterpieces.

The other, the early masterpiece, the *Psalmus* is constructed more around the colours and the means of expression of the orchestra. It seizes the listener with its decisive opening from the very first moment. Wild passion rages in the orchestra, incredible tension is concentrated in a few measures, only for the waves to suddenly collapse: an atmosphere of heated expectation leads to the real opening of the composition. The choir is heard. All of a sudden we are in a strange, mysterious country. This choir sings piano from the other world, this heightened atmosphere remains, even when the psalmist steps forward from out of the choir and begins. The orchestra accompanies him with heated tones, subdued murmuring, nervously quivering tirades, splashing outbursts; the singer begs, accuses, shows fear and curses. In whose name? In Kodály's or in the name of the whole Hungarian people? Both. Just as the poet of the sixteenth century identified with the words of the psalm, Kodály felt the words of the prophet as his own, castigating the nation for those dark years of the twenties.

The words of complaint, the waves of passion are profoundly human,



yet they remain at a dream-like distance. The passions rise higher and higher, the opposition of more and more subdued pianos strain within these outbursts. The mysterious choir-theme articulates with increasing energy approaching ever closer to the zenith in these heightenings. Ultimately it billows out into an enormous polyphonic theme, which finally calms down, until the choir moans with the singer: "God, unto you I cry because I am frightened by my enemies." Then before the last, the greatest increase, there is one more stunning large piano supplication rising out of the harps of celestial light, allowing the song to rise higher among drums and trumpets: "You are true, my Lord!" All this is crowned by the polyphonic orchestra besieging Heaven until there suddenly appears the well-known voice of the opening and, as if by magic, the waves collapse and the opening song is heard again from a distance. It is fading, it slowly fades completely away. The celestial gates are shut, the vision disappears.

There are very few compositions which wholly represent their composer, even fewer which represent the art of a whole nation. The *Psalmus* is one of these unique, condensed moments of Hungarian music.

This individually and socially lyrical masterpiece is the end and at the same time the beginning of a new path. The first period of Kodály's career contains most of his lyrical and instrumental music, particularly in the most lyrical of all genres, chamber-music. Two string quartets, the *Trio Serenata*, the wonderful, unique violoncello and piano pieces precede the *Psalmus*. But how conscious the switch was is proved by a statement in 1932, at the age of 50: "It is time to abandon the lyre." In other words he was completely aware that what he created in the *Psalmus Hungaricus* and afterwards is the œuvre of an epic giving himself up to his community and feeding on it. In the next period, until the *Spinning Room* (1932) he composed only works using folksong tunes or dedicated to the folksong. And when he felt this task was accomplished, he again composed works out of his own inventiveness, but along with others, folksongs, the Concerto, the Symphony and orchestral variations. Until 1923 the lyric characterizes his œuvre, between 1923 and 1932 the epic; from then until his death the two together.

Out of this œuvre appears a highly individual figure. He had a particularly isolated career among his contemporaries. Even with Bartók, who was closest to him, only the base is the same. Hungarian folk-music ties them together as does formal discipline in the classical sense. To a collapsing age they oppose discipline of form and humanity but while Bartók sought the elemental, the modern to liberate his individuality, Kodály aspired to the monumental, and searched for depth, homogeneity. Despite



his willingness to explore new ways, he is not a revolutionary. His personality required clarity and accomplishment. His art is essentially vocal and that explains why it is not so daring in harmonic innovations.

Monumental form, clarity, content, sureness of technique taken together mean: classical. For us, Hungarians, to whom he dedicated it, his work is the national genius.

## KODÁLY AND DEBUSSY

### 1.

Those conversant with the life and œuvre of Zoltán Kodály agree that his discovery of Debussy was of great importance for Kodály's development. László Eöszé, the author of a Kodály biography, considers the experience "decisive."<sup>1</sup>

The twenty-four years old Zoltán Kodály spent most of the 1906/07 season studying abroad. From December until March he lived and studied in Berlin, and from April to July in Paris. His companions were his colleagues of his own age, not long after graduation. One of them was Herbert Bauer, better known as Béla Balázs who collaborated with Bartók on *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* and the *Wooden Prince*.

There are many indications to show that Kodály himself considered his encounter with Debussy's music very important, not only for himself but also for the new Hungarian music as a whole. The strength of the personal experience can be seen in his piano piece *Méditation sur un motif de Claude Debussy*, a result of that spring in Paris, in some later references to Debussy, and in his writings and statements on Debussy and on the importance of Debussy.

The *Méditation* is an open homage

<sup>1</sup> László Eöszé: *Kodály Zoltán élete és munkássága* (Zoltán Kodály's Life and Œuvre). Budapest, 1956, Editio Musica 294 pp. p. 29. In English: "Zoltán Kodály. His Life and Work." London, 1962. Collet. p. 183.

even in its title and motto. Nor may we be entirely wrong if we suspect the influence of Debussy behind the third of the *Seven Piano Pieces*. The work was composed in 1910. Its epigraph, in the Universal edition of 1921, is *il pleut dans la ville* in brackets as in Debussy's *Préludes*. László Eöszé in his book completes the original Verlaine quotation: — *il pleut dans mon cœur comme il pleut sur la ville* —.<sup>2</sup> It is striking that the second song of Debussy's cycle *Ariettes oubliées* was composed for this very poem of Verlaine's. A quote from Rimbaud above the song serves as a motto: *Il pleut doucement sur la ville*. The chain of quotations is thus complete. No comment is needed on the reference to Rimbaud in Verlaine.

It is also quite probable that the fourth of the *Seven Piano Pieces*—the epitaph—is actually a homage to Debussy: it was composed in 1918, the year of Debussy's death.<sup>3</sup> Kodály gave it the final position in the series directly after the third piece we have already referred to. Similarly, Béla Bartók's piano piece, the *Tombeau de Claude Debussy*, subsequently the seventh of the *Eight Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs* was com-

<sup>2</sup> *ib.* p. 179.

<sup>3</sup> For the drafts and origin of the piece in more detail, István Kecskeméti: *Kodály zeneszerzői műhelymunkája a "Sírjelirat" kimunkálásában* (Kodály's draft for the "Epitaph"). Hungarian Musicological Studies in the Memory of Kodály. Edited by Ferenc Bónis, Budapest, 1977, Editio Musica pp. 43–50.



posed in 1918 or 1919 and published in 1920. It is not difficult to recognize a common source of inspiration in these compositions of similar genre by two composers whose friendship was particularly close at that time. But one can be persuaded also by the music alone. Here is part of Kodály's *Epitaph*. (Ex. 1)

Kodály was a man of great erudition. It is therefore hardly a coincidence that the *Epitaph* with its solemn mixtures in the Phrygian mode and with several harmonic turns which recall Debussy invoke the atmosphere of a work by Debussy.<sup>4</sup> The French master

composed this work to the memory of a great predecessor: his *Hommage à Rameau* is the second in the first part of the *Images*. (Ex. 2)

It is highly likely that in 1918 Kodály already knew the Debussy composition re-

<sup>4</sup> György Kerényi, referring to Bence Szabolcsi, writes: "Kodály's verbal communication: the mourning melody of the *Epitaph* was inspired by a tune heard at a Jewish funeral."—György Kerényi: *Zsidózene, magyar népzene* (Jewish Music, Hungarian Folk Music). Hungarian Musicologic Studies for Bence Szabolcsi's 70th Birthday. Edited by Ferenc Bónis, Budapest, 1969, Editio Musica 404 p.—This in my opinion does not contradict my supposition.

Ex. 1



Ex. 2



Ex. 3





calling Rameau. In a press statement on Debussy's death, Bartók refers to the *Images* series as well-known. If Bartók knew the work, Kodály must have known it too. In the last cadence of his *Epitaph*, a characteristic turn of Debussy's composition distinctly reappears. (Ex. 3)

Almost at the same time as he composed the *Epitaph* Kodály wrote the obituary on Debussy in the 1918 volume of *Nyugat*.<sup>5</sup> He describes Debussy as "the finest composer of his generation, the most productive in his influence." An acknowledgement of his importance and his rank as an artist is reflected in other writings and statements of Kodály's. He said of Debussy's Cello Sonata in 1917 after a concert by the Waldbauer String Quartet: "In this composition, even among the not too serious contents, we find numerous good qualities: perfect taste, total balance of thought and form, precise brevity, simplicity, and harmony."<sup>6</sup> In a critique of Ravel's Piano Trio of 1919, he compares the opus of the two French musicians in favour of Debussy.<sup>7</sup> We do not know the next of a lecture on Debussy given, according to László Eöszé, in autumn 1917 "At the free university under György Lukács, Béla Fogarasi, Károly Mannheim, Lajos Fülep, and Béla Balázs,"<sup>8</sup> but the actual fact that, beside Hungarian folk music, he chose Debussy as a subject, reflects his assessment of the composer's importance.

## 2.

These are the most important and more or less direct references to Debussy in Kodály's music and writing. It still remains to

<sup>5</sup> Claude Debussy. *Nyugat*, 1918, volume XI, pp. 640-642. Also published in: Zoltán Kodály: *Visszatekintés* (Looking Back). Collected Writings II. Edited and notes by Ferenc Bónis. Budapest, 1964. Editio Musica. In English: The Selected Writings. Budapest, 1974. Corvina Press, p. 239.

<sup>6</sup> "The Waldbauer-Kerpely String Quartet's First Concert." November 18, 1917. *Nyugat*, volume X, pp. 957-958.

<sup>7</sup> "Chamber Orchestra Concert." *Pesti Napló*, January 5, 1919. *Visszatekintés* II, p. 439.

<sup>8</sup> László Eöszé, op. cit. p. 47.

identify what marks the evidently durable influence left on Kodály's music.

A first and superficial approach holds out hopes for spectacular results. It is not difficult to notice how the young composer's imagination is occupied by the mastery of things heard and seen in Debussy's music, the exciting task of incorporating them into his own work. When listening to the song *Nau-sikaa*, composed in 1907, with the atmosphere of its empty quint chords, its pentatonicity and modality, the memory of the French inspiration can be clearly felt. The composer once told Bence Szabolcsi that "he learnt this tone from Homer."<sup>9</sup> We cannot deny this, yet we must accept the composer of the third *Nocturne*, the *Sirènes*, the great disciple of antiquity and Mediterranean poetry as an intermediary between the two.

In another work composed in 1907, the *Valsette*, the first of the *Ten Piano Pieces*, something of the delight of a sorcerer's apprentice can be felt in the playful experiments with the ideas allowed by the pentatonic scale. If we did not know that Debussy's well-known waltz, *La plus que lente*, was composed three years later, we would happily argue the influence of the Debussy composition on Kodály's piano piece.

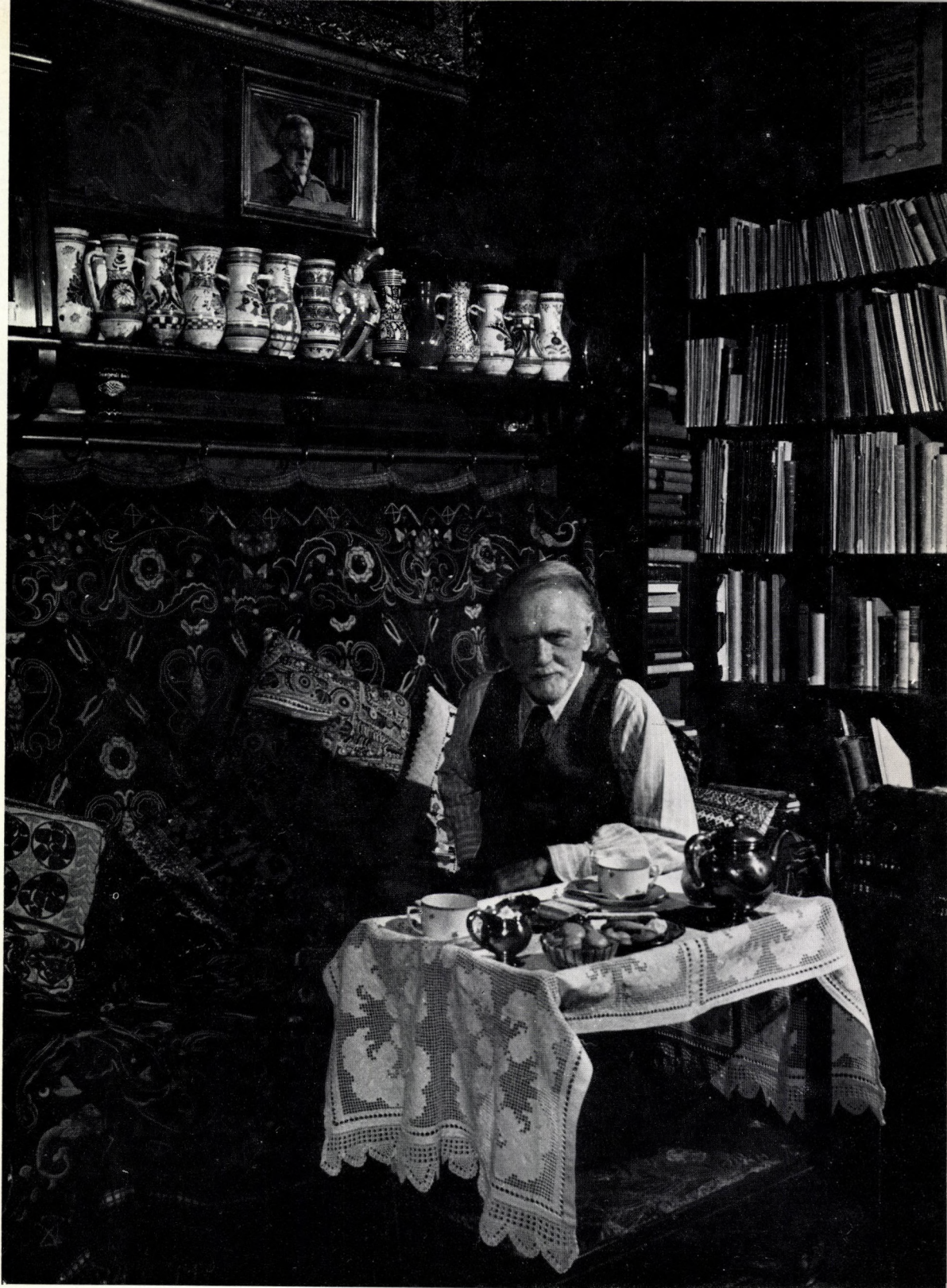
We have no wish to get entangled in making an inventory of the modes and harmonies Debussy and Kodály have in common. The similarities can be dangerously misleading, if they are not considered as surface-phenomena of deep parallels connecting the two masters and of the deep disparities which distinguish them. But more of that later.

Kodály transplanted a means of expression, the rich and various application of mixtures from Debussy's musical phraseology—originating from the harmonic essence of diatony—more or less along its wider context.

We have seen in comparing Kodály's *Epi-*

<sup>9</sup> Bence Szabolcsi: *Utam Kodályhoz* (My Way to Kodály). Editio Musica Budapest, 1972, 24 pp.

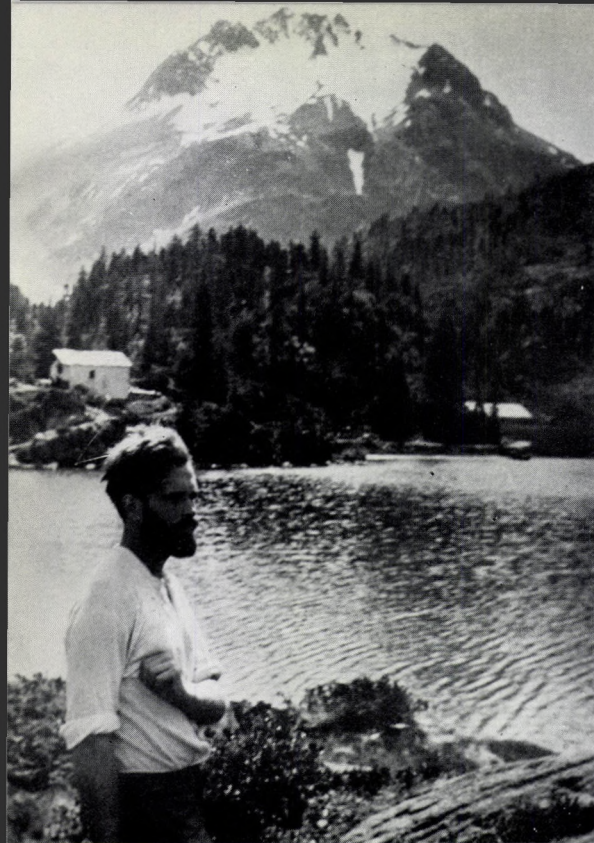




Zoltán Kodály in his Budapest home, 1964

László Vámos





Kodály on holiday in Switzerland (1911)



Kodály, his first wife, and Bartók on their second Transylvanian folksong collecting trip in 1911

Salzburg Festival, August 1923. Kodály in the company of the violinist Zoltán Székely and Emil Hertzka, director of the Universal Edition and an unidentified man in the background



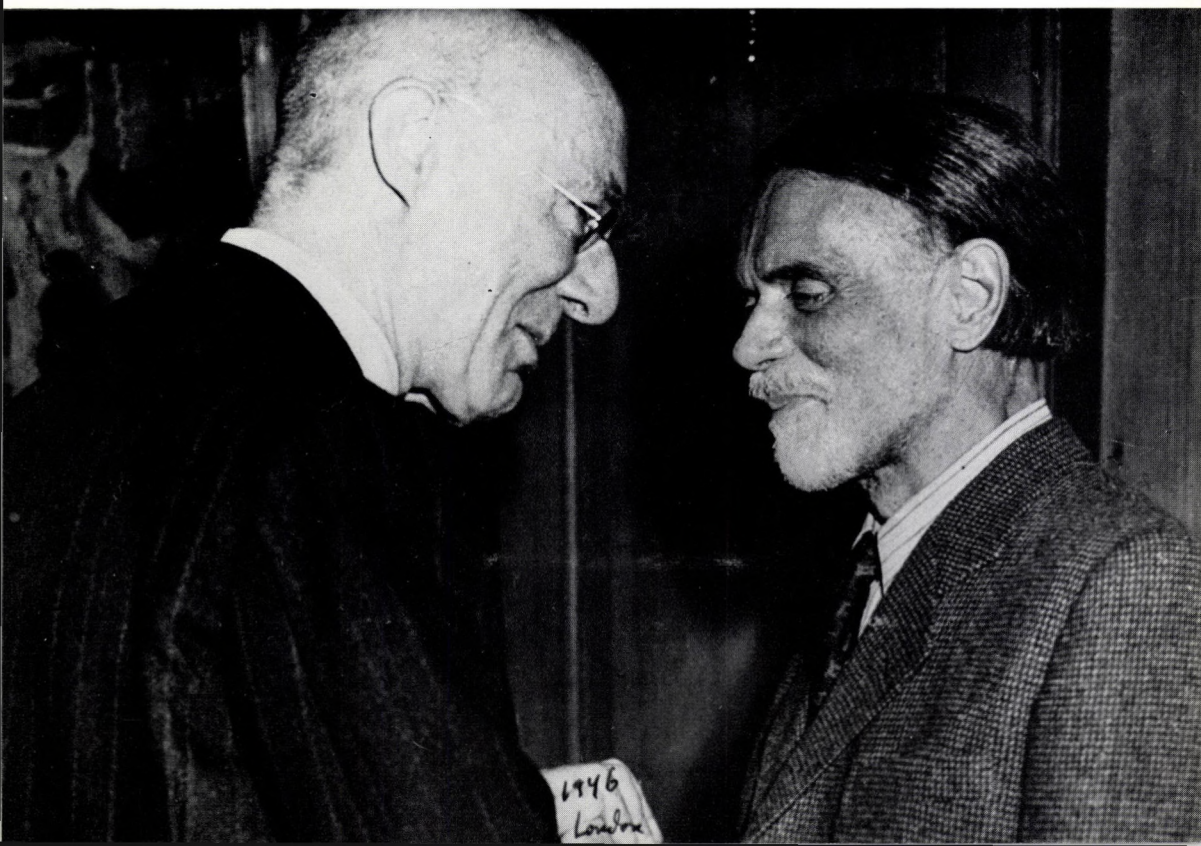




Kodály with Toscanini in 1928. Toscanini conducted the *Psalmus Hungaricus* that same year and later had *Summer Evening* dedicated to him

With musicologist Edward Dent, an old friend, in England, 1946

Courtesy Editio Musica







*Courtesy Editio Musica*

Visiting Imre Palló, the first *Háry*, in the village of Pánd, 1947

With his old phonograph (1952)

*László Vámos*





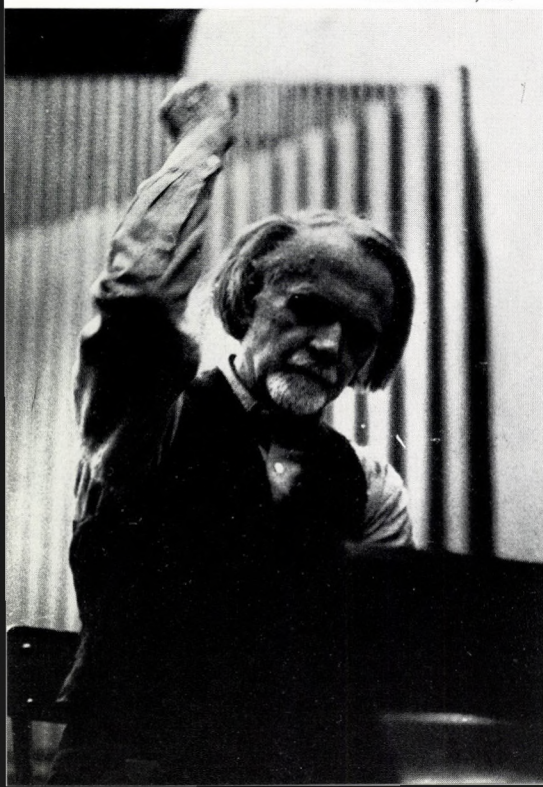


*Edit Molnár, MII*

Kodály at eighty, with the poet Gyula Illyés, at the celebration in Kecskemét, his birthplace

Conducting a DGG recording  
of the *Concerto* in 1960

*Endre Friedmann, MII*

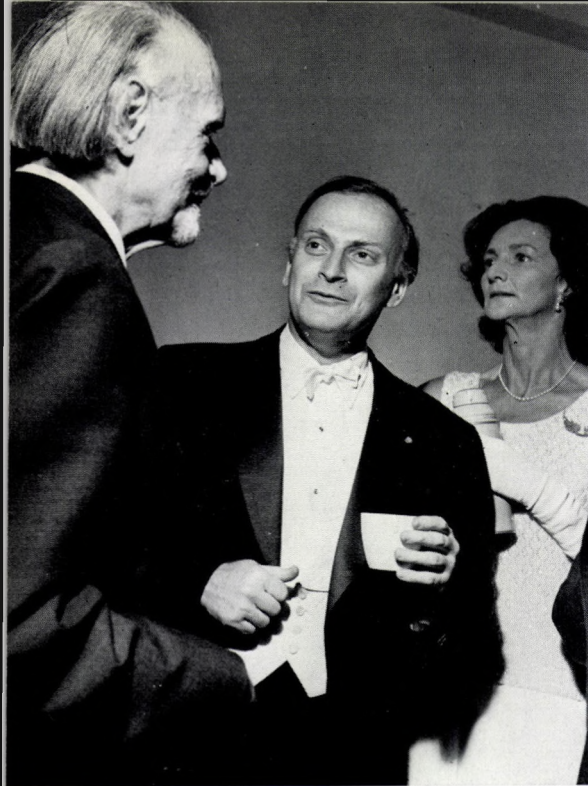


With the sixteen-year-old cellist  
Miklós Perényi at his home in 1964

*Edit Molnár, MII*







Kodály with the Menuhins,  
at a 1961 Budapest concert

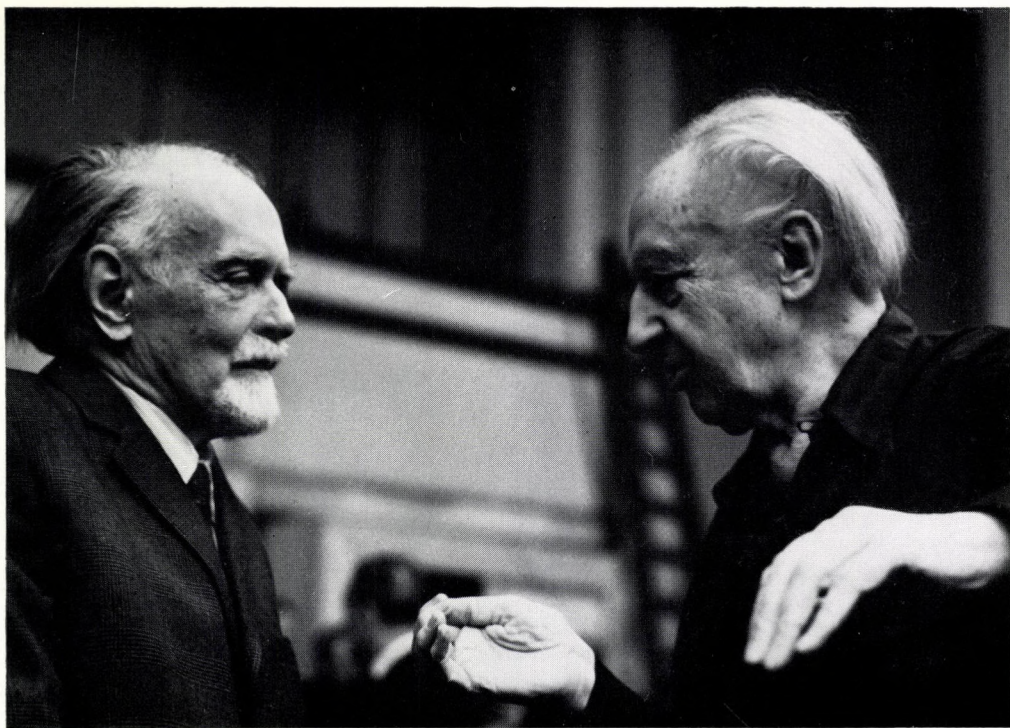


Benjamin Britten's second visit to Budapest  
October 1966

Britten, Kodály's second wife, Aladár Tóth, the music critic,  
and Kodály after the Pears-Britten *Winterreise* recital





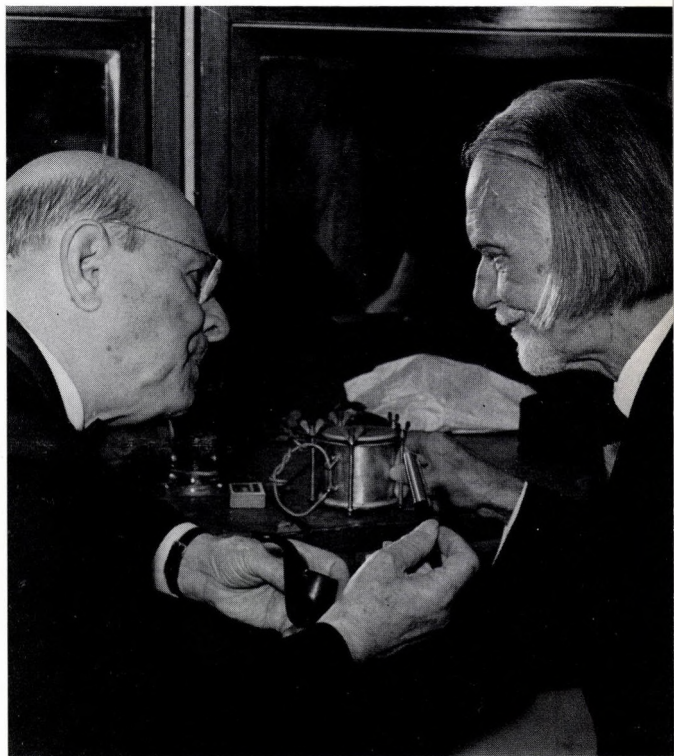


László Vámos

With Leopold Stokowski, to whom the *Háry János Suite* was dedicated, in the first days of February, 1967. On 6 March 1967 Kodály died

The visit of Pablo Casals, October 1964

Édit Molnár, MTI







Mátra Hills, 1960

*László Vámos*



*taph* and Debussy's *Hommage à Rameau* how they both use the archaic-sounding mixture processions to evoke a mood of deep emotion, of solemn reverence. Let us complete this with a detail from a Kodály folk-song (*Magas kősziklának . . .*). (Ex. 4)

Another example is Kodály's music of 1918 to Ady's text: "Adam, where art thou?" Here the solemn mixtures evoke a radiant, mythical vision, just as in Debussy's prelude, *La Cathédrale engloutie*.

The use of a strange scale in both Debussy and Kodály is a tempting basis for comparison. Lajos Bárdos wrote an exhaustive study on this scale, the combination of the peculiarities of Lydian and Myxolydian mode; he called the scale *Heptatonia secunda*, second heptatony.<sup>10</sup>

It is really striking how at home this scale is in Debussy's nature-music (think of *L'après-midi d'un faune* or the first *Nocturne*, or of the first theme in *La Mer*), and how gladly Kodály used it in his works. But the comparison itself warns us to look at the similarities in the light of the differences. In Kodály there are variants of this peculiar heptatonic scale which derive partly from the folk-music of our neighbouring coun-

tries, partly from the historical tradition of the Hungarian song. Here the scale which begins on the fifth tone of the melodic minor and which originates from the folk music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries should be mentioned.

This example forces us to remember that Kodály, already a collector of folk songs, when trying the pentatonic possibilities of the *Valsette*, is aware of similar formulae of different origin through his widening and inspirational knowledge of pentatonic folk-music.

It does not need too vivid an imagination either to recognize similar principles of construction in Kodály's First String Quartet and Debussy's String Quartet. In both, variational expressions of the motto running through the themes give new content to the traditional string quartet frame. Kodály prevents us from making any rash conclusions, however, by quoting a Hungarian folk-song in its entirety at the beginning of his quartet. It is through this that he determines the theme, the basic tone of the development in the movements that follow.

3.

<sup>10</sup> Lajos Bárdos: "Heptatonia secunda. A peculiar tonality in Kodály's compositions." *Magyar Zene*, Budapest, December, 1962, February, April, June 1963. Volume III, No. 6—Volume IV, No. 3.

The fruitful influence of Debussy acknowledged by Kodály is in fact not shown in the direct, superficial adoption of one or

Ex. 4





two characteristic features, harmony-turns, structural models, but lies in the deeper and more general effect it had on him. Certain stylistic similarities simply indicate an influence which reaches to the very base of his artistic nature. The young national composers' school gained its inspiration from Debussy—to find the form and musical language appropriate to the age, a language for their respective folk and historic traditions, the music for a world whose horizons had been extended, different in character to the by then academic Western art music. The young Kodály heard this liberating call in 1907. In a 1923 article he wrote of young musicians returning from Paris, carrying in their luggage the few pieces of Debussy that got to us, "at a time when Hungarian music-shops did not sell French music."<sup>11</sup> Among those young Hungarian musicians we have to place him first: his immediate task was to acquaint his contemporaries, and especially Béla Bartók, with the new music and its implications.

Debussy's name and one or two of his works were not entirely unknown to Budapest concert-goers at that time. János Demény writes in detail in his biography of Bartók of a performance of *L'après-midi d'un faune* by the Philharmonic Orchestra in January 1906. We learn from an unfavourable review that not long before the Kemény-Kladivkó-Szerémi-Schiffer quartet performed Debussy's String Quartet.<sup>12</sup>

The reception in fact could only be uncomprehending. Every community—and ev-

ery individual—can accept only what (and when and how) it or he is ready for. Zoltán Kodály was a young member of Endre Ady's generation. Hungarian culture in its many forms had ripened for the perception of Debussy's music and of his artistic attitude only in that generation. A mere three years later Debussy came to Budapest as a performer and described in amazement to his family the youthful Waldbauer String Quartet's rehearsal: "J'ai déjà fait répéter le jeune quatuor qui doit jouer lundi prochain. Ils sont tous les quatre très forts. Le final, sur lequel tant d'autres se cassent les reins, n'est pour leur qu'un jeu d'enfants."<sup>13</sup>

In his Debussy obituary, Kodály clearly expresses the importance of Debussy's example: "In the same way that the supremacy of the Latin language was eventually challenged by national literatures emerging one after the other, German music, too, will be compelled to give way to modes of expression other than its own. National attempts during the nineteenth century were overshadowed by the German spirit."<sup>14</sup>

Two other significant experiences made Kodály sensitive to the lessons inherent in Debussy's music. One was his thorough and concrete knowledge of Hungary's historical heritage, which he had acquired through his discovery of folk-music and his wide reading in Hungarian literature. This cultural awakening in someone who was a student of János Koessler, an ardent follower of Brahms, coupled with his day to day experience led him to the conclusion that from the established German music there was no way forward.

The other significant experience was the new town the young teacher trainee at the Eötvös College found himself in. The conservative bourgeoisie in Pest were oriented towards Vienna. But the young intellectuals, looking to Paris as their example, gave the

<sup>11</sup> "La musique française en Hongrie". *La Revue Musicale*. Paris, February 1923, volume IV, No. 4, pp. 80-81.

<sup>12</sup> János Demény: *Bartók Béla művészi kibontakozásának évei. Találkozás a népzenevel, 1906-1914* (The Years of Béla Bartók's artistic development. The meeting with folk music, 1906-14). *Musicological Studies*, Vol. III, in memory of Ferenc Liszt and Béla Bartók. Edited by Bence Szabolcsi and Dénes Bartha. Budapest, 1955, Akadémiai Kiadó, p. 325. In the review referred to the performance was by the Kemény-Schiffer String Quartet on December 13, 1905.

<sup>13</sup> Debussy to his wife, Budapest, December 4, 1910. Cited by Pasteur Vallery-Radot in *Tel était Claude Debussy*. Paris, 1958, p. 89.

<sup>14</sup> Looking Back II, p. 379.



lead just in the name of national existence and autonomy and tried to break off the German culture's leading strings.

This is why he—and so many others of his contemporaries before and after—went to Paris, for Hungarian culture to find itself with the help of its powers and erudition. This was how he came to know Debussy's work, his artistic view and intentions, and applied this knowledge to the benefit of his country's development, showing his contemporaries and students the example of the Latin genius. Kodály was also helped by Debussy to find a way to the source of the Hungarian language and literary traditions. He confirmed Kodály's conviction that he is on the right way when he listens to folk-music in order to discover lyrical poetry and the tune of the Hungarian language. Debussy, too, had freed French prosody from the exaggerations the French opera had developed.

Finally, let us turn to Kodály's article written on Debussy to see how important he considered Debussy's musical "language-reform" . . . "In his own country, however, the French dramatic music—the revival of the recitativo—is considered to have been his greatest accomplishment. No one had ever been able to turn the natural rhythms of the French language into music the way he did . . . Even if the text did allow—as it does not—a stronger musical expansion and loud bursts of passion, we must still find quite natural this reaction against heavy Wagnerian pathos on the one hand, and the affected pathos and rapid lyricism of French opera on the other."<sup>15</sup>

If we change "French" into Hungarian in the quotation, the description fits Kodály's own prosodic reform. It was thus that Hungarian music, after decades of following German expressionism's treatment of text after

Wagner, conformed to the cadence of classical Hungarian literature and became much more flexible. To this cadence the best musicians of any age have to return to.

The other dominant feature in Kodály's œuvre which connects him to the Latin spirit of Debussy is his landscape-poetry. For music to take possession of the Hungarian literary tradition was no mere problem of prosody for Kodály. The permeation of both folk-music and French musical nature-poetry can be felt in how Kodály's music accepted and continued the perspective and the atmosphere of Hungarian landscape-poetry of the nineteenth century.

It would be difficult to speak only of Debussy as a direct example. Kodály's early attempt to express musically Petőfi's and Arany's landscape-poetry preceded his acquaintanceship with Debussy's music. His chorus *The Evening* based on Pál Gyulai's poem is from 1904, the first draft of the *Summer Evening* is from 1906. In these and later landscape-pieces his idyllic, homely plain-dweller's voice differs from the world of the French impressionists. Yet the comparison is not forced. It underlines that Kodály discovered Hungarian landscape in our national poetry, recognized the impressionist features of János Arany's lyre—just as Debussy transplanted the landscapes of Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Monet into music.

"The French relate to the world by means of their eyes, so it is no wonder they want their eyes to share even in the hearing of music."<sup>16</sup>—Again, from the Debussy obituary, the observation is typical of the writer: listening to the music of Hungarian lyric poetry unfolded the Hungarian landscape before him.

He was of Ady's generation; the French example helped him to open his eyes to the beauties and troubles of his country—the very effect that Paris had had on Ady too.

<sup>15</sup> ib. pp. 68–69.

<sup>16</sup> ib. p. 68.



JÁNOS BREUER

## ZOLTÁN KODÁLY AND BENJAMIN BRITTEN

The first Britten work planned to be introduced to Hungary was the *Phantasy Quartet Op. 2*. Its introduction was intended by the Hungarian section of the ISCM for March 14, 1940, but the concert never took place. Benjamin Britten's popularity in Hungary was established with the *première* of his *Peter Grimes* at the Hungarian State Opera House on December 22, 1947. Zoltán Kodály appreciated it greatly, and referred to it in a lecture "English Vocal Music" at the British Embassy in Budapest on November 2, 1960. The actual meeting of the two composers was anticipated by several years through an unusual encounter in musical works: Britten and Kodály set to music "Tell me where is fancy bred" from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* for the *European Song Book* compiled by the Countess of Harewood and Ronald Duncan (the Kodály chorus was written in 1959, that by Britten in 1961).

Benjamin Britten first visited Hungary at the end of April 1964. He provided the piano accompaniment of a recital by Peter Pears, he heard a performance of *Albert Herring* at the Opera House, visited primary schools of music and singing, music clubs for young people, and met Zoltán Kodály. The first letter from Britten arrived at the Hungarian master's home late that summer.

15th August 1964

My dear Mr Kodaly,

It was a great honour, and a great pleasure indeed, for Peter Pears and me to meet you and Mrs Kodály in Budapest in the spring. As we said then we are looking forward greatly to a further meeting, if possible in England. Could we possibly persuade you to visit our Aldeburgh Festival? This happens each June, ten days of concerts, operas, lectures, and picture exhibitions. If you

have the time and inclination to be present as our guest, possibly to talk—an illustrated lecture on a subject of your choosing, or to introduce a concert—it would be a highlight for our Festival audience, an interesting audience of old and young.

We brought back from Hungary with us a record of the Kodály children's chorus, by which we are very much attracted. It is a marvellous choir for musicianship, and with a beautiful, individual sound. It is our ambition to ask this choir to participate in next year's Festival. We expect there may be problems in transporting such a choir this distance, but we would make every effort to overcome these difficulties. Could you tell us with whom our Festival Secretary (Mr Stephen Reiss) should communicate—an agency or choir secretary? The date we were thinking of was 19 June 1965—and if your own visit could coincide with this we should be doubly happy.

With warm good wishes to you and Mrs. Kodaly in which Peter Pears joins.

Yours sincerely,  
Benjamin Britten

M. Zoltan Kodaly  
Nepkoztarsasag út. 89,  
Budapest VI,  
Hungary

[A typed letter, in the Aldeburgh collection of the Britten Estate.]

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to Miss Rosemund Strode, the Secretary of the Britten Estate, for sending me copies of the documents, and to Miss Strode and Mrs Zoltán Kodály for permitting their publication.



At this point the thread of contact is broken, temporarily; Kodály's reply cannot be found in the Britten Estate. It is possible, in fact, very likely that it was not even he who answered, instead he passed the matter on for further action to one of the competent Hungarian cultural institutions, as he himself could in no way have undertaken to arrange for the travel abroad of a large choir of young people.

In the meantime, however, the preparations for the 1965 Aldeburgh Festival Kodály celebration continued. Britten planned to perform not only the works of the Hungarian composer, but—in this he was the first among non-Hungarian composers—wrote a work of his own on a theme by Zoltán Kodály:

Gemini Variations, Op. 73

Twelve Variations and Fugue on an Epigram of Kodály. Quartet (flute, violin, and piano duet) for two players.

Britten himself wrote the history of the origin of the piece in the programme notes of the 1965 Aldeburgh Festival (p. 15), in his comment to the first performance on June 19:

"When we were in Budapest in the spring of 1964 we were very taken by a meeting of one of the Music Clubs for school children—particularly by the versatile gifts of two young twins. They each played the piano, one the violin, the other the flute, they sang, they sight-read, they answered difficult musical questions. It turned out that they were the sons of one of Budapest's most distinguished flute players. At the end of the meeting they approached me and charmingly, if forcefully, asked me to write them a work. My plea of being very busy was gently brushed aside, but I insisted on one small bargaining point. I would do it if they would write me a long letter telling me about themselves, their work and their play—in English. I felt safe. After a week or so, however, the letter arrived, in vivid and

idiosyncratic language. I felt I must honour my promise. Here it is. (The Theme, suitable for our days of tribute to Kodály, is from his *Epigrams* [1954]. The variations are very short.)"

The copyright problems of the variations Kodály settled officially, in a manner not typical of him, with a typewritten letter to music historian Donald Mitchell:

Dear Mr Mitchell, 25.3.65.  
thank you for your letter of 16th  
March, 1965.

I have learned with pleasure that my illustrious colleague, Mr. Britten has included the theme of No. 40 of my *Epigrams* in his *Gemini Variations*. Of course, I fully agree with its publication, and I am sure that also the publisher for England, Boosey & Hawkes, will make no objection.

Yours sincerely,  
Zoltán Kodály

[Aldeburgh collection of the Britten Estate. Zoltán Kodály signed it above the typed signature.]

Benjamin Britten wrote to Kodály on March 10, 1965 about the *Gemini Variations* and the Kodály programme of the approaching Festival. There is no copy of this in the Estate.

Here is Kodály's reply:

Bp 27/III [1965]

Dear friend,  
many thanks for your kind letter from 10.III. I am looking forward with great interest to your new work, how could I have any objections, if you honour me this way?

I answered already to Mr. Mitchell about the copyright question.

I am agreeably surprised to hear about Mr. Foldi. I suppose he will sing in Hungarian? As to tessitura, he can freely



transpose, if e.g. No 1 would be too deep. Since there is no *cyklus* in op 6, he must not sing all, he can chose what is most suitable for him.

We think both with great pleasure about our trip which promises to be very interesting and send you our warmest thanks and greetings.

Z. Kodály

[Handwritten, from the Aldeburgh collection of the Britten Estate.]

The mode of address of Kodály's letter and its tone express friendly sentiments, but at the same time the letter is a source of important musical information. In dealing with the programme planned by Andrew Foldi, the Hungarian baritone residing in England, this is the first among the Kodály documents known up to now in which he declares that he does not regard the keys of his songs to be unchangeable and he consents to their transposition. As a concrete example he mentions the setting of Endre Ady's poem entitled "Weeping" for basso voice (Op. 5/2), agreeing to its transposition to a higher key. Another essential remark by Kodály is that he did not regard his series of songs as an indissoluble unit, i.e. the performer could choose at will among the seven songs of the Op. 6 *Late Melodies*, which he mentioned by way of an example.

The Kodály couple journeyed to England on June 14, 1965 as Benjamin Britten's guest. The Kodály Girls' Choir under Ilona Andor performed on two occasions at the Aldeburgh Festival, and Britten's *Gemini Variations* were introduced by its young "commissioners," the twins, Gábor and Zoltán Jeney.

The Kodály celebrations were held on June 18th and 19th. "Tribute to Zoltán Kodály in the presence of the Composer" was the motto of the concert given in the Aldeburgh Jubilee Hall on the evening of June 18. Imogen Holst—daughter of the composer Gustav Holst—Benjamin Britten,

and Peter Pears wrote the following lines in the programme notes (pp. 12-13):

"There can be no composer of our century who has done more for the musical life of his country than Zoltán Kodály. He and Bartók, together and separately, may be said to have re-created Hungary's whole musical language. When he started to compose, the dominant influences in Central Europe were Wagnerian and Viennese; Hungarian music was equated with mere Gipsy music. But turning his back on Austria and looking to Paris, where he first met Debussy in 1907, he could free himself for Folk Song and National Expression. His first major international impact occurred with *Psalmus Hungaricus*, written in 1923, and first performed in England—who that was there will ever forget it?—in 1927. His later symphonic and orchestral works are firmly in the repertoire of every orchestra. In our concerts at this Festival we are to hear his rather less well known chamber works, all written before the *Psalmus*, but wholly characteristic of the man. With these, we shall have audible witness to that other triumph of Kodály's later career, the creation of a tradition of children's choral singing which has already become something mythical. "Nobody," said Kodály, "is too great to write for children; in fact, he should try to become great enough for it." He started by creating a repertoire for children, and then revolutionised their education; and he based it on active music-making, and not on passive appreciation; thus he has created a new standard in sight-reading, as well as in vocal intonation and in rhythmic vitality, which listeners to the Budapest girls' choir called after him will recognise as being quite unique.

Like many other creators, he has been subjected from time to time to most venomous criticism, but his courage and



integrity has triumphed. He is now, at eighty-two,\* the most honoured and loved man in Hungary, and we are proud and lucky to have him with us."

Although the three main organizers of the Aldeburgh Festival signed this salutation together, I suspect, nevertheless, that it must have been drafted by Britten. When Lutz Besch's volume of an interview with Zoltán Kodály appeared in Switzerland (*Mein Weg zur Musik*, Peter Schifferli, Verlags AG Zürich, 1966), Benjamin Britten, with Ernest Ansermet and Yehudi Menuhin, wrote a preface to the book which is almost identical, word for word, with the above festival programme notes.

At the June 18, 1965 concert Emanuel Hurwitz, Ivor McMahon (violin), and Cecil Aronowitz (viola) presented Kodály's *Serenade* (Op. 12), Emanuel Hurwitz and Keith Harvey ('cello) the *Duo* (Op. 7), and Andrew Foldi, accompanied at the piano by Viola Tunnard, performed five songs from Kodály, in Hungarian (the programme notes also give the titles of the songs in Hungarian). The Kodály Choir of Budapest, conducted by Ilona Andor, sang nine choral works: *A Birthday Greeting*; *Gipsy Song*; *I Am an Orphan*; *Dancing Song*; *Mountain Nights I*; *A Christmas Carol*; *Shepherds' Christmas Dance* (piccolo solo by Zoltán Jeney); *Ave Maria*, and *Whitsuntide*.

On the following day, June 19, the choir gave a concert at the Parish Church. At this event Ralph Downes, organist, and the Jeney twins—the children who introduced the Gemini Variations—assisted. The choir sang Renaissance a cappella choruses, six choruses from Bartók, Kodály's *Psalm 150*, *Spring*, *Fancy*, *Epiphany*, *Don't be Grieved*, and *Angels and Shepherds*, as well as the *Pange lingua* with organ accompaniment. The concert was concluded with a presentation of the "Ite, missa est" of Kodály's *Missa brevis* on the organ.

\* In fact he was then eighty-three.—J. B.

This concert also contained an element of excitement for the choir. It turned out in the course of the forenoon that the Hungarian choir was not familiar with the arrangement in parts of the British national anthem which was to open the concert. Within minutes Kodály jotted down the accompanying parts on paper, and thus the anthem was heard in Zoltán Kodály's setting.

The third, and last, meeting between Kodály and Britten occurred in Budapest in October 1966. The highlight of the Musical Weeks of the Hungarian capital was the presentation of Schubert's song cycle *Die Winterreise* by Peter Pears and Benjamin Britten. At the closing concert of the Festival Britten's *War Requiem* was played (it was first performed in Hungary in May 1964), in which the composer himself conducted the chamber ensemble, the large units the chief musical Director, János Ferencsik, and Peter Pears sang the tenor solo.

A few months later, on March 6, 1967, Zoltán Kodály died. Benjamin Britten himself wrote the obituary for the Hungarian Service of the BBC, for its broadcast of March 7, 1967.

#### KODÁLY\*\*

"A great man has gone from us. Not only a great musician but a great human being, and a very contemporary one. By that I do not mean necessarily a *fashionable* contemporary composer—Kodály was beyond and above that. But he was a man who was able to make *sense* of contemporary life. He was there. He did not avoid problems. He remained and triumphed. And out of the problems he produced solutions which have changed our ways of thinking. He made sense. He lived a long life, but to the end he kept his

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vitality and his faculties. In Budapest when I saw him late in the autumn last year, he was as lively as I have ever known him. He talked animatedly about musical education, about Ansermet's recent provocative essays on science and music,\* the *Winterreise*, the reaction of the present-day urban young to folk-song. He was aware of himself about the problems of contemporary art. It is difficult to realise that he is no longer among us. But what a legacy he has left. Superb choral works, the *Psalmus Hungaricus*, stage works which still hold the stage, Hary Janos, and excellent chamber music, and, what I perhaps cherish the most, a volume of two hundred pages—folk-songs collected by him and Bartók, arranged for children's voices unaccompanied. They are of an originality, simplicity, yet richness, which is startling. We can all learn from these, from their beauty of sound, freshness, their *multum in parvo*. One is reminded of his famous words "nobody is too great to write for children; in fact, he should try to become great enough for it." Not only did he leave these countless miniature masterpieces for children, but he worked for and re-planned their musical education—new methods of sight-reading and vocal training, new curricula. One result of his educational efforts is that at this moment over 80 of the state schools in Hungary (and I do not mean the musical schools) have one hour's general music period every day. And with excellent young men and

women to teach the youngsters—I have seen some of them at work.

Many of us will never forget the happy days at the Aldeburgh Festival, 2 years ago, when he and his young wife were our guests, along with the Kodály girls' choir from Budapest, who sang many of his pieces. We tried to tell him by our words, presence, and applause how much we owe to him, how much we loved him. He brushed all this gently aside, and got on with the business of rehearsals, concerts, meeting people, young and old, driving around, for him, a new countryside. In these few days Mr. and Mrs. Kodály became welcome, familiar figures among us. Just as in a far greater way, he was a welcome, trusted, familiar figure all over Hungary—at all times, war and peace, and under every régime.\*\* We send his young widow, all his pupils and colleagues, his innumerable Hungarian friends, our deepest sympathy in their great loss."

\*\* The programme notes of the 1965 Aldeburgh Festival (p. 13) detail this declaration: "The year 1919 was one of the stormiest of Kodály's life. Under the new Hungarian Republic of Culture (recte: Councils.—J. B.) he had been appointed Deputy Director of the National Music Academy. After the counter-revolution in August he was subjected to twelve vicious hearings before a vindictive Council of Enquiries, defending his great reforms with courage. The next year or so was spent in disgrace."

In 1937, when Kodály's choral works were already very widespread in the schools, right-wing circles in the government denounced him as a destructive, Bolshevik subverter, and only with the unity of Hungarian progressives was this extremely dangerous attack parried. In 1944, after Hungary's Nazi occupation, Kodály was compelled to go into hiding because his life was in danger.

\* Ernest Ansermet: *Les fondements de la musique dans la conscience humaine*. A la Baconnière, Neuchâtel, 1961.



## ENCOUNTERS WITH KODÁLY

My first memory of Kodály dates from the time when I was spelling out his name from my father's scores. I must have been four years old at the time. At fourteen, I decided to follow in his tracks, and when I turned seventeen I gave my first talk on Kodály in Sopron where I attended the *gimnázium*.

After my final examination at that school, my father went to see Kodály and asked him which department of the Academy of Music he would suggest that I should enrol in. The Professor, as we called him, recommended the department which trains secondary school teachers of singing and music. It had been set up around that time and along with music theory and musical knowledge provided the qualifications for a choirmaster. "Send her there," he said, "that's the department of the future." My career has justified his remark.

Kodály taught us folk music. His classes were attended by some fifty students of the Academy coming from various instrumental departments. To many of them folk music was of no interest and they spent the classes chatting and doodling, some even playing cards in the back. Kodály did not insist on receiving attention. What he said was clear and intelligible, but he spoke in a low voice, without much delivery. I sat next to his desk, as close as my awe allowed me to. Once he asked the class to give examples of the tonal response structure of the folksong in Bartók's works. None of us could. The Professor waited for an answer. He did not speak. We sweltered in a deep silence which became more and more intolerable by the minute. He did not reproach us for our ignorance; after the class we ran to the library to find tonal responses in Bartók works.

I prepared for months for his examination. I made folksong analysis, marking out the folksong categories, keys, cadences and so on in five different colours and their varia-

tions. I placed my work on his desk with shaky hands. He did not put many questions, he looked at me, and with his fine, long-fingered hand entered the best mark into my student index-book which we all had.

I became a teacher at the Szombathely *gimnázium*, and as it took three secondary schools to make up my prescribed number of weekly lessons, I was soon dashing by bicycle between the schools. In all three I organized a large choir, and on official holidays, the celebrations in the three schools were held at times that conformed with my ability to reach them on my bicycle.

With one of my chamber choirs we soon won a first prize in the county and a trip to Lake Balaton. On my return home a letter from Kodály was waiting for me stating that Szombathely wanted to set up a specialized primary school for singing and music, and asking whether I would like to teach there.

Up till then all that I had known about these specialized schools for singing and music was what Márta N. Szentkirályi, their founder, had achieved at the Kecskemét school. At the time, in 1953, there were just a few specialized classes in the country and there was neither an official curriculum or even a text-book for them.

When I undertook the assignment, I went to Kecskemét, Sopron and Budapest to find out what such classes were doing. I scarcely believed what I saw and heard. The daily singing lessons did not only provide musical education for the students. I met lively children bursting with life in Kecskemét, running and playing in the school yard (in Kecskemét instruction had taken place for years in the city's most delapidated school building, the lovely, modern Kodály school was only built later, in 1964), and singing and listening during classes as attentively as little angels. The small chamber ensemble of the twelve-year-olds gave special music recitals for the city's holiday occasions with a serious sense of responsibility. They car-



ried off first prizes in schools sport competitions, they won the chess tournament, and all the cultural and inter-school contests, both individually and as teams. My curiosity was immediately aroused, which later led to my studying the transfer effects of musical education and after some years writing a doctoral dissertation on the topic.<sup>1</sup> What does this condensed, intensive musical education give to children that makes their abilities so richly unfold?

I had to recruit students for the music class. It was the end of summer, and I went round to homes trying to persuade parents. Most of them showed reluctance. They had never heard about such a thing as a music class and felt that singing lessons were a superfluous luxury. Let the child study some language. Or maths. But singing? And every day?

In the end, the singing class was launched with twenty-six hard-won students instead of thirty.

The children made breath-taking progress. Whatever they learned one day, they knew it with assurance on the next, their musical memory received more a month than a grammar school student in a year. My eight-year-old second-graders gave an independent choral concert at the end-of-term ceremony, singing Kodály's *Bicinia*, a two-part piece by Bach, and a Renaissance madrigal, and taking turns at conducting. Eight students in the class could conduct independently. They took up the tuning fork, gave the pitch and the cue, and the rest of them started singing with shiny eyes.

At the beginning of the third school term, we had to select the thirty new first-graders out of 95 applicants. We did not know whether to admit those at the beginning of the list of names, to draw lots, or what. I hate entrance examinations.

The term "musical ability" is familiar to many but there are few who really apprehend what this complex, mysterious thing actually means, woven as it is of so many threads and appearing in countless

forms among children. Some feel the rhythm but stray between pitches, others do notice their own faulty notes but their voice does not obey them. It is a rare gift when someone's internal hearing is ready to receive music and his or her voice is ready to reproduce it exactly.

But what should happen to those who were not born like that? To those who have not brought with them a sure ear or a receptive musical memory, and yet are bursting with a taste for singing and a desire for music.

Upon Kodály's request, every year we admitted a few "tone-deaf" first graders who could not sing. The loveliest memories of my career as a teacher are linked to the musical and individual development of those children. Their touching, almost fanatical love of music helped them over all obstacles. "There is no such thing as a tone-deaf child," wrote Kodály. "Every child has to be taken to the little garden of music."

Márta Szentkirályi used to tell us that once she asked Kodály if she could be exempted from admitting some four to five tone-deaf first-graders. "They make a special problem for our teachers. We have already provided sufficient proof," Márta said, "we could stop taking them on." The Professor looked at her and asked, "And what should happen to them?"

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The paths leading to music open up because music, valuable, good music is no luxury but an invigorating force. No child should be chased away from its vicinity.

Every lesson raised some new question. Why are children with musical education better spellers? Is their sense of equilibrium really better? Do nursery-school pupils used to singing really control their breathing better? Does a better auditive observation make itself felt in visual tasks? What kind of tests could we use in our examinations?

I was looking for means to verify whether



what I felt, had experienced among my students was really true. At the Academy of Music we were not taught psychology. In those years psychology tided over hard times anyway. Which volume should I take from the library? Which one tells the truth, which one will give me a lead?

In 1964 we completed our first survey, I took the material to Kodály. He was sitting at his desk, examining the papers and putting questions. "You'll have to speak about that at the Budapest conference of the International Society for Music Education," he said.

The programme of the conference had been printed months in advance, but upon the Professor's request, the chairman of ISME reserved half an hour for my report at the plenary session. At the time I spoke no English and gave my report in German.

On the closing evening, Kodály said on Hungarian Radio: "For me Klára Kokas's lecture was the most valuable as she also demonstrated the influence of musical education through examinations." And to me he said: "Learn English. The next ISME conference will be held in America in two years' time, you'll have to lecture there." On my way home I bought a text-book of English and records for beginners. I studied from records, without a teacher.

But the ISME conference in America was still far away. First I had to look for a post in Budapest where we could carry on with our examinations. Finally the educational head of the Budapest City Council asked me, "Would you take on something difficult too?" "By all means!" "Even something very difficult?" That is how, through the personal intervention of Kodály, I found myself teaching in a boarding school for orphaned or abandoned children in state custody.

That they had not taught us at the Academy. We had learned to read scores, to construct a fugue, to memorize melodies, harmonies and choral works. We had attended countless singing lessons and choral rehearsals, we had sung Monteverdi, con-

ducted Lassus and Bartók, and practiced the methods of teaching singing in school. We had been given a many-sided, valuable musical training.

But we had not been told what to do if desperate, lonely children sit in the benches in front of us and turn their back on the teacher.

When I entered the first nursery school pavilion, I was surrounded by a group of twenty well-combed, nicely dressed four-year-olds. Two of them asked me at once, "Are you my ma?" And they flared up at each other, "No, she's not your ma! She's mine!" I stood among them with a heavy heart while some eight or ten small hands clutched at my fingers.

My students at Szombathely had enthusiastically played the folk games accompanied with singing, and during the breaks also walked round singing in the courtyard. Here I was scarcely able to introduce any singing game as they did not keep in step, did not hold hands, indeed they often tripped or kicked each other. To organise a ring-game was a Herculean task.

All the schools where they had taught me to teach and those where I myself had taught, invoked the help of the parents. We called on the parent, we asked the parent... No-one had told us what to do when there is no parent.

I had to fight every day. Often the best planned ideas did not work out. I learnt always to have others in reserve. At every lesson I fought anew for the silence needed for common attention.

These children lacked the mental basis for internal concentration. They could easily be forced to silence by coercion but I could not use that rejecting, retreating silence for anything. I had to use all possible means to penetrate deep down to the layers where emotions responded.

It was very hard to foretell the mood they would be in the next day, how they would tolerate the presence and actions of the always distracted trouble-makers. We



could work together only if the community did not react to the provocations of the peace-breakers and failed to notice them. By so doing we could for the most part disarm them, as they were usually only out for some extra attention. After a short while they slowly learnt that they could receive personal attention from me without forcing it, out of affection, and that they did not need to resort to violence. But on bad days, particularly at times when they were still under the after-effect of a Sunday visiting day, all my long-cherished beautiful plans were frustrated.

At that time I learnt that I had to create teaching methods day from day as an operation designed for individuals, I could make no use of the well-proven methods of group education. Every child was a separate world that could be approached only by an individual path.

They woke up and went to sleep without their mother kissing them good-night, telling them stories or singing at their bedside. To put them to sleep with stories and songs, to awake them with cheering ditties and to find the time to touch and stroke each of them, at least once a day, became more important than the material of the singing lessons.

Even while in good health and physically fit, this work took up all my strength. But soon my health also deteriorated and I had to learn to live in constant pain for years. I had a spinal operation and was in hospital for several weeks. I kept a tape recorder at my bedside and learnt English.

Much later, when I had recovered, I learnt what the doctor had said to the organizer of the ISME delegation: "You just take her to that American conference. That'll be her last trip anyway. Soon she'll become paralysed."

In America I was able to see much of the Professor. We met the Kodálys in Chicago. There was an airline strike, and the next day the three of us were taken to Interlochen, Michigan, by car.

I had lunch with the Kodálys in the hotel. We had to wait in front of the restaurant as our hosts were late. The Professor asked me about my pains and explained what exercises I ought to do. He did not believe that I was threatened by a coming paralysis. And he demonstrated right there, at the door of the Chicago restaurant, how I should do leg-swinging exercises. He swung his leg easily, high up above his head. His ease showed how practiced he was in gymnastics and with what balance and what flexibility he moved. I learnt from Sárika, Kodály's wife, how he had regained full mobility after a heart attack seven years earlier. When the imminent danger had passed, he started by moving his fingers, until gradually he returned to a daily one-hour gymnastics routine exercising his whole body.

It took me three years to learn a leg-swing of the same ease, and then with the help of a teacher who employed Kodály's principles in developing his method of teaching locomotion.<sup>2</sup>

During the few days until the opening of the conference, we went to see the summer courses at Interlochen. I could not move much as every step felt painful and I could hardly rise from a sitting position. Sárika had a straight wooden bench made for me on the balcony of their wooden cottage, where I lay and looked at the lake. I was making plans on how to go on if I had to live all my life in a wheelchair. I could no longer envisage my existence without pain. I kept thinking how to get accustomed to permanent pain and immobility. One morning the Professor stayed with me. We were silent for hours. He too was looking at the lake. Once he got up, went into the house and brought out a glass of cold milk for me. If I were a painter I would relate it in a picture what the white, sparkling glass looked like on that wonderfully narrow, long-fingered Christ's hand, stretched out without a tremble.

The next spring he died. I heard the news during a singing lesson, among my students,



and it came as an unexpected, unavoidable lash. It was unbelievable, inconceivable. A few months earlier I had seen him wading into the lake at Interlochen without a second's vacillation, with young people around him carefully dipping their toes in the water and hissing how cold it was. The over-loaded daily programmes of the conference had exhausted everyone, but he had shown no sign of tiredness and had taken part in everything.

For his 84th birthday we had prepared a domestic surprise, taking our own children to congratulate through song. Helga Szabó's tiny little daughter sang the shortest song, with the bigger ones coming up with more and more difficult ones, and finally my two children singing a long and difficult piece from the 15 *Two-Part Exercises*. I am glad they were old enough at the time to have kept the memory of that hour fresh in their minds.

A few days before his death we gathered in his home for our Saturday afternoon singing session. No-one dreamt it was going to be the last one. And yet it so happened that we were singing Kodály choruses one after the other. (On other occasions we tended to sing Bach and pre-classical composers.) After the closing chord of the *Hymn to King Saint Stephen*, I felt a sudden dizziness when I put down the score and all at once felt it impossible for the composer of such a work to be tangible and living amidst us.

The world has become empty and defective. Kodály had been 84 years old, but we had not sensed his age, we had not been prepared for his death.

Later I spent three years in the American Kodály Institute and wrote a book on it.<sup>3</sup> I followed the story of the adaptations of the Kodály-method in the specific linguistic, musical, social, educational, and psychological environment of English-speaking peoples and those of Latin origin. My experiences reinforced my faith in all that I had received from Kodály. I owe it to him that I have been able to preserve my childish qualities,

the joy of discovery, wonder, delight, and contemplation, a revival of cathartic experiences and a love for people.

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In their good moments, my students demonstrate it with their own compositions of movements what music has aroused in them. They discover that their bodies, their limbs move to music. They may have responded to musical resonances with some such instinct in their mother's womb, in the warm medium of the soft liquid that surrounded them. Young mothers speak of this, and I myself lived through it, with my own children. How many memories can the child preserve in the deep layers of his mind from that stage of his life? What can his experience of motion be like in there when his mother is singing and the vibrations arising from her vocal chords diffuse in her body, in the soft tissues, the circulating body fluids, in the blood, the hormones, the bones, the viscera, the layers of the skin? When a mother sings, it is the body in which the child is living, breathing, resting, strengthening, developing, and growing, that is making music. At such times the world surrounding the child resounds and becomes arranged in harmonic sounds.

In 1929, the year I was born, Kodály, at a conference in Paris, answered a question by saying that musical education must be started nine months before the child's birth.

Decades later, medicine discovered the functional development of the embryo's hearing from the sixth month of intrauterine life.

And I had been working along Kodály's path for nearly thirty years when at last the idea he added to what he had said at the Paris conference became really clear to me: "The musical education of the child must be started nine months before the *mother's* birth."

A cellist from Australia has told me that in the months before her daughter was born,



she followed in the womb the performance of one of Beethoven's trios with even, almost gentle rolling movements. Sometimes she indicated motion during other pieces of music, too, but that particular work always prompted her to particularly pleasant movements. Later, when the little girl was already living in this outside world, she reacted to that piece of music with quickening attention, motions of joy and sounds of joy. Did the Beethoven work give specifically pleasant combinations of vibrations with the resounding of the cello that was so close to the mother's body? Or did the cellist herself enter into the spirit of that particular piece with particular depth?

Nowadays I have met a growing number of parents who live through the development process of the foetal life of their children, and the father is also present at the birth. In the Hungarian Kodály Institute we have made plans with Noémi's father to sing for their keenly awaited child already before its birth. Upon the sound of the deep, resounding voice near the mother's body, the child began a softly undulating motion and continued it until the song lasted. By now Noémi is two years old, she loves singing, she receives music in her father's arms, their relationship is interwoven by music.

Old peasant women, grandmothers, great-grandmothers in villages and remote farms used to rock the little ones in their lap, hushing or cheering them with songs and ditties. Their body warmth and the rhythm of their motion transmitted music.

How can some of all that be preserved in the conditions of group musical education? I have tried it and have succeeded. Even my

nine-year-old students settle gladly in my arms if I teach them a new song in such a motherly position. And I teach the parents together with their children. At our joint lessons we sit on the ground near one another and sing like that.

Such a personal closeness in the transference of music is feeding on the deep roots of our primeval inheritance.

My mother used to sing often and beautifully, while working for us, her three children. After all these years I clearly remember all her songs, the timbre of her voice. I clearly remember where she inflected the melody and where she drew breath between the musical sentences. My musical education began with my mother's birth or even before. I wonder whether my grandmother had sung to her, her twelfth child?

Kodály once wrote: "The mother not only gives her body to her child, she builds his soul too, out of her own." Out of what music should the soul be built? That, too, is the mother's responsibility. In that uniquely intimate relationship, when she provides with her own heart action for the child who still relies on her in all its vital functions, she can also give music with the greatest intensity.

KLÁRA KOKAS

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Klára Kokas: *Képességfejlesztés zenei neveléssel* (Improving Talents through Musical Education), Editio Musica, 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Géza Kovács holds his courses at the Budapest Academy of Music and the Béla Bartók Specialized Secondary School of Music.

<sup>3</sup> Klára Kokas: *Amerikában tanítottam* (I taught in America), Editio Musica, 1978



## THE INTERVIEW IN THE ELYSÉE

by

PÉTER RÉNYI

**M**y colleagues from the Hamburg weekly *Der Spiegel* told me that they make a clear distinction between the *Spiegel Interview* and the *Spiegel Gespräch*, the latter, literally conversation, means that the journalist is free not only to pose questions but also to make statements; he may express his opinion not only indirectly, in question form, but also bring up counter arguments, quoting facts of his own. The interview, on the other hand, is more formal, the journalist is obliged to show moderation and self-restraint; it is the latter that is the convention in Hungary. It puts me in an awkward position. I am not sufficiently sure of myself, I worry that I might be carried away by my inclination to argue, or perhaps become numbed by selfcontrol.

When in late summer of 1980, two days after the Gdansk agreements, *Der Spiegel* requested me to comment, based on what Hungary had experienced since 1956, regarding the prospects of the situation in Poland—the only reason for choosing me being that I happened to be in Hamburg—and I was not in a position to do any homework, I was less nervous than before interviews during which I only had to ask questions.

This is also why, whenever it was possible, I strove to prepare the interview not alone but with colleagues. I insisted that László Rózsa, the Paris correspondent of *Népszabadság*, the paper I work for, should also be present when Mitterrand was interviewed.

We cooperated trying to establish an area of communication which included the more delicate issues as well, making it obvious where our views converged and where they diverged, with the intention not of exposing a person but of eliciting information.

It is important that, if possible, readers sense precisely, what was agreed on and where the consensus ends. To discuss the views expressed by the person interviewed, contradict him where necessary, and try if possible,



to convince him that truth is on our side—could not be the aim in the present case; indicating the differences was sufficient and, as past experience showed, readers accepted this.

This was the intention when I asked the President of France to agree to be interviewed for *Népszabadság* prior to his visit to Hungary. For a number of reasons, both objective and subjective, I felt more nervous than on any previous similar occasion.

The first reason is my poor command of French, so much so that I thought it would not even be right to risk speaking French. I had no such problems with Helmut Schmidt; I know not only German, but also *Plattdeutsch*, the vernacular of northern Germany, which is almost unintelligible to most Germans. Helmut Schmidt and I both grew up in Hamburg, what is more we went to the same school. I first met Bruno Kreisky already in the early sixties when I was a member of the first "official" delegation of Hungarian journalists to go and see him at the Austrian Foreign Ministry. I have had occasion also to exchange a few words with him several times since then. I also spoke German with Olof Palme when I met him for the first time last December, during the far from easy days following the introduction of martial law in Poland, and it turned out that we had mutual friends, something that was true of the Austrian Chancellor as well.

There was, however, no similar point of contact with Mitterrand, except his books, of which I hunted up as many as were available in Budapest. I knew what he had said on the subject of politics but other than that only as much as could be gathered from his biography and from Dénes Baracs's book on his election. There was also a more personal memory: when the news of his election reached us it caused great excitement in our office; I proposed that we should acclaim the event in a page-one leader under the heading "Changes in France."

This was not quite as simple as it sounds, after all, anyone with a nodding acquaintance with Hungarian literature and Hungarian history knows that in 1789 the poet János Batsányi welcomed the French Revolution with a poem bearing this title and concluding with the line: "Cast your watchful eyes upon Paris!" To have the central organ of the Communist Party of socialist Hungary use the title of that poem as the heading of an article reacting favourably to the election victory of the French Left was obviously suggestive of an unhistorical analogy between 1789 and 1981, not only between the France of that time and France today, but also between the Hungary of that time and Hungary today; "a complete muddle of ideas and relationships, an ideological scandal," is what ideologically sensitive people, and not only pedants, might have said.



But they have not said it, at least I have not received any complaint in this sense; what is more, the allusion was repeated in this new sense and gained currency in Hungary. Dénes Baracs used it as the title of his book, and we used it again in *Népszabadság* as the subheading of our interview with the President. If there had been time—as there was not—I would have boasted even to Mitterrand about it (I had it down on paper both in Hungarian and in French). One might add that Mitterrand himself, in a toast proposed in Budapest, also spoke of Batsányi and indirectly mentioned the poem.

I have certainly not regretted since that *Népszabadság* had put in circulation the title of the Batsányi poem in a new reference which has been accepted without protest in Hungary. Such reinterpretations are not only a right but, in a certain sense, also a duty of political journalism, a concomitant of the fact that this genre has as its medium the conventional associations of public opinion; had I not placed it over our commentary at that time, there would have been somebody else to put it in circulation, and none would have done so because they thought circumstances or the relationship were identical but because they considered it as an ordinary association of ideas which spontaneously found its way into the Hungarian press.

The hundreds of thousands who, on the night of the election, crowded the Place de la Bastille to celebrate the unity of the Left were similarly aware that they acted in an historically inaccurate manner, that what was taking place in France was not a revolution, yet that night they sang the Marseillaise differently from the way they had sung it before, during the tenure of office of de Gaulle, Pompidou or Giscard d'Estaing, the Tricolour was being blown by different breezes. What their attitude to the memory of 1789 meant was not that they imagined past events could or should be repeated, but only that they could use this historical symbol to demonstrate that they expected change, radical changes. Something similar was reflected also by the title we borrowed from Batsányi over our expression of modest hopes.

The reason I have gone on about all this at such great length is that I wish to show that I nevertheless had a personal hand in this interview as well.

For about a month we received no reply to the letter which the Editor-in-Chief of *Népszabadság* had addressed to the President and which a member of the Hungarian Embassy in Paris had handed in at the President's press office. As we mentioned in lines over the interview, the weeks had been passing by and reports about President Mitterrand being extremely busy



had become more and more frequent. We had already begun to fear that the interview might not materialise.

Not only the President's programme proceeded at a fantastic pace—trips abroad and summit talks in quick succession, first the meeting of the "Seven", then a NATO meeting, followed by a meeting of the "Ten"—but events also moved more and more rapidly; Mitterrand's disagreements with his allies, first of all between him and the Reagan Administration, became more and more noticeable. The least of these cares would be too great to allow him to make the time for an interview with *Népszabadság*.

Add that Hungarian Television—weeks after us—had also turned to the Elysée with a request for an interview. This caused consternation in the President's press office; they said that Mitterrand did not customarily give two interviews on one and the same subject... We were all the more surprised when the message came that the President was willing to oblige us—and also the Television people—though the precise date could not be fixed yet.

We could not know at the time why he undertook to give both interviews in the midst of immense pressure of work, and even now I can only surmise that those great international conferences, however much of his energy they might have taken up, did not foil our plan but rather tuned up the President in favour of our request. It suffices to read through the comments of the French Right-wing press on the interview he gave to *Népszabadság*, the snide remarks, all the complaints that it was precisely in a communist party organ that Mitterrand had chosen to give expression to his objections to the U.S. policy of economic sanctions, making it clear why he had taken the opportunity to state his views to the Hungarians, confirming before the public of an East European country what he had expounded to his West European colleagues in Brussels the day before.

At that time, however, we could not know this; what is more, after Versailles and Bonn it was not yet clear either whether the tensions there would not overflow to Hungary, whether this business would not go off against us. But what would happen then? We would have to reply and argue; no matter how courteously I put my point, the exchange of views would lead to a polemic, so we would ultimately end up with a *Gespräch*.

This is why I decided to prepare a page of introductory text to show our intentions, as it were with a view to avoiding a confrontation which did not fit the occasion. In the first question as it appeared, a reference occurred to the "statement" that was never made. The full text of the draft I made is:

"There are three reasons why your forthcoming visit arouses extraordinary



interest in Hungary. The first one might call historical: it is for the first time that a French head of state is paying a visit to Hungary. No such significant visit exciting such great expectations has as yet taken place in the context of Hungarian-French relation.

To be brief let me call the second reason political: in your person we shall receive a French head of state whom the majority of the French people have elected with a Left-wing programme. Of all the historical and contemporary ties between our two countries we regard as most important those which have taken shape between the progressive forces of our two nations. A minor episode, but one which may be worth recalling: the day we informed our readers of your election victory we published a leading article under the heading "Changes in France:" we borrowed the heading from a poem with which János Batsányi, the poet of the Hungarian Enlightenment, in 1789, welcomed the France of 1789 with enthusiasm. Great interest is taken in the reforms which have been initiated during your presidency.

The third reason I would briefly call international: your talks with János Kádár will take place in world political conditions in which Hungarian public opinion as well is paying close attention to all negotiations between representatives of the two systems of alliance, and which promise that the dialogue will promote bilateral understanding and serve the cause of détente.

It is in this spirit that we ask for this interview."

But who can know whether this will prove sufficient? I continued to meditate. In any event I had to do my homework, preparing myself for replies, and for this purpose I had to have a thorough knowledge of the positions adopted by Mitterrand earlier and also recently. . . I was overcome with something of a panic, I thumbed his books for days on end, I had passages translated and extracts prepared: the quotations and notes made up a bulky brief. And, of course, I was puzzling over how I could react to this or that.

During a weekend at Balatonaliga, where I stayed in the holiday home of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, I was racking my brain when, outside the dining-room, I met János Kádár, a fellow guest. I was well aware of the unwritten law that he was not to be disturbed with official business in his time off; my wife who heard me, interrupted me: I should not take unfair advantage of the situation. . . János Kádár, however, must have sensed that the point in question was a somewhat more personal affair and, in a few words only, he responded to my problem; he even authorized me to convey his greetings to the President and to tell him that he was looking forward to his visit to Hungary. What



he told me reassured me somewhat; it appeared that he was in no way anxious; he knew Mitterrand, he thought highly of his wisdom, experience and political intelligence, and—considering also other circumstances—he was confident that the coming negotiations would be useful.

In the meantime, however, new problems had arisen; I was occupied particularly with the news from Paris that no one except the official interpreter of the Elysée would be permitted to attend. I had contemplated from the very beginning that we would have with us Edit Verok, an official of the HSWP Department of Foreign Relations, who not only knew French but was aware of the political situation in France and was likewise well versed in the political language; she had met Mitterrand in 1976 when he had first come to Hungary, acting as his interpreter at that time. My experience of "official" interpreters in general is not good. Recently, at a joint press conference in Bonn, the translations of Helmut Schmidt's replies into Hungarian almost made me interrupt in order to protect the Chancellor from his own interpreter's special interpretation of his words. The woman interpreter employed by the Elysée was rumoured in Budapest to have a very good knowledge of French, her Hungarian, however was said to be rusty, and she was said to be unfamiliar with the language of politics. One could not agree to that, at my insistence the President's office finally consented to the presence of both Mrs Verok and László Rózsa; they stipulated only that the conversation should be translated by the official woman interpreter.

Then followed the biggest conflict: how much time should we be allotted? We reckoned, and mentioned in our letter, that the interview should cover a whole page of *Népszabadság*. This amounts to about 11 or 12 typewritten pages of Hungarian text, 14 or 15 pages at least in French, add the time necessary for translation and that in informal speech there are always digressions, repetitions, and disquisitions which do not strictly belong to the subject, perhaps even passages which are touchy and can be left out by common agreement; the interview should last at least an hour and a half, preferably two hours. We had been informed meanwhile that the President would receive us at 5 p.m. on June 30, I was hoping that he would be at our disposal—and that of Hungarian Television—until about 7 p.m. My nervousness peaked when, already in Paris, my colleague from Hungarian TV, who had been busy around the Elysée, told me that all in all three quarters of an hour had been reserved for the two interviews: we could have only half an hour. . .

Perhaps I have described our vicissitudes and anxieties more dramatically than necessary. Truth to tell, I was really upset by this limit of half an



hour. Just to convey János Kádár's greeting, to deliver my short speech by way of introduction, and to read out the three carefully drafted questions I intended to ask—would (together with their translation) take twenty minutes! What could we do with that half-hour? I almost resigned myself to asking a single question only—concerning the trip to Hungary, of course—the answer would then amount to a preliminary piece of the sort statesmen are wont to utter at the airport when they just wish to be polite. László Rózsa would not hear of such a thing and, as the result makes clear, he was right to insist on asking all three questions. Once again I grew uncertain at the last moment. Since this happened when we were already in the Elysée, let me first describe our reception there.

The scene was not entirely unfamiliar. I had already been in the building twice before: in 1968 when de Gaulle received Jenő Fock, prime minister of Hungary at the time, and the journalists were let in as far as the inner courtyard, and in 1978 when Giscard d'Estaing gave a dinner in honour of János Kádár, and I was among the guests. But now the atmosphere was somewhat different.

We came early because we were afraid of being caught in a traffic jam, and thereby caused considerable trouble to the bodyguards: they had to secure us an extra waiting-room where we could have sat down. They picked out a room, but some people were gathered there for some sort of familiar ceremony, or at least we concluded this from the fact that many young ladies stood around a young mother with a crying baby in her lap, and champagne glasses were on the table. The young bodyguard turned red in his embarrassment: how could he seat us there?

Even more unusual was the press secretary, Madame Duhamel, of whom I had heard so often since she was the source of the severe messages addressed to us. I had fancied her to be a palace shrew, a buxom matron, but she turned out to be a girl just under thirty. Considering her looks, I would have taken her to be a Young Communist League secretary in Hungary rather than one of the President of the French Republic's aids. Her long loose hair and over-large skirt which she continually had to pull up, plus her youthful manners, did not seem to fit in with these historical monuments; she had obviously been recruited from the ranks of the Socialist Party. And yet it was she who gave me another scare, saying that the President did not of course insist on the allotted time to the minute, but that he usually glanced at his watch every now and then and, if we took up more of his time than he thought right, he might break off the conversation in the middle of a sentence.

We still had a few words with Monsieur Vauzelle, the President's



spokesman, mainly about how to proceed subsequently, whether we were expected to show them the edited text. This also occupied my mind very much, particularly because of the deadline. Vauzelle did not wish to decide by himself whether the text with the possible modifications should be presented for approval, and told us to ask the President about it.

I did not have the patience even to think of new complications that might arise as a result. Nor did I pay much attention any longer. I kept looking at my notes: how could I cut short the introduction and the questions, since every minute mattered. Meanwhile we had been seen up to the first floor, into the large lobby outside the President's office.

A brief interlude on the way. A ground-floor drawing room has been allotted to our television colleague for him to set up his contraptions; his camera would be working there after our interview. Our inventive colleague suggested that we talk the President into letting this drawing room, and not his office, be the scene of our interview as well; this would save time. What time? He would have to go downstairs in any event. Why mix up the two? Television technique, with all the cables and equipment, with all the moving to and from, is anyway irritating, why make our job still more difficult? Should we divert his attention also by the testing of the camera and the lights? Possibly a take? I am categorically against it, we are natives of the Gutenberg galaxy, leave us alone, we stick to the original arrangement, to the famous office which had once been de Gaulle's and which Mitterrand has most probably occupied for this very reason.

We still had to wait. Two more delegations in the large lobby upstairs were ahead of us and it was nearly five o'clock... Will anything come of it after all?

Well, the result has since appeared in *Népszabadság* for July 3, 1982: a substantial illustrated four-column interview with a short editorial introduction—a sort of homage to the President who, despite pressures of work, undertook to answer our questions—with a few brief questions and François Mitterrand's exceptionally clear and interesting, relatively exhaustive, elaborate replies. I must admit that when, on Friday night, I drove from the airport straight to the offices of *Népszabadság*, where copies of the country edition with the interview were already available, even I was surprised how it had all finally worked out. The answer, of course, is simple.

The fact is that the situation was saved by none other than Mitterrand himself who understood, even without any introductory explanation, the purpose of our coming; who so formulated his thoughts that there was no use to interrupt with questions; who was aware also of the need, before his first presidential visit to a socialist country, to make a statement which



contained the fundamental elements of his position — and for this very reason did not regret that we took up about fifty minutes of his time. Not to mention that he spoke so clearly and expressed himself so well, in well-rounded and complete sentences without repetitions, that we could print every word. Paradoxically, it was also of help that the little woman interpreter was not equal to her task, that she confined herself to short summaries, taking up relatively little time.

Everything went smoothly, one small slip occurred in interpreting, which came to light only at the very end when, duty bound, I asked the President if we should show him our text, for we did not wish to alter anything in it—except one point, notably the sentence in which he spoke of Hungarian practice saying that those were *the* most interesting of all (this is how it sounded in translation)... whereupon both he and the spokesman interjected: he had not said this, he had spoken only of *one* of the most original. This was precisely what I would have asked him for.

They said they would provide a French transcription, Monsieur Vauzelle would look through that, correcting what was necessary, and send it to us. All that remained for me to do was to offer the President my thanks for the time he had devoted to us. I did so sincerely; a great load had fallen off my mind: after the stress of many weeks I felt quite relieved.

Of course, the greater part of the concrete job was still to come; in the evening the same day and in the morning the day after, Thursday, on the basis of the tape-recording, we prepared the first version in Hungarian which we then sent home by the noon Malév flight. The French typed version issued by the Elysée—with considerable modifications—came to hand only afterwards, late in the afternoon on Thursday; checking our text against it, we had to revise and partly rewrite it, we only managed to get to bed only at half past three, at dawn on Friday.

At half past eight in the morning, Rózsa rang to say that various technical problems put obstacles in the way of transmitting the new version to Budapest. Finally—to make sure—we transmitted in two ways, by telex and telephone, asking the office to collate the two texts lest some error had slipped in. After that I flew to Budapest. When I reached the office, I found only a couple of small mistakes which I could correct for the Budapest edition.

I have just noticed that the fifty minutes we spent with Mitterrand left almost no trace in my description. I could, of course, sum up what he said, but that would mean leaving my subject which is the genesis of the interview, so let me stay with that. I will then continue with the impression what he said made on me. Involuntarily I compared him with others I inter-



viewed, like Schmidt, Kreisky, and Palme, of like ideas and politics, a fact also reflected in his message. And yet he was very different.

Helmut Schmidt remained what he had always been, a virtuoso public speaker, able to pull out all the stops of the register, the oratorical passion overcame him even in his office. Kreisky spoke in that matter-of-fact way which is characteristic of him. Listening to Mitterrand I was under the impression that he was not particularly concerned with persuading those he was talking to, he was not really addressing them, he said his piece like me saying: this is what I think, like it or not.

Some compare the manner to that of professors reading a lecture out loud, I am convinced however that it has its source in the deeper regions of his political past. After all he still roughly stands for what he stood for in 1965, and what he proclaimed in 1974. This loyalty to his own principles, this persistence and staying power, finally proved successful. The way he speaks reflects the consciousness that time proved him right. There is much in what he says that is debatable, but there is no doubt that his choice of words is not opportunistic. When he speaks of the achievements and difficulties since assuming office there is no trace in his accents of the unprecedented pressure on the part of the Right to which he and his government are subjected. He mostly uses the first person singular: "I did this or that. This is also the grammatical form of the extraordinary power which devolves on the president in the 5th Republic, in terms of the presidential system worked out by de Gaulle, but it also shows that he is his own man, sovereign in the personal sense of the term as well.

There is an element of risk in this attitude. Enjoying the legitimacy of electoral support is not identical with the triumph of his policy, he has to try and carry that out midst extremely difficult circumstances. But that does not really upset him. He knows what he has planned, and he knows that this mandate is valid for almost another six years. And if he is right in his opinion—and he is right—that the poorer majority of the country has had enough of prevailing conditions, then it will back him for a long time yet, however spitefully every section of the Right might attack him.

This self-confidence is expressed in his categorical judgements concerning the petrification of French society and the need for change, and it also makes his views about American egoism and the practices of the US Administration so clear and unambiguous. Everyone knows that Mitterrand's Leftish attitudes do not derive from identification with revolutionary ideas but are based on rational calculation: on the recognition that the French ruling classes were incapable of the reforms demanded by the age. That is what offered a chance to progressives. The President naturally



mentioned subjects as well on which we differed, such as the SS 20, nuclear equilibrium. I cannot agree with him, but I must admit that his intonation in no way reminds of those who call the tune in America; at no stage does one feel that he says something in order to satisfy the expectations of the anti-Soviet camp. He is also original in the way he speaks about Hungary and János Kádár: with considerable warmth, which is unusual for him, and great respect, not only as about successful practice, but also as experience which is worth studying.

As for the scene, I confess—precedents possibly explain this—that I did not even look round in that room, I would only be able to reconstruct it from the photograph taken there. Mitterrand, I remember, was somewhat formal and tired at the beginning of the conversation, but quite relaxed and refreshed by the end of it. He had finally dismissed us with a broad smile, which was not usual.

My aim in telling this story was not, after all, some sort of profile. I intended rather to show why we so much insist on the notion of familiarisation in international politics and contacts today. As readers can verify, the principal source for preliminary anxiety was that we could not be sure of what awaited us, how the conversation would turn out, what would be the reactions of the President and his entourage. That is we were not familiar enough with the medium and the chief character.

If I had to go to the Elysée again tomorrow and could again talk with François Mitterrand, I would not be half as nervous. But this is only the personal side of the matter and not even an important part of it. What is important, and of general validity, is that the successful visit to Budapest, to which our interview was only a small introductory step, resulted in something similar taking place between the two countries, the two states and the two nations. We could become more familiar with each other better, and at different levels; and since then we can even understand each other better; what is more, we are of the same mind about many things.

This is no small matter; it is worthy of attention both from the bilateral and the international point of view.



# DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS OF THE HUNGARIAN ECONOMY

by

BÉLA CSIKÓS-NAGY

**B**etween 1949 and 1979, after postwar reconstruction, the Hungarian economy grew by an annual average of 5.9 per cent. The years 1967 to 1973 were outstanding. In those seven years annual growth approached 7 per cent, the standard of living rose rapidly; at the same time, the supply of goods improved and international trade was balanced. We were justified in considering those years as a golden age in Hungarian economic history.

## *The end of the Golden Age*

These achievements were underpinned by the new economic policy introduced after the 1956 events in Hungary. Compulsory delivery of products by farmers was abolished in 1957. In industry profit incentives were introduced. The developmental process was based on broad social cooperation and was then given institutional foundations by the economic reform of 1968. This put an end to central direction based on obligatory plan targets and it introduced government regulation through economic instruments.

It was during this favourable process that the oil price explosion on the world market in 1973 seemed to cause a long-term break. In the five years between 1974 and 1978 rapid growth still continued, reaching an annual average of 5.3 per cent. But this was already taking place in an unbalanced situation; the result was large-scale debts towards both the rouble and non-rouble accounting countries. In this there were two principal factors. First, there was Hungary's relative shortage of energy and of mineral resources. Hungary imports 45 per cent of all its energy, and 80 per cent of the demand for crude oil has to be met from imports. Second, the modernization pro-



gramme which began in the second half of the sixties assumed that the consumption of oil would increase at a rate greater than that of economic growth. The implementation of this programme was accelerated by the economic reform of 1968 and investment was well under way when oil prices jumped in 1973.

In the commodity structure of foreign trade which the modernization also dealt with, because of price changes on the world market, the terms of trade deteriorated by 20 per cent in the period 1973 to 1980. This meant to the foreign trade-sensitive Hungarian economy no less than the loss of 10 per cent of the national income. The government was unable to offset this deterioration in the terms of trade by increasing exports partly because of a continued and vigorous growth in domestic consumption and partly for structural reasons. This largely contributed to the enormous foreign debt, which was especially conspicuous in 1978, at the peak of the so-called investment cycle. It was in this process that the turn in economic policy appeared at the end of 1978.

#### *The 1978 turn in economic policy*

The two features of the turn in economic policy are the priority given to equilibrium over growth, and the priority given to the standard of living over investment. When these priorities were being drawn up, it was still assumed that even in more difficult international conditions it would still be possible to achieve a nearly 3 per cent growth annually without increasing foreign debts. For this the 25 per cent of the national income put to accumulation would have to be reduced to 20 per cent. It is already clear today that achieving the new growth is more time-consuming and a more difficult task than had been expected. Consequently, the standard of living can also only be maintained if investment is cut back to a greater extent than was planned.

In any case, we have gone further to restore economic equilibrium in 1981 than had been assumed in 1979 when the five-year plan for the 1981-85 period was enacted by the National Assembly (Parliament). The better than expected situation is shown both in the limitation of excess demand and of foreign debts. The supply of goods—in spite of some sporadic disturbances—is better today than before the oil explosions, and in a situation which was more favourable to Hungary. Within CMEA, financial transactions move within planned limits. In addition, non-rouble debt fell in 1981. All this seemed hardly conceivable in 1979.



But contrary to the plan, equilibrium was accompanied by economic stagnation. National income in 1981 barely surpassed that of 1979. Although the national income increased by 1 per cent in 1981, in 1980 it had fallen by nearly the same percentage. All this is very different from the annual average of 5.9 per cent growth which existed before. The 1982 annual plan also assumes a mere 1 to 1.5 per cent increase in the national income. The dual task has remained in force: stabilizing the balance of trade and maintaining the standard of living. The former demands a 4 to 5 per cent surplus of exports in the balance of trade. For this domestic consumption of the national income must be reduced by 1 to 2 per cent. But the latter demands that an even higher share of the national income should be devoted to consumption than before. Accumulation will be around 16 per cent, which is near the technical minimum. The greater than expected difficulties in the economy were brought about by the second oil price explosion of 1979-80.

### *The second oil price explosion*

By the turn of the eighties Hungary had worked off the loss caused by the first oil price increase of 1973. But in the first half of the eighties it must overcome the deterioration in the terms of trade caused by the second oil price explosion of 1979-1980. In trade between the socialist countries the world market prices are followed in five-year averages. In the case of oil this has been a considerable advantage but can only be a temporary respite in having to adapt to the extreme increase in energy prices in the world economy.

The second oil price increase involves the Hungarian national economy in a *larger* and more complicated task than the first. Although the first jump in oil prices quadrupled the world market price of oil, this was only to 7 US dollars per barrel. However, the second price jump doubled the price to 16 US dollars, and meeting this causes almost insurmountable difficulties, even if we take into consideration the inflation of the US dollar in the seventies.

In addition, oil can be obtained from the Soviet Union within transferable rouble accounting trade only in quotas agreed in advance. Imports over and above the quota must be paid for at the spot market prices in free currencies or in convertible products. This has given rise to two problems. First, the protracted recession in the industrially developed capitalist countries means greater difficulties for Hungary in increasing exports to non-



rouble accounting countries. In other words, the capacity of the Hungarian economy to produce dollars has become weaker. Second, the export structure developed in CMEA has ceased to represent an „unlimited” export potential. In other words, the structural problem has become acute within CMEA trade too.

### *Problems of stagnation*

The seemingly permanent economic stagnation brought about by changes in Hungarian economic policy in 1978 has also created a number of other problems. This is understandable if we consider that it is more difficult to solve the problems raised by socio-economic evolution if the national income, or that part of it that can be utilized domestically, does not increase, or in certain cases, even diminishes. There is no unemployment, although this was feared by many people. In fact, the unchanged annual 4-5 per cent growth in productivity eased the problem of the labour shortage.

The main source of dissatisfaction is linked to the absence of growth. Governments need economic growth, since in part of society the feeling of optimism is only created by the hope that tomorrow will be better than today. Also, the institutions of the socialist economy have imposed a forced course of growth from the beginning. In the productive sector this is encouraged by the prospect of increased profit while in the non-productive (consumer) sectors growth is promoted by the gap which exists between the demand and supply of public goods. Consequently, politicians have difficulty accepting periods of economic stagnation, and if these cannot be avoided, they should at least press that its time span should be reduced to a minimum.

In the arguments around the concept of the national economic plan for 1982 several participants urged the application of a boosting policy. One reason for this, among other things, has been the increasing under-utilization of productive capacities. In Hungary, capital efficiency has deteriorated in recent years, which is incidentally a natural concomitant of reduced growth. If an economy developing at 5-6 per cent per annum is stopped, it is inevitable that reserves of capacity will arise, since new capacities still expand at the old rate for some time.

Looking at the problem from the point of view of utilization of capacities, it is obvious that stagnation is indicative of lost opportunities. However, if we sought a solution merely by putting these frozen capacities into operation, we would really have to question the justification for the slow-down. But we know that in given circumstances a high growth rate would



demand additional imports, while exports could not be increased at all, or at least not at the same rate as imports.

Agriculture in Hungary is developing dynamically; it is the reduction of industrial output that causes stagnation. The essence of the problem lies in the fact that capacities available as a result of restricting financial policies can not be used to increase exports. There are three factors which play a role in this. (1) The price relations of crude oil and oil products, at least for Hungary, do not render refined oil products profitable for export, since OPEC prices have to be paid for the crude oil. For this reason 30 per cent of Hungarian refinery capacity is presently unutilized. (2) Steel production is suffering from the worldwide recession despite the fact that the industry is essential for earning hard currency. In 1981 the steel industry had to decrease its output by 5 per cent and the export price level was 20 per cent below that of 1980. (3) The reduction in investments has created excess capacity in sectors such as construction and building materials, and the machine industry. The endeavour to find foreign markets for these free capacities has not yet succeeded.

#### *Rational energy management*

Today the main task of Hungarian economists is to introduce rational energy management. After 1973 a revision of the modernization program of the economy was of course inevitable: a new concept adjusted to the changed conditions in the world economy had to be developed. In the new situation this concept could only be based on specific energy saving methods and on oil substitution. Taking into account Hungary's natural resources, there are several ways to increase the output of natural gas and low-quality coal. The elements of this new concept were shaped in 1974-78, and were merged into a comprehensive programme in 1979. In 1981 the government passed a resolution to accelerate the implementation of the programme, including the extension of domestic fuel production, the introduction of a stricter regime in the manufacture of energy-intensive products, as well as the extension of financial support for energy conservation projects.

Energy saving must be singled out as a major objective because for some time to come the equilibrium of the Hungarian economy will be determined primarily by the success of the efforts made in rational energy management. As long as such a large proportion of foreign currency income earned from exports is devoted to financing oil imports, the more unfavourable will be the balance of trade. The world market price of oil is far higher



than its real value, so that all Hungarian products which must be exported in order to finance its imports, become devalued in comparison. Also, a double price structure exists within the CMEA; if Hungary exceeds the oil import quota ceiling, the OPEC price becomes operative. Projected to the Hungarian economy with the existing production structure, this may be regarded as a punitive price, because it leads to an imbalance.

Hungarian economists are now seeking a new growth course which will not threaten the newly acquired economic equilibrium achieved with such great difficulty. The party and government resolutions of 1977 on the principles of foreign economic policy and the direction of long-range development brought structural policy into the foreground of interest. These resolutions were the first to point out

- that the improvement of the balance of trade was the key issue in the new economic policy;

- that export-oriented development should be effected by improving the production structure;

- that improvements to the balance of trade would only be achieved if the structure of the economy is also improved;

- that technical-economic criteria must be considered in the formulation of an efficient structural policy.

At the time these resolutions were made, however, there was still much debate about the role (active or passive) that prices should play in structural policy decisions, and more generally whether it would be necessary to take measures to strengthen the system of economic guidance. If so what measures would be required in order to lay reliable foundations for improvements in structural policy? In this connection, in my previous paper\* I dealt with the modifications to the regulation system in 1980 which, among other things, aimed to establish the guiding function of price in decisions concerned with structural change. Solutions to three problems were required:

- 1) Placing the domestic valuation of natural resources on a world market (non-rouble import) price basis; the introduction of a competitive industrial price system while maintaining the autarchic nature of the procurement price system of farm products; and the adjustment of profit and loss of industrial enterprises to their results in international competition (non-rouble exports).

- 2) The orientation function of prices in rational economic decisions should not be restricted to the day of price rearrangement, but should be asserted in the process of price formulation, adjusting to changes in the external economy and in the internal market conditions of the national economy.

\* "New Features of Hungarian Economic Policy." *NHQ* 77.



3) Normative financial regulation should be strengthened, i.e. the price effect should not be neutralized by the redistribution of income through budgetary control, such as by skimming off of high profits of an enterprise which has achieved outstanding trading results, or by reimbursing of losses of an enterprise which operates at a low efficiency.

At the same time, it must be emphasized that adjustment to world prices today is a simulated process; i.e. a real competitive price system does not exist. The establishment of competitive conditions can only be achieved in Hungary over a long time span. In the short term the external market price centre must continue to be interpreted by the authorities. The export price (which is the obligatory price centre for the entire sphere of manufacturing industry) is not a real competitive price since, from the viewpoint of efficiency, domestic products should compete with imports. But with import competition, price formulation adjusted to import prices would mean manipulation of the system. Here it must also be remembered that at present Hungary protects her domestic industries against competition from imports by an extremely high tariff barrier which takes into account the requirements of the production structure. Consequently, import prices can not compel the necessary changes in structure required for growth. In GATT, Hungary promised to reduce the 1979 import tariff level by 50 per cent by 1988, so that in the 1980s conditions may gradually be created to achieve a competitive market price structure.

#### *An efficient production structure*

A well determined price system is an indispensable but insufficient condition for rational behaviour; the system of economic regulators must therefore be suitably comprehensive. In the case of Hungary this has been made easier by changes to some economic regulators in 1980. The 1968 reforms introduced state guidance in industry through economic instruments, based on the aim to make a profit. It was changes in these industrial regulators which aimed to set international competition as a measure of efficiency by adjusting domestic prices to foreign trade prices. At the same time, a better adjustment to world market conditions needs measures which go beyond the 1980 changes. These should involve appropriate changes in planning, management, and organization.

In Hungary, state planners have realized that they have to pay more attention to changes in the world market, which are becoming more un-



predictable. This recognition is manifested in the current five-year plan, which gives room for flexible adjustment to international conditions.

Within the framework of the regulation system, analyses are centered primarily on the flow of capital in the implementation of investments, the extension of the competitive price system, as well as the change-over from the aim to exceed a certain target to the achievement of a certain level of productivity.

The Hungarian economy must participate in the international market, with its booms and slumps, upswings and recessions. For a productive organization to be able to meet this situation successfully, it must be properly exposed to the fluctuations. However, the present incentive system which evaluates the performance of enterprises in view of past indicators (the base-determined incentive system), questions the ability of the Hungarian economic units to meet this challenge. This sort of incentive system was introduced before the new economic mechanism and survived the economic reforms of 1968, primarily through the regulation of wages.

The base-determined incentive system motivates enterprises to grow and invest. If the basis of the enterprise is the improvement of performance (profit accumulation, profit rate increase), if wages can only be raised, then premiums can only be paid when performance is improved, and in the case of diminishing prices (profit rates) there is no incentive to remain in competition.

Further, if the aim to surpass a base target level exists, there is only one solution to an uneconomic concern: technical development, but never the transfer of capital to another enterprise or sector. The structural problem therefore clashes with the obstacle of capital shortages even when capital is available. The major task is therefore to create mechanisms which promote both the withdrawal and flow of capital as well as the labour mobility necessary for this.

### *Changes in attitude*

In respect of the organizational structure of enterprises, the introduction of demand-oriented policy, the application of more efficient marketing policies than those in existence at present are essential. A marketing-oriented organizational structure must therefore be introduced.

The structure of Hungarian economic institutions was developed in the 1950s based on the assumption that all problems could be solved by state planning. Consequently, the kind of organizations needed were those which would ensure the implementation of the five-year plans. The system is



therefore a production-oriented one in which the enterprise structure is divided into organizations according to production phases and operational functions. It was felt that in this way the organization of the economy could most easily be shaped to conform to the wishes of the administrative system—to be kept in hand. In an economy controlled by demand, on the other hand, performance is recognized by the market, and the marketing function is essential.

The change-over is complicated, since it does not simply require reorganization, but a change in basic attitudes. No one seriously considers centrally controlled campaigns of reorganization. It is for the benefit of individual enterprises that conditions must be created which couple the rearrangement of production functions and associations for given tasks. It must be assumed that a demand-oriented production structure leads to an organizational structure where the work of the enterprises is judged from the success of the end product.

In the transformation of the system, the introduction of small cooperatives was an important step, and so was the creation of work-teams (partnerships) to be formed within large enterprises to look after certain tasks, and the ability to operate contractual groups. Not all activities could be fitted into the traditional organization of the socialist economy, or they could only be done so according to an irrational pattern, and this was one reason why the second economy has developed. From this point of view, the creation of new forms of organization may be considered as a method to reduce the second economy; to make a number of previously illegal activities legitimate. This also makes it possible to extend the activities which can only be carried out in such organizational forms, and to adjust them better to demand.

Six new organizational forms were permitted, in a united system by the small plant unit. The purpose was to create an efficient organizational system which was sensitive to market requirements as well. It is to be hoped that within a few years an equilibrium will have been created between large, medium and small plants, which is an indispensable condition of an effective production structure.

#### *Monetarization of the economy*

In the course of preparing the 1968 economic reforms there was a debate about the main direction of the transformation of the economic guidance system. Many were of the opinion that decentralization was the main objective, but this was questionable even then. There are areas where de-



centralization cannot occur, such as electric power, and others where it is simply not possible to centralize, such as the fashion industry. The question of centralization-decentralization arises in different forms from sector to sector. But for prices to be able to orientate structural decisions, the role of money relations has to be expanded. Without this the economy can not be regulated by monetary and budgetary (i.e. financial) means. Alternatively, efficient financial regulation is indispensable for an economic management system based on indirect economic regulator. All this presupposes that:

- 1) enterprises can operate independently within a framework of an economic policy strategy controlled by the profit incentive (the law of returns can be asserted);
- 2) there is an equilibrium within the range of both the factors of production and products (money is a genuine legal tender);
- 3) money is tied to the formation of international operations (the currency is convertible).

The more complete the monetary function is the more likely it is that enterprises will be able to act as dictated by economic conditions. When this is the case, policy hides behind the factors determining costing; it is still present, but invisible. This is why monetarization is more likely to accelerate economic reform than decentralization.

In the course of the adjustment of the economic regulators in 1980 great emphasis was laid on the introduction of normative financial regulators. This principle states that financial policy creates the same conditions and sets a uniform yardstick for all enterprise managements. It is not difficult to understand the importance of this in improving efficiency, but the "normative" character of regulators must be interpreted correctly. There are, for instance, regulators that are differentiated according to economic sectors. There are rules of the game which come into force if an unexpected situation arises, or if economic policy attaches special importance to certain goals, and thus creates an incentive for their realization, etc. Such a practice is not considered a harmful exception. In our complicated world, in the rapidly changing world economic environment, we cannot do without mechanisms which create conditions for adjustment.

From the aspect of the activation of the monetary function, in an economy sensitive to foreign trade, fitting into the world monetary and price system is of great importance. This is why such great emphasis has been laid in recent years on steps that can be taken towards the convertibility of currency. This is why the foreign exchange multiplier was changed in 1976 to enable the transition from a dual to a uniform exchange rate.



In the monetarized economy the price-regulating function of the exchange rate and the structure-regulating role of prices inevitably increase. In connection with this, attention has been focused on the question of an equilibrium exchange rate. In the 1970s analyses were made of the attitude of Hungarian industrial enterprises towards domestic sales, and in the case of exports in respect of rouble and non-rouble sales. The analyses referred on the period when, as a general rule, higher profits were attainable from non-rouble than rouble exports, and higher profits from rouble exports than domestic sales. In spite of this, most enterprises preferred domestic sales to rouble exports, and rouble to non-rouble exports. In other words, in respect of the three markets the decisions were not regulated by relative profit.

Detailed analysis has disclosed the benefits from the dominance of producers over consumers, and the fact that on the domestic market the risk is smaller. The preference for rouble-accounting exports was because of the long-term, stable orders, despite the lack of prompt delivery, uneven quality, and lack of spare parts. The conclusion is unequivocal: in the hope of surplus profit no enterprise was likely to prefer exports over domestic sales, and especially not non-rouble accounting exports. Consequently, the aim should be to create a restrictive monetary policy. In such a situation the enterprise behaviour is export-oriented, because the volume of exports is a natural consequence of efficient utilization of industrial capacity.

Nevertheless, the introduction of an equilibrium exchange rate in the classical sense would not have been a realistic objective in the course of the correction in 1980. A structural policy focusing on international competition could not be based on an equilibrium exchange rate when in industry the large scale production structure had been shaped by 1980 with no regard to the price function, and in agriculture, due to the basic differences between European conditions of production and world market prices, international competition could not regulate structure.

### *The external convertibility of the forint*

Consequently, in 1980 the real objective was the introduction of mechanisms through which (keeping efficiency in mind) the Hungarian industrial structure could gradually adjust to the requirements of international economic conditions. Hence a uniform exchange rate must be accompanied by a differentiated modernization subsidy that would be eliminated within 4-5 years. Otherwise it would have been necessary to



be totally irrational and devalue the domestic currency. However, this would have created a differentiation in profits which would have been difficult to justify politically and economically, without making individual exceptions and skimming off excess profits. Consequently, the classical exchange rate regulation can be set as a goal only for 1986-90. At the same time, the goal of external convertibility of the forint can be set as a goal today, and was indirectly declared in the early 1970s when it was decided that foreigners who invest capital in Hungary could re-export it in the currency of their choice. For the Hungarian economy this was a more rational method of international cooperation than raising short-term foreign credits.

CMEA relations in the opinion of many Hungarian economists, joining in the world monetary system is also an important requirement from the viewpoint of the intensification of the division of labour within the CMEA. The CMEA has not been able to operate independently so far, and can do so to an even lesser extent in future. Due to the noticeable reduction in the trade in natural resources within the CMEA, there has been reduced growth in those CMEA countries which are deficient in natural resources. As a result of this, dependence on the world market has increased to a different extent from country to country, so that the intensification of the division of labour within the CMEA can only be interpreted in the way that they provide a preference for joint measures of integration and cooperation in cases where this leads to demonstrable mutual benefit. If the monetary and price system of the CMEA fitted adequately into the world system, then the intensification of relations between CMEA countries would depend on the range and extent of the preferences which these collectively grant to each other.

The integration resolution passed by the CMEA in 1971 set the goal of industrial cooperation and specialization in production between the socialist countries without, however, examining the conditions for these in the monetary and price system. Yet, if international competition is to be kept in mind in the formulation of structural policy, a course of growth can only be controlled by demand, and the latter can only occur with the introduction of currency cooperation and competitive prices.

The fitting of the CMEA into the world monetary and price system can be achieved easily in the case of prices but with more difficulty in respect of the currency. In the former case this is easier because the basis of the setting of contractual prices within the CMEA is today also the world market price. What is involved is only the more flexible and more consistent assertion of adjustment to world market price movements. The



creation of currency cooperation represents a bigger problem since it presupposes that the external convertibility of the transferable rouble will be brought about. The necessity of this was recognized and agreed upon in principle, in connection with the resolution on economic integration, but in practice little has been done.

It seems that, in contrast with earlier ideas, the CMEA countries have to take initiatives separately, and concerted CMEA stand may then be taken as the synthesis of these steps. This is how the decisions Hungary has taken or wants to take in respect of the convertibility of the forint and to join the international monetary organizations must be interpreted. The basic motivation for Hungary to join the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank was not the possibility of raising new credits on favourable terms, although this was a strong motivation. What is involved is primarily the elimination of the disadvantage created by the fact that in projects undertaken in the developing countries using credits granted by the World Bank, only member countries of the World Bank can participate.

On the part of the developing countries the question arises: as long as the CMEA does not fit into the world price and monetary system, it cannot represent an alternative to the capitalist world economy for developing countries, in the organization of the international of labor based mutual benefit.

### *The importance of production*

In the transition from stagnation to renewed growth two extreme approaches may cause the most damage. One is a routine approach in which the modernization of the production structure is only possible through the introduction of new techniques ensuring the highest standard on a world scale, i.e. through investments. With the other approach, growth can be started only after the radical transformation of the system of economic regulators. In reality, an export level can also be increased within the existing production structure and, products of average quality can be sold favourably on the world market. Every intelligent investment and every wise step in the regulator system can gradually advance the solution to the structural problem.

A stand has to be taken against the organization of production divorced from market judgements relying on the primacy of production. If this course is not followed, economic policy is likely to get stuck in the labyrinths



of stagnation. In the course of renewed growth a policy of equilibrium must be coupled with a progressive development policy.

The fathers of economics created our science as the economics of production. They disclosed the law of equal exchange, which regulates production through the operation of which, on the one hand, demand influences production, and, on the other, production adjusts to demand. This theory was developed further by Marx when he elaborated his theory of surplus value. In the capitalist world, this theory, forgotten for half a century, is now being rediscovered in the hard days of stagnation. Steps are being taken to adjust budgetary policy to the requirements of stimulating production through taxes. While Hungary breaks from its development policy divorced from market judgements this must not be forgotten either.

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# PREPARING TO MEET THE CHALLENGE

*The Hungarian Economy in the Eighties*

by

BÉLA KÁDÁR

**T**he changes in the system of economic management may well be the most important development in general thinking and political practice in Hungary over the past fifteen years. It is not without interest that economic reform has certainly not been on a single-dimension nor is it an historically novel process. The problems deriving from the relative backwardness of the country were recognized by the reform generation of the 19th century. Making up some of the leeway, trying to catch up with international developments was the aim and endeavour of many generations.

## *Historic dimensions*

The radical social changes that followed the Second World War crystallized around the building of the socialist system. The recognition of the operational problems of a new social model unable to call on the help of precedents was reflected in the economic debates around 1953 and 54, and indeed in the 1956 resolutions of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, and took a more definite form in the 1968 reform of the system of economic management. This aspect of the Hungarian reform policy was therefore primarily specific to the system, tied to reconciling the socialist socio-economic model with the given level of Hungarian development, growth fundamentals and cultural heritage.

The third and latest dimension of Hungarian reform efforts relates to the radical changes which took place in the external conditions during the seventies, that is to the new type world economic challenges and to the adjustments these forced. The current and very likely permanent external challenge is not specific to the system, neither is it a consequence of the given develop-



ment level, since it effects develop and lesser developed, socialist and capitalist countries alike, even if to a varying extent. These challenges cannot be regarded as a single-plane process, and their loss-causing effect cannot be made independent of the long-term development of the productive potential of social and economic life. Perhaps it will suffice to give an idea of the severity of the challenge through remarking on the deterioration of the terms of trade. At the present time Hungary is forced to pay 20 per cent more goods for a unit of its imports than the country did ten years ago, 30 to 32 per cent more than in the middle of the century, and 60-70 per cent more, then in the years before the Great War. The extent of the deterioration of the terms of international trade points to faulty development policy decisions, as well as deterioration in external conditions, given a country so sensitive to world trade from the start; it also points to the consequences of the introvert, protectionist measures taken between the two World Wars and during the fifties, and also to the long-term, structural problems which effect the future viability of the country, as well as the necessity and the urgency of comprehensive and continuous reforms.

Outlining the three aspects in Hungarian reform is not an obligatory offering to the spirit of the age, nor is it simply to broaden the analytic horizon of the ever increasing number of historical reviews. The point is that the efficiency of the implementation of reform efforts depends to a considerable degree on how far Hungarians and the leadership of the country build on the connections between the various reforms, the degree to which they are able to accept their continuity. It is in this spirit that I should like to examine the development trends of Hungarian foreign trade in what follows. External economic relations reflect productive capacity, the nature of the challenges, the practicability of the decisions that lay the foundation for the future of the country in the clearest, indeed the most merciless form. The particular timeliness of the connections between reform and foreign trade are well demonstrated by the events and dilemmas of the past decade. Growing central interference did not materialize in the five years after 1973, in measures that accelerated the growth of competitiveness, and efficiency and flexibility but rather took the form of defensive and administrative measures, out of step with the spirit of reform, and thus hindered the furthering and blossoming of the economic reform introduced in 1968. The moving power of the economic political reforms evolved after 1979 on the other hand, was the necessity of adjusting to adverse external changes.



### *Losing ground in the world economy*

Owing to the relative underdevelopment of the service sector, Hungary participates in the international division of labour principally by way of commodity exchange. Hungary's share of world exports was 2 per cent in the years before the Great War, 0.66 per cent in 1938, 0.65 per cent in 1955, 0.7 per cent in 1970, and 0.44 per cent in 1980. The reduction of the country's importance in world trade over the longer run is, naturally, not independent of changes in the price structure, and the relevant forward movement of oil-exporting countries. But this provides only a partial explanation: the limitations of statistics makes it difficult to analyze the long-term fluctuations of Hungary in world trade of the more important groups of commodities. Nevertheless, since 1970, when the falling behind of the country became more clearly outlined, Hungary's share in the world trade in engineering industry products fell from 1.07 to 0.61 per cent, in industrial commodities from 0.8 to 0.57 per cent and in agricultural products from 1.1 to 0.9 per cent.

Trends of falling behind are experienced in trade transacted with the various main groups of countries. Even though Hungary increased its share in the industrial commodity import of OECD countries from 0.2 to 0.23 per cent between 1965–80, the country was reduced from 0.7 to 0.5 per cent in their agricultural imports. Hungary's share fell from 6.9 to 3.8 per cent in the industrial commodity imports of socialist countries, and from 4.6 to 4 per cent in their agricultural imports. The anyhow modest world economic importance of Hungary declined considerably even without the effects caused by the shifts in prices between industrial commodities and fuels. The country did not succeed in counterbalancing the quantitative loss qualitatively, by building out positions on the markets of leading technical products enjoying considerable demand. The export share of Hungary exceeds 5 per cent on the markets of such products of lesser importance for economic strategy such as rubber mattresses, deep-drilling tubes, paprika, salami, buses, and apples.

The reduction in world trade importance cannot be explained by under average growth in the volume of Hungarian exports, that is the export output capacity of the economy in the quantitative sense. The volume of Hungarian exports increased at an average rate of more than 8 per cent annually between 1960 and 1980 (having averaged 6.8 per cent even between 1971–80), while that of the world's export total grew at the rate of 7 per cent. Falling behind, under such circumstances, points rather to adverse price fluctuations related generally to an unfavourable supply struc-



ture, poor choice of trading partners, or to the low efficiency of the foreign trading.

The process of losing ground in world trade, the speed and extent of which came close to those experienced in the course of the restructuring of world trade, that began late in the 15th century, or those of the post Great War years, adversely influences the development prospects of the country in several zones. The loss of ground, even though it is but a consequence, also demands countermeasures, particularly at a time when the extent of participation in the international division of labour, and the external economic sensitivity of the country continuously grew (foreign trade amounted to an average 18 per cent of national income before the Great War, 10 per cent in 1938, 12 per cent in 1949, 31 per cent in 1965, 42 per cent in 1975, and approximately 50 per cent in 1981). That is the loss of ground increased the asymmetry of interests generally experienced between countries possessing different economic potentials and bargaining strength, reducing the attraction of Hungary as trading partner also during the past decade. The economy, however, can rely on in-depth defence zones, independent economic-financial-technical-scientific development in small countries as little as their military strategy can. Attack is the best defence, the continuous strengthening of world economic positions is a fundamental requirement of the long-term strategy of small countries, regardless of their social system.

#### *Structural problems in foreign trade relations*

The exchange of services increased much faster than that of commodities the world over following the Second World War and by now one quarter of the total volume of payments relates to the exchange of services on an average, 40–50 per cent in some Western, and Southern European countries. Consequent to the development policy Hungary followed during the better part of the past thirty years, the participation of the service sector in the international division of labour suffered delay, and developed over a narrower zone and with limited resources. Thus, in spite of the heartening growth in tourism in 1981, the currency-earning importance of the service sector is small, and a disproportionately great role has to be filled by foreign trading, which transacts more than 90 per cent of the payments related to the exchange of goods and services.

The structural transformation as well as the balance stresses of growth of the Hungarian economy can be well traced in the changes of the product pattern. The structural changes in Hungarian foreign trade are outstanding even by international standards. The fundamentally agrarian character of



the pre-war Hungarian economy and foreign trade changed, and participation in the international division of labour became the chief motor of the broadening of external economic relations quite some time ago. The share of exports of agricultural and food industry products was 57 per cent in 1938, 32 per cent in 1965, 23 per cent in 1970, and 34 per cent in 1980. The relevant import figures over the same period were 8, 19, 15 and 13 per cent. While agricultural foreign trade is still, and is expected to be for a considerable time, the most important currency earner, its earlier quantitative dominance has been considerably reduced.

The change in quantitative indices is the most significant in the case of machinery and other finished products. Machines accounted for 9 per cent of exports in 1938, 27 per cent in 1955, 32 per cent in 1970, 39 per cent in 1975, and 34 per cent in 1980. Consumer goods were responsible for one-tenth of the Hungarian exports in 1938, and one-fifth since 1955, in round figures.

It is one of the peculiarities of the economic and external economic structure that different product structures developed in foreign trade with the various main groups of countries. This by no means favours the structural integration of the economy in a small country. For instance, machinery is of key importance in rouble accounted exports, accounting 37 per cent already in 1955, 44 per cent in 1970, and 47 per cent in 1980. Two-fifths of Hungarian exports to developing countries consisted of machines before the Second World War, one-third in 1955, 35 per cent in 1970, and 31 per cent in 1980; other industrial products are responsible for 35-45 per cent in the long run.

The backbone of exports is made up by natural resource-intensive agricultural products, metallurgic and chemical semi-finished products, and—to a smaller degree—more labour-intensive light industry products in the division of labour with OECD countries. The rate and tendency of the structural transformation of Hungarian foreign trade is by no means satisfactory in this relation. The share of machinery reached the pre-war level only during the seventies, having increased from 7 to 13 per cent only between 1970 and 1980. The most substantial structural changes were the continuous, and later accelerated reduction of the share of once dominant agricultural products as a result of growing Common Market agrarian protectionism, the share of highly processed food, however, increased from 47 to 68 per cent between 1970 and 1980 within the total of agricultural and food processing industry exports, the doubling of the pre-war share of industrial consumer goods, and the increase of the importance of fuels and semi-finished chemicals.



On the import side the more significant structural changes took place in two opposed waves. Between 1938–1955 the share of consumer goods decreased, and that of the agricultural and food processing industry products increased. After 1955, and particularly after 1965, the share of machinery, which reached 24 per cent in 1970, and 30 per cent in 1980 increased parallel with the decline in agricultural products. The importation of parts for operational purposes however increased vigorously in opposition to that of equipment imports for investment purposes.

The chief structural changes are worthy of note, no doubt, yet they must not be judged to be wholly favourable. It would not be reasonable not to take into account that the structural transformation in world trade has also accelerated during the past quarter-century. Products of a material character accounted for half of world trade 25 years ago, only one-third in the early seventies, and even after the shifts in price relations in the seventies, their current share is two-fifths. Hungary has no reason to be particularly satisfied, when it is considered that many countries, which stood at lower levels of development than Hungary before the war, e.g., Spain, Ireland, South Korea, Taiwan, were able to transform their foreign trade product structure faster than Hungary.

It is true that the share of processed end products already reached 29 per cent in 1955 in the non-rouble accounted trade, that is it exceeded the 1938 average by about 50 per cent as a result, in part of the technical and structural changes of the war years. This share remained steady over the next 20 years, indeed it even decreased somewhat, to 24 per cent in 1970–74, and began to grow more vigorously only in consequence of the external shock-effects after 1973, and the subsequent domestic development policy.

A considerable portion of current external economic tensions are due to the deterioration of the terms of trade owing to drastic shifts of prices between fuels and processed industrial goods in the country's trade with socialist countries, and the consequences of the market position of processed industrial goods, and their increasing price differentiation in trade with OECD countries.

On the market of conventional and new Hungarian industrial goods substituting for the decline in agricultural exports (light industrial products), semi-finished chemicals, metallurgical products, indeed of engineering massproducts and of durable consumer goods exported to OECD countries:

- demand increases much more slowly, than the average,
- struggling with structural problems, the producers and trades unions



of OECD countries with increasing frequency demand measures which restrict imports,

- the developing countries commanding considerable raw material and wage advantages, and most of them also enjoying trade policy preferences have an increasing, occasionally even market-determining role in meeting slowly growing OECD domestic demand.

As a cumulative consequence of these factors, the greater proportion of the Hungarian exports to OECD countries consists of

- products of low relative price dynamism by international standards, and therefore
- of low profitability, and
- falling within the zone of world-wide structural over-supply.

Thus one of the pivotal problem of the future Hungarian development is posed by the degree to which the economic structure which was steadily, and in the seventies radically depreciating, will be transformed, taking into account market competitiveness and profitability. In the absence of more efficient adjustment to the world wide requirements, Hungary is forced to compete not with the developed capitalist countries, as was supposed in the sixties, but with the developing world, and over an ever-widening zone. This inevitably leads to sliding back amongst the developing countries within a foreseeable time, and to the process of losing ground within the world economy becoming firmly established.

#### *Dilemmas of the relational orientation*

Objective determinations, location, factors of the political and institutional systems, the fundamentals of economic structure and growth are reflected in the choice of trading partners in the long run. A more extensive international analysis shows that the role of geographic determinants is diminishing, and that of economic factors is growing parallel with the globalization of economic progress, in the way the relational structure of external economic relations shapes up.

The relational tendencies of Hungarian foreign trade were shaped in essence by the political and institutional system in the twenty-five years that followed the Second World War: on the domestic side the requirements of building the socialist social-economic model, and on the external one the constraints of the Cold War and its aftermath. Radically rearranging the historically developed international division of labour meant a formidable test for the Hungarian economy. The share of what are now the socialist countries was no more than 13 per cent in Hungarian foreign



trade in 1938 (disregarding the GDR and Yugoslavia), but over 60 per cent already in 1955, and 71 per cent in 1960, when it began to decline to 65 per cent by 1970, and to 53 per cent in 1980, under the effect of the exogenous effects developing since the sixties, and in the wake of the strengthening of the economic determinants of the international division of labour. The share of the developing countries fluctuated around 5 per cent for a long time, but increased to 10 per cent by 1980, parallel with the growth of their world economic importance during the seventies. Foreign trade with OECD countries amounted to 34 per cent in 1955, 29 per cent in 1970, and 38 per cent in 1980. It has hardly changed over a quarter of a century. What has changed is the foreign trading concept, which assumed that the international division of labour will become realized essentially, and to a growing degree among the socialist countries.

The role of vicinity should not be neglected. The overwhelming part of the Hungarian trade was transacted within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy before the Great War, even though the lion's share of high technology products of the time (e.g., railway rolling-stock, vacuum-engineering, pharmaceutical products) was sold on non-Austro-Hungarian markets even then. The relational structure of Hungarian foreign trade reflected essentially the same situation also in 1922, when 67 per cent of Hungarian exports went to Austria, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia, and a further 14 per cent to Germany. The first major extension of the distance manoeuvrability of the Hungarian economy occurred between 1922 and 1938. Only 31 per cent of the Hungarian foreign trade volume was shared by neighbouring countries in 1938, while Germany accounted for 29 per cent, Italy 7 per cent, and more distant West European and overseas countries for 33 per cent. Thus the Hungarian economy already succeeded once to alleviate the limitations of geographically determined foreign trading manoeuvrability within a relatively short time, and under very severe conditions. Following the Second World War, the Soviet Union also became a neighbour, while the share of Austria, and later of the other smaller countries, decreased considerably compared to the average of the two inter-war decades. Disregarding the developments of trade with the Soviet Union, the share of foreign trade turnover with the countries already neighbouring Hungary before the war accounted for 25 per cent in 1955, 18 per cent in 1970, and only 16 per cent in 1981.

Besides the continuous diminishing of the role of proximity, the linking power of institutional factors, indeed even of the membership in the same regional integration weakened in the development of trade with the small European CMEA countries. The share of foreign trade turnover of the



five small European CMEA countries amounted to 34 per cent in 1955, 27 per cent in 1970, and 18 per cent in 1981.

The major structural aspects of the Hungarian economy are not independent of the direction of trade. In 1980, almost the whole of imported fuels, 46 per cent of imported raw and basic materials, 65 per cent of the machinery and consumer goods import came from socialist countries, and 79 per cent of the machinery exports, 49 per cent of the consumer goods exported, 43 per cent of the raw material and semi-finished product exports, and 55 per cent of the agricultural exports went there.

An important problem for adjustment is that the volume of fuel, raw material, and basic material imports from socialist countries can be increased only at a very moderate rate or not at all, owing to growing equilibrium—difficulties, loan-repayment obligations, growth-deceleration, and the inevitable economic restrictions applied by the CMEA countries (the volume of socialist imports to Hungary increased by only an average of 2.7 per cent annually even between 1976–80), and only on different profitability terms than before. The economic policy constraints to which the various CMEA countries are subjected also modify the future prospects of common industrial cooperation programmes. The type of cooperation, which developed over more than thirty years, aimed at the development of the Hungarian processing industry on the basis of fuels, raw materials, and basic materials imported from the CMEA region will no longer provide a dynamic motor for cooperation in the coming decade.

Improving the equilibrium conditions of the Hungarian economy, its structural transformation, and dynamization also effects the direction of foreign trade, and makes urgent the establishment of new, internationally competitive capacities, able to meet the demand for new sources of raw materials, semi-finished products, and technologies structurally as well as qualitatively. Naturally, it is still expedient to cope in as close cooperation with the socialist countries as possible, if only in the interest of counterbalancing the inevitable quantitative reduction of the intensity of cooperation by the modernizing, qualitative improvement of the forms of cooperation. In spite of the modification of the relational structure related to the objective economic processes, the Soviet Union and the CMEA region will remain the quantitatively most important area of Hungary's foreign trade.

The exploitation of the additional sources of international economic cooperation is by no means simple. Even though the buyer's market favours Hungary's imports from the OECD countries, with certain exceptions, problems arise concerning the growth of Hungarian exports. Within the EEC, the conditions of marketing are made more difficult by the economic



dynamism being below the international average, by trade and economic policy discrimination against Hungary, and the already developed tendencies of business management and financial integration. Relations with the relatively more dynamic developed countries overseas are handicapped by the limitations of distance to which a small country shut off from the sea, and with no traditional links, is particularly subjected.

In cooperation with the developing countries, the most dynamic sector of the world economy, the comparative advantages of the expertise and of Hungarian wage levels, as well as of growing imports ensure favourable prospects. However, increasing exports to developing countries requires suitable commodity bases, available financing of the transfer of technology, know-how, management and personnel, and occasionally import-oriented regression programmes. Progress gives rise to new tasks on all of the three major fronts of Hungarian external economic relations.

*Economic reform and the new course of growth*

The international processes of the past decade made the balance, efficiency, and structural problems of the Hungarian economy more acute in several respects and with cumulating effect. Since an efficient remedy for the much intertwined socioeconomic problems cannot be expected from measures with limited aims, or a mere treatment of symptoms, the coordination of socio-economic aims, the system of economic management, and of reforms affecting spheres outside the economy within the scope of a comprehensive development strategy is a condition for the charting of a new Hungarian course leading to growth.

The circumstance that Hungarian economic policy was late in recognizing the nature of the challenges arising from the new world economic situation, and the kind of response they needed is also reflected in the current socio-economic problems of Hungary. The 20th October 1977 resolution of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party on long-term external economic policy and production structure made its effect felt only since 1979. The Hungarian economic policy of the last three years differs substantially from the earlier one, and more effectively assists adjustment to the world economic changes, above all the improvement of the external economic, budgetary, and domestic market balances. The essential aspects of this policy are curbing extensive economic growth, investments and consumption, the start of labour-saving labour management, the tightening up of liquidity on the money market, the improvement of the organizational system of the administration and the enterprises, the



extension of the forms of business undertakings, the increased assertion of world market price movements and price ratios, the introduction of a uniform exchange rate, and the joining of the International Monetary Fund, and the Bank of International Rebuilding and Development.

The therapeutic effects of Hungarian economic policy between 1979 and 1982 have not yet become fully effective owing partly to shortage of time, partly to the unevenness of implementation, but they prevented the further deterioration of the situation. At the same time, the further deterioration of the external conditions of Hungarian development between 1980-82, and the experience acquired so far in the course of adjustment also ripened the recognition that the success of the long-term adjustment requires reforms that go well beyond equilibrium therapy.

The 23rd of June 1982 resolution of the Central Committee of the HSWP states: "Economic growth and improvements in the standard of living in the next decades will depend on

- how far we will be able to increase dollar accounted exports, in general, and the exports to the developed capitalist countries in particular;
- the carrying out of a production policy, in which the size of production, its composition and changes, and the technologies used are unambiguously controlled by demand, first of all the demand on outside markets;
- more efficient service of the Hungarian external economic targets by foreign policy and by Hungarian positions taken up at international political and economic policy forums;
- on the further improvement of the ability of the economy to adjust to external conditions by further developing all of the elements of the production structure and of economic management, and on the requirements of the domestic market being brought close to those of the world market."\*

The latest political decision related to development strategy, therefore formulates with a clear lack of ambiguity that the new Hungarian growth course will be set within the framework of increased participation in the international division of labour, of control by demand, and increased reliance on the qualitative factors of growth.

The shaping and modification of the system of socio-economic aims received most attention in recent years within the reform of the Hun-

\* "On the evolution of Hungarian external economic relations, and on the tasks of their development." Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1982, pp. 39-40. In Hungarian.



garian economy, since the 1968 reform of the system of economic management somewhat postponed tasks related to development strategy, and also because the changes that occurred in the international position of the country made the revision of the system of aims imperative, and of key importance. The adjustment to the requirements of the new development phase of the world economy naturally also affects the system of economic management, and urges first of all changes which improve competitiveness. Consequent to the external challenge, and to the domestic fundamentals, however, the maintenance of certain dualisms is inescapable in economic management, that is the continuing coexistence of market mechanisms, and various forms of central interference.

Much is known about the present development of countries which began to modernise their economies late. This shows that the market mechanism, under conditions of less developed commodity production and social division of labour, provides only poor indications for decisions that are in keeping with what is practicable and desirable. Present market conditions in industrially developed countries are not a reliable guide particularly as regards new technologies and structural transformation. Economic agents, enterprises and individuals, reared in an environment of economic models operated by central plan instructions, can hardly be expected to behave rationally, as the market demands, when market effects suddenly appear and are fully felt in the economy, or to move comfortably in the competitive environment of the world economy, given their training and the information available to them. The world market environment, more precisely the competitive climate, does not develop either purely under the effect of the market mechanisms, but—to a growing extent—of the bargaining power of multinationals or organizations as big as the economy. Coordinated assistance by the state which backs the smaller bargaining power of less powerful firms is particularly important in the smaller countries. In uncertain world economic situations, when the economic motives of global strategies appreciate, the healthy operation of the economic system increasingly demands a graded division of labour between the central agencies of economic management, and business. Socio-economic progress cannot be fitted into a single, or a few universal laws or models of general validity abstracted from historical circumstances or political and economic options. The more complicated the material and social world is, the more difficult it is to formulate truths of general validity based on any lofty principles, the greater is the danger that the search for pure models leads to the ossification of scientific and social behaviour that should be flexible.

The Hungarian control system of the 1980s can be developed only on



the basis of concrete possibilities, and not of the inner logic of some abstract, theoretical model. Its business is the practical service of the interests of Hungarian society, and not the creation of a theory for export. In consequence, it cannot assume a pure form in the future either, but will have to be built on the combination of central planning, and the market mechanism. Unfortunately, Kossuth's view, which defines politics as the "science of exigencies," struck too deep roots in the Hungarian public opinion. Ferenc Deák, who regarded politics as the "art of proportions" is a much sounder guide concerning the further development of the Hungarian system of management.

The international economic experience of the past two decades, the close connection between the general state of health of a society and its ability to produce economically also drew attention to the importance of the social environmental components of growth. The reform policy has to take into account that a switch to a more competition-oriented growth course or social environment clashes with the conditioning of several decades, and in the absence of suitable preparation is likely to produce more, and make more visible successes and failures. Society has to be psychologically prepared, and armed with a new set of values to accept the more conspicuous success of a few, and to bear the inevitable failures and conflict situations. That is abroad transformation of social views has to take place. Economic policy may contribute to this far-reaching task by establishing the conditions necessary for the development of individual abilities and for the improvement of opportunities, to be successful. The educational system and the media can contribute by shaping the attitudes, of the public at large. The primary task of the political sphere will be, naturally, the strategic coordination of the complex tasks of the reform, and the control of their implementation, keeping the tensions which unavoidably emerge in the course of the reform programmes at bearable levels. The democratization of the system of political institutions may provide considerable assistance in the function of the political, cultural and intuitive Hungarian heritage and of the appropriateness of the situation at any given trial. Strengthening the atmosphere of trust is of pivotal importance, since the basis of economic prosperity is faith in the future. It is increasingly recognized today that the success of the reform, cutting short the phase fraught with the most severe ordeals, ultimately depends on the extent to which society is able to shape the non-economic conditions of progress.



# PETITION

(Short story)

by

MIHÁLY KORNIS

Dear Sirs,

*With reference to your much-valued query concerning final judgement on requests respectfully submitted by the undersigned claimant (Reference No: 1909-1970, Mrs Szalkay, clerk in charge), I hereby return the Claims Form together with a Supplementary Statement.*

## CLAIMS FORM

*(issued in compliance with Official Decree No.40, 1957 B.C.)*

### I. REQUEST

(a) I should like to be born on December 9, 1909, in Budapest.

(b) I should like my mother to be Regina Fekete (housewife) and my father to be Miksa Tábori (travelling salesman).

(In the event that you are unable to grant my request regarding the above-mentioned persons, I am open to other suggestions so long as honoured parents will be recognizable as Mama and Papa.)

(c) I further request that my wife be Edit Kovács (payroll clerk) and my son, Pál Tábori (student). (See addendum to Item I (b); here the words "my wife" and "my son" are to be substituted for "Mama" and "Papa" respectively.)

(d) In view of my desired date of death (see Item II), I renounce forever the joys of grandparenthood.

### II. LENGTH OF STAY

I request 61 years 6 months 3 days 2 minutes and 17 seconds.

(Note: I have submitted similar requests to the proper authorities on a number of previous occasions—e.g. in 80 B.C., and more recently in 1241,



1514, 1526, 1711, 1849\*—but on each occasion, due to lack of space, my request was turned down. This is my seventh request. 61 years is not a long time; were I to succeed in gaining your favour, sirs, in this matter, I would certainly try and make the best of my brief sojourn.)

### III. PURPOSE

(a) I would like to complete six years of elementary school, four years of secondary school, and then take a few business courses. Afterwards I wouldn't mind joining the firm of Haas & Son as a cashier, so that in 1939—with the consent of the authorities, of course—I might be able to open my own little dry goods store on Király utca, subsequently known as Mayakovsky utca. In 1940 I could realize a long-held dream and purchase a two-seat Fiat motor car.

(During the course of your deliberations please take into account that with said motor car I could take Mama to the market, though this she does not yet suspect.)

*Total time used up on these activities (shop, car, provisions, cleansers, etc.):*  
3 years.

(b) Next I thought of a Second World War. Nazism, discrimination, persecution I will put up with; yellow star I will put on. My car and my shop I will hand over to the Hungarian Army and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of de-Judaization, respectively.

(I hereby request that if at all possible my parents not be dispatched to the Mauthausen concentration camp. It looks as though I might be able to work out something for them at the Dohány utca ghetto.)

As for me, I could like to be drafted into a forced labour company, with all that that entails, slaps, duck walks included. I hope that in 1945 the Red Army's liberating operations will still find me alive (see Item II!); if so, I shall marry at once, start a family, and join the Hungarian Workers' Party.

(c) From 1945 to 1948 I shall be happy.

*Total time spent (new shop, new car, provisions, cleansers, etc.):* 3 years.

(d) In 1949 I should like to make my son's acquaintance; and it might be a good idea if that same year I was relieved for good of my automobile (I will have buried Mama by then), my business, and my Party membership.

(e) My wife should likewise be expelled from the Party.

\* The dates indicate major disasters in Hungarian history.—The Editor.



(Should technical difficulties arise in this connection—as my wife will have no contact with the private sector other than through my own person—permit me at this point to call your attention to a Mrs József Csizmadia, also known as Babi, who, I believe, could be persuaded to write an anonymous letter stating that my wife attended a grammar school on Vörösmarty utca, run by a Scottish mission. In addition, it might be pointed out that she maintained, through a certain Róza Kun, ties with the United States of America that could be said to be close; she received letters from her, read them, answered them.)

(f) Because of the foregoing, my son should be denied admission to a public kindergarten.

(g) I do not wish to participate in the 1956 counter-revolutionary upheaval; on the contrary, in protest against the disorders, my family and I will begin a fast. Four hours of guard duty nightly, on our staircase, in the company of Dr. Aurél Kovács, dental clinic resident, is not inconceivable; all the same, I would appreciate it if the above-mentioned Red Army would again come to the aid of our country.

(h) From this point on I should like to continue, or rather conclude, my life as an assistant buyer, maybe even a buyer.

(Note: Aside from events enumerated above, I should like to be spared from further noteworthy historical occurrences.)

Respectfully yours,

ISTVÁN TÁBORI

*Appendix No. 1.*

#### SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT

In full knowledge of my legal and civic responsibilities, I the undersigned hereby solemnly declare that it is as retail merchant, truck driver, assistant buyer and buyer that I would like to serve the Kingdom of Hungary, the Hungarian Republic of Councils, Truncated Hungary, Greater Hungary, the Apostolic Regency, and the Hungarian People's Republic.

I will honour and respect the governments of Francis Joseph I, Count Mihály Károlyi, Béla Kun, Miklós Horthy, Mátyás Rákosi, János Kádár, etc., and will obey their laws.

When hearing the Austrian, German, Soviet, Hungarian national anthems (as well as the "Gotterhalte," the "Giovinezza," the "Internationale"), I will stand at attention.



I will give due respect to the Austrian, German, Soviet national colours, and to the Red Flag, as well as to my nation's arms (Dual Cross, Crown of St. Stephen, hammer and sickle, wheat-sheaf, etc.).

I shall likewise respect my superiors: Edmund and Paul Haas, Endre Garzó, forced labor company commander and war hero, Kálmán Zserci, owner-director, Kálmán Zserci, Jr., cooperative chairman, and will obey their instructions at all times. My assigned tasks, both at work and away from work (eating, sleeping, caring for progeny, visiting shelters, hospitals, polling places), I will faithfully perform. I will also help my wife with the housework (wash the dishes, clean the rooms, wring out the mop) without constant reminders.

During the course of my life I will not trouble you with special requests (e.g. flight into space, starring role in a movie, platform in Hyde Park), and regardless of whether or not I receive prior notification, I shall accept my death with equanimity; and I shall not have strange gods before me, and shall not swear false witness against my neighbour; and neither shall I covet my neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, his maidservant, his ox, his ass, nor anything that shall belong only to my neighbour.

In the hope that my request shall receive a sympathetic hearing, I remain (and shall hopefully become)

ISTVÁN TÁBORI

*(Translated by Ivan Sanders)*



## SOCIALIST RENEWAL AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

by

ZSIGMOND PÁL PACH

A quarter of a century ago the epoch-making process that had begun with the liberation of Hungary in 1945 came to a crisis. This session is to survey how we overcame that crisis, a crisis which was social and political as well as spiritual and moral; our purpose is to sum up the experiences of these twenty-five years of socialist renewal in Hungary.

So the matter to be discussed will be history, contemporary history. This requires us to apply the principles of historiography by observing as far as possible principles in theory and methodology; it requires us to take into account the particular conditions and opportunities for studying historical phenomena.

The scope for our research into contemporary history—in a small country, I should add—is obviously given by the connection of domestic events with international processes. It is indisputable that in the emergence of the crisis of the fifties and in its later development into a counter revolution, a great and significant role was played by international factors—including forces abroad whose goals went beyond events in Hungary. It is just as indisputable that all that has been accomplished in Hungary during the past quarter of a century can hardly be interpreted without taking into account changes in the international balance of power, the emergence of détente, the strengthening of Hungarian-Soviet political and economic relations, the world economic boom in the 1960s, and the increasingly uneven, difficult trend which the first oil price explosion initiated in the seventies. But it is equally evident that Marxist historical analysis now has also to set out from internal factors, from the determining character



of the socio-economic conditions and from the effect of the latter upon the general and social consciousness. This was how, practically on the morrow of the events, the Provisional Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party proceeded when, in Chapter I of its memorable resolution of December 1956, it revealed the fundamental causes of the counter-revolution. And we must also ask these questions: Why and how was Hungary able to turn temporarily favourable conditions to her own advantage? Why and how was she able not only to overcome the crisis but to come out of it with fresh developmental vigour as a member of the socialist community, a country hallmarked by political, economic, and cultural stability and characterized by a demand and aspiration towards adapting flexible responses to the changes in internal and external circumstances?

*Economic development*

To conform to the way these questions are formulated, I shall first examine the basic problems of economic development and economic policy. Here, too, we take as a starting-point the resolution of December 1956. It gave a concise criticism of the voluntary economic and agrarian policies of the earlier party leadership and, in Chapter V, defined as one of the most important tasks facing the party the framing, "with the participation of the best economic specialists," of a new economic policy which "should be built upon our economic potentials and particularities. It should endorse individual initiatives and special knowledge as far as possible. Material incentive should be used, in accordance with the interests of the national economy, . . . to promote technical development, to improve quality, to reduce the cost of production, to raise the productivity of labour. Planning should concentrate . . . first of all on the establishment of the most important ratios and the development ratio of the national economy. A main concern of our entire economic policy should be to ensure that in the distribution of our national income, in the drafting of our investment plans, primary consideration is given to the gradual raising of the living standard of the working people."

History today wants to know how the economic policy of the past twenty-five has been able to implement a resolution which remains valid and correct to this day; it wants to know what factors have hindered or acted as obstacles to progress; history wants to know how Hungary tackled a basic problem in order to attain, through growth of the national income, a yearly increase in real wages at a rate of 4 to 5 per cent—unprecedented



in Hungarian history—and an almost doubling of real wages during these twenty-five years; and finally, another question of topical interest is how this economic policy has led to the formulation of new requirements in quality in socialist economic development, at a time when maintaining the attained living standard also calls for great additional efforts.

### *Social development*

Besides the problems of the economy, a significant task is to study the trends in social development. The past twenty-five years in Hungary have witnessed, among other things, the birth of a new science, or rather the rebirth of a science: Marxist sociology. The recognition that proved to be justified—which incidentally has made also the revival of sociology an urgent affair—has been that neither the best economic policy or the best system of economic management are capable of automatically guaranteeing solutions to social problems, or, by themselves, of providing a foundation for planning social processes, for a socialist development of the way of life. For this reason, if we are to assess the path of economic development envisaged by the December 1956 resolution, it is now necessary to make a thorough study of social aspects which have many connections with the economy, or are partly independent of it and have the capacity for self-development. And even if scientific analysis obviously finds numerous contradictions, problems, and difficulties in both economic and social relations, it cannot be doubted that objective consideration of the data and the facts lead to the conclusion that the outstanding economic development of this past quarter of a century was accompanied by enormous transformation in society and in the way of life. It was in this stage that the socio-economic structure succeeded in ridding itself for ever of the features of underdevelopment. This stage created the shape of the society undergoing industrialization and urbanization. Through a socialist reorganization of agriculture into a large-scale industry and through effective use of the potentials of small farms within this over-all development, it was this stage that put an end to the traditional backwardness and poverty of the Hungarian countryside.

It is clear that the gravity of the crisis in the fifties demanded that the problems should be dealt with radically and that a fresh start should be made, a start based on continuity of socialist construction and on the recognition and preservation of its essential results. In this sense crisis and solution form a dialectical unity. But to take the results of a quarter century, largely and narrowly, to be only a reaction to the profound crisis would be



a mechanical conception of historical processes: it would underestimate the role of policy and the significance of policy application and implementation. The success in overcoming the crisis, the past twenty-five years, lies precisely in the fact that those years were a period in which a new policy was conceived, shaped, and implemented. This policy largely took into consideration the factors which caused the crisis and resolutely turned against them; but it was not and is not confined merely to correcting errors but—by reviewing the whole problem area of the guidance of society—it carried out and still continues to carry out a renewed concept of building socialism. From many points of view this concept is still new in the prospective and everyday practice of life in Hungary.

One of the most serious elements in the crisis of a quarter century ago was its spiritual and moral aspect. The most serious fault which the old party leadership committed, and it almost sums up their unforgivable mistakes, was to discredit the idea of socialism in the eyes of the broad masses.

In the first few years following Liberation hopes soared high, the masses were filled with enthusiasm readiness to act, and a sense of security because of victories won in the class conflicts, because of the overthrow of the former ruling classes, because of political and economic results and achievements which were incontestably linked with the Hungarian Communist Party.

Then in the atmosphere of the Cold War followed measures and regulations which were aimed at unrealistic objectives and which exhausted and curbed the people's readiness to act, replaced enthusiasm with an artificial substitute and broke down their sense of security. Disappointment, frustration and confusion began to gain ground in society, until they practically swamped society during that autumn a quarter century ago; indeed they were about to capsize it through the open appearance of revisionist and counter-revolutionary forces.

How much more difficult it is to restore respect for ideas and values than to win respect, just as it is more complicated to regain the confidence of the people than to lose it.

Convincing the masses that what they have been disappointed in is not the very essence of socialism, but a grossly perverted form of it, is in fact an exercise alien from the idea of socialism. This could only be carried out by consistently defending the fundamental achievements of socialism. This meant also that it was necessary to abandon a continuity with the old methods, indeed to mark a clear break with them.

The success achieved in this effort is the summary of twenty-five years of activity of the HSWP.



*Contemporary History—and the Present*

I have just alluded to the general interconnections between problems of social consciousness and those of morality. The fields where they connect are where questions of science, culture, intellectual life are concerned. The December 1956 resolution recognized these among the most important tasks facing the party, the resolution of December 1956; and the party conference of June 1957 called on "Marxist social science freed from the harmful phenomena of the personality cult and dogmatism to throw light upon the fundamental questions of our economic and political life and make the teachings of Marxism-Leninism generally known (enabling thereby dialectical and historical materialism to penetrate more deeply the specialized branches of learning, too)." I think one of the positive tendencies in the development of sciences is the growing number of Hungarian sociologists who have begun to take part in theoretical examination of those problems which have a direct bearing on the present, on action, and on social and political practice.

The social sciences have the function of revealing reality, and they have an ideological function; in addition, and in close connection with them, another function has become equally important. This is the function of preparing for action: the recognition of practical tasks and the dissemination of this recognition.

I am going to deal more extensively with one of the social sciences, with my own speciality, historical science.

The process of extrication from the crisis and of socialist renewal had had a manifold productive effect upon Hungarian historiography. The second half of the sixties and the early seventies saw significant results from research and the treatment of the history of the period which began with the Liberation. This boom, however, did not prove to be enduring, and in recent years a peculiar contradiction appeared. The general public, especially the young people, felt and showed, repeatedly and pressingly, an increasing interest in the events of the recent past. There are new generations for whom this recent past is as much history as 1919 or 1945; it is these rising generations who wish to know more about the struggles of the generations before them. In these very years when interest in the recent past increased so greatly, historiography was unable to cope with these large new demands made on it. If anything, it has even coped less well; at the moment it publishes less on the topic than it did a few years ago. In comparison with the history of earlier periods, it provides public education with less assistance in making authentic and substantial the



teaching of the history of the era most closely related to the present time. There are objective causes for this contradiction; historians judge in a subjective manner in that they are unable to fully satisfy the interest shown in the subject; and perhaps their answers and analyses cannot take the strict form that methodological principles demand of work dealing with earlier periods. And could it be possible that the difficulties of growth are among the causes? Or would they include the interpretation of the historiographers' political sensitiveness, the bureaucracy of archives, or the half-heartedness of authors, the comfort of the lukewarm water of recurring subjects? Or all of these together? This is not the place to assess the weight and implications of these causes. But we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there has arisen a situation in which the questions put to historians are being answered by novelists and film directors, in their own way.

The situation has thus arisen that parts of important and interesting texts offer flashes of insight, impressionistic and intuitive; but they are often over-moralistic and limit themselves to a Hungarian context. The problem is that historians do not provide or even try to provide more comprehensive answers based on a thorough command of the available material.

We are already past naïve illusions. History has taught us that the development of socialism, the struggle for its existence, realization and new possibilities, is over serious obstacles along parts of a road full of pot-holes. From time to time the road to socialism cannot avoid crises, and such crises have occurred repeatedly in one or another of the socialist countries during the past few decades. The Hungarian crisis of a quarter century ago and the renewal of twenty-five years are obviously topical issues if we keep in mind the Polish crisis of a quarter century ago, the search for solutions to it, and its current tragic, menacing aggravation. Marxist-Leninist social science has to study these critical situations, to explore and analyse the ways of renewal, not only in the interest of an authentic disclosure of historical facts, not only in order to discharge its national duty but also so as that the lessons of the historical processes can be generalized.

We have to face reality, to elucidate what the social sciences can do in order to lay before the country a picture which shows the critical elements, the tensions, the emerging contradictions together with the results of progress, the spreading of culture, the development of the mode of living, the increase of material well-being, in order to present a picture which stimulates both practice and science to right action: this is a task of scientists and of our present session alike. We can achieve something today because we have a firm foundation to build on: the foundation which the quarter century of socialist renewal has laid.



## POLITICAL MECHANISM AND SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY

by

MIHÁLY BIHARI

**I**n the *Contrat social* Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote: "If we take the term in its strict meaning, no true democracy has ever existed, nor ever will. It is against the natural order that a large number should rule and a small number be ruled."\* If, however, we escape the theoretical cul-de-sac that so many frequented before and after Rousseau, and do not limit democracy to the relationship of majority and minority—not denying at the same time that this is its thorniest problem, which presents the meanings of the democracy of power arrangements in a compact way—and examine democracy primarily as the power mechanism relating the majority to itself, then perhaps we would not have to despair faced with Rousseau's scepticism: "If there were a people of gods it would govern itself democratically. A government so perfect would not accord with man." \*\*

In spite of such scepticism many communities and generations staked their lives on establishing democratic systems of government, and on operating such power arrangements. Marx emphasized that democracy was the justification of any form of government, that the power arrangement adequate to a socialist-communist society was democracy, even though he did not exclude the possibility that such a society could also exist temporarily in a despotic-dictatorial form. It is also common knowledge how often Communists—but mainly Lenin—were accused of having no sense of democracy, and that whenever Marx wrote of democracy and revolution, Lenin substituted the expression dictatorship. (Karl Kautsky: *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*.) Passing the history of socialist societies in overview—including the history of socialism in Hungary—one cannot fail to conclude that a dictatorial power arrangement unworthy of, and alien to,

\*The social contract. Transl.: Gerard Hopkins. Oxford U. Pr. 1952. p. 331.

\*\* "S'il y avoit un Peuple de dieux, il se gouverneroit démocratiquement. Un gouvernement si parfait ne convient pas à des hommes." Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Du contrat social*. Livre III. Chap. IV.



socialism operated for many a long year there, a dictatorial rule not over a minority that stood antagonistically opposed to the interest of the majority, but over the majority itself. I do not hesitate to draw the conclusion from the classics as well as from the past history of socialist societies that the true test of the socialist-communist society is not exclusively, indeed not even primarily, the establishment and development of the economic-material-technical basis of society allowing it to catch up with the front runners, but the democratization of power arrangements. Socialist democracy, as the adequate—yet not the only possible—power system of socialism is in this sense global on the one hand, that is that it is of global dimensions and importance, but it is also a practical task. It is the true measure of the maturity and viability of socialism in the perspective of history. Socialist democracy is a specific alternative of the organization and operation of power, a specific historically realizable “response” to the challenge of society—of mankind in the broad sense—for a political integration worthy of man. Therefore socialist democracy is certainly not an objective necessity, a mechanical function of the economic basis, or of macro-social arrangements, where the distortions of the alienated power can be only temporary. The economic basis and the social arrangements as a whole determine only an “ever existing, solely possible scope of movement” (György Lukács) for the political power. “Within this scope every teleological positing” (including the mainly secondary aim concerning the organization and operation of political power, M.B.) “always comes about in the only possible alternative and this excludes every preliminary determination through which the necessity of the essence necessarily takes on potential form for the practice of individuals.”\*

### *Economics and politics*

Socialist democracy is a specific alternative of the power arrangements of the political system, one of the alternatives of political practice which, within the framework of political practice, may become a historically materializing reality as against other possible alternatives of exercising power, of exercising power, dependent on the development of power constellations.

Socialist democracy has been studied both from theoretical as well as practical aspects in a great variety of approaches. I should like to discuss the subject from a less usual angle, and that is the types of separation and joining of the economic and political systems.

\* György Lukács: *A társadalmi lét ontológiájáról* (On the ontology of social being) Vol. II. Chap. III. Budapest, 1976, Magvető. p. 479.



In his introduction to the critique of Hegel's philosophy of law, the young Marx wrote that "The relation of industry, of the world wealth generally, to the political world is one of the major problems of modern times." \* My view is that this is valid not only for capitalism—the modern society of Marx's time—but also for socialism and perhaps even more so.

The separation of bourgeois society and the political state is the most important macro-social change produced by the bourgeois revolutions.

The separation of a society of private citizens based on private ownership and the political state built on liberal concepts of the state went hand in hand with the development of the intricate mediating mechanisms between the two social sub-systems. The mediating institutions of free enterprise capitalism grew principally from the society of private citizens towards the political state, in a wider sense towards the political system. The growth of the mediating institutions as democratic political rights, in many respects as the effect of working class demands—at least in Western Europe—produced institutions for formulating and mediating interests, political opinions and the political will which embody the foundations of bourgeois democracy: the representative system of the state and local government, the political parties, trades and professional associations, chambers of industry and commerce, formal and informal institutions for influencing political decisions: the lobbies, pressure groups, mechanisms for asserting interests and exerting pressure came into being. The predominance of the society of private citizens over the political system asserted itself efficiently by way of this institutional system, and kept the political state away from interference with the economy.

In the age of liberal capitalism the operation of a system of institutions structured from the economy towards the political system, efficiently and intricately selecting and mediating interests and influencing power left their mark on the relationship of the economic and the political systems. The political mechanism of liberal capitalism, dominated by economic interests, employed political and legal prohibitions and prevented the development of a system mediating the intervention of the state, that is of the political system. This other mediating mechanism took shape only during the crisis-ridden period of monopoly capitalism, as a sort of power organization and economic management response to the maladies which tormented the operations and hindered the progress of capitalist society. The economy-centred social structure of capitalism gradually moved away from the overly powerful determination of the society of private citizens

\* Karl Marx: Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. In: Marx/Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 3. Moscow 1975. p. 179.



and its powerful role in social integration, towards the increasingly decisive economy organizing and society integrating operation of the political system. Consequent to the growth of the society organizing and integrating role of the political system—but while the dominance of the society of private citizens remained—another mediating mechanism developed beside the one described, a system of institutions which no longer determined merely the general conditions of the operation of the economy, but also its inner proportions and concrete conditions of operation: the complicated network of economic policy decisions, preferences, and limitations. One may say that the linkage between the economic and the political systems is now guaranteed by a bilateral mediating mechanism which maintains the fundamental integrating and structuring role of the economy.

This mediating mechanism is the institutional system of bourgeois democracy. Therefore the functional sphere of democratic institutions may also be defined as a bilateral mediation between the economic and the political systems, separating as well as linking economics and politics, maintaining the scope, society-organizing effects of their *sui generis* laws, and also establishing a superior model of social integration on the macro-social level. The developed capitalist societies worked out political answers and solutions in the first place in order to avoid the economic and political crisis that convulsed capitalism. Even though this did not eliminate the fundamental and antagonistic conflicts of societies, they were still instrumental in working out an integration model viable within their own limitations for a long time.

#### *The primariness of the political mechanism*

Assessing macro-social relations between the economic and political systems following the socialist revolutions two trends can be distinguished. A strongly politics-centred social arrangement developed on the one hand, in which the political system was the fundamental integrating and structuring motive of society, while on the other the all-enmeshing mediating mechanism strongly controlled by direct economic decisions was built out only from the political in the direction of the economic system. This mediating mechanism is the mechanism of management by plan instructions which is not simply a system for the organization and control of the economy but also the most important aspect of the political system, a factor which fundamentally defines power arrangements. In the relation of the economic and political systems the unambiguous determining role of the latter



appeared in the fact that politics descended into the economy—in the form of political decisions—and at the same time snatched up the economy into the political system. Consequent to the complete political reformation of the economy and the gradual domination of an economic outlook over the political system, these two social sub-systems telescoped in such a way that the relative independence of the economy ceased completely. The political mechanism interfered with the economy not from without but by fulfilling a production function directly and internally. Economic and market relations were replaced by political relations mediated by political decisions. The political decisions defined not only the general conditions of economic management, its character and proportions, but they themselves became the organizers and motors of it—broken down right to work-benches and desks.

This autocracy of the social organizing function of the political mechanism turned the political system into the sole sphere of social reproduction and integration, which had as one consequence that every economic problem and task also became a political problem or task, from being late at work through the fulfilment of norms to the accomplishment of the plan instructions, or the handing over of investment projects. When errors developed then answers and solutions in accordance with the integrating and reproduction principles which defined the system were sought, that is that political bureaucracy—as Marx put it—placed the onus of any social shortcoming on the bureaucracy, and responded with bureaucratic measures and controls. This further reinforced the spread of the will of political leadership past its sphere of validity where it would still have been able to take efficient measures. Marx accurately described the process how the operation of the political will becomes inordinate if it is not, or cannot be, subject to any limitation, principally a political limitation, of a different nature.

“The principle of politics is the *will*. The more one-sided and, therefore the more perfected the *political* mind is, the more does it believe in the *omnipotence* of the will, the more is it blind to the *natural* and spiritual limits of the will, and the more incapable is it therefore of discovering the source of social ills.”\*

Let us add that only another political will representing different interests can effectively counterweigh a given political will. Although objective social relations and institutions, material limitations, and psychological tolerance are powerful bars to the will of any political leadership, the tensile strength of the latter is also unbelievably high.

\* Karl Marx: Critical marginal notes on the article “The King of Prussia and Social Reform.” By a Prussian. In: Marx/Engels op. cit. p. 199.



Summing up the essence of this train of thought it can be said that an almost extreme primariness and decisive role of the political system asserted itself in the macro-social relationship of the economic and political systems in the first decade (1945-56) of the development of Hungarian socialist society. That the mediating mechanism of political decisions was built from the political system towards the economic one was partly a means, and partly a consequence. A sole social integration principle, a sole will that guided social reproduction was asserted, the will of an alienated political leadership lacking any democratic limitation, that believed itself to be omniscient and omnipotent. This variety of the relationship of social integration and economics and politics simply excluded any democratic mediating mechanism such as the control and influencing of political decisions, the autonomy of organizations and communities, and the integration of interests into group-interests and their expression as political will. Under such circumstances it was little wonder that one of the most important categories of political life, interest, was simply omitted from the theory of politics, and from its dictionary. The policy of alliances, and its means, the People's Front, became a tool for paying off old scores—as Rákosi said and willed liquidating the power bloc based on the stable hegemony of the Communist Party, separating the mass basis of the allied power block, later even its own masses, from the Communist Party. Instead of the hegemonistic alliance block which rested on a stable, strong and wide social basis, an extraordinarily unstable, monopolistic power bloc came into being based on nothing but the party apparatus. Democracy was not simply limited, it suffered distortion and became reduced in this apparatus that controlled power and social reproduction; it could not grow, being an element alien to the system. For this reason I believe that Hungary did not simply experience an economic crisis and a crisis of the political confidence. The whole power mechanism of social integration and reproduction found itself in a crisis and suffered bankruptcy.

#### *Principles, criteria*

I should like to mention a few of the principles whose importance determined the whole of the system of social integration and power that operated in the spirit of the almost unlimited primacy of the political mechanism which was typical of the system, partly as a description, partly to facilitate an outline of the changes that took place precisely from the aspect of the development of socialist democracy.



1. Unlike the state-centred political system characteristic of capitalism, the political system of Hungary was a party-centred political system until 1956. The Communist Party occupied the centre of the power mechanism which integrated society and controlled social reproduction. The state organs partly intertwined with the party organizations—particularly in the positions of central power—and partly carried out executive functions away from the power centre. The traditional state-representative organs completely lost their self-governing, local power functions.

2. Within the power mechanism of the party-centred political system an organization of power defined by Gramsci as a monopolistic power bloc developed, in which democratic power equilibria were not present within the party, in the relationship between the party and party members, the party and its allies, and the party and the whole of the nation.

3. The paramount organizing principle of the monopolistic power system was a considerable centralization. The distance between decision takers and those affected by decisions was too great, consequently the contradiction arose that those who decided on any particular question were unaware of the social context of a given case while others, aware of the context, had no authority to take decisions.

True to the principle of centralization, every (economic, cultural, educational, health, etc.) social problem, requirement, tension found itself on the long, vertical course of the hierarchy of power, carrying the problem arisen so high that not only the alternatives but even its reasons became completely incalculable for those affected by the decisions. After the initial advantages of over-centralization, which asserted themselves until 1950, the harmful consequences mutually intensified the effects, and the periodical attempts to rationalize and decentralize did not change anything. The result was that instead of an economy achieving maximum efficiency and rationality, an economy developed of bewilderingly poor efficiency, perpetuating irrational motives, one that was wasteful and shortage-ridden. Instead of firm political unity based on maximum concord, political fear, faction-fighting, political terror, within the party as well as without, and the complete end of democracy became characteristic.

4. An economy snatched up by the political system, political integration that replaced the economic conditions of production produced vast quantities of administrative tasks. An over-bloated political and economic bureaucracy came into being to cope with this avalanche. According to official figures, the administrative staff of the state increased by 164 per cent by 1954 compared to 1949, and the economic administrative staff increased by 357 per cent compared to 1938.



The swollen bureaucracy of monopolistic power produced vast quantities of regulations, instructions, individual interference, and licence resulting from the huge amount of work made subject to political control and from the political mechanism of the social integration.

5. Political and economic centralization was accompanied by an apparently uncheckable concentration of organization which further reinforced the centralism of control.

The organizational concentration began at the level of political organizations with the liquidation of political parties, the paralysing of the People's Front, the reorganization of the trades union on an industry basis, the merger of youth organizations, and continued in the economic sphere, with the amalgamation of economic units. The economic sphere, strongly concentrated at an organizational level, further reinforced the excess centralism of the party and state organizations, the telescoping of economic and political tasks and organizations. The mechanism of vertical and horizontal organizational concentration reacted with an almost elementary force, and added further strength to the centralization of authority.

6. Organizational concentration went hand in hand with the telescoping of state, party, and social organizations, with the confusion of their spheres of authority, made possible by multiple organizational membership of individual leaders and the piling up of positions, as well as by committees and power organizations which concentrated all sorts of spheres of authority.

7. A system of power and hierarchical relationships based on personal dependence developed in this political mechanism. Spheres of competence were not institutionally ordered and defined by law, or at least strongly deviating from such arrangements. This circumstance made power relations uncertain and unpredictable, forcing participants of the political mechanism to constantly over-insure themselves, looking for informal stability in the higher regions, conforming to the total exclusion of independence.

8. A peculiar system of spoils of the division of the spheres of authority developed. This meant that a given person or organization did not have the duties or authority as defined by law or organizational and operational regulations, but everybody had as many rights of decision as he could grab, until the strength of his power met resistance by others. The sphere of authority due to a person or organization was frequently much wider than the rules permitted, but just as often considerably narrower. This circumstance further increased the unpredictability and uncertainty of the power mechanism, resulting in a considerable growth in organizational conformity.



*Setting the course of reforms*

Without intending to continue the listing of typical characteristics of this power mechanism, I should like to emphasize that these principles strengthened one another, cumulating the effect of each, and made it impossible to change them one by one. A change of this political mechanism that governed social reproduction could be realized only by the joint assertion of three principles. These were: centralized reforms, the total implementation of reforms, and unambiguous reforms.

After the catastrophe of 1956, the leadership of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party reorganized not only the political mechanism, and not just the economic system, but also the integration and reproduction mechanism of the whole of society under the aegis of these three principles. The first, the principle of centralized reforms, meant that in the control mechanism that maintained centralization radical social reforms—therefore not partial reforms, which are always fended off by the organizational bureaucracy—can succeed only if they start at the top, if the ideas of social reform are asserted centrally, and backed by the weight of power.

The reform of the power mechanism and of social reproduction was also total, that is it encompassed almost every field of social life, and it was unambiguous, leaving no room for doubt. It used power as well as the social consensus, systematic and unflinching. Only these three principles together could achieve the resounding—and in 1956–57 still a most unimaginable—success, which accompanied the policies of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party over the past twenty-five years.

At the level of structural analysis of social sub-systems, this twenty-five years old policy is characterized by two gradually strengthening tendencies which forced back powerful factors acting in the opposite direction from time to time, and by changes in content: the first one of these is the gradual rationalization of the total process of social reproduction, that is that more and more expertise, professional rationality, legal, administrative, economic, cultural-aesthetic values and rationalities were built into the mechanism of social reproduction, regaining their right to existence. The second tendency is democratization, the deliberate reformation of the power system of the political mechanism under the leadership of the party, which got under way after the first three to five years of consolidation.

The question of historical continuity and discontinuity, and within that the continuity and discontinuity of social development before and after October 1956, has been frequently raised recently. Taking into account the



foregoing, my view is that the continuity in the policies of the Hungarian Working People's Party and the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and in the social reproduction governed by these policies asserts itself in some very important macro-social criteria (e.g. that social ownership became dominant, that the antagonistic classes ceased to exist, that economic planning prevails, etc.), and in the historic objectives defined by the classics of Marxism. What is characteristic and important in almost everything else is discontinuity, particularly in the power organizing structure of the political mechanism.

At the level of social-structural analysis it can be said that the process of social reproduction became rationalized in the past twenty-five years, its capacity (not just in the economic sense) grew, qualitatively superior elements began to develop, specific rules increasingly govern the various sub-systems of society, in contrast with the monolithic political organization of social reproduction. In its stead the political integration of various social organizing principles developed. While the political system still dominates, a qualitatively superior unity and integration has been realized. It comes into being again and again rising from the full palette of society in the processes of power through the cohesive strength of the political mechanism. The development of socialist democracy reinforced this process, broadening its scope, but the attained degree of democracy also limited this process.

The most important element in the course of the development of socialist democracy is the acceptance that on the macro-social level the integration of individual, group, and sectional interest generated in the economic system must be placed at the centre of the political mechanism. The acknowledgement of the many-facetedness of interests can be traced back in the political documents of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. Thus the political leadership legalized interest-mediating institutions, having ensured an increasingly wide field to the political articulation of interests, to their integration at group and sectional levels, to their democratic confrontation, to influencing nascent decisions on the basis of the interests involved. The development of the socialist democracy is equivalent to the development of that mediating mechanism, which is able to efficiently mediate the many-faceted, conflicting interest aspirations developed in the economic system, and feed them back into the power mechanism and political processes of the political system.



*New integrating mechanism*

This way a qualitatively superior type of the integrating mechanism—a linking of the economic and political systems—of socialist society developed, or is at least developing: an integration mechanism of the economic and political systems connected by two-directional mediations, in which the dominance of the political system continues to assert itself but the social sub-systems preserve their scope of action and the society-organizing effect of their specific rules in their mediating connections.

A possible historical alternative of the development of socialist society became gradually visible—but not realized—in the political practice of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party: the unity of the rational and efficient social reproduction, and of democratic power arrangements. We all know that rational action and democracy do not go hand in hand by necessity. On the one hand, rationality can be realized also under centralized control, and democratic power arrangements do not always operate in the most rational way.

Democracy has to place its offerings on the altar of pure rationality just as rationality must on that of democracy. But consequent to this it is also true that no lopsided social arrangements based on a single principle of integration can be viable in the long run. Therefore neither democracy, nor pure rationality, or societies organized under the aegis of the ideologies which include these can historically rival integrated societies which preserve the many-facetedness of social spheres of existence, their specific rules and values and special mobility mechanisms, which bring about a qualitatively superior unity from this many-facetedness. The connections between the economy and politics are one of the principal problems of the modern age—Marx has already been quoted—to which a political answer can and must be given. The dominance—but not the hegemony—of the political systems seems to be an irreversible historical tendency in the development of societies. The capitalist and the socialist countries as well can give an adequate answer to the challenge of our times only by democratizing their political mechanism and by building up that second mediating mechanism.

In my view the further growth of socialist democracy in Hungary is a task of primary importance, acting through a series of reforms guided centrally by the party, totally implemented, that is in respect of every politically significant community relation, suppressing any antidemocratic political endeavour unambiguously. These principles correspond to the logic of the centralized system of control in Hungary. A reform policy carried systematically in terms of these three principles not only ensures



rationality and democracy in social reproduction, but also considerably increases the ability of society to learn, innovate, and adapt.

Meditation on democracy—unless one is a sceptic or rejects the notion altogether, and there have been numerous examples of such in the history of political theory and practice—has always to a certain degree implied the formulation of a political platform.

*Developing socialist democracy*

The platform of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party is clear and unequivocal in respect of the necessity of developing socialist democracy. There is no reason to doubt such intentions, but what has to be done in order to realize this programme is far from unambiguous. I should like to point out two difficulties, two problems, that can be coped with only in the process of political practice. One is that quite a few elements still survive from the antidemocratic mechanism of socialist development in Hungary within the economic as well as the political system, and the mediating mechanism connecting them. These historical fossils exist not only as the past preserved in memory, as distorted political practice, as a social-psychological mechanism of antidemocratic reflex actions and conditioning, but also in the form of bureaucratic institutions, empty organizational mechanisms, and idling organizational engines of deviating effect. The reason is that the effects of characteristics typical of the earlier system still assert themselves, and it follows that these can be changed only together, or at least together to an overwhelming degree, by consciously guided political reforms.

The other problem is that it is not possible to acquire the habits of democratic politics theoretically, transplanting it into practice. It is only in the course of political practice that the skills can be developed, and theoretical knowledge comes third. It is impossible to take over the conditions, means, and adequate organizational and institutional framework of the democratic power mechanism from elsewhere. A nation cannot be taught to use democratic institutions taken over from others.

Nations are able to learn only in the course of their own political practice, and to operate in practice only institutions which correspond to the political practice of the nation. Political practice is an organic part of national culture, and a democratic political culture can develop only as a structural element of a democratic political system. There is no supra-national, general democratic practice, as a system of practical skills and



talents that could work and mobilize organizations and institutions under all sorts of national conditions. The connection of political practice and a political system operating as a system of objectivation, postulating and mutually shaping one another is well known. The recognition that only changes in the objective power mechanism, centrally guided, complete, and unequivocal democratic reforms would result in the general spread of the democratic political culture arises from the character of their connection.

What kind of democratic reforms, and the principles governing them, moved by the party, but to be realized by the whole of society—already started and to be continued—do I have in mind in the first place?

Summed up in a few points, I should like to put particular emphasis on the following:

1. The position of Marxism is that democracy has no general concept. Democracy has a class-content, and is historically concrete. Therefore I would sum up the historically concrete content of democracy in the present phase of Hungarian development as follows: one may say that democracy is present as long as the differences of interests coming into being under socialist social relations—thus with a socialist content—can be expressed as political differences of opinion, and these political wills determined by interests can take part in the preparation, making and implementation of decisions, and in controlling these three phases by the mediation of political communities and bodies.

In order to enable democracy to materialize as a positive value-content of the exercise of political power, it is necessary to establish conditions and guarantees closely connected with one another, and to ensure organizational instruments. It is not possible to perfect the exercise of democratic power while the condition and instrumental system of socialist democracy is inadequate. As long as this inadequacy exists, the establishment of adequate conditions, etc. receives preference, and this arises as the substantive requirement of democracy.

2. The *conditions* of socialist democracy cover the following institutions:

- (a) The political security and freedom of individuals and communities in their relation to other individuals and communities, and to the organizations of political power must be guaranteed. This political security and freedom should be guaranteed by a system of civic rights. The development of the system of guarantees of civic rights is an ongoing duty, it is therefore the precondition of the realization of democracy, but until this system of guarantees is developed relatively completely, it seeks realization as a substantive requirement of democracy.

- (b) The other precondition of the assertion of democracy is a guarantee



of the political equality of individuals and communities. By political—therefore not social—equality I mean that all individuals and communities may, within the constitutional framework, insist on their political opinion without suffering disadvantage and may strive for the assertion of the political will governed by their interests. The political system of socialism, like every other, raises political and legal barriers which limit the assertion of the political will.

Defending the rights of the majority and of the minority is one of the guarantees of political equality. These rights and obligations must be defined in such a way that the minority could turn into a majority and the majority into a minority as part of the democratic process of the assertion of political wills. Defending the rights of the majority is indispensable for the assertion of the will of the majority, and for the efficient and uniform implementation of decisions that have been taken. Defending the rights of the minority (acknowledging the right of the minority to maintain its opinion, and to argue for it, while the democratically formed will of the majority is uniformly implemented) is indispensable for correction, for development of a reforming character, for timely criticism of majority views, that may have been correct earlier, for the growth of political creative talents and of political activity. Over-emphasis or absolutization of the rights of either side, majority or minority, however, leads to undesirable results: that is to the dictatorship of a minority. A sweeping assertion of the power of the majority—without defending the opinions of the minority—gradually suppresses all minority opinion, and conserves the rule of a minority that appears in the name of a conformist, organized majority. Absolutizing majority opinion leads straight to the rule of some minority, behind the fig-leaf of the organized majority opinion. When the assertion of majority rights subdues a minority in an absolute manner, everybody will be afraid to remain part of the minority, particularly if that entails denunciation, perhaps excommunication, giving up former opinions in a humiliating way, and loss of position. Under such circumstances most people will try and discover the likely majority view—the views of the currently ruling minority declared as majority opinion—and fall in line with it well in advance, afraid of being in the minority. The right to maintain a minority opinion cannot go as far as questioning implementation, sabotaging uniform implementation, or performing political actions only for appearance's sake.

Such attitudes would render impossible the efficient action of any political organization and community, or uniformity of implementation, in fact it would be equivalent to the surrendering of the most effective



political weapon of the modern age, that of the organization. Such an overly strong position of a minority gradually increases the demand for uniform opinion at any cost, which can be achieved only with antidemocratic means. Absolutized defence of the rights of the minority leads by necessity to the state, in which the organized monolithic unity, the order and unquestionable decisiveness of power will be a form preferred by the majority for fear of anarchy, or poor efficiency, and this ultimately leads to the impossibility of any minority opinion.

The relationship and mutual system of guarantees of majority and minority (or different minorities) embody the essence of the most important components of democracy: self-government based on political equality and freedom, a power mechanism conserving diversity, and integrating a new unity from it. The democratic system of power also ensures the participation of minorities in power, even if they have to implement the majority will, differing from their own, owing to democratic order and discipline.

The organized majority, however—which always conceals the power of some minority—excludes the majority from the exercise of power. A policy of participation, a power mechanism which guarantees participation in the exercise of power and strives for legitimacy, demanding loyalty, must recognize the democratic rights of the minorities. In a certain sense, the best indicator of the democracy of the exercise of power, the touchstone of its maturity, and of its ability to renew itself is the democratic relationship of power of the majority and the minority, the interlinked and mutually counter-balancing system of their rights and obligations.

Guaranteeing these two conditions—the two great pillars of democracy (political security and freedom, and political equality)—is indispensable, but not enough for asserting the substance of democracy. Besides the conditions of democracy, and adequate system of organizational means of the democratic assertion of interests, and of the exercise of power must also be created.

3. The instrumental system of democracy differs from the conditions of democracy. The latter are expressed primarily by normative-legal institutions, consequently they are relatively stable, and historically less subject to changes once developed, the natural condition of the instrumental system of democracy, however, is constant change and adjustment to changing socio-political conditions.

(a) I should like to stress the system of organizations actually present in a given society which gives rise to interests that define the political will and political opinions on the surface and ensure their political articulation within the instrumental system of democracy. This organizational system



must dynamically adjust to the values actually present in society, which are of differing importance, and of varied substance, and which constantly change as time goes on. I believe that it is essential that the organizational system of democracy should ensure the emergence of the socially most important class, sectional, and group interests, it should favour the emergence not only of inessential conflicts of interest, for otherwise the most important clashes of interests would shift to the non-formalized sphere and follow courses impenetrable either by the political leadership or anyone else, becoming politically unmanageable.

(b) The other indispensable and important means of democracy is an adequate system of political control. Political control must extend to three phases of the exercise of power: 1. the preparation of political decisions; 2. the taking of decisions, that is to the role of individuals, groups, and institutions participating in these processes, influencing the decisions, the decisions-taking system, and 3. finally the phase of implementing decisions.

Without this political publicity and control, political responsibility and power relations become impenetrable and uncontrollable. Where the instrumental system of democracy is absent, the democratic exercise of power becomes impossible.

(c) The third component of the system of instruments of democracy is the guarantee of equality and completeness in access to politically relevant information.

This can be summed up in one sentence: it is necessary to have a mass media system responsible to the democratic public.

The development of the instrumental system of democracy is just as much a practical political task as that of its conditions, and they remain demands of substantive importance for democracy until they are effective and consolidated. After that they continue to exist as formal guarantees of democracy.

The conditions of the democratic exercise of power can be ensured under the conditions of socialist democracy. It is possible to create the organizational-institutional framework necessary for its operation, in which the substantive and formal unity of democratic exercise of power become realized, which was summed up by Marx as "the constitution of the people", a power materializing as "the self-determination of the people", contrasting with the "people of the constitution of monarchy".\* One of the

\* Karl Marx: "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law." In Marx/Engels: Collected Works. Vol. 3. 1975, Moscow, p. 29.



most important socio-political aims in the building of a socialist society, and one may also say the measure of its maturity—a major task that determines its historical perspective—is the constant furthering of socialist democracy.

Remaining at the level of macro-social structural analysis, the historical development of socialist democracy is the equivalent of the development and perfecting of the two-directional mediating mechanism, which is capable of adequately mediating interest trends generated in the economy towards the political system, and the decisions made by democratic processes in the political system towards the economy.

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## ZOLTÁN JÉKELY: A POET OF TIME, DEATH, AND LOVE

by

JÓZSEF TORNAI

**Z**oltán Jékely died in Budapest this spring, loved and respected by all who knew him. He had become a living legend, almost a saint. Zoltán Jékely was modesty itself, learning and eternal youthfulness. No one would have taken him to be sixty-nine. He was an exception in everything, why could death not have spared him?

Jékely was exceptional also in that his father, Lajos Áprily, had been a poet of note and yet his son surpassed him. By the age of eighteen, Jékely already wrote mature verse. He was born at Nagyenyed in Transylvania in 1913; he graduated in Hungarian and French at Budapest University, but in the 1940s returned to Transylvania, to Kolozsvár, almost as if an Irish poet, having concluded his studies in London, returned to Dublin. In the 1950s Jékely moved to Szentgyörgypuszta, not far to the north of Budapest, on the right bank of the Danube. In 1939 and again in 1948 he spent some time in Italy; in the late 1930s, and later too, he repeatedly visited Paris. His learning had strong and deep Italian and French roots. Yet he also knew German and translated, alongside French and Italian verse and prose, German poets (Trakl and Rilke) and, above all, *Faust*. But this highly cultivated person took scarcely any part in literary life. In the first half of the 1950s, at the time of the Rákosi period, he, together with a number of his contemporaries, was excluded from the literary scene. Jékely felt an instinctive attraction for everything old, mainly medieval. There was something of the vagrant scholar of the Villon kind about him who does not belong anywhere: love, verse, and nature held him in their power, that was all. He was exceptional in everything.

Jékely belonged to the generation or, rather, school, which, since Mihály Babits, Dezső Kosztolányi, and Lőrinc Szabó, the great poets of the periodical *Nyugat* ("West") have been known as the "westerners." To be a "westerner" means to be immersed in literature, to live the life of a *homo*



*aestheticus* in a country where the writer, the poet always had to be a fighter, a patriot, and a politician as well. The "westerners" of Jékely's contemporaries are the poets Ágnes Nemes Nagy and János Pilinszky, and the writers Géza Ottlik and Iván Mándy. In the 1950s they earned their living translating and writing radio adaptations of classical novels. After 1956 their writings started slowly to reappear in the journals, new volumes appeared and they took their proper places.

What was it that Jékely fled retreating to river banks and fishing? Why did he not wish to be a modern poet when, already in the last century, Rimbaud had commanded: "Il faut être absolument moderne!" But Jékely only kept repeating the eternal themes, the poetic commonplaces if you like: stars, death, love, the passage of time. In his idiom too he consistently adhered to archaic grammatical forms, to expressions and epithets no longer used in current Hungarian. Everything that is the result of twentieth-century verse, ways of thinking, and attitudes seems to be missing from his poetry. He knows no anxiety, ambivalence, and narcissism, or dread of the masses. Nor is there anything surrealist or expressionist about his poems. He is not intellectual or philosophical like Eliot or Auden, nor verbal or emotional like Dylan Thomas or García Lorca.

Jékely wished to be a Christian in the twentieth century. For him man is still in the hands of God, who commands history and fate. Death, war, suffering, art, beauty, and time are fruits of a thus defined relationship between God and man. Jékely feels this eternally unchangeable relationship to be stronger than any novelty and modernity. This relationship is primarily embodied in churches and women, in them it becomes tangible and at the same time a metaphysical certainty. "What I have liked most | on Earth: women and churches, | in whom a leaping flame flickers, | in whom the peace of death sounds." (Prose translation.)

But churches, the joys of love, death, and time are not placed side by side by chance, they are in close affinity, being complementary to each other. They become the attributes of God—metaphysical gates through which this modern medieval soul, acquiescing in his fate and full of grief, can gain insight into the secrets of the great works of existence and the universe. It is this that makes understanding possible for Jékely. It follows from this understanding and insight that he considers a break-down, the destruction of the earth, of the world and of man possible, and indeed inevitable. In that respect he is already 100 per cent modern: in the age of the nuclear bomb, catastrophe bubbles in his mind. In vain does he seek refuge in a rod and line: he is forced to see things apocalyptically because for him too, time is not only that eternal time in which he would like to believe, but



also the time of the twentieth-century drama of human history. His long poem dated 1950, *Az utolsó szó keresése* (Seeking the Last Word), is a major work of modern poetry and philosophy, much like *The Waste Land*:

"Who is to tell where our Father the Sun is? | Why has he abandoned this bad star? | Now we are all lost in the fog, | a gigantic Franklin expedition: | numbed men and dogs | reviling snarls on our teeth | and frozen tears on our eye-lids. " ..... "Wanderer of a neighbouring star, strayed | alien traveller! With your splendid instruments | reconstruct the last moments! | From the time on when heaven and earth began to fall | and hands were torn off from each other, | the suckling found his mother in an animal, | no flowers blossomed any more, fire and water converged..." (Prose translation.)

What makes this poetic vision of prophetic dimensions so extraordinary is that nothing survives annihilation. In Jékely's vision of God neither nature nor man are valuable enough to survive. Rilke could still point out the church to the angel with whom human emptiness cannot vie. The Eighth Duino Elegy closes:

... *Wie er auf  
dem letzten Hügel, der ihm ganz sein Tal  
noch einmal zeigt, sich wendet, anhält, weilt—,  
so leben wir und nehmen immer Abschied.*

But Jékely leaves no room for objects, works, and man in his other great apocalyptic poem either. In "Akhnaton's Dream" he also explains why:

*Now is the best moment, life has my decision:  
I shall not have children, and, of course, not grandchildren,  
nor a tower, nor a grave—they would crumble away.  
Why should I present death, hungry glutton, with prey?*  
.....

*From birth, all my moments pledged to the Eternal,  
how could I live trapped in the finite and final?  
Now certainty reaches the marrow of my bones,  
that all my works wear as sea-time washes stones,  
that in all transience crags cannot really stand forth,  
not the pharaoh it is who prevails here, but death!*

(Trans. Alan Dixon, see p. 137)



But in "Seeking the Last Word" there is a line: "But mainly search for our escaped soul." Destruction can be accepted because the soul survives somewhere:

"If a fluff of cloud hangs on the sky's wall, | beckon to it: it is perhaps a human soul."

He declares the same metaphysical belief in the octet "Poem about the Poem:"

*Something we have which was from distance claimed—  
a unique pearl, a pearl without a rival.*

*(Trans. Alan Dixon, see p. 139)*

The whole perspective of this faith opens up in "In the Startower," written in 1936. Jékely's cosmic, metaphysical world view was fully developed when he was twenty-three. The universe is being moved by the multiple secrets of majestic, awesome, unknown forces which conceal it from human minds:

*Now it is night and darkness is threefold:  
eternal, heavy darkness—that of men—  
the northern hemisphere obscurely clothed,  
and, surging up above, the deepest one—  
the distant dark beyond the star-flecked cold.*

*(Trans. Alan Dixon, see p. 134)*

This is the most modern recognition: the metacosmic is there above nature, above man, above the cosmic. That is what, in the language of poetry or religion, is called God. Otherwise it is unnameable anyway. Jékely cannot know, and does not even pretend to know, whether there is a road, some radiation, some kind of relationship between nature and the metacosmic. His poetry is modern despite its attraction to the traditional precisely because his sensitivity is able to transmit such elusive openings. In his best poems this induces a visionary metaphysics replete with emotions which never becomes a philosophical display but always remains original poetry. It "only" differs from naive poetry by its tremendous vertical tension. That makes Jékely's poems astounding, sad, and unforgettable. The memories of childhood, love, churches, trout and other fish he had caught, time, war, destruction, cemeteries and the dead in them, the fate of the Hungarian people, are linked through these vertical threads to what is beyond the earth and the stars. Nothing could be a better symbol of



this mysterious and yet obvious motion than the wind. Shelley's poems about the wind are only cosmic; Jékely's are also metaphysical. If one wants to read a single poem to get an idea of Jékely's whole poetry and thinking, one should select the 18 lines of "The Wind..." It is a masterpiece of conciseness and completeness. (See the poem on p. 138.)

This poem, through which cosmic winds blow, also has to end with the complaints of love. Love, woman, the ecstasy of carnal congress is even more important for Jékely than God, the stars, the future of mankind. Not only is it more important, it is indeed love and sexual intercourse that take him to God. The bodily and mental union between man and woman is the proof of communion with God.

I think this practical proof of God can be readily accepted by everyone. And one will not for a second think of Leibniz's theory of the monads, maintaining that every individual, every monad is a hermetically closed world without any windows, with God being the principal and most tightly closed monad, with whom the world and man can be linked at most through a *praestabilita harmonia*. Jékely did not care at all about such philosophical problems. He knew that the poet's job starts where science and philosophy drop tools. He knew that there are irresolvable secrets, and women, love, death, time, and man's love for his own nation are such secrets. He cherished no hopes whatever, neither in good nor in evil. Instead of hoping he opted for understanding and compassion.

His stories, mostly love stories, and his discursive prose writings, mostly conjuring up some forgotten, mysterious male or female character of Hungarian history out of timelessness, are permeated with the same wisdom; a painful radiation, Jékely's melancholy is present in all his writings. The reader cannot shake off the feeling that this mind of a medieval scholar, this twentieth-century artist and intellectual basically suffered from the spleen of Baudelaire's modernity.



ZOLTÁN JÉKELY

## POEMS

*Translated by Alan Dixon*

### IN THE STARTOWER

Greatest of stars, the god-named Jupiter,  
master of moon-worlds, maker of their writs,  
and all you other stars to whom men dare  
to give a name: Neptune, Gemini, Canis,  
Arcturus, Venus, Cassiopeia,

Mesartym, Lyra and Aldebaran—  
from your vast namelessness, cold majesty,  
look down on me as shivers overrun  
my fragile skull through night's immensity  
in front of pipes as they go dreaming on.

And take a good look at me: never has  
your power intimidated anyone  
so much. So tiny this my monad is,  
one that would hide in waters which have gone  
fetid. I am a fish, a larva—where is this?

The great Rotation trundles to return,  
the stellar years close up and open out,  
snow on the Milky Way, the Host Road's shine,  
sprinkled and brave the warriors stroll its route,  
huge is that golden rolling ball, the moon.

Celestial figures glisten, could they be  
—these rhombuses, these sky-borne polyhedrons—  
the arbiters of human destiny,  
and do they bear the horoscope's predictions?  
or is their light fine gems' intensity



left dangling from the dreadful lap of sky,  
 so loosely that some thousands drop each night,  
 and one, which surely has no inkling why,  
 fits in a formula shown by the light,  
 knows less of his companion than I

know about Venus? Circling, unwearying,  
 the tread I almost feel; the heaving earth  
 snorting and bumping its salt-mill horse along.  
 Around it swim, tossed by the current's wrath,  
 cloud archipelagos, a lawless throng.

How shall we be made free, where are the eyes  
 to pierce this terrible threefold arras,  
 and where, where is the mind before which flies  
 the melting mystery, the mind to pass  
 unhorrified through ink's infinities?

Now it is night and darkness is threefold:  
 eternal, heavy darkness—that of men—  
 the northern hemisphere obscurely clothed,  
 and, surging up above, the deepest one—  
 the distant dark beyond the star-flecked cold.

And now, as the machines to greater height  
 ascend, the more the lenses, clearing, show,  
 the more they irresistibly augment  
 my hopelessness, but nonetheless I know  
 the spirit of the sages ambient.

The way these scholars stood beneath the stars!  
 Their feeble instruments shook in their hands,  
 yet no restriction of this kind debars  
 travel through the infinities of minds—  
 spaces which have no walls, which no cloud scars.

Where did it fly, the revelation-flamed  
 triumphant moment, the great Delirium!  
 and where now can be found the minds which scanned  
 the lake of heaven, like burning sodium;  
 where are those great minds lying scattered round?



Depths of forgotten churchyards terribly  
 consume all that they were, yet might they not  
 have now become light dust which longs to be  
 dissolved in sky, unable to forget  
 how thirst for knowledge drove relentlessly?

Perhaps the altitudes admit them all,  
 and, made delirious with light, they flash from star  
 to star, zig-zagging bugs, until they fill  
 their great rapacious souls. They swallow there  
 sugar of light to store when back they fall.

It does not matter. Here their heavy bones  
 remain so that the turning earth is slowed.  
 Shoved in forever, all these skeletons  
 must tread with us the orbit's ancient road  
 where their coevals buried their remains.

The great Rotation continues to return,  
 and stellar years close down and open out,  
 snowy the Milky Way, the Host Road's shine,  
 sprinkled and brave the warriors stroll its route,  
 massive that golden rolling ball, the moon.

With what wild terror of the universe  
 the stars at midnight fill me in this hall  
 of blue-dark endlessness! We feel one pulse  
 as our hearts beat together through it all;  
 give me your hand again sad man, this once.

I wonder how long in the night our barge,  
 this overloaded and decrepit world,  
 will float for us, no point of flame to urge  
 some hope to rise where you and I have lived,  
 in this eternal night, some hope of change.



Not even a celestial hand so far  
 has beckoned to our hearts, but we know soon  
 lurking voracious cloud-whales will devour  
 our souls and death will slyly drag us down,  
 or lift us high, as merit will require.  
 1936

## AKHNATON'S DREAM

*Homage to the poets of the 18th century*

Awaking one day from his terrible nightmares  
 Akhnaton calls out for his tip-top advisers.  
 The servants come running the length of the palace.  
 Stand judge priest and gaoler before his great presence.  
 He must have had nightmares! What whims has he for us?  
 say astrologer, boffin. Their eyes are the chorus.  
 Here bow more respectful old men to their lordling.  
 They wait for his orders, some angry, some grouching.  
 Uplifting himself from his tear-sodden pillow,  
 to the faithful who'd gathered he said, the great pharaoh:

I, Akhnaton the first, of life and earth master,  
 last night had a dream, so grave was the matter  
 that the world is still shaking, it cries out aloud . . .  
 My apparel was only a tattered old shroud.  
 The time-current lifted me, carried me forward,  
 much faster than Nile's flow it bundled me onward.  
 In vain I struck out, but it carried me raging  
 to the coming millennia. Their aspect was blinding,  
 and, brutally torn from the womb of the present,  
 I cried and I sobbed. I am still not quiescent.  
 Like one seeing hamlets from snow-peaks of mountains,  
 I saw the world doss in its various regions.  
 The wind sprang up quickly; from up there in the sky  
 I could see purplish dust dropping down from on high.  
 It ensconced in the gap between sky and the earth.  
 A deadly conception brought rain-fire to birth.  
 From lightnings foregathered sea set on a rampage



and made the earth tumble on sky in its rage.  
 Huge cliffs were uprooted with reverberant tones  
 and were pelted towards the sun like sling-stones.  
 On the vault of the sky the big fishes flew;  
 in the waters below birds convulsed in a brew.  
 The forests were hissing; all the palm trees ablaze  
 soared like firebrands over the neighbouring stars.  
 The graves were all opened, flew skeletons, jinking.  
 The pyramids tumbled: high seas took their sinking.  
 Our towers fell down with a terrible tumble.  
 All was razed to the ground with racket and rumble. . .

Come closer my servants, come closer and listen.  
 Take heed to my warning, my final instruction!  
 No one shall build houses, no more in my kingdom  
 shall foetuses grow in the wombs of our women.  
 Here ends procreation, and also conception.  
 Those who need must toss off, splash stones with their semen.  
 If children are living when born, they, like puppies,  
 shall be flung to the Nile, to be drowned in its eddies.  
 And no one shall sow wheat, or fling seed to the breeze,  
 no one shall pluck weeds and no one shall plant trees.  
 Now is the best moment, life has my decision:  
 I shall not have children, and, of course, not grandchildren,  
 nor a tower, nor a grave—they would crumble away.  
 Why should I present death, hungry glutton, with prey?  
 I forestall, in my wisdom, the final perdition.  
 All the pyramids shall undergo demolition.  
 From birth, all my moments pledged to the Eternal,  
 how could I live trapped in the finite and final?  
 Now certainty reaches the marrow of my bones,  
 that all my works wear as sea-time washes stones,  
 that in transience crags cannot really stand forth.  
 Not the pharaoh it is who prevails here, but death!  
 His the poisonous sting which must end every life.  
 I am the example; I shall set it myself!  
 His last words were uttered, his decisions were made.  
 With what fervour he drew out his finely-wrought sword,  
 and in front of the shocked and the feeble old men  
 he fell on his blade, that most glorious one.



First to speak was the judge: Lunatic! (All he said.)  
 Then the priest had his say: It is good he's soon dead!  
 Next the boffin burst out: What he might have achieved!  
 When I think of it all how it makes my blood cold!  
 And the gaoler in turn opined in this manner:  
 The throne did not suit him; straw would have been proper!  
 The astrologer thought: he had nothing to say,  
 so he walked up and down and kept out of the way.

1947

## THE WIND

The wind, which with its autumn sounds and autumn vapours  
 over the withering hillsides wanders,  
 knows what will become of us.

Faint cricket-chirrup and the call of geese,  
 feeble the leaf-rustlings on the tree:  
 what will become of us  
 after this time's geology?

The stones alone survive, the rocks persist;  
 cut stones which fell, the dolmens and the churches,  
 in tottering heaps, where in the early ages  
 processions of cowed pilgrims, barefoot, passed...

The wind blows round and round the tongue-tied earth-face,  
 embracing winds which blow from some unearthly  
 planet, kisses this valley, shapes a vortex  
 where I had come to seek you for your body  
 two hundred thousand years before—

And you allowed me, blind with fearful pain,  
 to fade into eternal night, be seen no more.



## POEM ABOUT THE POEM

O sweetness of all poems which were born of dreaming,  
to vanish, frayed explosions of the mind!  
I stopped my lips from flinching, spoke with Beauty,  
who showed she had surrendered when she smiled.  
Something we have which was from distance claimed—  
a unique pearl, a pearl without a rival.  
If this, O this, could make our God more mindful,  
in endless thicket it would not bewhelmed!

## RECOGNITION

If you, beneath a starry sky, have lolled about  
with your back against a thousand sparkling worlds,  
and beams of stealthy force have found you out  
to tingle your back and madden with heats and colds,  
the rosy flutter of a glowing breast,  
beating beneath you naked, then you must know  
that faith can never, come what may, be lost,  
that God exists, that it must be so!

1955



# TERRA AUSTRALIS—OR THE ART OF BEING DIFFERENT

by

ZOLTÁN HALÁSZ

*The legacy of Captain Phillip*

**N**o matter where a Hungarian or, if you please, a European traveller may go, he always favours the historical approach. He likes to look at old medieval streets, or ancient castles and ruins, and makes attempts at placing events here and there in comparative chronological order. Such an approach looks hopeless from the start when touching down in Australia after a long flight. The traveller soon discovers that the real founding father was not Captain Cook, the legendary explorer who first hoisted the Union Jack on Australian soil, but a practical-minded sailor, Captain Phillip, who made Australian history as the first governor of the new British colony of New South Wales. In front of his bronze statue, which—with the skyline of brand-new City skyscrapers as a backdrop—stands in the wondrous and beautiful Botanical Gardens of Sydney, one is bound to think of the paradoxes of history. The few hundred convicts and the soldiers guarding them who, under the command of the captain landed at Sydney Cove in 1788, actually sailed to Australia because, on the other side of the Earth, in North America, Great Britain had lost those colonies which until then had served as penal settlements. At a time when the new United States Constitution granted all citizens the right to freedom and the pursuit of happiness, a society founded upon a diametrically opposed philosophy appeared to be taking shape at the antipodes.

The bicentenary of Australia, the 200th anniversary of Captain Phillip's landfall, is fast approaching; in a little more distant future, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the country will celebrate another centenary, that of the pivotal event of 1901, of Federation, when the British Parliament enacted the Constitution of the independent Commonwealth of Australia. This made a break with the colonial past and was at the same time a document of the British connection. Thereafter Australia not only remained a member of the British Commonwealth but, at critical times,



proved herself to be superloyal. This attitude has, in time, come under revision, a process which appears to be coming to the boil nowadays both emotionally and politically. Peter Weir's film *Gallipoli* was an outstanding success not only because it is a brilliantly directed production with realistically characterized figures and dramatic confrontations, but also because it placed a finger on a sore spot. Was it right to leave thousands of young Australian lives to the charge of impotent British commanders who really did not care what happened to them? This revisionism applies not only to the Gallipoli campaign event but also to the Second World War, in which—as they now begin to suspect—Australians naively made, on the battlefields of the Western Desert, Syria, and Greece, a sacrifice out of proportion to their numbers. Weir is also concerned about another, equally sore spot: the Australian aborigines. His film *The Last Wave* recalls—unfortunately way below the standard of *Gallipoli*—the destruction of their ancient religion.

*The Australian mosaic*

I really became aware the first time that the Qantas jumbo jet had taken me to a country where a genuine, operating New Frontier was in existence, when my friend Rodney Hall—a poet, player of ancient musical instruments, and scholar of literature who teaches at the Australian National University—told me that his twenty-year-old son, like many another Australian youngster, had gone walkabout in the north and had taken out a mining licence for a couple of dollars. The boy spends his time working with a pick and shovel extracting tin ore in a tropical valley, carrying the yield in his old Land-Rover to where he delivers it ten miles away. . . . In his leisure time, of which he has plenty, he surfs and fishes, in other words, he has a good time waiting for the day when he can seize opportunity by the coat-tail selling out to a multinational. . . . or, what is just as likely, till the lode is exhausted and he has to move on to even more desolate regions further north.

Distances in Australia boggle the mind. You are aware all the time that you are in a country that is almost as big as the United States, yet fewer than fifteen million people inhabit it. These two facts placed side by side are a determining factor in many ways though one is aware that 14 per cent only of the total area are arable, the rest are grasslands and semi-desert areas. Most of the mineral resources—and, however surprising this sounds, the largest quantities of fresh water—are deep beneath the surface precisely in those deserts (it is said that in Queensland an ocean of water



lies underground). A turn may occur at any time, in such a way, for example that a Japanese-American multinational company might start bauxite mining in the Northern Territory, and this really happened in recent years. Or, vice versa, things may happen as they did when another multinational, owing to the world economic recession, gave up their plans for a petrol-chemical works in the Cooper Basin of South Australia as suddenly as the bricklayer in the story dropped his trowel when he downed tools for lunch.

What strikes the eye of the European traveller who imagined the remote land of Australia to be a sort of antipodean offshoot of the British Isles, is first of all the large number of New Australians of varying colour and origin who walk the streets of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, or Adelaide, people who—paradoxically yet truly—have been integrated amazingly rapidly while at the same time preserving much of their national culture. This was due, on the one hand, to the much more liberal immigration policy of recent years, the end of White Australia, keeping the door ajar for Asian immigrants. At present Australia receives 100,000 to 120,000 immigrants every year; in 1980, 33.2 per cent came from Asia, including 18.5 per cent from Indonesia and the Malay Peninsula, and a further 5 per cent from Africa. A contributory factor has been that the government encourages the emergence of a society composed of various ethnic groups, the formation of a mosaic in which every element is free to retain its cultural identity and its native language. In these days those born in the British Isles only make up about 40 per cent of those born outside Australia. Twenty-five per cent of immigrants were born in Italy, 18 per cent in Greece, 10 per cent in Germany, 9 per cent in the Netherlands, and 5 per cent each in Poland and Malta. As a Hungarian I was, of course, interested most of all in Australians born in my country. For the most part they live in the towns of New South Wales and in South Australia. According to the 1971 census, 29,160 men and women stated their country of birth to be in Hungary. According to Dr. Egon Kunze, who specializes in Hungarian studies at the Australian National University, however, an additional 21,000 persons declared that Hungarian was their native language, though they were born in parts of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Yugoslavia, or Austria. The number of Hungarians in Australia thus exceeds 50,000.

*A day with the Pulszkys*

It is true that the Hungarians do not form ethnic islands as, for example, the Greeks do who have made Melbourne one of the largest Greek cities



anywhere including Greece, or the Italians or the Chinese, but the small number of Australians of Hungarian origin play a role far in excess to their proportion in a good many fields. The Hungarian role in Australia began fairly long ago by Australian standards. In the first half of the nineteenth century a number of enterprising Hungarians breaking out of the feudal conditions of Hungary tried their luck in Australia—among them a Hungarian-speaker with a German name, Ignác Wortmann, who founded the first Australian match factory naming it “Lucifer” in 1842. He had probably taken with him the manufacturing process of a Hungarian inventor, János Irinyi; contemporary newspapers reported that he was using nitrogenous phosphoric acid to make safety matches. The end of the 1848–49 Hungarian Revolution was followed by a different kind of Hungarian immigrants. Some managed to take root in this remote country, as did Károly Nyulay, who had served under General Józef Bem, the first to employ explosives in Australia in the mining of gold and non-ferrous metals, or Zsigmond Vékey, Lajos Kossuth’s adjutant, who helped to establish vineyards in Australia and planted vines on the Tokay model in the state of Victoria. Others, however, failed. Among them was Baron Cézár Mednyánszky, an army chaplain in the Revolution who, cross in hand, had led the *Honvéd* troops in the assault on Branyiszkó. He tried his hand at gold-digging in the vicinity of Ballarat, where he was robbed and got seriously wounded: one of his arms had to be amputated. After he had returned to Europe, new disappointments drove him into suicide. Mednyánszky is still remembered, thanks to György Sárközi’s novel *Mint oldott kéve* (As a sheaf unbound), but hundreds and hundreds who went into exile after 1848–49 Revolution were scattered unknown in the Australian vastness.

A curious set of coincidences led me to think of one of the most interesting nineteenth-century Hungarian immigrants on a weekend while in Australia: Tom Shapcott appeared in my life as an unexpected conjurer up of spirits on a Friday, and the Pulszkys came to life in the Sydney Drama Theatre on Saturday. Shapcott is a big man of about fifty, who teaches at Brisbane University. He has published a number of books of verse and edited anthologies, and is the author of an opera libretto, the music is by Colin Brumy, an Australian composer. It came as no little surprise to me that, after we had been introduced to each other, I found that this powerfully built Australian knows all about the Pulszkys who played such a prominent role, over several generations in Hungarian public life. Shapcott discovered what only the best Hungarian sources know, that Károly Pulszky, the director of the National Gallery, the predecessor of the Museum of



Fine Arts in Budapest, who left Hungary after a big political scandal, died in Brisbane and was buried near by, not far from the place where he had been found shot dead in 1899. Hungarians are not even aware of the Brisbane grave, the newspapers of the time, with a curious sort of modesty, only mentioned that Pulszky had "disappeared in Australia;" there was even a version that he had fallen overboard and was lost at sea, on his way to Australia. Shapcott did not rest satisfied with finding Pulszky's grave, but looked around in the Brisbane Public Trustee's depository and discovered Pulszky's wallet, his suicide note, a gold watch, and a signet ring bearing his family crest (the Pulszkys traced their descent from the Polish aristocracy) and other valuables. At the time Pulszky's daughter Romola—the widow of Vaclav Nijinsky—lived in Los Angeles and Shapcott sent her, with the consent of the Brisbane archives, her father's valuables. Romola Nijinsky-Pulszky thanked him for the unexpected parcel in a long letter. Shapcott continued to gather material on the "Pulszky affair." He wrote up the Pulszky story in a cycle of free verses, interior monologues, and dramatic scenes.

I believe in fate and was therefore impressed that a poet on the antipodes was engaged in studying the Pulszky family story which, in the course of the historical self-examination conducted in our age, we, Hungarian writers, should really rescue from oblivion. The Pulszkys were progressive liberals of a period which is too little written about or discussed. Károly Pulszky's father, Ferenc Pulszky, was a member of the liberal opposition in the National Assembly before the 1848 Revolution, then became an under-secretary in the Batthyány government, and later worked with Lajos Kossuth who sent him as an envoy to London. After the end of the Revolution he accompanied Kossuth on his tour of England and America, recorded in the English-language memoirs of his wife, the cultured and witty daughter of a Vienna banker. Ferenc Pulszky long lived as an exile, then returned home and, following the Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich* of 1867, became a member of Parliament; though he really withdrew from active politics and devoted most of his time to art and archeology, the anti-Habsburg forces nevertheless regarded him as one of their leaders and the anti-Semitic extreme right getting off the ground then identified him as the chief representative of liberalism; as a result he was subject to attacks from several directions. It is at this juncture that the tragedy of his son, Károly Pulszky, enters the story. The son, just like his father, dabbled in art history, and was appointed director of the National Gallery. He became one of the leading personalities of the art life of Budapest; his wife was Emilia Márkus, a well-known actress; their drawing-room con-



tained great art treasures and was the meeting-place of writers, poets, artists, and journalists. The Pulszky family and their intimate friends held many important positions in the cultural and political life of the country. It was probably the spiritual force emanating from the Pulszky salon that provoked the antipathy and hatred of the extreme Right. The Right in Parliament attacked Károly Pulszky, accusing him of having failed to render regular accounts of his trips in Italy, on which he had acquired art works of great value for the National Gallery. The attacks meant that he had to resign, then he was charged, tried, and condemned—following a campaign of slanders and libels—but three months later he was released. Pulszky left Hungary a broken man, at war with the world and himself, going to England first, and then on to Australia. A Brisbane doctor, who befriended him during his short stay there, recorded the story of his last weeks.

Tom Shapcott dug all this out of the Hungarian past with great empathy. What made meeting him still more memorable was that, the same weekend, I witnessed, as performed by the Sydney Theatre Company, Robert David Macdonald's *Chinchilla* of which Diaghilev is the protagonist and Vaclav Nijinsky and Károly Pulszky's daughter Romola are two other major characters.

This is not the place to discuss Macdonald's play—much has already figured prominently in the world press. It is the many memories and associations it evoked when I saw again, on stage, the characters of a tragedy whom I met in real life that I am concerned about. I met Nijinsky and his wife Romola when the storms of the Second World War swept them from Switzerland to Hungary; and Pulszky's younger daughter, Tamara, Romola's sister, when we worked together for Hungarian Radio over many years and I remember Romola in Emilia Márkus's Hűvösvölgy villa one ghostlike night when exploding bombs dropped by Liberators illuminated the early autumn darkness. Nijinsky sat in silence all evening—this self-imposed silence was a symptom of his illness—while his wife talked with unfailing (or pretended?) optimism about how, once the war was over, she would take her husband back to the Kreuzlingen clinic, the only place which offered hope of recovery. I must admit I too asked myself—as Macdonald did and everyone else who came close to this tragically blighted life—what has elicited Nijinsky's fit which finally proved irreversible. Macdonald explicitly refers to the conflict provoked by Nijinsky's unexpected marriage to Romola and then by Diaghilev's resolute, ruthless rejection. A credible, if not too plausible explanation. The facts however suggest that, on the eve of his tour of South America, Nijinsky—in whom genius had from the outset been coupled with latent schizophrenia—



reached a climax with the interpretation of Stravinsky's *Sacre du Printemps*; it was like the explosion of a self-exhausting star. Jealousy was possibly one of the causes but not the principle cause of the break in the case of two geniuses to whom art mattered more than anything else. After *Sacre du Printemps* Nijinsky was clearly over the hill, and Diaghilev was implacable even to himself.

*The prehistory of the Sydney Opera House*

The Drama Theatre performs in the Sydney Opera House. Right in the foyer one meets with contributions of a Hungarian: the life-size portrait of Joan Sutherland by Judy Cassab O.B.E., born in Hungary as Kaszab Judit. The building itself was designed by the Danish architect Jørn Utzon, the winner of a competition arranged in 1956. The Opera House's outline, reminiscent of superimposed breaking waves or sails billowing in the wind, has since become the landmark of Sydney; the harbour-side Opera House is truly a worthy landmark of a South Seas port. It was thus a case of all's well that ends well following years of bitter argument. Chance allowed me a glimpse behind the scenes with a quarter of a century's hindsight, chance and a Hungaro-Australian. George Molnar, or rather MOLNAR as he is known to one and all—a sign of his popularity as a cartoonist—is also a noted architect, a graduate of the Technical University of Budapest and a resident of Sydney since the 1930s. For around thirty-five years now he has contributed several cartoons a week to the *Sydney Morning Herald* and he also taught architecture at Sydney University. When I called on him in his home, our talk touched upon everything except the prehistory of the Opera House; to avoid answering my questions, he showed me his exquisite pastels and water-colours which recall Sydney as it used to be. Months after my return home, after he had received an article describing my visit, he must have felt sorry for having kept silent. He then sent me the real story of the Opera House enclosed with a letter beautifully written in Indian ink. It appears from the story that Molnar and his students saved Sydney from having an Opera House where Oxford Street and Hyde Park meet. When Molnar heard of this suggested site, he had a maquette made of an Opera House midst all the other buildings and, in the *Sydney Morning Herald* showed all the world what the city would look like if the monstrous idea were to be carried out. This is how he managed to have the Opera House sited where it is now: at Benelong Point, replacing Fort Macquarie, later a tramshed which became redundant when Sydney's trams were re-



placed by buses. Molnar also participated in the international competition, but with less success: Utzon won and Molnar, a good loser, immediately started to propagate, in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Utzon's bold design. The famous shells (or breakers, or sails if you like) of the Opera House were erected next to the harbour. Even an interfering acoustics expert did not succeed in having the hall for opera performances demolished owing to allegedly bad acoustics. Molnar told me all these somewhat apologetically in his letter. It was good that I did not know when I watched and listened to Rita Hunter as Verdi's Lady Macbeth and took everything for granted—the splendid performance, the magnificent orchestra, and the acoustics.

### *Canberra — idyll and reality*

Why did the Australian capital manage to stay unaffected and uncluttered, free of artificiality and featurism, and why do the factory-built housing estates of Hungary present so dismal a view even years after the wedding cake style of what is euphemistically called the age of the personality cult? All right, someone might object, but how can a continent-sized country be compared to little Hungary where we have to economize everything: space, building materials, labour? Well, this is probably part of the picture, and so is the fact that Canberra is clearly a capital city which lays stress on public buildings, a city without industry or the separation of work and dormitory, a single immense park in fact out of which one or another snow-white building boldly rises to the sky. There is, however, another reason, too: the planning of Canberra was not entrusted to an institution enjoying a monopoly: an international competition was arranged, and Walter Burley Griffin, a Chicago architect, the winner, was commissioned to carry out the design. I concede the merit of collective work, I even believe that certain jobs can best be done by collective effort. But it seems that a really bold, homogenous architectural—or town-planning—idea can be expected only from a man of genius. It was perhaps in the spirit of Capability Brown that Griffin planned first of all a vast artificial lake in the centre of town, created by damming up the Molonglo. His idea proved such a success that grateful posterity gave his name to the lake. Trout are there in abundance (to my knowledge, this is the only place, in addition to the Szilvásvár trout-breeding lake in Hungary, where a fisherman is never threatened by failure), and small ships offer a ninety-minute trip to visitors come to see the sights of Canberra.



Parliament is an attractive, snow-white building with noble lines in the Neo-Georgian style. The Commonwealth House of Representatives first met there in 1927. A new, more imposing, building is under construction, and the Australian legislators will move there in a few years' time. A Hungarian, of course, had a hand also in the new Parliament. Professor George Molnar and his students calculated and drew all the likely variants for the competent authorities to be able to decide on the site and size before designer Holford, the architect, got busy. During my stay the House of Representatives was in session, but what was in the focus of interest was not the new tax bill discussed on the floor of the House but, whether, because of a Gallup poll suggesting waning popularity, Malcolm Fraser would ask Sir Zelman Cowen, the Governor-General, to dissolve the House prematurely, before the position of the Liberal and National Country Party coalition would go on worsening owing to inflation and rising unemployment. I have to add immediately that the guesses were being made by the Labor Party at a dinner while those from the opposite camp I talked to described such views as trial balloons. It is not easy, especially for an uninitiated outsider, who has difficulties in appraising the power relations, to find one's way in the intricacies of Australian politics. In 1975, when Sir John Kerr, the Governor-General, called upon the Labor government of Gough Whitlam to resign, this action introduced an element of uncertainty into political life, and this uncertainty has not ceased entirely since. The Senate had not passed Whitlam's budget but he continued to be backed by the majority of the House of Representatives. Sir John Kerr had relied on the Senate vote to force the government's resignation and Australian opinion has not been able to forget the event altogether. "Our constitutional system is denied by the Senate's power to reject the budget," says Labor representative R. K. with whom I talked over the issue. "The House of Representatives embodied the people's will based on the electoral system" (125 members of the House are elected by universal suffrage according the single member constituency preferential system, the number of voters being about equal in all constituencies. Every state on the other hand elects an equal number of senators, ten each at this time. In this manner the state of New South Wales with a population of five million elects the same number of senators as does Western Australia with only 1.2 million inhabitants); "if the government dissolves Parliament and calls new general elections, one of the key issues of the campaign will doubtless be the new definition of the powers of the Senate." This is how R. K. argues. He said the ALP will submit a Keynesian economic programme to oppose the monetarist policies of the Liberals. It will demand a bolder credit policy with a view to



stimulating industrial activity, more efficient protective tariffs in favour of the processing industries, the more effective utilization of mineral resources for the benefit of the Australian national economy, the creation of new job opportunities, etc. Of course, a lot depends on whether William Hayden will still be leader of the ALP at the time of the elections, or whether it will be his great rival, the dynamic and intellectual Robert Hawke. A change may obviously result in a modification of the party programme.

"The most important question in Australia today is to define its own identity, to decide on its place in the world," says J. W., who was a senator during sixteen years and is at present a leading columnist of the Murdoch press; who—true to Australian traditions—enjoys considerable independence in what he writes. As an economist his starting-point is that the composition of Australian foreign trade has decisively changed since the Second World War. True, the ousting of Britain as dominant trading partner began already between the two world wars (Britain's ratio dropped from 70 per cent early this century to 50 per cent by the late 1940s), but the change assumed dramatic proportions after the war: the share of Great Britain in Australian exports was just 20 per cent in 1964 and only 4 per cent in 1978–79. Britain has been replaced by Japan which is now the biggest buyer of Australian iron ore, wool, and coal (buying coal worth \$5,000 million) as well as becoming an important export market for numerous other Australian products. At present about one-third of Australia's yearly exports is taken up by the Japanese market, while 20 per cent of all Australian imports is of Japanese origin. The United States is the second most important trading partner; of the Common Market countries the most important after Great Britain is the Federal Republic of Germany. "The long term, more than current practices, points towards the Pacific area," says J. W. "It is characteristic that, e.g., the most important export market for Australian industrial products is already New Zealand, and the volume of trade with Hong-Kong, Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia is growing year by year."

Another aspect of Australia's reorientation is the rethinking of attitudes towards the aboriginals. I talked of this to many people of many kinds: both whites and aboriginals. The picture I have been able to assemble for myself is certainly not clearcut, but one can definitely perceive a widespread improvement, a growing readiness to recognize the rights of aboriginals, parallel with a growing number of court decisions granting compensation for past and present wrongs. In Canberra I had the occasion to talk to Eric Willmot, principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.



The 45-year-old Willmot proudly told me that he was a full-blood aboriginal born on a small island off the coast of Queensland, that he was a drover in his youth, driving huge herds from the cattle stations towards ports and abattoirs. On the way he was once seriously injured. During the eighteen months of hospitalization he learnt to read and write, and felt an irresistible urge to continue his studies. He received a state scholarship and, since he was not really articulate in English, he began with mathematics. He matriculated at Newcastle University in N.S.W. and graduated in physics. "Look here," Willmot told me, "the state subsidy we were recently granted is only part compensation for the past and for social handicaps we still labour under. Just imagine, when the first Europeans landed, Australia had 300,000 inhabitants, all aboriginals; today there are about 160,000 of us—only half the number. You may figure out what has happened in two centuries."

Indeed: theirs was a bitter lot. There were times, in Tasmania, when the indigenous population was wiped out methodically, none live there today. In other parts of Australia half of those who have been left live in towns, the other half have withdrawn to underpopulated areas and live in tribal organizations, hunting, fishing, collecting. Since 1968 the Federal government makes regular yearly grants to promote the education of aboriginals and to improve their health and housing.

"In my view," says Eric Willmot, "both attitudes are right: to preserve ancient modes of life and traditions, establishing tribal communities a long way from the white civilization, as well as wishing to take part in modern civilization in such a way that in the meantime one preserves the ancient culture of our people with its own features. I for one have opted for the latter, as more and more young people have done since. Today we have a good number of educationalists, historians, and artists; but there is unfortunately little progress in the technical field." There Willmot shows his own modesty. In 1981 he won the Australian title of inventor of the year with his construction of a new type of gear-box, and he represented Australia at the international show of inventions in Geneva.

Of course, this is only one side of the coin, the great mass of aboriginals still do not really live in idyllic conditions. The Aboriginal Land Rights Bill proposed by Whitlam's Labor government in 1975 was put through Parliament by the Fraser government in 1976, yet in many instances aboriginals still have to go to the law to fight for their rights. Their folk-art is highly appreciated, but much water will still flow down the river Murray before the man in the street will have shed all his prejudices against the black people. "We have plenty of time," says Wurbilil, the painter who



conjured up wondrous spirit beings and mythical animals in his bark-paintings. "We came here forty thousand years ago, and meanwhile we have—even though with difficulty—survived a thing or two."

The tribes of Australian aboriginals speak more than three hundred languages, many of the tribes do not understand each other's speech. But they share a common body of beliefs. In the beginning there were dream times, that was the home of the spirit beings who created the Earth, water, the air, the Sun, people and animals. When one's time has come, one goes back there, to the dream times. That is why it is not worth one's while to lead an evil life or to hurry; one should enjoy living.

It is said that Wurbilil, whose works were displayed at a highly successful exhibition arranged by a picture gallery, could only with difficulty be persuaded to come to Canberra. The manageress of the gallery relates that guards equipped with walkie-talkies camp on the fringes of aboriginal reserves where whites are only exceptionally allowed to enter: mostly only doctors, nurses, and teachers. The agents of galleries are permitted to inspect and buy the much-sought-after products of folk-art only in the huts located at specified points.

"Congratulations on your success," I said to Wurbilil.

"What you should congratulate me on is that the day after tomorrow I shall at last be free to fly home," he replied.

However strange it seems, to these people who have dropped from the stone age into twentieth-century technical civilization, nothing is surprising. Neither air travel nor electricity nor television. The human brain seems to have dreamt about everything already in the dream times.

While the Qantas jumbo jet takes me home to Europe, I see shots taken in Australia moving in my mind's eye: eucalyptus trees with colourful galahs and white-feathered cockatoos—and parts of Melbourne that remind one of London; the boundlessness of the outback with kangaroos jumping about—and the bays and coves of Sydney harbour lined with houses and gardens. The substance of Australia is so difficult to grasp because the picture changes, practically abruptly, from modernness to exoticism, from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first. A country the size of a continent, poised between past and present, is in quest of its new role, of its own identity; this is what Australia looks like from the serial perspective of a jumbo jet. Seen from still farther off, from Europe, it seems certain that it will before long find both by adapting itself, in its own wisely conceived interest to a Pacific context.



IVÁN BOLDIZSÁR

## FOUR HOT AND COLD STORIES

### THE POET'S HIDING-PLACE

**I**n those *fin de guerre* cramped and quiet, traffic-free, blacked out nights one could already hear the sound of Russian guns over from Vecsés or it could have been Monor. One evening in early December I was on a number 61 tram travelling towards Hegyalja út. I stood on the front platform uniformed, belted, wearing a greatcoat. The pistol-holster and the most active-service looking map-case both contained forty copies of the latest issue of the stencilled *Ellenállás* (Resistance). I was taking them to Mihály Erdődi; a safe place in Fürj utca. We were going to put them in envelopes the next day.

The tram was practically empty. In the dimmed light that barely shone even just below it I noticed a young man on the rear platform. He was stamping his feet, looking about. He wore a forage-cap and greatcoat, but no belt. I started towards him, his broad shoulders and humped back seemed familiar. I recognized him. Only Z. had black eyes that looked bright even in the blackout. I believed him to be in a forced labour camp. I waved to him and he took fright. He did not recognize me, he saw my uniform, that's all. As I came closer, he jumped off. By the time I reached the rear platform, the conductor was there on the step and watched Z. falling. Z. quickly got on his feet and started to run.

Sound the bell, I yelled at the man.

"Go on, let the poor kike go," the conductor said. I should really have pressed an *Ellenállás* on him. But I only mumbled: don't worry, I won't hurt him, and jumped off. Z. must have been fifty to sixty metres off already.

I started after him. I shouted his name. Stop, nothing's wrong! He did not hear me or he did not understand. Or he did not believe me. He went on running. I had greater staying power. I was a few years younger and was not in such a poor state. He tripped over a kerbstone and fell. I over-



took him and bent over him. He lay prostrate in the thick of darkness between two black-wicked gas lamps. He could not see my face.

"Please don't hurt me," he said. He wanted to get up but failed and fell. He straightened his back and pressed both hands against his thighs. He came to attention on the ground. "Let me go, please. I am a Hungarian poet."

I know, I answered. You wrote "The lament for driven off dogs."

He looked at me in terror. Later he told me he had thought he was hallucinating.

Zoltán, I said to him then, don't you recognize me?

He extended his hand towards me. I helped him get up. He embraced me. He smelt. "Oh God, my God and Lord," he said, "you have sent me the Archangel Gabriel."

I had to take a big gulp. I am not Gabriel, but I shall take you to the Archangel Michael Erdődi.

A motor-car. At that time only Arrowcross people or Germans were motorized. We moved further into the shadows and crouched behind a street bench. If they move this way, I shall start to beat you, I told Z. "That will be good," he answered and laughed. He had absented himself without leave after digging an antitank trap in the afternoon. They were camped in a barn behind Nagytétény. He did not know where he would spend the night. He had wanted to hide in the bushes of the Városmajor park. Nine pengő and a telephone token were all he had.

He would phone Pista, who may know where his wife is. He had to scam today, the company was moving off tomorrow. He explained how he had come to a bargain with two of the guards, but I did not pay much attention. Mihály's house was still a long way off.

The next 61 arrived but I did not dare to get on. We worked out a plan of campaign: If we saw a patrol, we would cut across to another, even darker, side-street. If it can't be done, I would wind the strap of my map-case round his wrist. The rest would be done by the three golden stars on my collar tab which had turned me into a self-promoted captain.

Around the house the coast was clear. I rang. Dot-dot dot-dash-dot-dot. "What the hell is this?" Z. asked. "A conspiracy?" Yes. The letters 'i' and 'l', the first letters of the name Ilona, in Morse code.

She answered the door. Don't be afraid, there's nothing wrong. I pushed Z. in. Ilona drew back, locked the door and turned on the light. She was wearing a long white silk house-gown laced below the breasts, with a low Empire style neck and thin black trimmings on the neck-line. Her hair,



loose, fell over her shoulders. Could be that I liked taking the papers to Mihály for the sake of this vision? Z. wore odd boots. One was gaping at the toes, the other used wire instead of bootlaces. He wore skiing trousers, the shabby uniform of the labour service, no jacket or tunic, only a ragged sort of sweater. Two buttons of the army reject greatcoat he had on were missing. Only his forage-cap was regular. My eyes were arrested by the red, white and green cap button, labour service men were not allowed to wear it. "I managed to get one from the guards today," he explained. He needed such trifle to make him feel safe.

Ilona kept looking at him in alarm. Mihály showed up at a landing on the inside stairway. "Who else is here? I am glad to see you, but I cannot turn my home into billets." Z. turned and wanted to go. Ilona called to him. "Wait. You must be hungry."

I am not staying the night, I called up to Mihály. But I should like you to shelter Z. the poet. This was the moment the angel and all nine muses flew across the hall. "We know you. Welcome! Why didn't you say so at once?"

Ilona only shook hands then, including the nicest gift in her handshake—two lines of his verse: "Whom God does not love He severely punishes, He plants the bush of love in his heart."

"Do you know my poems?" Z. asked. "God loves me very much today." We all began laughing. That moment would have become unendurable otherwise.

First, Ilona served him with a plate of hot consommé, left over from lunch, it only had to be warmed up. Meanwhile she had turned the bath water on. Mihály rummaged about in the wardrobe. He fetched a shirt, the neck would be loose, but never mind! The trousers proved to be a greater problem. Z. could get into them twice over. Let him put on a bathrobe for the time being, Ilona would alter them after dinner. Z. sat on a chair in the dining-room, slowly sipping the soup and cried. "May I wash my hair, too?" he asked.

While he had his bath, we addressed the envelopes. The envelopes were all of different shapes and the names of the senders we wrote differed too. Ilona would drop them in six different letter-boxes. I told them how I had met Z. Mihály shook his head. "How dare he show himself in the street in this get-up?" I answered that it seems that there were still some left in Hungary like him or that tram conductor.

We heard a knock at the bathroom door. That (that also) was a time when, hearing any unexpected signal, one would ask: Is there anything wrong? I opened the bathroom door a little. Surely he was not taken ill



in the tub? "Come in," he beckoned. "Pick up my rags and put them in the rubbish bin. I don't want these people to handle them. I see they make you sick too." Don't be a fool, I was a soldier myself. "All right. But say, who are these magic people. They are kind, but will I be safe here?"

True, I had forgotten to tell him that M. E. was the photographer of the Regent's grandson. There was no safer place than this in Budapest today. "And why does he do it?" He is a decent man. He hates war and the Germans disgust him.

Z. asked me, since I was there, to rub his back with a brush. "Fine. But it could be that he wants to get some insurance for the future." I don't think so. What should a children's photographer be afraid of? (What indeed? In the winter of 1949 we had great difficulty in getting him out of the basement of Andrassy út 60.)

"Eat slowly. There is no need to hurry here," Ilona assured Z. at the table. "Don't stuff your belly full all at once, or else you will be sick tomorrow," Mihály warned him. The last time he had eaten meat was three weeks before, even then only shreds of beef in the soup. Mihály filled the glasses with Zöldszilváni. The first glass of wine already rose to Z.'s head. "Oh, holy meat," he said, "I honour you so much that I dare not cut you with a knife." He took his spoon and used it to cut the meat into pieces. They were not allowed to use knives in the camp. When Ilona brought in the coffee percolator after dinner, Z. asked to be allowed to light the spirit burner under it.

With the coffee-cup in his hand he attempted to phone Pista, but the call was answered by an unfamiliar voice. The happy mood at dinner only lasted a minute. I promised to help him find his wife tomorrow. We saw him up to a small room in the attic. Ilona had laid out a nightshirt and Mihály had put a pair of slippers next to the bed. They urged me to stay on after all, insisting that I could sleep in the dining-room, but I chose to make off. I could not recall where I slept that night even if I were tortured.

We were childish conspirators. My wife, whom I shall here call by her initial, J., sent messages to me in a sort of secret code through one, or sometimes two, friends of hers. This was how I was told, by way of three intermediaries, that Mihály wanted to see me urgently, there was something the matter. I rang him up immediately. "Listen carefully," he said. "Unless you come here at once and take away your poet, I will instantly join the Arrowcross Party. On the second day already he tried to seduce my wife."

I went and fetched him.



## SUSPICION AND FORGIVENESS

T. was freed on a Tuesday. The way I see things, looking back, twenty years later, the time of living submerged, at the bottom of the sea, came to an end that day. We still bore the depressing marks, but on the surface the sky was already clearing up. That Tuesday still, at noon, T.'s wife, B., phoned to tell me the good news. In the afternoon T. had a long bath, then went to bed, to sleep. We went down to see them in the evening, down since our home was on top of the hill and theirs at the bottom. I had often run down that hill in recent years when B. had phoned wanting to talk over something; how it might be possible to get an extra parcel sent in to T.; or whether a fee had to be paid to the court-appointed lawyer; or how one could possibly bear it all. Each time I rang, I imagined T. might answer. He would stand there and I would embrace him.

Tuesday evening he stood there and I embraced him. We even rubbed our stubbly cheeks one against the other. "Have you written it?" was his first question. In the summer of nineteen thirty-three I, studying in Berlin at the time, and two German friends, sprinkled the summer home of the local Nazi *Gauleiter* with a phosphoric solution. As soon as the liquid had evaporated, the phosphorus burst into flames and set the wooden house on fire. The residence burnt down all right. Unfortunately, some of the stuff got onto our trousers, which then flared up right in the middle of the Breite Strasse in Potsdam. "You should write up that. How you got away with it. How you decided to do it. There is sure to be a bit of self-arse-licking in it, but that is what makes it real."

We stayed only until half past nine, towards nine T.'s eyelids began to droop. We talked about everything, about subjects that had been written up and others that had remained unwritten, about the political situation and literature, we joked about the new French novel, gossipped, who's up whom, that sort of thing, but not a word about prison. I do not know why the others kept silent, I was tormented by curiosity, but I felt it would be more indiscreet to ask than chewing over the details of their honeymoon with newly-weds. How you put up with pleasure of love or prison is your own business.

The following day, on Wednesday, I got home early in the afternoon but still in time for lunch in Budapest. The first thing J. said was that T. had phoned early in the morning, soon after I had left. The inside inner alarm clock must still be working. And he must be happy to be able to use the telephone, he must have missed that particularly. "He sounded very excited." You forget how curious he is by nature. He wants to know



what people say. If they know he is out. "Perhaps, but I don't think so. He asked you to ring him back as soon as you got home." I dialled T.'s number. His wife answered. Suddenly I thought T. had been rearrested. I had heard of cases when somebody was set free on Tuesday and rearrested on Wednesday. I brushed aside the thought. All this happened before nineteen fifty-six.

The receiver was already in T.'s hand. "Come down rightaway. Both of you." I thanked him for wishing to see me again. We certainly would go soon, all I wanted was a bite to eat. And I wanted to lie down for a quarter of an hour. Would four be all right?

"No. Right now. I must insist." We rarely used such formal words. We would be off. J. wanted to feed me at least one fried egg. I did not want anything. My stomach shrank. "What do you think?" J. asked. Nothing. But something is wrong. He may have passed blood last night and is frightened of having cancer. It was again T. who answered the door. He wore a tobacco-coloured ankle-length dressing-gown. His forehead had grown still more domed, his profile still more noble. He looks more and more like his god, Goethe, I thought. I have felt sorry ever since for not having told him then. "Thank you for coming. Please come in."

He forgot to shake hands. B. drew back her cheeks when I wanted to kiss them. "Please take a seat," T. said. I tried to turn it into a joke. Would it not be simpler if we just sat down? T. did not answer, he only pointed to a place on the damask sofa. B. sat down in an armchair opposite us. T. remained standing.

"This is a very serious matter. I ask you for perfect frankness, indeed, I demand it." Good Lord, the man has gone off his head. They had questioned him for so long that he now plays at interrogating us. I sought to catch B.'s eye, but she sat with vacant looks. "It has come to my knowledge," T. continued in an articulate manner, "that during my absence you had maintained a liaison with my wife."

It was on the tip of my tongue to call him a fool. I held back. He had been in prison for three years; a hurt man who must be treated as such. Silence descended as at a rehearsal when the director told you to keep mouth shut and count up to three. J. must only have counted up to two, she got up, stepped close to T., pressed hard against him and put her arms around him: "Well, do you want to get your own back on them with me? Should we go into the other room right now, or will you come up to see me tonight?"

T. peeled off my wife's arm and urged her back on to the sofa.

"I am serious and I ask for a serious answer. Perhaps our lives hinge



upon it." He looked sad but resolute. I had felt as if on stage earlier, now the trap-door opened under my feet. I grabbed hold of the side support of the sofa. He could say anything he liked, I could not feel angry with him.

"If you remain silent I understand everything. It is better for you not to make excuses. I have already been told that you came here frequently also late at night."

Is that what the neighbours treated you to early in the morning? Have they also told you what a wonderful woman your wife is? How she warded off compassionate glances. If someone gave her a wide berth in the street, next time she approached them and asked if they could possibly help you. She flirted with the prison governor to be allowed to visit you. She fraternized with the screws to be allowed to pass in pyjamas or clean socks. She waited hours on end for the public prosecutor to read her letter, and then entreated him to put back every word he intended to cut.

"I know," said T. and inclined his head. "Indeed I know all that. I understand all right why you fell in love with her."

It would have been contemptible of me to take advantage of your absence, I started to say, but T. interrupted me. "So you mean to say that I am contemptible for presuming it of you? Is it so inconceivable?"

I felt as ashamed as when dreaming that I got on the bus naked. It is not at all inconceivable, I said. But even if I had fallen desperately in love with her, I would not have laid a finger on her as long as you were in prison.

"Don't be rhetorical," J. said to me. "And you, why don't you ask your wife?"

"He questioned me the whole night. I answered 'no'," B. said.

"Why didn't you believe her?"

"Why? And you didn't suspect your husband?" T. now turned towards my wife. "You did not think it unusual that he came here day after day?"

"I did. I was suspicious."

"And?"

"And nothing."

"You didn't say a word?"

"What should I have said? You were in prison, and your wife needed us."

I got up. I make no excuses, I won't explain, I said. But take care. You are at home, you are free. From this day onwards I shall start courting your wife impetuously.

B. laughed out loud and that extinguished T.'s suspicion. He stepped up to us and embraced us both. "Forgive me."

J. looked at him gently. "Don't apologize to us, say that to B."

We could not wait to see that happen.



After lunch I did have a short nap after all. I could not have slept much when J. came in holding the phone on a long cord. "Your girl-friend."

I pulled her beside me on the couch and held the receiver between both our ears so she could also hear.

"Why didn't you say 'yes'?" B. asked.

"Are you out of your mind too? I have not even ever held your hand, or have I?"

"Of course not. But since yesterday everybody sings my praises to T. How well I behaved, how brave I was, how much he has to thank his wife for. He would have loved so much to forgive me for something. Are you laughing now?"

I was not.

### IN THE LUKÁCS BATHS

I. G., the Social Democrat journalist whose hair had turned a silver grey at an early age, asked me in July nineteen forty-nine, in the showers at Lukács baths, whether I knew Arthur Koestler. Yes, I replied. I have seen him once at the Paris Peace Conference still in the autumn of forty-six. "Is it true that he knows Hungarian?" I did not talk to him, but a man does not forget his native language. Do you want him to do something for you?

"Not him. You."

I turned on the cold water full strength, dancing under it after the hot shower, and said to him, while sneezing and panting, just to conceal my embarrassment: Out with it. In those days nobody liked insinuations, those not quite straight questions. László Rajk had already been inside for two months. Everyone alive was suspect, me in the first place.

I. G. was also busily showering himself. We waited until there were just the two of us, bare like Greek lover boys. Had someone surprised us as we stood there, they might have grown suspicious, I. G. lent so close to me and whispered: "What I had in mind is that I am sure you own *Darkness at Noon*, Koestler's famous book."

I did not answer at once. I guessed why he wanted the book. It is about the Moscow trials of the thirties after all. I had bought it in Paris in forty-six. "True, my English is weak, but with a dictionary I could work my way through it," he insisted.

Why do you want it? "So you have it?" He began putting on his trunks. You haven't answered my question, I said. "Why do you ask a question to



which you know the answer already?" The malicious tone surprised me. I. G. used to be a smile incarnate. Those who did not know him better might have thought he was a mealy-mouthed man.

I followed up the ice-cold stream with a little more hot. It is good to alternate hot and cold after too short a sleep. "Please lend it to me. It is Friday today. I shall finish it by Monday." But my copy is in French. The title has been changed. It is not *Darkness at Noon* but *Le zéro et l'infini*. "Don't translate it! I know French well. I am in luck, you see."

Next day I took the book with me for him.

On Monday I waited for him in vain. He did not come. Not to worry, he would bring it back soon. I looked for him in vain on Tuesday as well. On Wednesday the whole town knew that I. G. had been arrested. But I alone knew that the Koestler book went with him—with my name in it. They must have found it, the way a cynical saying of the time had it: Bed and table remain, the rest goes with the man.

Two or three hard weeks followed, could have been two or three months. I was waiting for someone to call on me and ask, first, why I was concealing forbidden literature and, second, why I lent it to traitorous saboteurs. I specially dreaded being dragged from my bed in pyjamas. I therefore did not go to bed before a quarter past one. Rumour had it that they fetched one around one o'clock.

They did not.

Months went by, and we heard nothing about I. G. His name did not appear in the Rajk indictment, it was not mentioned at the public hearing in September. When it was bruited around that István Riesz, former Social Democrat Minister of Justice, had died in prison, I could not help, standing under the shower in the Lukács baths, thinking poor I. G. was dead as well.

One morning in nineteen fifty-four I was also there under the shower. For a long time past I again had gone to bed at eleven. Wives of some of the Rajk people had been allowed prison visit. There were news of releases from prison about to happen. Nobody knew anything about I. G. All at once somebody put his arms around me from behind and called me by name. I hated these jokes, so I hit out backwards even before turning about. "Relax, Iván." I recognized the voice. I turned round and, bare as I was, embraced him.

"I got out yesterday afternoon," I. G. said. "I wanted to give you a ring, but my telephone had been disconnected, of course. Then I thought it would be in better style for me to thank you right here."

What are you thanking me for?



"The Koestler. Remember I told you I was in luck because I knew French better. I was reading all day that Saturday and also on Sunday. Had you given me the English edition, I could not have got through a quarter of it. They came for me at a quarter past one Sunday night. The book was still next to my bed." There was no need to worry any longer, but I asked all the same if they took it. "The hell they did. They looked at it and asked me what it was. I told them it was a thriller. The boss sarcastically remarked: "Sure, a Social Democrat editor reads trashy novels instead of studying the classics." They threw the book back on the table.

All right, but what are you thanking me for?

"Everything. Koestler made me understand that it is no use denying things if you are arrested. Sooner or later you will admit everything and sign what is put before you. I thought I would spare myself the unpleasant aspects of questioning. Right at the first interrogation I confessed to everything I was accused of. They were surprised a little, they did not understand why I was so helpful. They added a few things to see if I would not get confused, but there was nothing I could get confused about, I just repeated in the affirmative what they told me as questions. When everything went off well also at the second interrogation, the boss came down. I don't have to tell you who. I have taken a vow never to say his name out loud. He also questioned me. Everything was plain sailing. In the end he slapped me twice in the face and said: it is obvious that you are a skit of a Social Democrat. I signed the minutes and from that time on they left me alone. Moreover, a year later I was placed in the office. I have to thank you for that."

My voice stuck in my throat. I kept squeezing his hands. And the book? I asked—just to say something.

"When I was taken away, my wife looked into it and quickly burnt it."

## ANDRÉ

André Simone was my opponent. Then he became a friend. I honour his memory. I met him in Paris in July nineteen forty-six during the peace negotiations. We sat in the bar of the Palais de Luxembourg. Not together as yet. A tall, stout man with broad cheekbones at the table near by was explaining something to René Maheu, a young reporter on *Le Monde*, and to two other journalists. They were sitting there when I arrived. I gave R. M. a nod, the others also nodded. While I pulled up a chair, I saw that the tall, stout man asked the *Le Monde* man who I was. I had left the Rumanian committee meeting which was also discussing the Hungarian busi-



ness, to dash out for a Schweppes tonic; it was then that I discovered the bittersweet taste of this drink.

Willy-nilly I had to hear what was talked about at the nearby table. I heard the words *les Hongrois* over and over again. André Simone told me later that he had intentionally spoken louder when I sat down next to them. He thought I wanted to overhear them. He repeated, in a choice style, with Bossuet-like turns of phrase, the anti-Hungarian rhetoric employed by the Czechoslovak delegation to the peace conference. At that time there was talk about the expulsion of two hundred thousand Hungarians from Slovakia. Things did not look well for us, it certainly mattered what the French journalists knew or did not know about us Hungarians.

For a time I listened patiently, then I walked up to their table and asked R. M. to introduce me and allow me to sit with them. This was when I discovered the name of the tall, stout man: André Simone. It took me a couple of minutes until, sitting close to him, I had picked out of his perfect French a few Slavic, long *i* (ee) sounds of higher pitch and heavily rolled *r*'s. But by that time we had crossed blades in a Hungarian-Slovak war of arguments. The four Frenchmen listened with interest for a while, one or another even scored the hits, then they put down their pencils and showed their boredom.

They livened up when I called André Simone a Slovak nationalist, whereupon he nicknamed me a Horthyite dog. R. M. clutched his head. (Twenty years later, when he was already Director-General of Unesco, in the manic state which springs from tiredness after a long meeting, he asked me whether I remembered that in my youth I had been a dog. I have never forgotten. But did he know what had happened to the man who had called me a dog? He did not.) The other two French journalists kept slapping their knees, were laughing. "You ought to collect an admission fee," the man from *l'Aurore* said.

We stared at each other, and stopped. In the next few days I saw him many times in the corridors of the Palais de Luxembourg and read his name even more frequently in the French dailies. Then I found out that he was as much of a nationalist as I was a dog. He had fled to France because of the German occupation, and had there assumed his pen-name. His real name became known to me much later. When Hitler's army reached France, he went underground. André Simone's name often appeared on illegal leaflets. In the French papers where his name and person were known and respected he kept repeating eagerly and without giving it a thought the abominable slanders and the false and specious arguments of Clementis and Doctor Hajdu, the Slovak leaders clamouring for the expulsion.



Though we lost every battle in the Palais de Luxembourg, we succeeded in putting obstacles in the way of the expulsion of two hundred thousand Hungarians. I rushed out of the committee room to place a call to the delegation, to ask for a line to Budapest. In the door to the telephone room I ran into André Simone. I held out my hand. At the moment of victory—this is such a rare Hungarian experience—one is big-hearted. He accepted it, shook it and said: *Les tristesses hongroises, roumaines, slaves restent toujours des tristesses.*

You are familiar with Ady? I looked at him. He asked me to say it in Hungarian. *Hiszen magyar, oláh, szláv bánat mindigre egy bánat marad. . .*

We went down into the bar and ordered Armagnac. He had translated this line from Slovak into French, in his native language he knew perhaps a hundred poems by Ady. I cast down my eyes; I barely knew the name of Hviezdoslav-Országh. "He was Slovak, I am Czech." I was too ashamed to mention Čapek. "I recommend Jiří Wolker to your attention. I have translated a few of his poems into French."

We came to be on first-name terms. "You were right on the expulsion issue," he said.

He only told me later why he had spoken in support of Clementis and Co. I never asked him, but from that time on we often sat together in the small cafés and taverns of the Boulevard Saint-Germain. He had lived abroad for a long time, he had practically become a French writer, he needed to convince his fellow countrymen of his usefulness. "But you may have noticed that for the last fortnight I have not written a single line on the expulsion. I familiarized myself with the material. . . that's all."

In nineteen forty-seven he came to Budapest. In forty-eight I went to Prague. In May forty-nine I received a picture postcard from him. He wrote about his summer plans. It would be good to meet in Paris. And an unexpected question in the end: "Do you believe it?" I knew what he meant, but I did not answer. In the summer of forty-nine I was not allowed to go to Paris, although I was still an Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Ministry. He sent me a postcard with a photo of the terrace of the Café de Flore, he circled a table, that had been ours, often. And, at the bottom, again without transition: "I don't believe a word of it."

Two years later he was one of the accused in the Slansky trial—in company with Clementis and Hajdu. I read the reports but did not believe a word; even at home I dared to speak only in whispers in the garden. I arranged for the Pozsony Hungarian paper to be sent to me every day to know more about the fate of my friend. He was accused of being a French spy. And a Slovak nationalist.



He spoke, being given the right of the last word. His fellow accused confessed in a short statement that they had sinned against the party. André Simone—during the trial he was called only by his real name to make him look ridiculous: his name was Katz—made a longer speech. I read it, but after the first sentences a strange feeling overwhelmed me. I know this text. Where have I heard it? Or where have I read it? He also pleaded guilty, but there was something frightening in the rhythm of his sentences, in the logic of his arguments.

On the third day he was executed. When I heard the news on the radio in the morning, I saw him in my mind's eye. I rendered homage to his memory by recalling our conversations, the two-way literary seminars we had had in Paris. As though a cover had been torn off in my mind. I remembered where those familiar words of André Simone's had come from: Koestler's novel. Those were the last words of Rubashov, before his judges. André Simone wished to indicate that he was just as little guilty as was the old Bolshevik defendant in *Darkness at Noon*. I could not look up the text, the book had gone with I. G.

When I could travel again, in nineteen fifty-eight, I bought the novel in the bookshop of the Brussels World Fair. Back at home I compared the two texts. They were identical almost word for word. What a memory my friend must have had, and what great strength of mind to be able to convey a message practically from the other shore.

Twenty more years went by. I was again in Prague, in the lobby of a big hotel. I was chatting with M. at the reception desk. As a very young girl she also had written reports on the Paris peace conference. A wizened old woman entered by the revolving door. She noticed us, came up to us, exchanged a few words with M., and also with me, in French. "Do you know who she is?" M. asked and went on: "André Simone's widow. She comes here frequently to give French lessons to the hotel staff."

I waited for her, went up to her, and we sat down in a far corner of the big lobby. She remembered me, but earlier she had not dared to mention it. "You have not forgotten André?" There was no need to answer. I hesitated a couple of minutes while we talked of children and grandchildren. Then I asked her if she had noticed something in André's last words. She took my arm with both hands. "*Mon Dieu*. You noticed? You understood it? You are the first to whom I can speak about it. May I kiss you?"

I kissed her hand. Her face lit up, she smiled. By the time M. came to join us, she was laughing. "You always told such good jokes already in Paris," M. remarked.



# FROM THE PRESS

## RESEARCH FOR THE EIGHTIES

The Secretary General of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences reports every fifth year on the work of the various institutes of this most important scientific centre. At the 142th Annual Meeting of the Academy (May 6-7, 1982) the world context of the Hungarian economic evolution was debated; the report by Secretary General Lénárd Pál dealt also with the economic side of research, the connection between research and social-economic reality, and with the international aspects. *Magyar Tudomány*, the monthly of the Academy, published in its June 1982 number a shortened version of the report.

Lénárd Pál noted that by academic research he meant not only work being carried on the institutes belonging to the Academy organizationally, but also research at the universities and elsewhere with the support of the Academy. The summary finding applies to all kinds of these activities — examples to the contrary notwithstanding — that although they did react to the social and economic requirements, they did so only haltingly and with some inertia. Nevertheless, in recent years several research programmes were begun which were in themselves results of a change in attitudes. These included research on the problems of the transition to intensive reproduction, the role of domestic natural resources in the long-term transformation of the production structure, the comparative analysis of the economic growth indices of the CMEA coun-

tries. In the work of the institutes devoted to the natural and technical sciences, "the goals which strengthen technical-economic orientation have begun to exert a more powerful influence." Examples here are, among others, the elaboration of the scientific foundations of the technologies used in the reduction of specific energy and material input the development of automation and computerization the strengthening of the scientific basis of the food economy.

The use of technical and scientific progress has been an important topic in recent debate. "Depending on where the debate was conducted, said Lénárd Pál, either the research and development sector or the production and sales organizations were blamed. If however, we carefully consider the experience of the past five years, we may find that unfavourable results were not caused by chance nor by ill-will. These unfavourable results occurred more or less as logical consequences of the conditions under which research and development and the production and sales organizations were compelled to carry out their activities... Experience shows that conditions that reflect genuine interest and value relations do more to ensure the use of research achievements than do incantations and instructions. But even where conditions are favourable, it must be taken into consideration that production and sales organizations of the Hungarian size are not able to take alone the full risks of in-



roducing research achievements whose promise of profit lies in the long-term perspective.

Although information and business links between research institutes and industrial enterprises have become closer, Lénárd Pál still mentions "dividing walls." The tearing down of these walls has been delayed to the eighties. "Now Hungarian research policy has to face two tasks at the same time: it must forcefully develop the innovations which will produce actual economic profit; but it must also support intensively basic research directed at new scientific discoveries, and this in much less favourable economic conditions those existing earlier."

Although the government and Party resolutions (including the scientific policy guidelines drawn up by the HSWP in 1969 and updated in 1977) put special emphasis on the importance of basic research, for some years medium-range research and development programs aiming at more immediate practical results seem to have diverted attention from them. Between 1976 and 1980 expenditure on basic research amounted to approximately 47 per cent of the expenditure on academic research, as against 53 per cent in the preceding five years. "It is not so much the drop of 6 per cent that is alarming," noted Lénárd Pál, "but the deterioration of those financial conditions which are needed for the pursuit of basic research. Owing to insufficient funding sources in the period just past—regrettably—the standard the equipment available for research has deteriorated, which has restricted the exploitation of intellectual potential." And yet: "Everything indicates that it is exactly the particular character of the present period that makes it necessary to increase support for basic research of a high standard (which creates something new) since the defense against the many unfavourable factors becomes only possible if we intervene in the processes in time and with scientific thoroughness and using new methods."

Where research in the social sciences is concerned, the programmes developed for the first half of the eighties already indicate that the reluctance to undertake practical tasks directly related to government work appears to be on the wane. On the relationship between politics and science, Lénárd Pál said, among others, that in Hungary "there are no forbidden topics and there are no prescribed conclusions; to rely on scientific achievements has become a fundamental interest of politics;" the relationship between the two spheres "is a creative dialogue."

The Secretary General analysed the information effect of academic research through the Science Citation Index of the Institute for Scientific Information. In the periodicals registered by the Index, 13,584 Hungarian publications appeared between 1976 and 1980, of which 3,360 were written by researchers from academic institutes. According to Lénárd Pál, this is not a bad proportion if we take the consideration that academic research receives a much lower proportion of financial resources (12.3 per cent). There is a relatively large difference between the expected and the actual citation; in chemistry, biology and medical biology, Hungarian researches generally publish papers which are of low citation; in a very broad final conclusion Lénárd Pál says that "although the standard of the research achievements... may be called average by international standards, the quality of the communication channels used for publishing the results is generally inadequate." Medical biology is typical by international standards. Many articles are published in this area, but the majority remains uncited; yet these include also the largest number of publications "of an outstanding effect" (cited more than nine times).

Only a qualitative evaluation of the economic effect of academic research is possible. In recent years the research institutes have often had to try to apply research achievements commercially, since industry did not attempt to apply them rapidly and not always



for objective reasons. On the other hand, in some institutes it was recognized that there was a real demand for results, and they found marketing solutions sometimes on their own and sometimes with the co-operation of enterprises or co-operatives. Lénárd Pál praised this activity though adding "it would have been more desirable if the results had been realized by the production and sales organizations, with research institutes sharing in the profits."

Approximately 5.5 per cent of the patents registered in Hungary originate from academic research establishments. However, a conspicuous fact is that the most profitable patents are remote from the areas of academic research.

Evaluating the effect of research in the social sciences can only be on a quantitative basis. Lénárd Pál recognized the large number of comprehensive reference works published recently (they include for instance a planned History of Hungary in ten volumes), and of their influence on public education. In addition "in academic research, in recent years, room has already been provided for examinations which serve the implementation of commissions, some of which have been fulfilled successfully." It may also be considered fortunate that the participation of social science research establishments has increased in the preparation of and justification for Government decisions and Party resolutions. The work which lays the foundations for the development of our price structure, the modernization of the production structure was especially important, as was the work done by our institutes in the forecasting of world economic processes and for national economic planning. "The research intended to help in the modernization of public administration has brought less practical results."

In his summary of the financial conditions of academic research, Lénárd Pál mentioned that between 1976 and 1980 research input

had increased by 10 per cent, and only partly made up for price rises. The input per researcher is rather low and must be increased "even at the expense of reducing the quantity and improving the quality of researchers, otherwise we cannot stand our ground in international competition."\*

A large part of the equipment used in research was already obsolete in 1976. In this respect there has been no important improvement in the past five years, though there has been no deterioration either. There is still much to be improved in the forms and efficiency of international research co-operation.

Lénárd Pál pointed out that basic research could not be directed, perhaps only influenced: however, in many areas it would be especially important "to intensively assist basic research." An example would be in micro-materials, which is expected to lead to the newest revolution in micro-electronics. In planning research not, however, in the case of applied research (it has not yet been possible to reduce the formal elements. Here the flexible selection of goals would necessitate modifying the plans. The criteria for evaluation are also not clear.

After describing the possible means of guiding research and the financial resources (recently made available, which he described in the context of entrepreneurial activities of the institutes) the Secretary General concluded: "The guidance of academic research must come closer to the economic and social reality, and at the same time to research itself too; its functions of assisting, co-ordinating, creating contacts, and of evaluating must be asserted better, because this is the only way of fulfilling a great and honourable task, the service of science."

JÁNOS SZÉKY

\* In 1981 Hungary spent 3.6 per cent of national income on research.—Ed.



# IN FOCUS

## THE ORIENT OF ANTIQUITY

The periodical on classical studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, was founded in 1951. In the present issue, Vol. 27 [1979], published in 1982, contributors number twice as many foreigners as Hungarians. This in itself indicates that the disciplines devoted to the cultures of antiquity can only have an international yardstick, and scholarship itself can only exist in the form of international cooperation.

The earliest subject in time to be discussed here is a Neolithic idol recovered in Hungary. János Makkay writes on the Near Eastern parallels, background, and world-image of this statuette. The late V. Gordon Childe related the Neolithic era in the Danube Basin to the cultures of the Ancient Near East. The author, who is an outstanding expert on the Hungarian finds of the period, explains the male statuette holding a sickle as a god separating heaven and earth—carrying out the act of cosmogony—and refers in his analysis to Greek and Babylonian myths. His erudite explanations contain many original ideas, and provide the most many-sided interpretation of the type of statue in question to date. The male figure holding the sickle is undoubtedly the representation, perhaps deification, of plant-producing Neolithic man; this reviewer is however not convinced that he may be the

world-creating god of the cosmogony of the Ancient Near East.

The world of the Ancient Orient is dealt with in two other articles. János Harmatta, professor of Indo-European studies at Budapest University, analyses the representation of a silver rhyton found in Erevan (Soviet Armenia). The lower part of the beautifully worked vessel has the shape of a mounted human figure. The author recognizes in the representation, as has earlier research (cf. P. Calmeyer: *Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, 10 [1977], p. 175, with note 46), the characteristics of late Old Persian art, and in the model for the representation, probably correctly, an important military dignity of the Achaemenid kings. But we need a strong imagination to follow his explanations why he considers the model to be definable also by name, in the person of the Persian Governor of Armenia who held office in the first half of the fourth century B.C.

The study by I. Gershevitch of Cambridge, an extract from a book of his now at press and delivered as a lecture in Budapest, also deals with an Old Persian subject. He investigates a mysterious murder in the history of the Achaemenid dynasty: how did the younger son of Cyrus, Prince Bardiya, in the Greek sources Smerdis, die? To come to the end of the story: the Prince was got drunk by his adversaries at the court, sent to the scaffold instead of some-



body else—his drunkenness having been caused by a heavy wine: *bull's blood*. Gershevitch's idea, conceived during a stay in Hungary, and his virtuoso argumentation stand up to the most difficult test of Iranian and classical studies.

Edward Lipiński (Louvain) throws light on a key question in the history of Western Asia, the sudden emergence of small states, using epigraphic sources and Assyrian data: It was in the period between the tenth and eight centuries B.C. that camel caravans which traded over great distances became important.

Miklós Maróth, who publishes no less than three important articles in the volume, explores in one of his treatises the Aristotelian foundations of the hypothetical syllogisms, and analyses also their presence in medieval Arab sources. We believe that his study which throws light on what has been an almost completely unknown interconnection may open up a new chapter in research on the history of logic, especially when we consider how topical the hypothetical syllogism has become in our time.

The other article in the volume by J. Harmatta deals with the interconnections between scholarly historiography and orally transmitted popular culture by examining the classical elements of the first Hungarian historic work that has survived, a thirteenth-century chronicle, the *Gesta Hungarorum*. His explanations are centred on Scythia, the peoples of the steppe and the oral traditions concerning them. Harmatta tries to look back to the times and lands of the Ancient orient in the mirror of medieval European Latin scholarship.

Makkay, János: "The Late Neolithic Male Statuette of Szegvár and the Ancient Myth of 'The Separation of Heaven and Earth.'" pp. 1-38; Harmatta, János: "Royal Power and Immortality. The Myth of the Two Eagles in Iranian Royal Ideology." pp. 305-319, Figs. 1-15; Gershevitch, Ilya: "The False Smerdis." pp. 337-351; Lipiński, Edward: "Aram et Israël du Xème au VIIIème siècle a.n.è." (Aram and Israel from the 10th to the 8th century B.C.). pp. 49-102;

Maróth, Miklós: "Die hypothetischen Syllogismen." (The hypothetical syllogisms). pp. 404-436; Harmatta, János: "Erudition, tradition orale et réalité géographique." (Erudition, oral tradition and geographic reality). pp. 285-303. *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 27 (1979). Edited by J. Harmatta. Vol. 27 [1979]. Published in 1982. 464 pp.

G. K.

## THE GARDEN OF LOVE

The author is mainly interested in dating the emergence of first person songs in Hungarian folk poetry. Two themes recur in the collections of folk song made by past generations and which can also be traced to earlier centuries in manuscript collections. One is the "Garden of Love," *locus amoenus*, the beautiful garden, or grove, often beside a brook, spring, or well, where lovers met, and the other is the "poison instead of honey" motif, through which the disappointed lover expresses his heartache.

In his study (two earlier parts have already been published) the author analyses—using a very wide range of literary and fine arts material—the history of the two motifs, which pre-date poetry, and are found in the religious ritual and cultic role of the holy groves. Early formulations can be found in literature too and the history of national variants can be traced. The motifs took on a folklore character in the genre of narrative-lyric songs. If we take into consideration, in addition to the history of the motif, the historic evolution of artistic methods, we find that personal lyric poetry could not appear as a genre in Hungarian folklore before the seventeenth-century. But from the seventeenth-century, as evidenced by archaic folk-song texts which have been handed down, we can consider it to have been established.

Voigt, Vilmos: *A szerelem kertjében. Szempontok lírai népdalszövegeink kialakulásának és alkotómódjának vizsgálatához* (In the Garden of Love. Aspects for the examination of the development and the way of creation of our lyric folk-song texts). *Etnographia*. 1981. No. 4. pp. 513-532.

T. H.



# MINORITY LITERATURES—ON INTERNATIONAL FORUMS

The 9th Colloquium of the International Association of Literary Critics (A.I.C.L.) was held in Madrid in October 1981, the subject being minority literatures. This affects closely Hungarian literature in Rumania, which exists and works in a minority context. Rumanian (Transylvanian) Hungarian literature came to be considered as an entity after the Treaty of Trianon attached former Hungarian regions to Rumania. At present two million Hungarians live in Rumania, and the ethnic and cultural consciousness of this national minority is mostly sustained by its literature. The monthly *Korunk*, in existence for over fifty years, is one of the organs of minority literature and culture.

During the Madrid Colloquium some important findings were made, for instance, on forms of experience of the coexistence of minority and majority literatures. Lajos Kántor is nevertheless justified in pointing to the regrettable fact that the literary historians and critics working within the framework of the minority literatures were generally not given the opportunity to report their experience and explain their reactions. The Rumanian critique was presented only by two Rumanian literary critics, who naturally voiced the view of the majority literature. Hungarian literature in Rumania, which displays a very broad activity, maintains numerous literary institutions (publishing houses, periodicals), was not able to present the experience and theoretical discoveries which it has acquired or formulated in its minority situation. The situation of ethnic and cultural minorities is attracting more and more attention in Europe and on the other continents. Thus the historic experience of a minority of two million may also carry international lessons.

Kántor, Lajos: *Kisebbségi irodalom — közélről és távolról* (Minority literature—from near and far). *Korunk* (Cluj — Kolozsvár). 1982. No. 3. pp. 238–239.

B. P.

# KASSÁK'S ABSTRACT GEOMETRY

Lajos Kassák\* during his stay in Vienna (1920–26), for the first time in the history of Hungarian art, began to produce paintings in which no object was represented. His form of geometric abstraction creates a pictorial world which is not brought about through the gradual abstraction of the objective world, but consists of autochthonous geometric forms and in no way refers to a visual object other than the picture. In an aesthetic sense, Kassák's pictorial architecture—as he named it—is kindred to Mondrian's neo-plasticism and Malevich's suprematism. These types of constructivism are divorced from the other wing of the school, which is represented by the productivist school of the Soviet avant-garde, and by the Bauhaus and De Stijl.

The productivists wanted to transform the object-creating spheres of social practice (architecture, design). They believed that society itself would also change with the transformation of the environment. The contradiction of their programme lay in that they themselves were also obliged to adjust to society and its market conditions, its products could spread widely only if they were "consumable." In this way the movement lost its revolutionary, avant-garde nature.

Against the productivist school, the constructivism of the Malevich–Mondrian–Kassák type emphasized the abstract order of values through abstract forms. For them an artistic work embodied a spiritual-fictive reality, and was essentially a representation of values. The constructivists denied the disintegration of values, the alienation as of the given historic situation, which to them was represented by objectivity. They strove to formulate the abstract spiritual validities which transformed man himself. Taking Schiller's concept of "aesthetic education" further, their aim was to prepare the people

\* See *NHQ*, 28, 54, 67, 81



for the order of values in an ideal society of the future. In Malevich's world transcendence and mysticism are the stronger, and Mondrian's art is also linked to the ideal God of Dutch Calvinism. In opposition to this, Kassák, who began as a worker and became the leading personality of the Hungarian avant-garde, connected the revolution in art with the social revolution, and also incorporated Dadaistic elements to this end. Against Malevich's pessimism, Kassák wrote full of faith: "Art is an outlook on the world... Art transforms us and we become capable of transforming our environment... Pictorial architecture believes itself to be the beginning of a new world."

Hegyi, Loránd: *A tárgy nélkülség értelmezése Kassák képarművészeti tárgyában* (The interpretation of the absence of objects in Kassák's pictorial architecture). *Művészettörténeti Értesítő*, 1981. Vol. XXX. pp. 194-199.

I. N.

## ART IN THE FIFTIES

History and literature, after considerable circumspection over a number of years, have finally started to come to terms with the fifties. Now art history is making an attempt to face up to the same topic. The Saint Stephen the King Museum of Székesfehérvár put together an exhibition of painting, sculpture, and documents under the title "The Fifties." The intentional absence of "art" indicates that what the period declared as art was in fact only a documentary record of ideological requirements. The time limits for the period are created by events in the artistic life of the period. It begins with the exhibition of Soviet painting which opened on October 1, 1949, and was officially designated as the example for Hungarian artists, and it ends with the Spring Salon of 1957, in which surrealist and non-representational artists, until then entirely relegated

to the dustbin, were allowed to exhibit for the first time. The Székesfehérvár exhibition selected from the six national salons of the period between the two dates, and tried to keep the proportions of the general make-up of genres, topics, and the individuals exhibiting. The aim was thus objectivity and clarity of information.

The exhibition provided a condensed picture of a period which had called the artist to serve day-to-day politics on the level of journalism. The centralized guidance of art determined the subject of works through detailed recommendation of topics, and set easy intelligibility as a formal requirement. For this, Soviet pictorial art and the realistic tradition of the nineteenth-century personified by Mihály Munkácsy could provide examples. In the sterile and unreal presentation homogenized in this way, there was no room for any conflict; "positive heroes" fired by self-consciousness rather than people filled these monumental canvases and frescoes. Most of the paintings were portraits and genre paintings, and the main figures were shock-workers, peasants, and agitators. A cautious change in the uniform style of the period could be observed from 1954. A moderation in the requirements left room for post-impressionist ambitions, and along with these the "apolitical" landscape could also reappear.

Some works of the 1956 Spring Salon, which had closed the period, proved that the evolution of art through itself had not been interrupted. Behind the spurious, in the studios, even if within modest limits, the genuine had been created.

Kovalovszky, Márta K.: *Az ötvenes évek* (The fifties). pp. 28-29; Pataki, Gábor: *Konzervativizmus — hagyományok nélkül* (Conservatism — without traditions). pp. 30-31; Nagy, Zoltán: *Program és megvalósulás az ötvenes évek művészetében* (Programme and realization in the art of the fifties). pp. 32-35. *Művészet*. 1982. No. 3.

I. N.



## THE YOUNG KARL POLANYI

A Hungarian university student, who had been impressed by the *œuvre* and personality of Karl Polanyi, the economic historian of Hungarian origin, has extracted from Viennese Hungarian and German-language newspapers what was until now a mostly completely unknown early chapter of this *œuvre*. This young man, János Gyurgyák, has done so with an inventiveness and diligence which would put experienced researchers to shame. It is not the early stage in Polanyi's life that is his subject, the stage spent in Hungary, and which—together with Polanyi's political and polemical activity—is already relatively well-known; he deals with the first years of exile in Vienna, beginning in 1919, when the economic expert and economic historian really began to take shape. Between 1921 and 1923 Polanyi was a regular contributor to the *Bécsi Magyar Újság*, the daily paper of the Hungarian Democratic emigration edited by Oszkár Jászi; after the paper was forced to stop publication, he worked for the short-lived *Bécsi Kurír*, and then for more than a decade as expert on the world economy and reviewer for the *Österreichischer Volkswirt*.

In this, his first publication, János Gyurgyák describes Polanyi's activity at the *Bécsi Magyar Újság*. He publishes a bibliography of the articles that appeared under his own name or under a pseudonym, and also presents approximately 20 articles: on the book by the Webbs, on guild-socialism, on the British Labour Party, on an American socialist settlement, on the young Soviet Union, on Mussolini, and other contemporary topics, in which the talents of the later thinker are already reflected.

Of course, it interests us Hungarians, how and in what ways the spirit of the Hungarian school of social thinking which had flourished at the beginning of the century, the activities of Oszkár Jászi, Georg Lukács, Karl Mannheim, Arnold Hauser, Charles de Tolnay—and of course of the Polanyi brothers (Karl and Michael)—spread into

the wider world. On the other hand, the foreign reader may be interested in the Hungarian and Central European beginnings of these thinkers.

Gyurgyák, János: *Polányi Károly a Bécsi Magyar Újságnál* (Karl Polanyi at the *Bécsi Magyar Újság*). *Medvetánc*. 1981. Nos. 2-3. pp. 173-242.

G. L.

## ARGUMENTS ABOUT DEMOCRACY

The double issue (8-9) 1981 of the periodical *Világosság* was devoted to a range of questions around democracy and the democracy-debates. Sixteen studies deal with the general, foreign and domestic, past and present problems of democracy, from the approaches of history, sociology, political science, and philosophy; they include a hitherto unpublished piece by György Lukács of 1968: "Demokratisierung heute und morgen" (Democratization today and tomorrow), which draws attention to differences between the Leninist and the Stalinist tradition and to the possibilities of socialist democratization.

Two studies analyse the immediate Hungarian past, the domestic obstacles to the expression of democracy in the first half of the century, and especially in the inter-war period. These two interesting pieces complement each other excellently: Tibor Hajdu approaches the problem from the aspect of the institutions, and Miklós Lackó from the aspect of the mentality.

Hajdu examines to what extent—and why only to this extent—the institutions of bourgeois democracy were realized in the Dualist (1867-1919) and in the Horthy era: parliamentarism, popular representation, and civil rights in general. The comparison makes clear the different ways in which these two periods recognized as anti-democratic in Hungarian history were anti-democratic in character.

Disregarding some brief but temporary



periods in both eras, which together make up the entire Hungarian bourgeois era (1867–1944), the forms of parliamentarism and of the freedom of the press and of opinion were by and large observed, but executive power was in practice made independent on every level from popular representation, and civil liberties were not extended to the “anti-state” forces. In the Dualist era (until 1918) it was primarily the nationalities, accounting for nearly half the population and increasingly self-conscious, which made up this force. An increasing fear of the nationalities was the main obstacle in this Liberal era to the introduction of the universal ballot, which was being demanded more and more loudly by the Socialists and other Democratic parties. The other great obstacle was the fear of the millions of the village poor, although the author considers the assumption that the majority of the village poor would have voted for the Socialists, to have been an error common to István Tisza and the Social Democratic leaders adopted of course for opposite reasons.

The counter-revolutionary system which followed the revolutions of 1918–19, although more Conservative and even more reactionary than the preceding era, introduced formally a more democratic regime. It was forced to do so by the international situation; this was also made easier by the Treaty of Trianon which had cut off from the country the regions where there was a nationality majority. The suffrage was widened, workers and land-owning peasants got their own representation in Parliament. However Parliament was given an even narrower role than earlier, limiting it to the functions of supervision, of revealing abuses and informing public opinion. The power of the centralized bureaucracy grew further through the reduction in importance of local self-government. There was a gulf between the legal status of the cities (especially the capital) and the almost unbridled rule of district administrators and gendarmes in the

countryside. This anti-democratic trend finally ended—through gradual transitions—in the fascist terror of 1944.

How did that great majority of the Hungarian intelligentsia, far removed from the Leftist movements and thinking, react to this process? Lackó's study gives a carefully shaded answer to this question, as he is able to break with the simplifications of the tradition of collectively blaming this stratum. He presents the reasons for their ties with the counter-revolutionary regime (including the dominance of the national problem, and the weakness of the Left after 1919); he also shows the slowly maturing elements in the internal transformation, that “feeling ill at ease and the longing for change,” which made this important stratum—in spite of its fundamental conservatism—or to be more exact, its best part, from the thirties, dissatisfied with the regime, and turned them against it as the country slid totally into fascism.

Hajdu, Tibor: *Mi valósult meg a polgári demokráciából Magyarországon?* (What had been realized of bourgeois democracy in Hungary?). pp. 511–520. Lackó, Miklós: *Demokratikus érzület és értelmiség* (Democratic mentality and the intelligentsia). pp. 521–526. *Világosság*. 1982. No. 8–9.

G. L.

#### INCOMES IN 2000

The Central Statistical Office has made family income surveys every five years since 1963. In the course of these, the total income in the preceding year of one half a per cent or one per cent of the population is recorded. On the basis of the four surveys carried out, the following main trends in income differences have been established: 1. The differentials in the average per capita income of different social classes and strata have narrowed. 2. Differences by region have also been reduced, including the differences between cities and villages, as well as between the various regions of the country.



3. The income inequality indices have somewhat diminished. 4. The income disadvantage of the inactive (pensioner) stratum has somewhat diminished. 5. Income differences according to the number of dependent children have not gone down since 1977, but have in fact increased to some extent.

If the income differences between families are broken down according to factor, it is found that differences in earnings play a relatively small role, while the number of dependent children has great influence on the differences in family income level.

The author has made income distribution forecasts for the purposes of perspective planning. Of course it would be an illusion to expect that the income differences between families could be forecast reliably up to the year 2000, since the uncertain world economic situation heavily influences the Hungarian economy and thus per capita income. The forecasts serve a more modest goal. They demonstrate how, if certain assumptions are made, the differences in family income would evolve and in what direction these could and should be influenced by income policy measures.

The forecasts in their several variants assume that per capita real income will rise by 1 per cent annually between 1980 and 1985, by 2 to 2.5 per cent between 1986 and 1990, and by an annual 2.7 to 3.2 per cent between 1991 and 2000.

Two assumptions are applied in respect of income policy: 1. Incomes will become more differentiated according to the type of work performed. 2. The income of families with several children will be raised through central measures, mainly through child allowances, at a rate above the average. If these two assumptions are met the present situation should be ended whereby the income opportunities of earners hardly influence the differentials between the families, because in the latter case the number of children is the dominant factor.

It is further supposed that the proportion of families with four or more children will

continue to fall, and that the number of dependents in the pensioner households will drop (since both spouses will be pensioners by their own right).

On the basis of the above, the author makes six variants of family income differences for 1990 and 2000. Depending on the extent of the increase of the allowances to families with children and of the differentiation of incomes, these variants forecast a smaller reduction or increase of income differences. The variant considered most favourable by the author is the one in which the increase of differentiation of both social allowances and earning is highest, because in this case the connection between earnings and the standard of living of the family becomes the closest.

Éltető, Ödön: *Kísérlet a jövedelemelosztás prognosztizálására a családi jövedelmkülönbségekre ható tényezők alapján* (An attempt to forecast income distribution on the basis of the factors influencing the development of differences in family incomes). *Gazdaság*. 1982. No. 4. pp. 22-35.

R. A.

## THE CAR MARKET

The authors examine a hypothesis in a book by János Kornai, *A bírány\** (Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1980), by referring to the workings of a single commodity market, the private-car market. They have chosen, obviously not by chance, one of the most conspicuous shortage areas in the Hungarian consumer market, a market which has been dominated for years by the forms of distribution which characterize shortage: waitinglists and allocation. The buying and selling of second-hand cars, which may be called a real market, is secondary in importance.

Cars are neither manufactured nor assembled in Hungary, consequently the market is only in imported cars. The chronic

\* Economics of Shortage. North Holland, 1980. pp. 631



shortage is seen in the waiting for several years, the frequent substitution forced on the buyers, the relatively high price of second-hand cars, and in the fact that the buyer lends the seller a substantial advance payment for years.

Surveying the factors behind the behaviour of sellers and buyers, the authors complement the range of effects in the standard consumer theory of neo-classical economics by examining other non-standard effects. Their calculations confirm that on this market too such standard explanatory variables as income and savings influence the behaviour of the buyer. For them, however, it is not simply income that determines demand, and demand the turnover; they are of the opinion that supply and the incomes of the population devoted to car purchase depend considerably on the macro-cycle of the national economy, and especially on the balance of trade.

The standard effects which influence the behaviour of the buyers are the price of cars, public transport fares, and the rise in living expenses. But non-standard effects, which derive from the "suction" nature of the economy and administrative interference, also have considerable influence on the behaviour of the buyers. Here the restricted number of car models available is the most important, but the effects on the buyer of the administrative restrictions on re-sale and of the waiting cannot be ignored.

In the Hungarian car market the seller is in a quasi-monopolistic position, since the Merkur Enterprise which sells the vast majority of cars and its superior authorities not only control the supply and set the prices, but they also determine the credit terms and the administrative restrictions on the market process. In such circumstances it is hardly a coincidence that the most important standard factors, price and the expected enterprise profit, have no influence on the seller's offer. For instance, the considerable price rise in 1979 was not followed by an ex-

pansion of the supply. The seller—a not truly autonomous, market-oriented enterprise—does not act from considerations of profitability, but pays more attention to such non-standard effects as to temporary guidelines and indices of foreign trade of considerations of transport policy which tries to avoid a too rapid increase in car ownership.

These effects determine the band of supply, within which the seller observes an upper limit of tolerance: the shortage should not be too large (the waiting time should not be longer than 30 months to 3 years). If the waiting time increases above this limit, the shortage is brought down to a tolerable level not by an increase in supply but by a reduction of demand. The seller also sees to it that the shortage should not be too mild, as it especially wants to avoid a buyers' market. On occasions when the waiting time was reduced to 6 months to 1 year, the seller restrained the supply.

The authors—while finding with satisfaction that their examination confirms numerous theses of Kornai's book—state sadly that this chronic shortage is setting back technical development; the cars available on the market were designed and constructed in the fifties and sixties. They are pessimistic also about the future. They consider it unlikely that the existing institutional characteristics of the car market will lead to a condition of permanent over-supply. In a great many areas the shortage is much more intensive and also much more depressing in its social effect.

In this situation, when moreover the present conditions are comfortable for those engaged in importing and selling cars, the question may rightly be put to those who are arguing for an over-supply: why should queuing be eliminated here? Following Kornai's train of thought, it is hardly imaginable that in the general conditions of shortage, a radical turn could be achieved on the market of a single commodity.



Kapitány, Zsuzsa—Kornai, János—Szabó, Judit: *A bírány újratermelése a magyar autópiacon* (The reproduction of shortage on the Hungarian car market). *Közgazdasági Szemle*, 1982. No. 3. pp. 300–325.

M. L.

## MOLECULES AND THEIR GEOMETRY

The geometry of a molecule tells us about the spatial arrangement of its atoms. The molecular geometry is closely related to the other properties of the matter. The time may come when we shall know what structures have to be built to achieve compounds with given properties. One of the main tools to determine the geometry of the molecules is electron diffraction, which has developed during the past fifty years into a powerful technique. Today there are about 20 laboratories in nine countries engaged in this field. One of them is the "Budapest Group," or to give its full name, the Department of Structural Studies, Research Laboratory for Inorganic Chemistry, Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

A unique feature of the research done in this group is a combined experiment of electron diffraction and mass spectrometry. It is used to investigate the structure of substances that are produced by chemical reactions directly in the diffraction experiment. This combined experiment has opened new possibilities for structural investigations.

The Budapest Group is engaged in active international cooperation. It has worked jointly with co-workers from at least 12 other countries. The visitors who often work here up to one year come from the Soviet Union, the United States, Norway, and other countries.

Several books on structural chemistry and well over 100 research papers in international journals have emerged from this laboratory. Numerous citations in the works of other groups, invitations to foreign universities and international conferences are

part of the recognition received by the group. Its leader, Professor István Hargittai, was the 1981 Hassel Lecturer at the University of Oslo whose Nobel laureate Odd Hassel is considered to be one of the founders of modern structural chemistry.

The Budapest Group is a good example of how a small but very active group may become a major centre of the international scientific community.

Hargittai, István: "Gas Electron Diffraction. A Tool of Structural Chemistry in Perspectives." *Topics in Current Chemistry*, Vol. 96, Springer Verlag, 1981.

P. É.

## HISTORY OF HEALTH CARE

The author—a young medical sociologist—surveys the development of health care in Hungary at the end of the last century and around the turn of the century. He points out that the history of the secularization of health care is a neglected field of medical sociology and medical history. By secularization he means that medicine began to be based on scientific knowledge and medical technology in this period, and health care became a subject of interest. It was accepted that health care should cover the whole of the population. In contrast to the U.S. and Western Europe, where health care was not organized by the state and was based only on the initiative of communities and individual doctors, Hungary, as other countries in Eastern Europe, established a network of state-employed doctors. The influence of the state on medicine was thus strong in Hungary, and this institutional system made it relatively easy to transform the public health care system into a socialist one after the end of the Second World War. This situation created a lively interest in social medicine in the ranks of doctors and contributed also to a growing awareness of the problems of public health. This is one of the reasons why health services are a subject of permanent



interest in the Hungarian press and mass media and why a process of critical reassessment of the health services has been going on since the early sixties.

Császai, Lajos: *Az egészségügy szekularizációja Magyarországon* (The secularization of health care in Hungary). *Valóság*, 1982. No. 5. pp. 77-87.

B. B.

## HEALTH CARE FOR THE FUTURE

The author—a pulmonologist—considered the merits and disadvantages of public health in Hungary. The idea was to establish a socialist public health system and if the principles had been put into practice it would be amongst the best in the world. Every citizen has the right to free health care of the highest possible standard. Although the government spends considerable amounts of money on medical care it cannot satisfy the growing needs of the public. Health care nowadays includes increasing proportions of social care and the public health system has to carry the whole burden of the latter. The principles are—according to the author—irreal, because public health care is not free, in the sense that society has to pay for it and cannot always offer the highest standard of care to everybody. The principles, however, create a childlike, regressive attitude in people. They want their share of health services, they waste drugs and services, and they blatantly misuse medical practitioners and health care organizations. Public health services show the typical features of economics of scarcity. Because of a lack of adequate remuneration for those who provide care a certain artificial scarcity is created and this is a source of inequality and cause of public discontent. The author stresses that patients and their relatives pay billions of forints a year to doctors and health care personnel secretly, in the form of tips or gifts. If this money could be used openly as a contribution for services rendered it could help to build a new health system

based on financial incentives and involvement. The author outlines a reform of health services and argues vigorously that such a reform is not only possible but is urgently needed for moral reasons as well, not to mention the medical ones.

Levendel, László: *A népegészségügyi reformról* (The reform of public health in Hungary). *Valóság*, 1982. No. 5. pp. 65-76.

B. B.

## THE REHABILITATION OF HEART CASES

In Hungary, as elsewhere, the number of diseases characterized by circulatory disturbances of the cardiac muscle has grown considerably. The demonstration of the symptoms of the damaged cardiac muscles is important on account of the disturbances in the supply of oxygen not only for early diagnosis but also for treatment. Among these symptoms certain disturbances in cardiac rhythm and electrocardiograms for the oxygen supply of the cardiac muscle are the most important. The essence of the method elaborated by N. J. Holter in 1961 is that a continuous electrocardiogram is made of the patient during his comings and goings over 12 to 24 hours; this is taped by a small appliance which he wears. The latter can be played back and evaluated at any time.

Twenty-one patients who were mobilized following an acute myocardial infarction have been examined by this method. Their electrocardiograms taped over a 12-hour period were compared by computer analysis to the rest period electrocardiograms made during the acute stage and the mobilization. It was found that the rest electrocardiograms were hardly suitable for demonstrating the rhythm disturbances which actually occurred during mobilization, although the detection of these is essential to diagnostics in the acute and the initial mobilization stages. On the other hand it is not helpful to inter-



rupt mobilization, as the first phase of rehabilitation, even in the case of the demonstration of graver rhythm disturbances.

On another group of seventeen patients observations were made using fatigue examination (submaximal bicycle-ergometric method) and the 12-hour Holter monitoring. The fatigue examination is appropriate for the discovery of what are known as "hidden" cardiac muscle oxygen supply disturbances, but it can be carried out only in laboratory conditions. On the other hand, through Holter-monitoring the usual or unexpected physical or emotional loads on the patient are registered by a continuous ECG record. By this method pathological changes were found even in cases where simple loads did not show any. The linkage of the two methods has been very successful at the Balatonfüred State Hospital, where the medical officer in charge is Dr. Ernő Böszörményi, and where the method was tried out for the first time in Hungary.

In the course of institutional rehabilitation, the diagnosis of the load-bearing capacity of the patients both on entry and on release is a basic task. The effectiveness of the treatment can be judged through the increase in their tolerance of the load.

Also at Balatonfüred, in the Hungarian Military Hospital, in 1979 and 1980, two groups were formed while examining the process of rehabilitation: in the first group 21 men and 4 women (between the ages of 42 and 60) were examined. The majority diagnosis in their case was coronary sclerosis or the angina pectoris syndrome. In the second group there were 62 men and 3 women (between the ages of 24 and 67). These had suffered cardiac infarction, and according to the time elapsed since their infarctus they could be divided into four sub-groups: (a) 1 to 3 months: 17 patients, (b) 3 to 6 months: 23 patients, (c) 6 to 12 months: 11 patients, (d) over one year: 14 patients. The shortest time was four weeks, the longest 15 years. Comparing the results of 12-hour continuous automatic

electrocardiograms with the ergometric load electrocardiographic methods, it was found that the so-called Holter-monitoring is more appropriate for the discovery of the ischaemic signs of the cardiac muscle which may appear in the course of the day for a short time with spontaneous spasms or even without them, as well as for the demonstration of the ECG anomalies and rhythm disturbances which can occur in the course of everyday activity. While in the first group the ECG during rest showed pathological changes in 21 cases, the bicycle-ergometric examination did so in 14, and the Holter-monitoring method in 20 cases. But while it was possible to explore 3 kinds of pathological characteristics through the ECG during rest, 3 kinds through bicycle-ergometric examination, 5 kinds could be demonstrated using the Holter-monitoring method. In the second group a pathological change could be discovered in 40 cases with the ECG during rest, in 39 cases through bicycle-ergometric examination, and in 64 cases through the Holter-monitor. Four kinds of characteristic pathological symptoms were discovered using the ECG during rest, 2 kinds using the bicycle-ergometric examination, and 6 kinds using the Holter-monitor. This shows that in demonstrating rhythm disturbances, the Holter-monitoring offers 2 to 3 times more information. The authors consider the method important in exploring the fatal electric disturbances of the cardiac muscle, or in preventing fatality. It has been possible to discover grave rhythm disturbances in a number of cases which had not given rise to complaints. The effectiveness of the treatment of rhythm disturbances could be increased by this method, which was used with outstanding results in the measurement of the load-bearing capacity of these heart cases.

The introduction of Holter-monitoring in Hungary completes in a modern and necessary way the ECG examinations during rest and load, ensuring better rehabilitation in addition to more selective treatment.



Böszörményi, Ernő—Molnár, János—Strammer, Mátyás: *Holter-monitorozás tapasztalatai ischaemiás szfvbetegeken* (Experience with Holter-monitoring on ischemic heart-cases); Gyökössi, József—Fekete, Katalin—Gulyás, József: *Holter-*

*monitorozás ischaemiás szfvbetegek rehabilitációjában* (Holter-monitoring in the rehabilitation of ischemic heart cases). *Orvosi Hetilap*. 1982. Vol. 123. No. 17. pp. 1041-1046, pp. 1047-1050. I. L.

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*Acta Antiqua*—a quarterly of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

*Ethnographia*—the quarterly of the Hungarian Ethnographical Society

*Korunk*—a literary review published in Hungarian in Kolozsvár-Napoca

*Művészettörténeti Értesítő*—a quarterly of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

*Művészet*—an art monthly

*Medvetánc*—an occasional publication of the Youth Movement Committee of the University of Budapest

*Világosság*—a materialist monthly

*Gazdaság*—economic policy quarterly of the Hungarian Economic Association

*Közgazdasági Szemle*—a monthly of the Committee for the Economic Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

*Valóság*—a monthly of the social sciences

*Orvosi Hetilap*—a weekly for medical practitioners



# BOOKS AND AUTHORS

## GLOBAL ASPECTS OF ECONOMICS, POLITICS AND SECURITY

József Bognár: *End-Century Crossroads of Development and Cooperation*, Budapest, 1980, Hungarian Council for World Economy (Trends in World Economy No. 30), 308 pp., (in English and in Hungarian).

The epoch-making events of modern economic history were the discovery of America, the spread of crop rotation and the English industrial revolution. It may be said that the change to a new world economic era that began late in 1973 is almost comparable with the above three events in its importance, though it is of a fundamentally different character. For one thing the dimensions are different: global change now take place in an interdependent world where the determinant lines for the movements of mankind—economics, politics and security are intertwined though not impenetrably, into a tangle at the level of national societies, alliances and integrations on a global scale.

József Bognár was the first among the economists of our age to identify signs of change to a new world economic era in the events triggered off—apparently unexpectedly—by the oil crisis of the end of 1973; he described its causes and analysed its moving springs and likely consequences in several essays.\*

His latest book has been published simultaneously in Hungarian and in English. Here József Bognár guides the reader through the complicated structure composed of economics, politics and security, on national,

regional and global levels, and the institutional framework of international organizations. Naturally the large problems, which permeate this structure, such as energy, feeding the world, technology, environment, population and economic growth are dealt with. The starting point of the book is economic (since the change of era also began in the dimension of economics), but the analysis takes us through the maze of politics and security as well. It underlines, for instance, that nuclear armament belongs to the field of security but points out that financing armaments in an economic problem while there are consequences (even in peacetime) in environmental pollution.

Although the view of the work is fundamentally global, the analysis does not lose sight of the practical operations of national and regional (integrated) economies. It demonstrates what is needed to adapt to the circumstances on national and integrated levels, mainly by examining the Hungarian economy and the CMEA integration.

While the subject of the work is complicated, its exposition and treatment is clear and easy to follow. The titles of the first and thirteenth chapters of the book ("Tasks of the social sciences in a new epoch of the world economy" and "Economic science

\* Among others: "New Factors in International Economic Relations" *Acta Economica*, Vol. 14, 1975, No. 1, pp. 27-47.; and Changes in World Economy and Hungarian Economic Policy, *NHQ* 62, 1976, pp. 65-78.



and the responsibility of economists") neatly express the author's motivation and intention.

In the introduction Bognár refers to his earlier work and the situation-analyses they contain. Here he emphasizes that the most essential element of his present work is to look for a way out of a situation arising from the instability of the old world economic system and the threats of serious crises, indeed from the danger of a collapse. Taking the world view of the situation, new forms and methods of international economic cooperation must be developed. This is why the author produces arguments all the way through the book to prove that a transformation of ways of thinking is inevitable.

Reviewing some crucial world economic problems he analyses the contradiction that exists between the new limiting factors on rates of growth and the dynamism of the needs of national economies within the various blocks. The influence of the world economy on national economies has become much stronger as a consequence of interdependence, the global character of problems, and the Third World situation; at the same time the effect which the alternative growth types of the various national economies exert on other economies has also increased considerably. Since the sensitivity coefficients of the world economy will be very high in coming decades, and will also reverberate in the political and security spheres, we must expect relatively moderate quantitative changes to bring gigantic forces into motion.

Types of growth that put minimal stress on the environment, and technical systems which save energy and material pose new problems to states and to the international community. Professor Bognár also points out that the decisive problem is just distribution and simultaneous efficient stimulation; that is, the working out of growth alternatives which have the potential to change distribution in favour of low income earners will have to be attempted.

This same problem also exists in the global dimension in the working of the current world market mechanism. The world market records only effective demand, backed by purchasing power; this causes serious problems at a time when hundreds of millions of people have none or not enough of the latter. Under these circumstances, excess supply which might even suggest production cuts could well appear on international food markets. Yet it is commonly acknowledged that 600 to 700 million people live on the brink of starvation, and their number increases year after year. This is the unshakeable proof that it is not only the operation of the world market that is imperfect but its very concept.

Current tensions in the world economy are inextricably bound up with problems of politics and (military) security; the term security is often a euphemism for the desire of certain powers to give effect to their political and economic interests by force (even by acts of war). Therefore external economic policy making and action has to take into account interactions with political and security factors. Such factors are subject to the profound metamorphoses in our era, partly for intrinsic reasons, but also because of the economic factor. Consequently the effects of political and security factors on the economy are changing too.

The conflict between economics and security became part of economic thinking almost at the birth of the science of economics.

In his analysis of economics, politics and security, József Bognár starts out from the consideration that the interdependence of national economies has greatly increased. This interdependence resulted partly from natural and biological causes, partly from economic relations, and partly from international political and security considerations. Various forecasts (for instance "The Future of the World Economy" prepared under the supervision of Vassily Leontief) predict a fall in the rate of world economic development



but the effects of the political and security spheres render uncertain even the prospect and possible achievements of scaled down growth.

New centres of political and economic power are developing in the international arena other than the Soviet Union and the United States. These new centres may considerably influence the development of international political events directly or indirectly within the various regions or by way of the relations between the two super powers. In the future, note will have to be taken of those effects which the international political system (potentially conflicting units) exerts on security efforts and on the deployment of military force. Previous experience shows that these effects handicap the development of desirable and economically rational relationships. In any case, the central problem for future economic development is how far and in what manner the security sphere will acknowledge the system of mutual dependence, and the dangers in preventing or handicapping development of the necessary economic attitudes. It is conceivable that the party which is stronger militarily and economically, and politically more aggressive will want to eliminate any dependence it considers inconvenient using military force or various combinations of political and economic pressure. The negative consequences of such actions, however may assert themselves immediately over wide fields in the present situation of mutual dependence.

Cold war forces are endeavouring to broaden and escalate various regional conflicts. It is, therefore, vital that people devoted to peace and international cooperation and who clearly recognize the fact of mutual dependence, should prevent such an escalation. But it is also evident that limits to cold war escalation policies will emerge after a time, since the escalating country itself also suffers substantial economic strategic losses. As the negative effects of cold war politics develop, the adherents of détente

gather strength, and may gradually halt or reverse the previous process.

The principal limitation to cold war policies is that nuclear war is not a realistic alternative; it is not the kind of risk which can be taken in a system of rational actions. Therefore it seems clear that cold war confrontations are necessarily followed after a certain time by periods of détente (as a result of the emergence of interest systems depressed during cold war periods).

Energies wasted during cold war periods cannot be regained, situations reached cannot be changed overnight. Thus mankind can no longer afford to lose time in this way among the dangers that exist at this stage of this century. All the same, the military sphere has not yet realized the dangers inherent in the new world economic situation, and has not drawn the consequences for the security sphere. Yet the fact remains that even a partial solution of the severe problems of our times will follow only from analyzing problems common to politics, security and economics, and from trying to understand the different internal logic of different systems.

The concept of decision, together with the problems of decision, emerge in the global dimension in keeping with the perspective of the book. Any solution of global problems requires global cooperation, which assumes the development of international agreement on at least some fundamental problems followed by concerted action. There is no world plan nor is there world government. There are, however, world forecasts, from which each country draws conclusions to suit its own interests, which often conflict with those of other countries.

Running through the work is a search for ways for mankind to avoid the dangers inherent the change of era in the world economy, and for what would be needed to prepare decisions and decision making on a global dimension. Exploring possibilities here, the author delves into the roles to be played by the social sciences, international



organizations and finally (government exercised) power.

Analysing the opportunity that social scientists have in the preparation of decisions, József Bognár details the international major workshops of the social and natural sciences. They appear in the forms as diverse as United Nations conventions, or forecasting work, such as that done by the Club of Rome, the RIO report (edited by Jan Tinbergen), or the Leontief study on the future of mankind. These all have considerable merit in that they use their discipline and research methods in order to examine situations, warn and inform. But Bognár also points out some theoretical problems and nonsequiturs here; for instance, some of these programmes echo the greatest happiness of the greatest number tenet of rational-utilitarian philosophy. In practice this principle was corrupted by the principle of maximised profit; there is an inevitable question: whether this philosophical system is adequate for narrowing differences when it created these very same differences in their current forms and size?

Bognár states that the international scientific community can work out a world plan to solve at least the most urgent problems (food, energy). As for world plans, naturally he has an indicative plan in mind, since by far the greater part of the material and intellectual resources needed to realize such plans is possessed by national economies. International organizations lack both power and resources independent of national states and economies. Nevertheless,

international organizations must be the pioneers who move such world plans, work out their conception, mobilize resources, pinpoint opportunities, and coordinate and control action.

But decision aimed at the acceptance and implementation of such world plans cannot be imagined without the consent, cooperation, and active participation of those who actually exercise power. In order to take steps towards solving world economic problems in the power sphere, Bognár recommends a world economic convention prepared by experts held at top level.

A world convention of this nature should give approval to long-term plans, to be implemented in phases, and based on a system of mutual guarantees. József Bognár adds that a thousand arguments can be produced against the idea of such a convention, but at times of such epochal changes, when the survival and development of mankind is at stake, and the world is threatened by so many new perils, it is evident that new methods are needed in handling and governing world economic problems.

The book ends by reiterating the responsibility of scientists in general and that of economists in particular. The words 'development' and 'cooperation' in his title are but hopes today. Yet we all should agree that the progress of mankind can only be found in the global cooperation of international relations spanning the dimensions of economics, politics and security.

EGON KEMENES



## NEW VOLUMES OF POETRY

István Jánosy: *Az álmok kútja végtelen* (Boundless Is the Well of Dreams), Magvető, 1981, 368 pp; József Tornai: *A többszemélyes én* (The Multi-Personal Ego), Szépirodalmi, 1982, 131 pp; Gyula Kodolányi: *A tenger és a szél szüntelen* (Ceaseless the Sea and the Wind), Szépirodalmi, 1981, 141 pp; Zsuzsa Rakovszky: *Jóslatok és batáridők* (Prophecies and Deadlines), Kozmosz, 1981, 46 pp.

István Jánosy has written the poems in his volume *Az álmok kútja végtelen* over the past thirty-odd years. His first collection was published in 1948, and opened with six of his early sonnets, working around the figure and legend of Prometheus. Then followed poems on the 1945 siege of Budapest, virtually in the form of a diary, and the volume closed with some love poems best described as surrealist. And that was what made up Jánosy's first volume, an overture to a rich life's work. Ever since 1948, the poet has sung variations on and enriched the motifs and the formal range of his first volume. The figure of Prometheus has occupied him ever since. In *Kukorica istennő* (Maize Goddess, 1970), he presents him like this:

Prometheus.

Always superficial.

Prometheus.

The only one essential.

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Prometheus.

You live anew in a new body.

(Prose translation.)

Prometheus is the symbol of revolt and creation. Jánosy devotes dozens of poems to rebels and creators, to politicians, champions of freedom, poets, musicians, and sculptors. To those celebrated and unknown who have stood up against hatred: Schumann, Mozart, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Horace, Kerouac, Ingmar Bergman. He writes on the Hungarians György Dózsa, the head of the 1514 peasant revolt, Prince Ferenc Rákóczi II of Transylvania, who led the eighteenth-

century War of Independence against the Habsburgs, Béla Bartók, the painter Tivadar Csontváry, and others.

In "Prometheus," the poem quoted above, Jánosy says:

'Do love. Do not kill!'

the moral is the same.

War was, and has remained, a determining experience for Jánosy. Devastation and destruction are recurrent in his poetry. Thus the title of his second collection in 1960 is significant: *Az örök béke álmai* (Dreams of Eternal Peace). Formulating and reformulating the Promethean attitude, Jánosy varies the hope and demand for peace. He deals remarkably frequently with children; he writes on love, sometimes in a surrealist and sometimes in a neo-classical manner. A major motif in his poetry is his interest in dreams. His first description of a dream dates from 1942 (although it was not collected until his 1977 volume, *A kővendég*—The Stone Guest).

The main motifs of the mature poet, Prometheus, war and peace, love and dream, were apparent in his early writings. His formal variety has also been evident from the outset, and that formal and technical variety has grown ever since. Jánosy, who translated into Hungarian the *Mahabharata*, has written a fragment: "Apocryphal Mahabharata." The Hungarian translator of Milton, he has written *Miltoniada*. He expresses himself in the manner of St. Francis of Assisi and of nineteenth-century Hungarian poets. He paints neo-classical portraits and publishes automatic writings.



He delights in the ode, the song, and the ballad just as much as in free verse and in the verse essay.

It may be worth mentioning here that Jánosy has also translated Aeschylus and Seneca, T. S. Eliot, and Ginsberg into Hungarian.

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József Tornai has taken an epigraph from Baudelaire's *Mon cœur mis à nu* for his new volume:

"Tout enfant, j'ai senti dans mon cœur deux sentiments contradictoires: l'horreur de la vie et l'extase de la vie."

The motto is not only typical of the present volume but all of Tornai's work to date. (A first collection was published in 1959, and has been followed by over a dozen more.) But it has been never more characteristic than it is of this volume, *A többszemélyes én*, for the simple reason that he has never exteriorized more strongly his passions, his problems, and his grief. His sleeve-notes say:

"As time goes on, the role becomes detached from one like a mask.

"Whether I want it or not. It breaks up into several persons and acts instead of me, it makes statements, it struggles, it is afraid, it is envious and it even writes poems.

"I must begin the fight against them, the resurrection—to throw off the lifeless gold mask.

"To become identical with myself: that is still my task, processing towards old age, with the approach of death."

The process of ageing and the approach of death have been recurring motifs—painful and tormenting—in Tornai's previous work. What is new in "The Multi-Personal Ego" is the new human and poetic function found in old age (even though he is only 54).

For Tornai the arch-enemy is industrial civilization, as it was for Baudelaire, especially the Baudelaire of *Journaux Intimes*. Tornai finds one possible form of defence in folk-song. "Were There No Folksong" is an

absolutely typical Tornai poem. In its layout, its lines and sentences it is reminiscent of an expressionist avant-garde poem.

Were there no folksong,  
how would we learn the names of the  
flowers and the name of the black-eagle-  
headed fate?

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from the lakes  
fish long exterminated with chemicals  
rap out...

(Prose translation.)

Is praising folksong, which preserves and immortalizes nature, tradition, and history, the subject of an avant-garde poem? Is there not a contradiction here? Baudelaire also claimed the right to contradict himself. And Tornai also writes an avant-garde poem against the avant-garde, even against his own avant-garde. That latter poem is from the cycle with the characteristic title *Apocalypse*.

The last cycle in the volume, "My Star-Mother, My Star-Father," consists of poems on the search for God and the absence of God. In the prose poem "Handel and Bach," he writes: "because this music is blackness, because the gods speak to you out of the dark, even if they shine, these two veritable gods: Handel and Bach still split your heart now in the idiom of eternal darkness."

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Gyula Kodolányi was born in 1942. He graduated in English literature from Budapest University in 1966, and has since taught English and American literature at the same university.

In another issue of this journal I have written that America has been discovered for Hungarian poetry essentially by the generation born around 1940. For a century or so, Hungarian poets who travelled abroad, wrote on Paris and Rome. After the Liberation, the Soviet landscape also began to figure in the literary scene; around the turn of the 1960s and 70s, with the increase in opportunities to travel, of scholarships and



study tours, the poetic discovery of America commenced. Kodolányi himself spent a year at Yale University in the United States in the mid-1970s. One result of that stay has been the anthology *Szavak a szélben* (Words in the Wind), subtitled Present-Day American Poets (the war-time generation). The 15 poets Kodolányi selected include Robert Duncan, whose poems he translated into Hungarian. Now he includes some of his translations of Duncan and of William Carlos Williams in his new volume, *A tenger és a szél szüntelen*. The poems are set in America and Hungary.

Including the adaptations, the book is organized into six cycles. The first is made up of songs which, with two exceptions, scarcely recall the traditional. The cycle opens with the three lines of "Chinese Landscape." The first line reads: "I'm sitting on a plank-way at the border of two silences." This cycle also includes a variation on a poem by William Carlos Williams, and four on poems by Robert Creeley. The second cycle, *Designs With a Landscape*, includes prose poems, one of which, "Sermon of St. John the Baptist," is based on Brueghel. The third cycle is entitled *The Real Life of Noah Webster*, and the fourth, *From the Diary of Noah Webster*. Kodolányi writes on his sleeve-notes, Noah Webster, "although a historical character, had a life distant enough and unfamiliar enough for me to project into it whatever might have happened, what could happen and what actually does happen day by day." Paradoxically, Kodolányi is never more personal than when he is hiding behind a mask: he speaks of a mode of life whose determinants are the university and the library. He speaks of colleagues and rivals, of love and the ambiguous yet real delights of scholarly work. The fifth cycle, *New World*, is a series of impressions, observations, and snapshots. In it appear the figures of the black driver, the ranger, the Italian wine merchant, the aged philosopher.

Kodolányi dedicates "Education of Senti-

ments" "to my childhood, the mid-twentieth century," because an *Education sentimentale* has to be written by every generation. He is a lyric poet of great formal culture, who plays on many strings. His remarkable assimilation of American landscapes, people, and poets enriches the Hungarian poetic sensitivity.

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"Why should I care to take possession  
of barren weather, this dark time?"  
(translated by Alan Dixon, *NHQ* 83)

"December," the first poem in Zsuzsa Rakovszky's first volume, opens with a question—a provocative question suggesting will and passion, a question that at the least arouses interest. Who is she who dares to open a poem and a volume like that?

Questions run all through the 27 poems of *Jóslatok és határidők*. And the attention provoked is never lost. One poem is given the title of "Conditional Mood," and her whole volume seems to have been formulated in this conditional mood, making her questions and statements so surprising. It is as if her poems were diaries, fragments of an autobiography, definitions of a personality. But actually they are not all so, they are "as if," because the poems themselves are in permanent motion. And because as she puts it, "the harmonic line persistently continues to diverge." In her poems she presents almost exact definitions of time and space, and in this "almost" lies one of the secrets of her effectiveness.

The motion of the poem is inner motion. Her sentence construction is often baroque, her metaphors sometimes romantic. And her vocabulary is almost always the most everyday possible. Occasionally her sentences read as if one is overhearing a chat in a café or in a university corridor. Sometimes she formulates with a virtually conceptual precision. Sometimes her metaphors may belong to the paraphernalia of some twentieth-



century "ism," hard to define. Sometimes, though rarely, one can sense the effort to hit upon some "laboured," "poetic" word. Her poems not only open effectively, they also close effectively, sometimes and surprisingly closing with a sentence which is grammatically incomplete.

Rakovszky has achieved a fascinating technical level. Her naturalness and studiedness, the harmonic divergence of the elements in her work are almost always functional. Today, when Hungarian verse—by younger and older poets, men and women—abounds in cultural allusions, Zsuzsa Rakovszky is a surprising phenomenon, asserting a possession of culture not through theme or re-allusion but through technique.

Rakovszky graduated in English from Budapest University. She seems to have learnt much from T. S. Eliot, but no more than Eliot had learnt from Laforgue. She

has learnt to exploit the possibility of using her own idiom, and the demand for an absolute professional knowledge, something which is both a moral and an aesthetic question. This enables her to write, from a viewpoint far from Eliot's, in "Admission":

It's not easy for me to endure my lightness,  
a life extemporized by wind-swept principles  
picked from who knows how many kinds of shrubs,  
instead of a happy and sombre restrictedness. (*Prose translation.*)

Her themes are the adventures of love and the intellect, the affronts, desires, possibilities, and failures of childhood and adulthood.

LÁSZLÓ FERENCZI

## SWEET AND NOT SO SWEET BURDENS

István Vas: *Miért víjog a saskeselyű?* (Why does the vulture scream?), 2 vols. Szépirodalmi, 1981. 536 and 574 pp.; Zoltán Jékely: *Édes teher* (Sweet burden), Szépirodalmi, 1982. 292 pp.

In the latest volume of his autobiography, *Why does the vulture scream?*, István Vas tells the story of how the countrywoman, who had the servants-room of the house in the thirties in exchange for some cleaning, happened to sweep down from the corner of the author's desk—while tidying—a framed reproduction of a portrait of János Arany, the great Hungarian poet of the second half of the 19th century. This simple woman looked at the picture, taking in the slightly smoothed-out features, the well-trimmed moustache, the white vest, the starched shirt, and remarked: "A brave looking gentleman... surely your grand-

father, sir." She presumed a gentleman would keep a photograph of an other man only if it was his son, his father or his grandfather. István Vas would most certainly have gladly accepted János Arany as his ancestor, especially as Arany was, at that time, regarded as the "most Hungarian" poet. In fact, Vas's grandfather was a rabbi in a small town in Hungary, and one of the main themes of this volume is an examination of Jewish roots and the increase in tension in the thirties both outside and in literary life as Hungary moved swiftly towards creating anti-Semitic legislation of the Nuremberg type. Even the title of this book comes from Arany, a line



from a poem to which the answer goes (in prose translation): "It is screaming because come tomorrow / on the second day of a battle, / hundreds and thousands of people / will be losing their lives / on the banks of the Danube." These new volumes of his autobiographical essay-novel cover the life and development of István Vas from the beginning of the thirties until the dawn of that "tomorrow," the outbreak of the Second World War and the death of his first wife. The events beforehand are dealt with in the first two volumes, *Hard Love*, published in 1964, and *Interrupted Investigation*, in 1967. They were written as an investigation on the birth of a poet, using, as it were, the methods of his favourite detective, Hercule Poirot. This poet was the remembering, investigating youthful self of the author, upon whom Vas looked back with a self-mocking objectivity, almost as on a stranger or on the protagonist of an unpublished *Bildungsroman*. With the meticulousness of a scientist or a criminologist he pulled apart the intricate fabric woven out of influences, potentialities, chances, attractions, and choices that contributed to the development and maturing of a writer.

In *Why does the vulture scream?* the narration takes on the more cautious form of a report, first on the thirties—especially the years 1932–33, and the international consequences especially felt in Hungary, and, last but not least, on his own initiation as a poet (his first book of poems came out in 1932, when he was 22). Here Vas enters a territory where his poet-hero has inevitably to step out of his private niche into the public arena to find himself in a whirlwind, the arena of the turn of an era. "As long as only I, my friends and my enemies were concerned, I could allow myself to play the elegant game of distance-keeping, fancying myself in the role of the 'detective.' In the phase following, however, a constantly changing and almost impenetrable net of contradictions, murderous hatreds, irreconcilabilities, and pitiable isolations called Hungar-

ian poetry, suddenly announced itself for real.

"To be more exact, I speak of the behaviour-patterns of this collective variety during the turn of an era and its answers to the challenges of history, to the many, simultaneous or recurring, shameless challenges of history." Though Vas does not in any way intend to create the impression that he had ever been party to this "net," he does speak of his experiences and not without embarrassment. Although he had never taken up positions and certainly not in a spectacular way in what he mostly considered as artificial debates, even so, he soon acquired followers and adversaries; ironically, some of his most determined enemies would give him assistance, intellectual and sometimes even practical, sooner than his natural allies did.

He is thus in fact irreversibly part to all that went on in Hungarian intellectual circles of the time, despite his inclination to play down his own modest role. His objective, reserved and analytical style does not much differ from that of the previous volumes, for all the warning to the contrary in the preface. And one of the great virtues of *Why does the vulture scream?* is that unequalled insight and calmness with which he has drawn the turbulent literary scene of the thirties with no trace of anger, spite or false note. At this moment István Vas's book can well fill the bitter gap in scholarly writing on the subject. He seems to be the first writer equipped with the courage to raise questions wrapped in a delicate silence or regarded as taboo, and with the ability to situate them with a disarming naturalness and a most remarkable ease, into the historical processes and intellectual currents of that time.

In the thirties, Hungarian literature showed a most complicated ideological and political spectrum. This can only partly be explained through the violent changes this turning point exhibited. Another reason must have been that what had been sown by *Nyugat*, established in 1908, and whose



orientation is clearly shown in its title: 'The West,' had come just to the point of being harvested. The generations of writers assembled around this periodical had managed to accomplish a democratically spirited revolution in Hungarian literature, in which, until the end of the last century, the purely patriotic traditions of the nobility dominated. In the wake of this literary and cultural revolution and of the preceding social revolution, a wide range of cultural initiatives had come emanating from the middle-class in the twenties, enabling even the socialist minded avant-garde to take root. A leading personality here was Lajos Kassák, the same writer whose step-daughter, the dancer Eti, István Vas was later to marry and who thus became one of the key figures in this novel-cycle. Under the auspices (or, later, by the example) of *Nyugat*, the thirties saw a series of mostly shortlived periodicals of this middle-class literature, their various tastes and ideologies more or less living side by side. A part of this phenomenon was the arrival at the turn of the twenties and thirties of a new kind of populist trend, which had, coming from among the second generation of *Nyugat*, already filtered for its own use both bourgeois radicalism and socialism and had soon managed to establish itself as a strong literary force, which in turn contained many branches.

István Vas is regarded, along with other writers born around 1910 and starting their careers in the first half of the thirties, as belonging to the third *Nyugat* generation. However, it must be pointed out that they themselves believed a major characteristic of their generation to be—out of some sort of scepticism perhaps—a refusal to join in any kind of group, not even in a group of people of the same age. István Vas tended, as a somewhat impartial observer, to limit himself to an apolitical "classicism," searching with moderation and patience his own way among the various groups and factions which fiercely fought each other. The antagonism between the "populist" and

the "urban" factions and their various offshoots is especially marked here. Indeed, it still crops up from time to time. According to this misleading alternative, someone was either a populist, seeking to invigorate Hungarian social and cultural structures with the folklore, vitality and traditions of the peasants and common people in general, or, he belonged to the urban faction with no rural roots, and was a "townie," a middle-class person. The vagueness of the above terms and descriptions show how little they had to do with actual reality: these were mere cover-names, even terms of abuse. At the time the term "urban" had come more or less to mean Jew. And how this distinction had functioned and how the declared or presumed priorities of one of the other did not depend on his or her origin, education, environmental influences, predestination through "blood and race," but much more upon shifting personal sympathies and interests and on more often than not changing ideological, political and aesthetic views, is well shown in the case of István Vas. As a writer of Jewish origins, he was for some time attracted to a populist group although he had previously proudly declared himself to be the disciple of *Nyugat's* chief editor, the "classicist" Babits; meanwhile, he was on friendly terms with both Jewish and non-Jewish writers, who never considered following his attempts to join the populists or even scolded him for the same.

However, by calmly analysing a subject which tears open wounds and stirs up passions even today, Vas demonstrates a rare virtue: a virtue he acquired there and then in this era of conflict; this virtue can very well be regarded today as a rarity to be cherished. The virtue is the incredible respect for culture, a most innocent good faith in all talent and creativity. In the Budapest of the thirties a bubbling literary life took place in editorial offices and cafés. Although everybody wrote and believed something different, they might well contradict themselves, a year or even a few



months later, depending on when, how much and what had registered of the screams of the vulture. This is why a mutual respect among the best of them seemed only natural. István Vas, once, had tried with almost a son's tender anxiety to explain Babits's errors to himself. Further instances here are examples of his *assimilatory* perception: although he had quarrelled with his teacher Kassák and turned his back on the latter's avant-gardist obsessions, he could think of him with a gentle understanding which he felt he owed to that charmingly priggish and incorruptible eccentric; although the proletarian poet Attila József fell out with him over some minor matter, Vas considered him a great poet all the same; although László Németh, one of the populists, did express some ideas not dissimilar to racial-theory in one of his essays (never republished since) on Hungarian literature, Vas could not deny the fascination he felt for Németh's brilliance of thought.

This was how he experienced his Jewishness intellectually. He was by no means an orthodox Jew, he had even converted to Christianity; he was attracted by the relation of Christian faith and Marxist ideas. From the very beginning he regarded himself a Hungarian writer and the Hungarian literary traditions certainly played no lesser role in his views than they did with any populist. "I didn't feel like belonging to the chosen people, nor did I want to be better than any other folk—and certainly not better than the Hungarians. And this notion of 'being chosen' seemed to inseparably belong to the Jewish religion." Vas felt a further aversion against this notion of "being chosen" in the face of another nation that was anxious to take on the historical role of the chosen and especially to spite the Jews. How could he feel animosity towards the Germans, how would he detect a threat in devastating German national pride—out of self-defence of course, rather than with the brutality and militarism of Fascism—if he was to diminish other peoples by glorifying his own, by

regarding himself as superior, one of the chosen? In this special case of consciousness of identity and the descriptions of the absurd and often grotesque situations that go with it, the spiralling themes of *Why does the vulture scream?* swing the essay-novel unperceptibly over to autobiographical fiction.

There is no sudden change of style and no contradiction between the essay-like and the narrative chapters; the reflecting narrator and his style combine what seems to be heterogenous into perfect unity. When writing about the personalities and events of the literary scene, or the steps in his intellectual or artistic career, Vas limits himself exclusively to facts closely connected with himself, the influences upon his personal life, the traces that people, books and events left on him. The rich cultural and historical material on the intellectual horizon of the novel becomes functional but no more so than the painful processes of soul-searching or the events of everyday private life. One should also mention the concentric layers around themes, to use a musical term, the recurring variations of a theme. We can take an example out of the most private sphere: the story of the author's first wife, Eti, which is the most remarkable and originally accomplished chain of themes in this long (1,100 pages) work. Eti, a masterpiece of nature, an embodiment of the emancipated woman, seems to stand for the authenticity of all causes the Left and humanists ever fought for; she suffers from a mysterious disease, some unusual form of epilepsy that was not diagnosed for a long time. Her latent struggle with death in which she confronts the "monster" with dance and with love up to her last breath, is without any artificial symbolism and is the sensitive essence of the book, an overwhelming metaphor for the threat of death. *Why does the vulture scream?* is one of the most remarkable achievements in Hungarian prose in recent years; certainly it is the most significant among the numerous recent autobiographical works.



Zoltán Jékely was a member of István Vas's generation and died this spring at the age of sixty-nine. *Why does the vulture scream?* has some pages on Jékely\* who was by three years the junior and became known for his wonderful romantic poetry at about the same time as Vas. "I looked up to him with admiration, and not only because of his poetry... also his appearance... he looked like a real poet... with his head always turned slightly to one side, with his permanently squinting left eye, he reminded me of Kölcsey (a few years later, during a more intimate conversation, he confessed that it was due to a permanent migraine) and when he found his more sublime tone, he resembled an old-fashioned romantic, a knight lost in his own dreams..."

There was something of a troubadour too, or, rather, of a Don Quixote in Jékely. With his lean body, the small moustache, the tiny head that seemed to shrivel as the years went by and with the quivering, sensitive lines of his face, he would have passed as a caricature. Yet his engaging charm, his concealed irony and secretive elegance conquered both friends and lovers. He was, in the most original and ancient sense, a gallant and courteous cavalier to women all his life. He came from Transylvania, that far-away province of Hungary, which now belongs to Rumania, which had a life of its own even in the years long gone by. The spirit and memory of the lost native land remained one of Jékely's chief sources for inspiration all his life. He remained faithful to her, as to the lady to whose memory a troubadour remains faithful. In his fidelity, which can be extended from the image of his place of birth and its past to a whole world of disappearing values, he seemed to be the Don Quixote who, in order to protect his ideals, did not fear to tilt at windmills on the back of his poetry. Yet there was never any heroic pose in his attitude, rather the proud acceptance of an irreversible predes-

tination. Jékely was no naive troubadour, sentimental old student or a patriot with the ambitions of a preacher: beneath his disguises and behind the constant reminiscences there were deeper qualities hiding in the person and the poet. The role-playing, too, was genuine, changes offered by life taken, though they did serve to some degree as shelters from those more hidden and mysterious experiences that struggled to the surface in his dreams. In the larger part of his poems and short stories Jékely deals with these, just as he does in this posthumously published book of short stories, *Sweet Burden*. The title story refers to the relationship of men to women. The metaphorical title is led back to its most original, literal meaning in this story. Every piece in this collection offers a variation on this same theme. To be more exact, behind the stereotyped forms of courting, the search for one another, male and female caught in rigid cultural traditions, he opens up a whole irrational world of animal instincts and impulses which can burst free only in dreams.

*Sweet Burden* tells the story of a recently divorced man, who takes a trip to Italy in order to heal his wounds. He finds himself in Sicily where he is soon swept away, as if by a powerful tide, by the spirit and ancient traditions of the place. In the small town where he stays more girls than boys have been born since time immemorial and the parents have taken to trading off their daughters as if they were sheep. Even today, a stranger is looked upon as a potential customer, seeking to buy a girl. According to tradition the husband-to-be has to prove he is worthy of the girl by displaying his physical strength to others. He has to carry the "Sweet Burden" on his shoulders up some steps to the church. Jékely's protagonist, one of his fellows in fate, acting on the advice of a procuress, the widow of a crazy amateur archeologist of a German count, goes, almost against his will, like a sleep-walker, to fetch the girl. He is drawn towards her by a fatal desire and fails the

\* See József Tornai's essay, and some poems by Jékely in this issue.—The Editor.



test: with the girl on his shoulders, struck too soon by ecstasy, he collapses on the steps. *Valencia* is a similarly sweet and feverish dream. While preparing for the celebration of his fortieth birthday with the unblemished lady of his heart, our hero comes upon a fat old slut of a procuress in the street, who is engaged in selling—apart from her own daughter—old records. On the pretext of showing him some more records, she manages to lure him up to her filthy abode where she starts playing scratched and worn records of sentimental old favourites, among them *Valencia*, which reminds him of a never quite-got-over, shameful sexual fiasco. The haunting past, the liberatingly debauched environment and the exciting young female offered to go with the records, soon break his resistance, but before he can make up for—to the rhythms of *Valencia*—the old frustration, a weird interlude wrecks his hopes once again.

Jékely's unusual stories describe the futile pursuit of the fulfilment of the supposedly 'real' male nature and the inability to totally satisfy those desires which the animal-like layers of the subconscious breed. Jékely does not deal with these issues through officious psychoanalysis or through fashionable uninhibitedness; rather he displays an admirable sense of forms, balancing as it were between dream and wakefulness, playful lightness and painful sobriety,

romantic surface and ironic distancing. On the one hand he loves to use the spine-chilling effects of the horror-story, the well-tested clichés of tale-telling, delicately elevated and obsolete idiom; by using them occasionally or with slight exaggeration or by injecting them with new elements, he can wrap his stories in an ironic mist. To this ironic floating he adds a bizarre, dream-like quality, which can bring to life the archaic settings in an eerie way; the further addition of bold and full-blooded erotic images seem in turn to challenge these elements.

The colourful interplay of all these elements of style almost withstands any attempt at analysis; it produces a poetic prose that the reader reacts to instinctively. István Vas, quoting an early poem of Jékely's, concludes concerning one of the poem's images: "Jékely's deep-set romanticism broke out from under the glittering surface of his poetry as the stag-beetle did from under the woods with its incredible antlers. And if I were able to read and define Jékely's secret any closer, he would not be the magic poet that he is."

He was a magic writer of prose, too, a poetic interpreter of secrets and dreams. With his death he has finally retreated into the world of his own mysteries.

MIKLÓS GYÖRFFY

## EDMUND WILSON AND HIS BUDAPEST

Charlotte Kretzoi, who served as Wilson's tutor during his visit to Budapest in 1964 (and to whom I am indebted for her recollections of Wilson both in Hungary and in

By courtesy of the Hungarian-language periodical *USA Magazin*, 1982/35.

the United States) remembers Wilson declaring that to see his own plays in Hungarian baffled, frustrated and, above all, provoked him. Although he prided himself on being a polymath, was well known as an amateur linguist, and was proficient in Greek and



Latin, French and German, Russian and Hebrew, here was a European language of which he could make nothing at all. Hungarian presented the ever curious Wilson with a linguistic puzzle he could not leave alone, especially since he believed that the distinctive marks of a culture expressed themselves through the language of that culture. What sort of people must these Hungarians be, he thought, to have a language as unique as that?

At the same time that Wilson was puzzled by the language he saw in front of him as he leafed through the translation of his plays, *Beppo and Beth* and *This Room and This Gin and These Sandwiches*, he was delighted by the physical handsomeness of the volume: "The bindings of Hungarian books," he noted, "have a special kind of richness and gaiety." The book, translated by the distinguished scholar and critic Péter Nagy for the series *Modern Könyvtár*, represented precisely the kind of edition that Wilson had himself proposed innumerable times for the classics of American literature and which no American publisher would accept. Again he was made curious: what sort of culture was it that could produce such a beautifully bound, printed and proportioned volume?

When Wilson finally gave the volume to a friend for a translation of Nagy's introduction, he was flattered to learn that his importance as a dramatist, something usually dismissed in the United States where he was best known for his critical writing, was still honoured abroad. "I am so pleased with this," he mused to a correspondent, "that I am thinking of starting soon for Budapest." Wilson was somewhat worried that the plays were chosen because they were believed to depict "the decay of the capitalist world." However, he remained confident that the "Hungarians are capable of playing certain scenes ironically."

Wilson begins his famous essay, *My Fifty Years with Dictionaries and Grammars*, with the declaration, "I have always been

greedy for words. I can never get enough of them." His interest in language, like his interest in literature, was never narrow. He understood that beyond the essential function of carrying meaning, the very structure of a language suggested the character of the culture that created it. Though he had written on topics as diverse as the French Symbolists (*Axel's Castle*), the American Civil War (*Patriotic Gore*), the Russian Revolution (*To the Finland Station*), and the Dead Sea scrolls, in Hungarian Wilson found not only a language whose elegantly complex composition intrigued and challenged him linguistically, but also a language reflective of a finely structured, richly literary culture that challenged him intellectually. The discovery revitalized him. Albert Tezla, an American scholar of Hungarian literature who was studying in Budapest at the time Wilson made his visit in 1964, recalled asking the critic how he came to study Hungarian. "Well, you know, Tezla," Wilson replied, "I've lived a long time, and in my lifetime I've felt myself several times growing old and whenever that happens I would learn another language and it would bring me back to life."

In the fall of 1961 Wilson made the acquaintance of an American woman of Hungarian descent who worked in a pharmacy near Wilson's home in northern New York State. When he discovered that she knew Hungarian he immediately asked her to provide him with lessons. She was at first reluctant to do so, in part because she was unsure of the correctness of her Hungarian. Another reason, according to Wilson, was because a man who had had four wives was thought, even at 65, to be "a dangerous character." Her objections were eventually overcome, and early in 1962 Wilson began to study with her regularly. Although her Hungarian was neither formal nor literary, Wilson was delighted by her ability to analyze the agglutinated structure of Hungarian words, something which initially confused him. When her explanations failed



to satisfy him—he was a student who would not proceed without explanation—Wilson would puzzle out a solution of his own with the help of Országh's dictionary and one or another of the available Hungarian grammars. He was enormously proud of his ability to derive such grammatical explanations and quite skilled at doing so. On occasion, however, his explanations, though perhaps logical, were, in fact, faulty. But convinced that his analyses were right he would not be swayed from his position even by the arguments of a native speaker. Wilson's understanding of the formal mode in Hungarian defied that of every Hungarian he encountered and yet he would not be dissuaded; arguments over the use of *kegyed* crop up with startling regularity in the recollections of his Hungarian friends. He wished to impose upon Hungarian a formality which the language had itself abandoned but which he felt it still deserved.

Wilson spent much of the latter part of 1961 in Massachusetts, in Cambridge and on Cape Cod, and while there often visited with two Hungarian *émigrés*, Agatha Fassett and Zoltán Haraszti, who introduced him not only to Hungarian literature but also to an impassioned literary salon such as even Wilson had seldom seen. Haraszti would declaim Ady, read from Petőfi, would make Wilson read the lines of the poets and repeat them. Wilson, whose principal acquaintance with Hungarian literature till this time was through Ferenc Molnár, would insist that Molnár was what he wanted to read, and Agatha Fassett would insist just as strongly that he should read Ady, Arany, Madách, or Attila József. She would lecture to Wilson about literature and music, stopping only to change the Bartók on the phonograph. Fierce literary arguments would rage over issues as broad as symbolism (a topic of particular interest to Wilson whose *Axel's Castle* was influential in the acceptance of literary symbolism in the United States), and as narrow as the choice of a single word in a poem of Ady's. While an obvious result

of these meetings was to provide Wilson with his first serious introduction to Hungarian literature, these salons had another imported effect as well: Wilson assumed on the basis of these literary encounters with Fassett and Haraszti that he had witnessed the true type of the Hungarian character—flamboyant, fiery, voluble. "My great revelation this summer," he disclosed to a friend, "has been making connections with the Hungarians here. . . . They are rather as a people, self-contained and proud and likely to be fiery if provoked. . . ." While Wilson's knowledge of Hungarian cultural history was already intelligent and insightful, his understanding of Hungarian character was based on a romantic misconception. He wanted to insist on thinking that all Hungarians were the passionate descendants of the fierce Magyars, fiery and spirited, perhaps sometimes dark and brooding, but never merely stable or sedate.

Dr Kretzoi recalls that in 1964 when she first met Wilson at the airport in Budapest, he had no sooner entered the taxi she had waiting for him than he exclaimed in disbelief, "Are you Hungarian?" and then immediately answered his own question by declaring, "You can't be Hungarian!" When Charlotte Kretzoi explained that indeed she was thoroughly Hungarian, Wilson was disbelieving that this stolid, careful, patient woman could belong to a culture he had conceived in a far more picturesque way. Wilson's impressions of Hungary are often informed by this initial misconception of Hungarian character. In his letters and journals he several times remarks on how "sad and depressed" he finds the scene around him when he first arrives in Budapest. Typically he attributes this lack of colour to some relatively recent change in social conditions but is slow to admit that his disappointment stems from the false stereotype he brought with him. Wilson sought in Hungary a kind of mythic old-world culture, filled with the kind of wonderful literary arguments he had witnessed in



Agatha Fassett's salon, informed by a language which he believed still preserved that old culture. Shortly before leaving for Hungary Wilson wrote to his old friend and fellow writer John Dos Passos and explained that "I seem nowadays to be obsessed with minorities—feeling that I belong to one myself." Hungary, whatever its day-to-day reality, represented for Wilson an image of a privileged cultural minority and it was inevitable that what he was to find when he at last visited the country was different from what he had expected.

The plan to visit Hungary took shape after Dr. Kretzoi, who was then reader in literature at Debrecen, wrote to Wilson asking for information about Wilson's friend F. Scott Fitzgerald. A correspondence was soon established, and early in 1964 Wilson wrote to Mrs. Kretzoi asking her if she would read Hungarian with him when he visited Budapest later that year. She agreed, and the necessary arrangements were made for Wilson to come to Hungary. He flew into Budapest from Milan on the 19th of April and quickly settled into his room at the Hotel Gellért—the sort of old style grand hotel that Wilson most enjoyed.

Four afternoons a week during the three weeks he was in Budapest, Wilson would leave the Gellért, cross the Liberty bridge, stroll past the National Museum, browse at the secondhand bookshops along Museum körút, before arriving at four o'clock at Dr. Kretzoi's apartment on Semmelweis utca. With a glass of the Furmint or Szürkebarát that he favoured beside him, he and his tutor would work on Hungarian. He was eager now to read Madách and struggled with *The Tragedy of Man* but, as he admitted later to a Hungarian writer visiting him at Cape Cod, "I did not make any headway! It was no use looking up every word in the dictionary. I understood what I read and yet I didn't." Wilson felt compelled to read Madách in the original; suggestions to read it in translation drew his wrath, bringing from him an earthy description of what he

thought the translation was worth. At the time he was in Budapest, he even had it in his head to attempt a new translation of the play. Years later he wrote Dr. Kretzoi from Cape Cod confiding that he had begun to translate Madách on his own. She encouraged him to go on with the project, but despite his enthusiasm for the idea, the translation was too much for him and the project was abandoned. Dr. Kretzoi affectionately referred to Wilson as Ödön bácsi (Uncle Edmund) and he would often behave like a favourite elder relative making pronouncements to his younger relations, explaining to his bemused tutor that "this is the way the language should be," regardless of how in fact it was. Language was always a kind of elegant puzzle to Wilson and he was disappointed when his own clever solutions proved not to be those favoured by the language.

Much of his time in Budapest Wilson spent alone working in his room. The Cultural Relations Institute, concerned about the welfare of their distinguished visitor, arranged for Albert Tezla to look in on Wilson. Tezla recalls that, far from being lonely, Wilson could hardly have been happier: he was immersed in his work. He spent his mornings working on a long review-essay of Vladimir Nabokov's translation of *Eugene Onegin*—when published the following summer in *The New York Review of Books* it would create a literary furor that lasted for years—and had been reading a Hungarian translation of Pushkin which he declared far superior to Nabokov's and therefore made his criticism of his friend's translation all the more justified. He marvelled that such a superb translation of Pushkin should exist in Hungarian and regretted that he did not know of it till his visit.

On occasion Tezla and Wilson would go out together for a drink or meal and Wilson would attempt to place an order in Hungarian with an accent that Tezla, a polite man, could only describe as atrocious. Wilson apparently knew his Hungarian was bad,



yet insisted on going ahead with it; it mattered to him greatly to try to be like a Hungarian. For though his initial interest in Hungary stemmed in part from misconceptions about the Hungarian national character, he was enormously impressed and moved by the actual culture he saw around him: "Hungary has really interested me more than any other country I have been in over here," he wrote to a friend. Toward the end of his visit, on the final Sunday Wilson spent in Budapest, Mrs Kretzoi took him to the Fisherman's Bastion. Wilson, struck by the view, looked out over Margaret Island, and the old city of Buda, and the river, and said quietly, "Now I understand." What he saw at last was not the Hungary he had imagined when he was with Haraszti and Fassett in Boston, but a real place surviving in history with its own complexities and beauties.

No person embodied the attractiveness of the Hungary he discovered on this visit more than the poet and translator Gábor Devecseri. Wilson, preoccupied with his own work, had been somewhat reluctant to meet persons he did not already know, or at least know of, but Charlotte Kretzoi insisted that he meet Devecseri who had done a highly praised, widely read translation of Homer into Hungarian. The two men met in Devecseri's living room in the Buda hills and immediately hit it off. Wilson pulled his chair up alongside his Hungarian colleague's and for the next several hours the two sat side by side comparing translations of Homer, worrying over the connotations of one Greek word or another, exchanging theories of prosody and reading to one another. Wilson had had a vague knowledge that it was possible for Hungarian to reproduce both the accentual and quantitative meter of Greek verse (something impossible in every other language Wilson knew), but had never seriously looked into the matter, at least in part because he himself was confused by such a prosody. Devecseri was able to show Wilson something further about the

nature of the Hungarian language, and the two spent a delighted afternoon "chattering like schoolboys." Wilson in his badly accented Hungarian would try to follow Devecseri's lead in reproducing the stress and duration of Hungarian verse. Despite his best efforts Wilson found the attempt almost impossibly difficult: "It resembles those feats of performing conflicting movements with the right and left arms or legs." Relatively young, soft-spoken, interested in both contemporary literature and the classics, Devecseri belied Wilson's earlier conception of the Hungarian *littérateur*, and the Hungarian prosody Devecseri showed to him made Wilson admit for the first time that there were aspects to Hungarian for which he had no explanation, which, at last, he could only take on faith.

Wilson had hoped to see Iván Boldizsár, the editor of *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, but Boldizsár was in Mexico and the two men did not meet until two years later in an episode that Boldizsár describes in the *NHQ* of Winter 1973. He was able, however, to meet Péter Nagy, whose translation sparked his own interest in Hungary. While there is no record of the conversation, one imagines that Wilson must have quizzed Nagy on how he came to translate the particular plays he did. And he certainly would have complimented the critic on the variety of theatre offered in Budapest: "It was astonishing. Besides Hungarian classics and modern Hungarian comedies, they were doing foreign plays which ranged from Shakespeare to Molière to Racine, through Diderot, through Bruckner, Shaw and Pirandello, to O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Anouilh, Noel Coward, and Cole Porter."

When Wilson returned to the United States he began work on the essays *Budapest and My Fifty Years with Dictionaries and Grammars*, that most directly discuss his involvement with Hungarian language and culture. He knew by the time he wrote these essays that he could not speak as a scholar of Hungarian literature; he had taken on too much,



too late. He understood that his role was best that of a broad-ranging critic. In *Budapest* he discusses art and drama and what it is like to hear Bartók and Kodály on their home territory, inevitably tells his readers about the Puszta, and introduces them to Hungarian geography, invents a vaudeville joke to illustrate the problem of the familiar and the formal "you," appraises statuary and architecture, lingers over the details of night club revues, describes the scene on Bartók Béla út where he took his daily stroll, and, finally, considers the Hungarian character. He says very little about literature. As he recalls his time in Budapest, he explains: that he had been subject to the usual misconceptions of someone from the West about the character of this culture; had mistakenly thought that the absence of the

fiery, émigré salon meant that culture and character had died with socialism; but "found on further acquaintance the passion, the dynamic force, which have made Hungary, in its strange isolation, its strategic position in the center of Europe, such a continually erupting crater, such a constantly humming powerhouse, which is also a constant exporter of power." Wilson was 71 when *Budapest* appeared in print and he knew that the most he could do with what he had learned about Hungary was declare with the critical authority and judgement for which he was justly famous that "this is a language that has borne the impress of the masters of thought and art." He shared with his readers what he had discovered for himself.

MARK SAVIN



# ARTS

## BECALMED

### *The National Fine Arts Show in the Műcsarnok*

The National Fine Arts Show is a pleasant event. The visitor to the Műcsarnok Gallery can find nothing that is particularly annoying. Practically everybody who is somebody is here. To be more precise, every significant creative artist has freely chosen whether to participate or not. All trends in contemporary Hungarian painting, sculpture, graphics are represented. The overall picture is rich and comprehensible, not only because of the choice of exhibits, but also because of their arrangement: the airy presentation lines up works, some good some not so good; some deserve attention, others let the glance pass by almost without stopping.

\*

The first large hall conveys a sense of protocol. I do not mean this pejoratively. I mean rather the deliberateness of the undertaking. Because here—in this hall—there is to be seen something more significant than the works: the vision which animates Hungarian cultural policy today.

Almost all the great elders are on show. Gyula Pap who came out of the Bauhaus; Pál Miháلتz, one of the original members of the old Szentendre artists' colony; and, next to Gyula Hintz, the great enfant terrible of the thirties, there are the recently deceased Ferenc Chiovini, György Román, and Aladár Farkas (who dedicated his entire oeuvre to the fight against fascism).

Then there are those attached to the rural experience. Although they start from the same point, their oeuvres are very different. István D. Kurucz works under the spell of ploughed land; Mihály Schéner brings the narrative fantasy of his native land; a plebeian temper is the determining factor in János Orosz's works. On the (literally and figuratively) opposite side the "moderns" of the European School are lined up. Among them Endre Bálint, Ferenc Martyn with works expressing their personalities, Tihamér Gyarmathy with a warmly beautiful canvas; Jenő Barcsay, closely connected to them, has exhibited one of his new compositions, and Tibor Vilt the sculpted portrait of his painter colleague.

On the main wall which greets the visitor and in front of it there are the works of two representative Hungarian artists, laden with prizes. These two compositions of considerable size have an immediate hold on viewers who are event-hungry and interested in trappings: Imre Varga's antiheroic apotheosis of Franz Liszt and Ignác Kokas's symbolic work *Let There Be Peace*, a proclamation of the calming of the elements. More modest in size and setting are the two sculptures of István Kiss, president of the association, and a painting by Ervin Tamás, its secretary.

Finally in this first room there are a few works that do not seem to belong here. The most striking among them—in the wrong



way—are the portraits of Kodály and Bartók by Ferenc Kokas. These routine works say nothing about the personalities or spirit of the two princes of music; they have the effect of awkwardly coloured photographs. But such flagrant concessions in quality are rather the exception. The calmness tell us that the great storms in Hungarian fine arts are over. There are no elements to shock or trouble public opinion, no new trends to be seen—not here, at any rate.

\*

The second room offers telling evidence of this settling down. The calm atmosphere compels some to faithfulness, encourages others to experiment, and there are those whose spirits are dampened by it. It would be impossible to discuss the several hundred works in question, so we will just have to glance at those which are in some way characteristic of a number of things that are happening.

Let us take two extremes, Gábor Dienes and István Mácsai who are working in the same manner as before. A beautiful example of the former's grotesque surrealism is *Tattered Furs*, which depicts old ladies' table society. The title is particularly apt because it refers to the artist's method: to the fact that Dienes practically caricatures, masks his figures into animals, thus revealing their personalities. Mácsai's foppish naturalism is repugnant, rather than rousing or stunning. The *Outside* presents women shut out from their sanctuary, home, plainly speaking from happiness, appealing to the sentimental side in all of us.

A few have used this absence of inner strife in order to re-examine themselves. Again we can mention two cases whose results are diametrically opposed. Piroška Szántó has shifted to brown, and has adjusted to the style of old photographs. In this spirit she has painted two pictures which are quite unlike her earlier works, filled with plants and animals where, generally, the human figure is absent. László Patay has

also made a change. His work has been irritating enough so far, provoking disagreement through common-place compositions, exasperating colors. Now he has chosen a different trivialisation: under the title *Monument* he has exhibited a tableau of lesson-recitation, an uninhibited montage of significant pieces from the history of fine arts—from the lion gate of Mycenae through Michelangelo to Vasarely.

Those incapable of renewal are often tormented by self-doubt and grow uncertain. The result: retreat. In this sense we can speak of the balking of several artists. Lajos Sváby is as dynamic as ever, but the details are neither rich enough or refined enough to balance the animated effect of the composition as a whole. József Németh persists in the subject matter of work in the fields, but because of much repetition his free manner has become mechanical and consequently schematic.

\*

Time is at a standstill—as witnessed in its own manner by the third large hall, which presents what we could call the contemporary adepts of constructivism, in the company or a few artists with a related approach. We have simple geometrical figures and a color range reduced to the bare minimum (often to black and white). The list of names (from János Fajó to László Paizs) is not new, neither is the style: this has been the most modern trend in Hungarian art for the past decade and a half.

We must remark though on two minute changes. They are due to the fact that geometrical abstraction has become widely accepted. This circle has attracted some who had earlier worked in a different spirit. It is primarily their works which show that it is easy to paint geometrical shapes, but all the more difficult to create innovative works out of them. György Segesdi's *Steel Sculpture* is nothing but a grey shape which unfortunately swallows up its details; all that can be said



of József Baska's slices of form is that they are boring.

István Nádler, however has brought some innovation. His canvas which reminds one of a punched card, carries on the best tradition of geometrical painting, while at the same time leaving the constructive behind. Colored dots flash on the black background in a beautiful visual pun. This is one of the finest pieces in the whole exhibition. Only one other approaches its ingenuity: Mária Lugossy's *Splitting Crystal*, a cube of translucent plexi-glass combined with chromium steel, whose intersecting parts are a gorgeous spectacle.

The strength of the constructivist room lies to a large extent in the number of its practitioners. Even though some are missing and others are not at their best here, it still presents a unified camp. They spur each other on, they mutually amplify each others impact. Their weight becomes even more apparent when we look into the side rooms. Here a few other are to be found, such as the ironic naturalism of György Kemény and Tibor Helényi or the grotesque microrealism, adding to Dienes many naive elements, of Gábor Nagy, Péter Ujházi, István Zámbo.

\*

Many well-known artists are not participating. One is aware not so much of the absence of persons, but of art forms and the ideas closely related to them.

To formulate this another way: it is not the preponderance of conservative or old-fashioned works that gives the show its establishment look. Fortunately their number is relatively small, this is why the overall effect is pleasant. And for the same reason this harmonious surface is disturbing as well. There is an absence, of tough, unusual, risk-taking manifestations, of the experimental work of young artists, such as was seen at the Studio Gallery.

This absence is not conspicuous at this event, for the time being. This is because this national fine arts show, renewed after a ten year interruption, includes a large number of older works in addition to the new. We can run into many works which greet us as old acquaintances. This review accordingly covers a longer period of time, but in the future such events will take place biannually. When accounting for only two years' work, topicality will be unavoidable.

To summarize: the show has paraded a few previously unrecognized talents, but it has not recorded any new aspects of Hungarian art. The regular national show should follow a different path to this, a recapitulation before all else.

When a ship is becalmed, the time can be used for many purposes, if it is not pressing and the ship is well stocked. But in order to reach new shores, the wind must rise.

JÓZSEF VADAS

## RECENT WORK BY JENŐ BARCSAY

Jenő Barcsay, aged 82, is the grand old man of Hungarian painting. He has won the esteem of public and fellow painter not only for his work but also for his attitude. During his career as a painter he has never ceased to create new and newer values. His work has constantly changed, one period

bringing to maturity its successor through experiments which, from time to time, have led him to organic synthesis. His changes of style were never a flurry, he was never moonstruck by new styles, he has developed and built his life-work slowly. A few Hungarian romantic works at the outset were





*Ferenc Kovács*

SÁNDOR VECSESI: PEACE—JOY. OIL, 160×130 CM

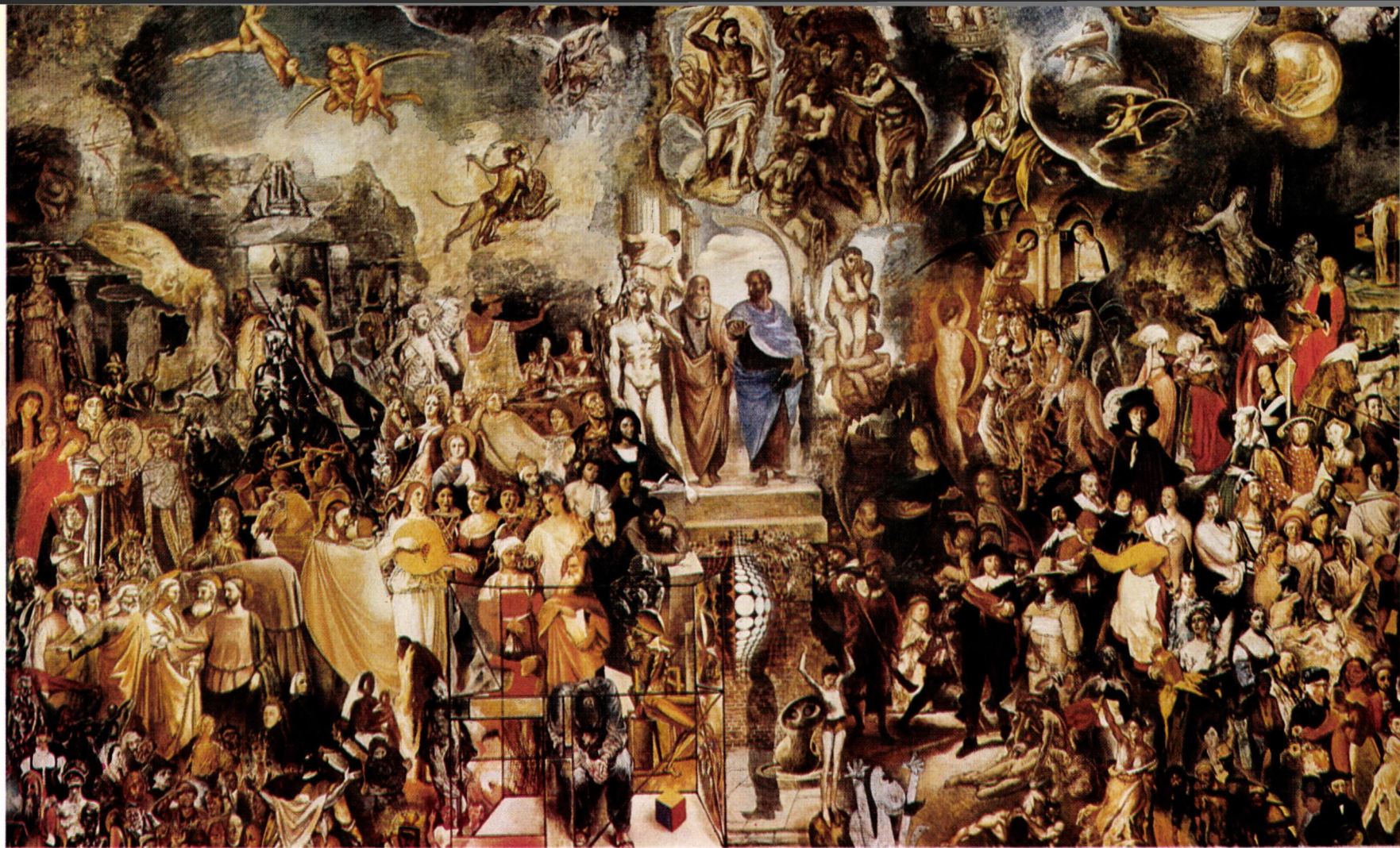




Ferenc Kovács

JÁNOS GICZY: TRIPTYCH. OIL, 65 × 94 CM

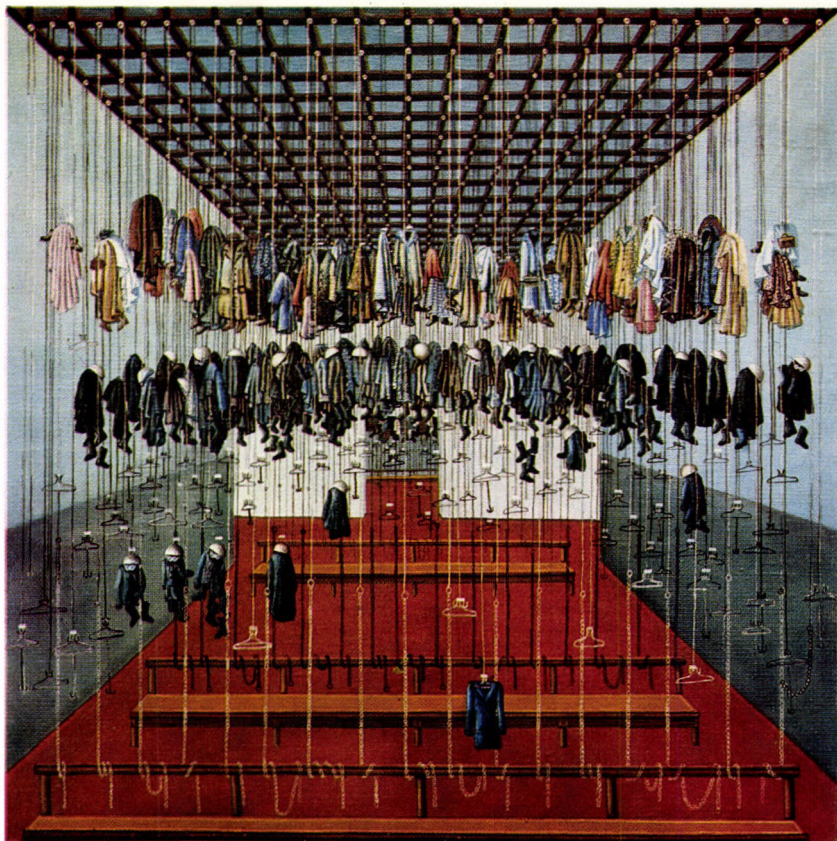




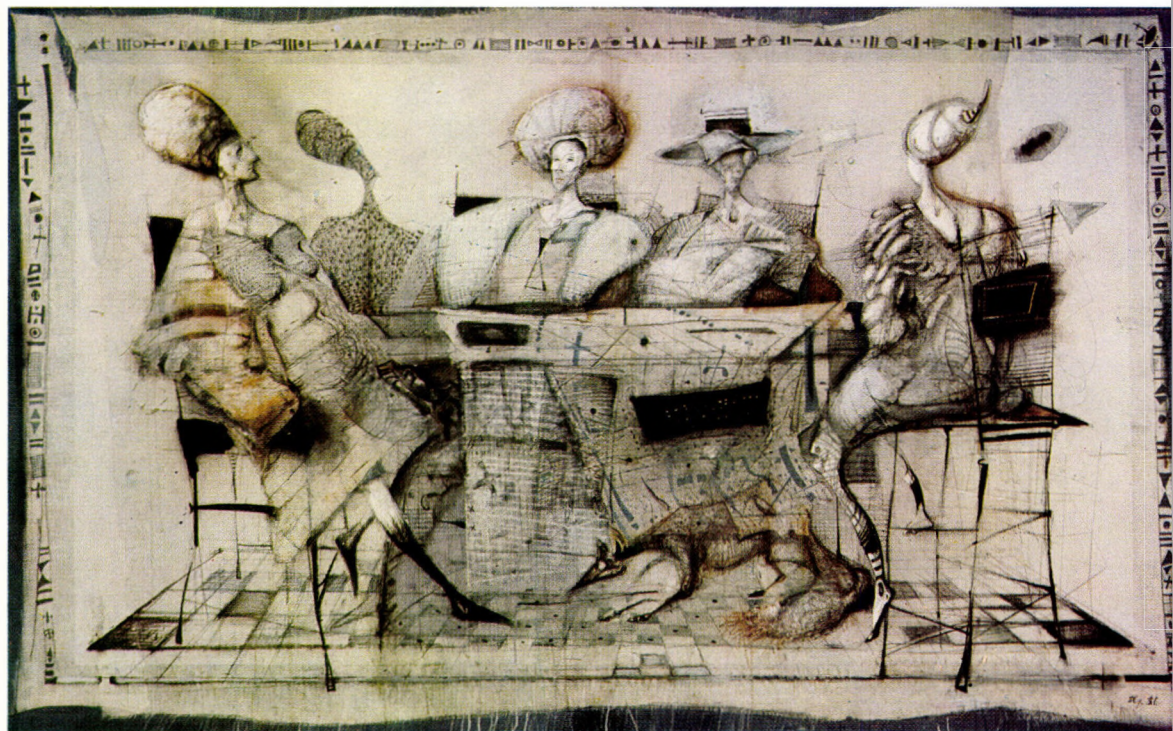
Ferenc Kovács

LÁSZLÓ PATAY: MONUMENT. TEMPERA, 172 × 275 CM





TAMÁS GALAMBOS: MINERS' CHANGING ROOM. OIL, 60×60 CM



GÁBOR DIENES: WORN FURS. PLEXTOL, PASTEL, CHARCOAL, 125×200 CM

Ferenc Kovács





IGNÁC KOKAS: LET THERE BE PEACE! OIL AND TEMPERA, 250 × 312 CM



*Ferenc Kovács*

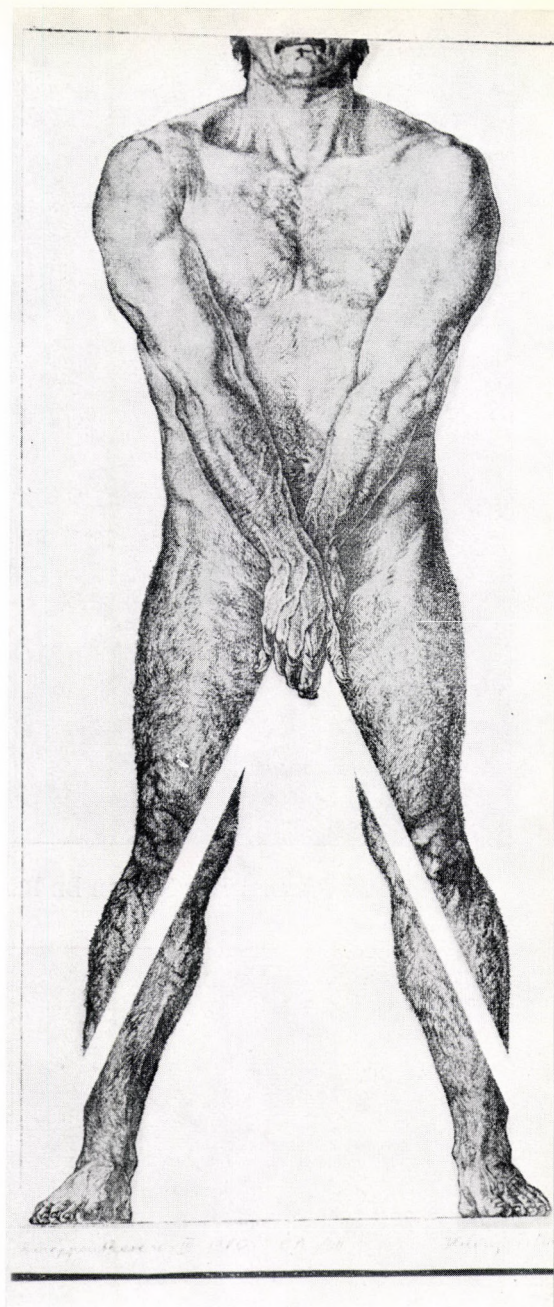
MIHÁLY SCHÉNER: SHEPHERDS. OIL, 70 × 100 CM



TIBOR HELÉNYI: SEARCHING FOR THE  
FOCUS III. ZINC ETCHING, 47 × 22 CM

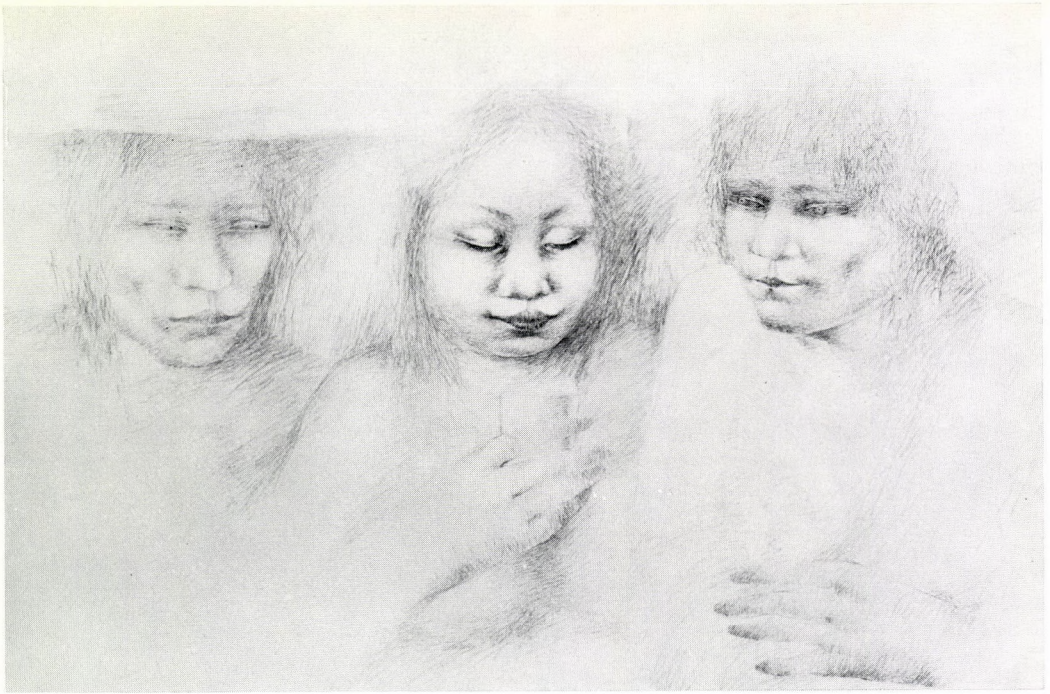


*Ferenc Kovács*



FERENC CZINKE: RIME. COLOURED  
PHOTOMONTAGE, 70 × 50 CM



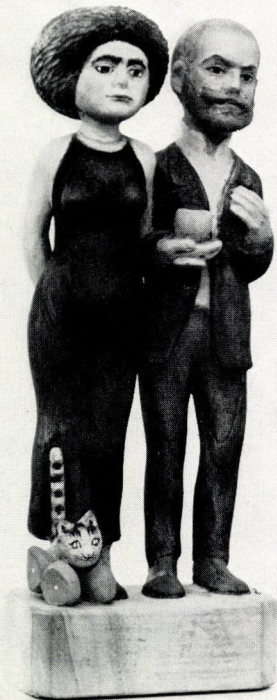


MÁRTA LACZA: MUSIC. COLOUR PENCIL, 37×55 CM

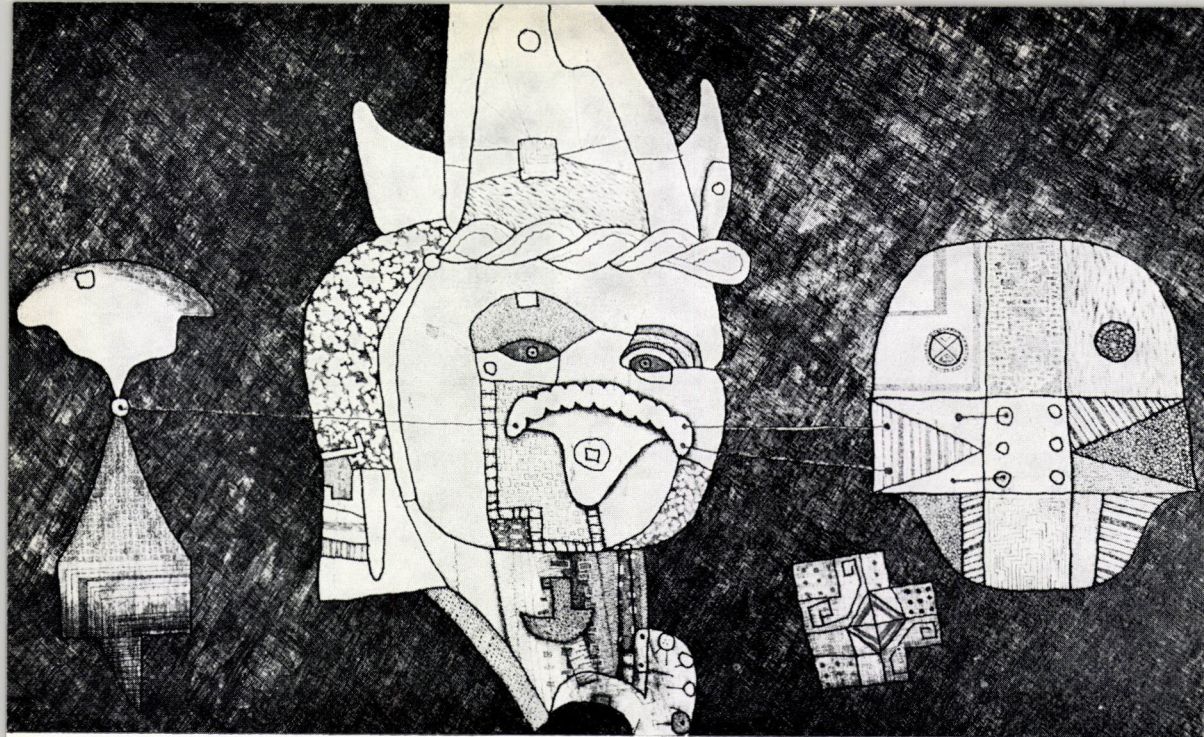
ZSUZSA LÓRÁNT: VERNISSAGE.  
PAINTED WOOD, 38 CM

SÁNDOR KISS: OLD WOMAN.  
WOOD, 150 CM

*Ferenc Kovács*







IMRE SZEMETHY: ORTHODONTICS. COPPER ENGRAVING, 21 × 33 CM

MIHÁLY GÁCSI: A WALK IN THE FOREST IN SPRING. LINOCUT, 34 × 50 CM

*Ferenc Kovács*





followed by paintings with bold brushwork but even then their main feature was their structuredness. I remember some of his panel pictures which evoke the heads of Renaissance angels and putti, but his main theme have been women or groups of women and architecture. His female figures show the lessons of well-assimilated cubism; these colourful groups of women later become more and more constructivist, homogeneous and united—they can be imagined only together, as a group. His houses and townscapes have always been inspired by his summer home, Szentendre, this provincial, eighteenth-century Baroque town. At first, the small one-storeyed houses were directly identifiable, later he tended to generalize more and more, and the houses and townscapes became symbols of architecture as such. In the beginning his paint was laid on thickly and his pictures had an oily surface; later the layers of paint became thinner and the pictures more firm and severe. His large mosaics, found chiefly in large entrances and vestibules, sum up his paintings; their themes are groups of women, their structure—underlined by the nature of the hard mosaic stone—is even firmer and harder.

Jenő Barcsay was professor of artistic anatomy at the Budapest Academy of Fine Arts, a teacher respected and loved by many generations of students. His book on artistic anatomy has been reprinted countless times; translated into six languages its illustrations have the quality of exhibits. Few artists have been honoured as Barcsay has been: some years ago a Barcsay museum was created in Szentendre to house a permanent exhibition of his works.

Now a Barcsay exhibition has been opened in the Budapest Art Gallery. Not, as one would believe, a retrospective of material from the museum, but an exhibition of works since 1977. These are not only new but also quite different from what we have seen so far: they document the newest creative period of Barcsay's revival.

He had arrived close to the limits of the

non-figurative earlier; now he has crossed the frontier. He always used to say that he needed the push of nature: sometimes the viewer can gather so much from his pictures, sometimes not. I am not surprised at his gesture of turning his back on descriptive art now, after six decades of painting; the cycle in this exhibition is entirely new and proves a radical change in outlook. Barcsay will obviously not remain in this stage either, the new style proves that he needed this excursion.

These pictures have an extreme purity: this is visible in their method of painting in the sharp divisions of their colour fields, in their proportions, and above all, in their idea. Every colour and form has been reduced to a virtual minimum. The absence of colour is a characteristic feature: black and white pictures dominate although there are also some intensive and striking colour compositions. Some earlier works are pictorial but firmness and severity characterize most. However, even where the geometry is tensest, sensitivity and, I would even say, sensuality, flows in Barcsay's brush. Although emotion or the vibration of the hand or throbbing of the pulse are not visible on the brushwork, they can be felt strongly. To say it a painter's way, this feeling comes from "the way he lays the paint on." There is further evidence for a volte-face by Barcsay around 1980: for some thirty-five years he has only been painting palm-sized pictures because for health reasons he had to paint while seated. Now it seems that his appetite has grown for larger dimensions (there are many 130 × 150 cm pictures in the exhibition); the task has overcome physical obstacles.

The gradual mental process of reduction has started in his small painting *Fekete-sárga* (Black and Yellow, 1978). On the email-like black background there are large, vertical yellow patches and nothing else, the colour divisions are sharp, emotions deliberately checked, discipline severe. The viewer may not even see to what extent this picture still clings to reality but if we recall Barcsay's



town, Baroque Szentendre, we find the fore-runner of the small horizontal prism broken by an arched line quite clearly in the foiled architecture despite the scattered geometrical horizontal rectangle forms. The laconic *Kompozíció* (Composition, 1981) is given as a title to a picture with nothing but a reversed negative letter L in a black field. But here he was still experimenting: he used a coarse canvas on which he has put on a rather thin layer of paint and left out the texture of the background which, in this small size, is even more emphatic. The dividing lines are still not as sharp as in later works; expressivity and lyricism are still very much present in the geometrical abstraction. We should not reproach the artist with inconsistency: this feedback is part of his experiments along with other panels. *Ritmus* (Rhythm, 1981) is a small picture: on the white negative form enclosed in black there is a meander motif. Although the painter did not have the ancient Greeks in mind, the construction here is not consistently abstract and the association with nature is all the more stronger as the schematic ancient border pattern paraphrases the winding river, Meander.

Colours have also their place in geometry. *Arányok* (Proportions, 1981) is a narrow vertical rectangle; its lower field is black with a crimson field above containing a horizontal red stripe. At first sight the black and crimson squares seem identical in size but the crimson is actually bigger. The picture is true to its title and achieves its effect solely through proportion—there is so little on it and yet it conveys the impression of completeness. *Foltok ritmusa* (Rhythm of Patches, 1981) is much larger and more complex. This is also a vertical rectangle with seven horizontal stripes on it: on top, at the bottom, and in the middle there is a black-grey rhythm dominated by black; the painter has placed the yellow bands in the two large black fields. Thus the picture is a series of horizontal stripes. A simple but contrived irregularity determines the thickness of the

individual stripes; indeed, the upper line which divides the lower yellow stripe steps out and breaks the order, but it remains strictly geometrical and even keeps its rectangular form. This is an antidogmatic dogma of geometry.

*Monumentális kép I* (Monumental Picture I, 1978): here the title is emphatic in itself because the picture is rather small, only 30 × 45 cm. Monumentality here resides in the relation of plane and space; Barcsay has returned to his tenet whereby even a tiny picture can be monumental. The overwhelming part of the picture-plane is filled with pure black, the only pattern and counterpoint being the single, not even broad, stripe placed in its first quarter.

The *chef-d'œuvre* in this cycle is *Fekete-fehér* (Black and White, 1981). Among the largest of the paintings, its real greatness is its almost total reduction. The black background is enclosed on top and at the bottom by a grey (horizontal, L-shaped) border but its role is only secondary. The leading role is played by the dazzlingly white small square in the picture field. This is the type of picture about which outsiders like to say that they could have painted it. They couldn't have. They could have put a white square onto the picture but they wouldn't have known where to place it. They could have put it amateurishly in the middle or calculated some geometrically shifted centre or just put it anywhere. To find the right place for the square one has to be Barcsay himself, with 60 years of painting behind him. A shift of one millimetre would have destroyed the magic. Although it is a workshop secret, I can tell that the artist worried a lot about the correct placing of this small white patch, his trials and errors are recorded on the reverse of the canvas and demonstrate the amount of experimenting. Again to use a painter's phrase, one can say of a picture that it is a "sitter." This white square is a "sitter."

JÁNOS FRANK



## SETTING A TRAP TO TIME

### A Conversation with Nicolas Schöffer

*The house where Nicolas Schöffer lives stands in a quiet street on Montmartre, the old artists' quarter of Paris. A marble tablet on the wall says that Maurice Utrillo used to have a studio here. Schöffer's kinetic art has no relation to the melancholy work of the painter who lived here before him. I often think—with only a little exaggeration—that kinetic art or mobile sculpture is more authentically Hungarian than the Biro pen or the Rubik cube. Looking back on the modern art in our century, many Hungarian artists seem to have been particularly attracted to the world of technology. In the early twenties Lajos Kassák, the founder of the Hungarian avantgarde, assisted at the birth of Hungarian mobile sculpture; László Moholy-Nagy made the first machine-driven mobile ever; in the USA György Kepes was responsible for the spreading of artistic kineticism: the list could go on and on. One who would have to be included there is Nicolas Schöffer, in Paris now for many years, who has been making his motor-driven sculptures for several decades.*

*Nicolas Schöffer is a short man and rather like a tightly coiled spring; his eyes sparkle with scarcely contained energy. Before sitting down to talk we walked round his studio and Schöffer switched on his light and space mobiles one after another: they started to turn and shine according to their programs. Lux and Chronos is the name given to most of them and only the number indicates which is which in the series. And yet they are each different, one could never be taken for another. By the time almost all of them were in operation, I lost sight of the studio walls and felt that I was standing in unknown space. I mentioned this sensation to the artist and he replied: "I think this is the future".*

*Q: "In 1936 a young man of 24 took the Paris train in Budapest with the firm intention of going to the City of Light and becoming an artist there by fair means or foul. You were this young man. Forty-six years have since passed, and your art is appreciated throughout the world, still you have spent*

*over one-third of your life in Hungary, and it is commonly believed that the years of childhood and youth determine the course of life to a great extent. What did you bring in your intellectual baggage from Hungary?"*

*A: "I was born in Kalocsa, a beautiful but sleepy and small provincial town; I lived there until the age of 17. My father was a lawyer but his interests went beyond his profession: he was a widely-read man and interested in the affairs of the world. My violinist mother also gave me a lot: she taught me to love music and the arts. Despite a very harmonious family background, I lived in Kalocsa where every serious intellectual pursuit came up against a wall. I am talking about one feature only of the town: the lord and master of the town was the archbishop of Kalocsa who practically owned the entire county.*

*I had wanted to become an artist from childhood and my parents put no obstacles in my way; my father insisted only that I have a profession and become a Doctor of Law. So I went to Budapest at the age of 17 and began to study law. I graduated from the Péter Pázmány University. I never regretted this, indeed, I have benefited from these studies to this very day. The study of law developed a logically ordered way of thinking in me, how to concentrate on constantly changing facts and to search for the structure behind them. After graduation I was drafted into the army where I served for a year. This year has stayed in my memory as the saddest, deepest period of my life which left terrible marks on my psyche and made me decide to leave Hungary. My experiences in the army made me understand that I could never adjust to living in a Hungary permeated with feudalism."*

*Q: "Like doctors, joiners or lawyers, artists also have to learn their trade yet you*



maintain in your writings that you had no masters in art."

A: "This is true. As a student of law in Budapest I studied for some time in the free school of István Szőnyi where we made, naturally, traditional pictures and sculptures. At the time I hadn't even heard of modern schools of art. Luckily these works without exception perished, so today I don't have to feel ashamed of them."

Q: "So you never had any connections with the Hungarian avantgarde groups of the years between the two world wars?"

A: "No. This was probably my fault but let it be said in excuse that I was very young. Of Lajos Kassák, for instance, I believed that he was just one among many Hungarian poets. It was not easy at the time to orient oneself clearly on the Hungarian intellectual horizon. The cultural policy of the Horthy-regime did not wish to popularise the group of avantgarde artists around Kassák.\*

My only serious artistic contact was with Péter Benedek, a gifted peasant painter. I was more or less conversant with modern music, I frequented some young musicians, all pupils of Béla Bartók."

Q: "So when you arrived in France in 1936 you had a lot in your intellectual baggage but you knew very little about modern art. How did Dr. Miklós Schöffer the lawyer become Nicolas Schöffer, the kinetic artist?"

A: "You said I knew little about modern art. Actually I didn't speak a word of French and didn't know a living soul in Paris. So I had to learn French first in order to catch up with. Soon after my arrival I enrolled at the *École des Beaux-Arts* but unfortunately the teaching was based on very conservative principles and I didn't get any serious help from the lessons. In the beginning I ran right and left, I had no idea where to start. Gradually I digested the painting of the impressionists and arrived at cubism. I remember having seen a Cézanne and later

a Van Gogh exhibition. Both were tremendous events for me. But just when I had begun to grasp the rhythm of 20th century art the war broke out, and I only managed to catch up with myself Kandinsky and the abstractionists, then I met André Breton and we started to study some phenomena of *art brut* together: from then on I was in the mainstream of the French artistic world.

"But I still did not see my own path clearly. During the war I had started experimenting with techniques which we would call today gesture-painting. First I used a spray gun, then I experimented with liquid paints which I slowly poured onto the canvas from suspended small tanks. The results were interesting, they pointed towards the trend evolved later by Jackson Pollock. For me, however, they were no solution because chance played too great a part in this technique and the process of creation slipped out of control."

Q: "You have written countless times in your essays that you considered the role of the hand insignificant in the creation of works of art, and that the real creators were the ideas in the artist's brain. Was this the reason for experimenting with techniques which reduce the role of the hand in artistic creation?"

A: "Everybody sees clearly that the hand plays only an inferior part in artistic creation. What is odder that very few accept the consequences which follow from this. If an artist suffers brain damage in let us say, a car accident, nobody expects him to continue working even if his manual skills are intact. Artistic creation starts from the brain and the finished work of art can exert an impact only if it contains ideas. Modern technological advances for the first time have made it possible to replace the handcraft use of the brush or sculptor's chisel with modern methods and thus, so to say, put brackets around the role of the hand.

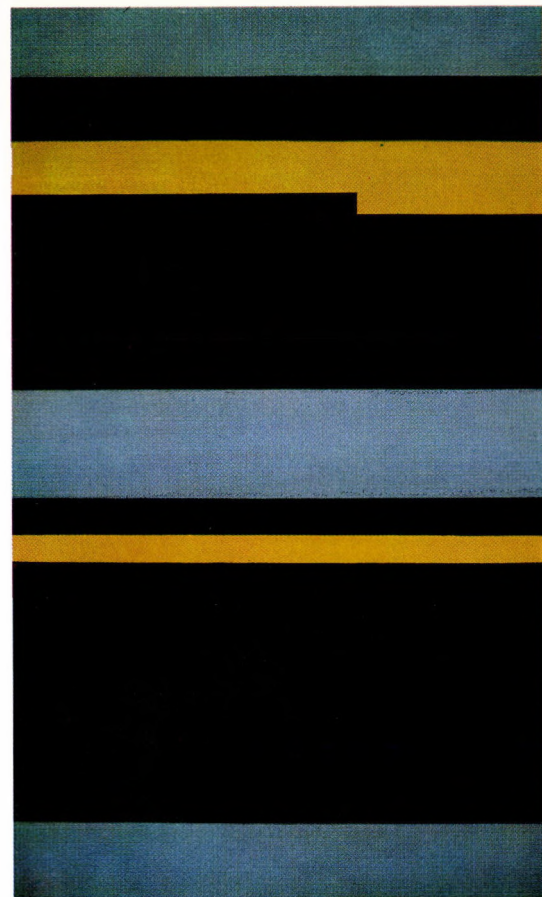
I had arrived at this realisation after the war but was still unable to proceed farther from there. In 1948 I came across Norbert

\* See NHQ 32.





PÉTER UJHÁZI: PICTURE PUZZLE. TEMPERA, 65 × 50 CM



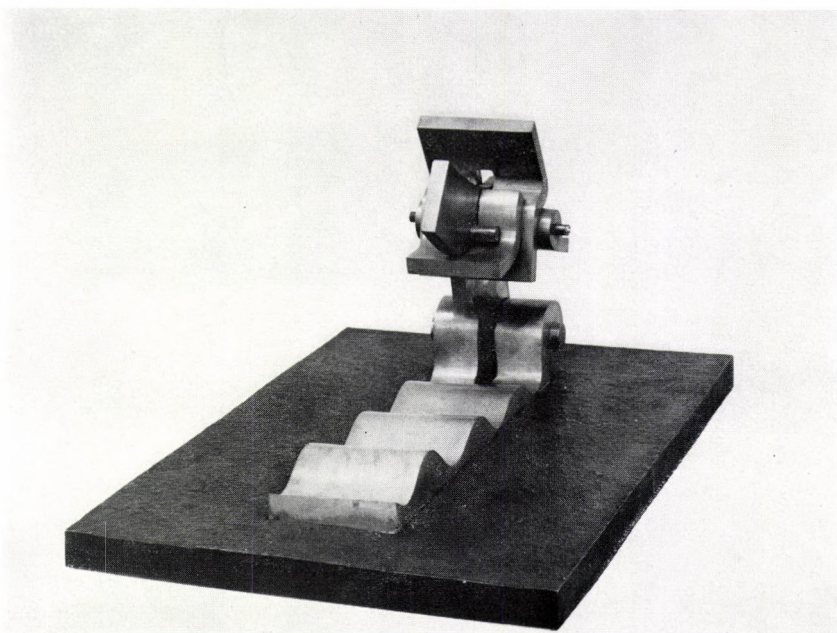
JENŐ BARCSAY: RHYTHM OF PATCHES.  
OIL, 130 × 80 CM, 1981





ANTAL CZINDER:  
SOUVENIRS I. BRONZE,  
Ø 10 CM

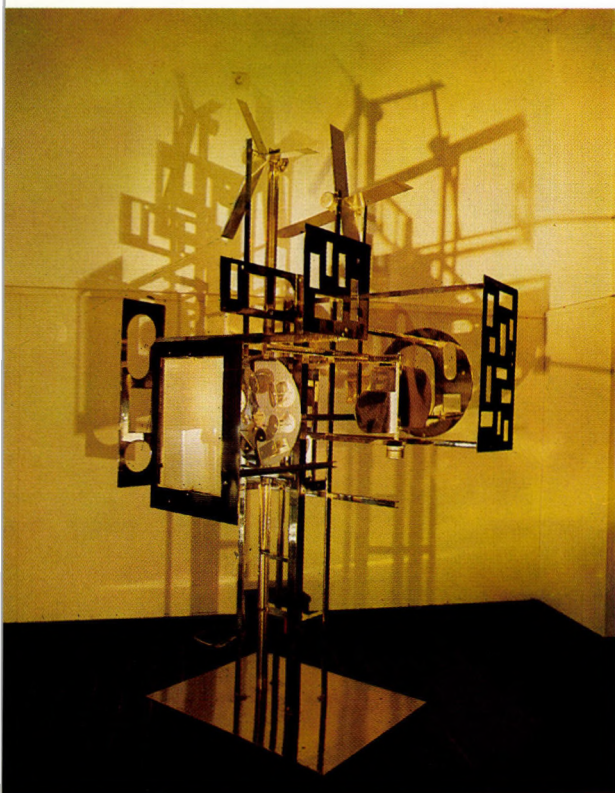
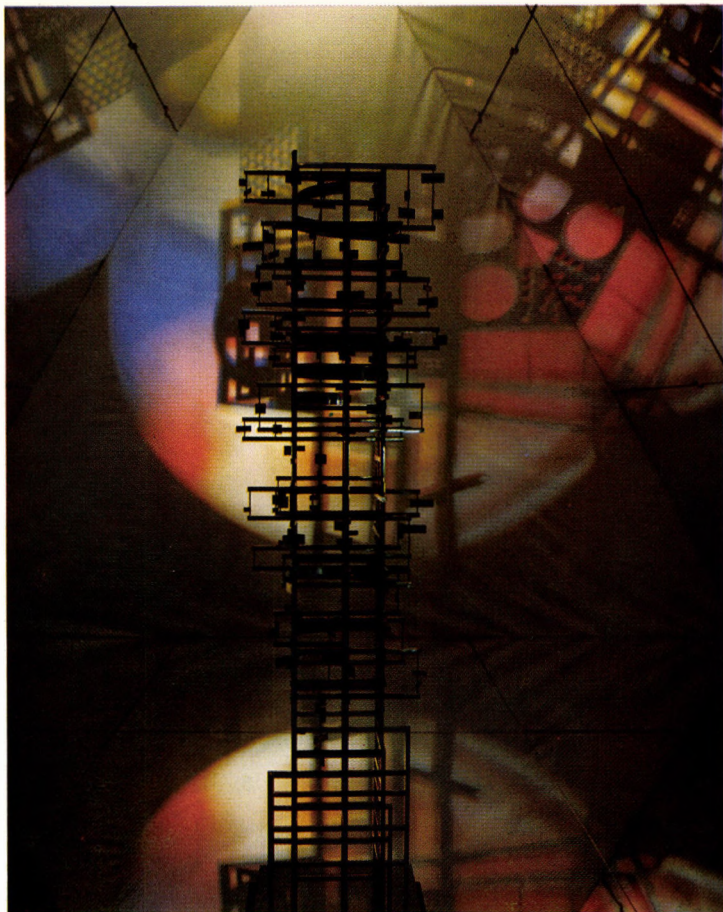
ÁDÁM FARKAS: A WATER-CREATURE. BRONZE, 20 CM



Ferenc Kovács

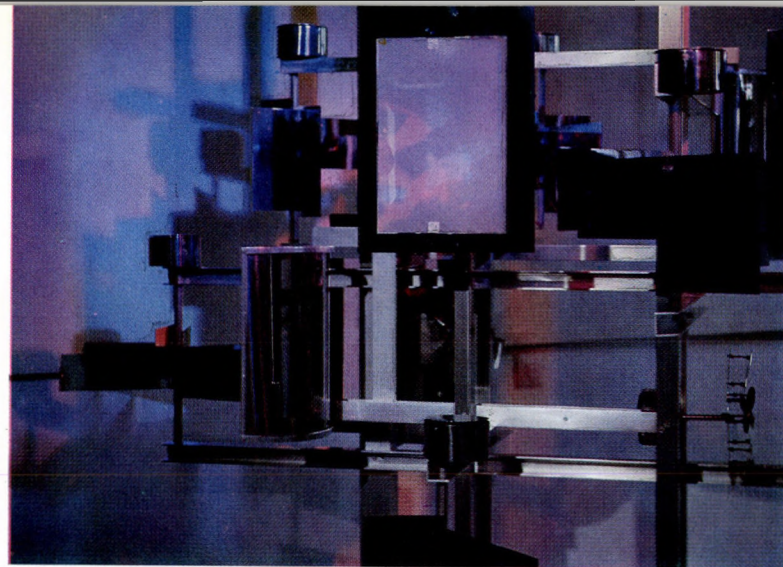
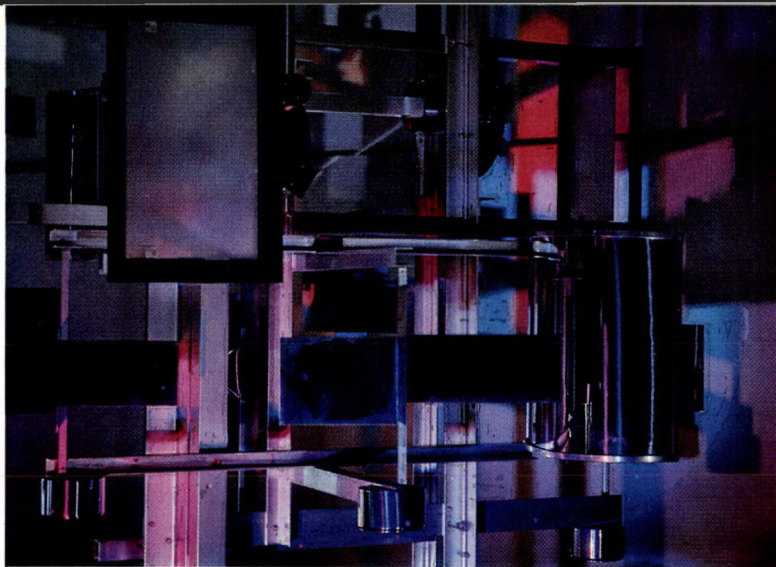


NICOLAS SCHÖFFER: MODEL  
OF A TOWER OF LIGHTS PLANNED  
FOR DÉFENSE IN PARIS.  
METAL, 25 × 25 × 80 CM, 1970



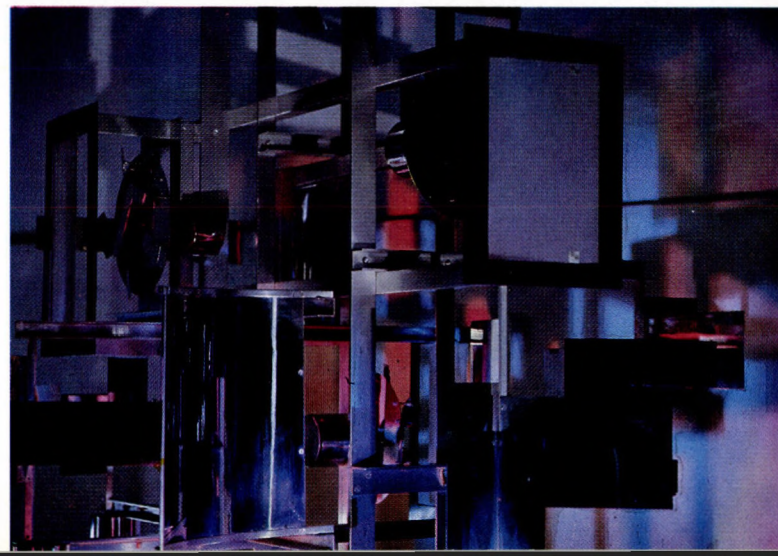
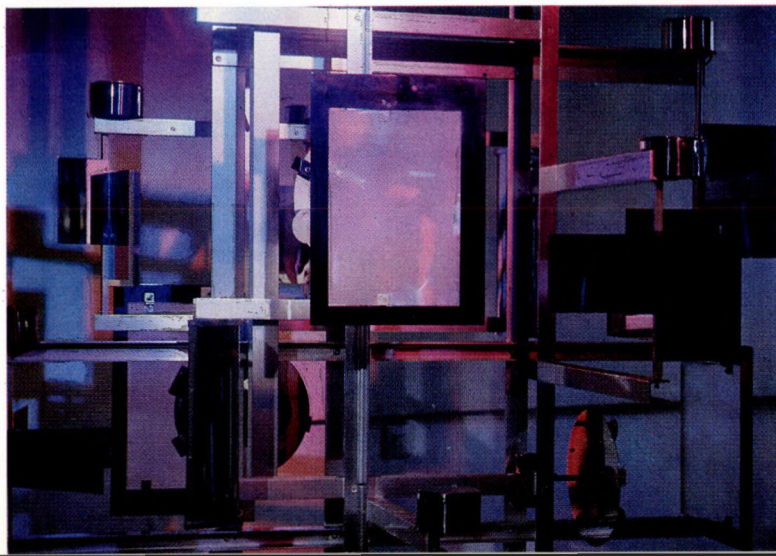
NICOLAS SCHÖFFER: CHRONOS I. METAL,  
GLASS, ELECTRIC MOTORS,  
210 × 140 × 140 CM, LATE 70S





*János Szegenedi*

NICOLAS SCHÖFFER: CHRONOS 5. METAL, GLASS, ELECTRIC MOTORS, 200 X 150 X 80 CM, LATE 1970S







TAMÁS ASSZONYI: BRAVE NEW WORLD: I. DRINKABLE WATER;  
II. BREATHABLE AIR; III. CONSUMABLE CULTURE. BRONZE, Ø 9 CM

*Ferenc Markovits*





RÓBERT CSIKSZENTMIHÁLYI: WATER.  
BRONZE, Ø 13,3 CM,  
FRONT AND REAR



Ferenc Markovics

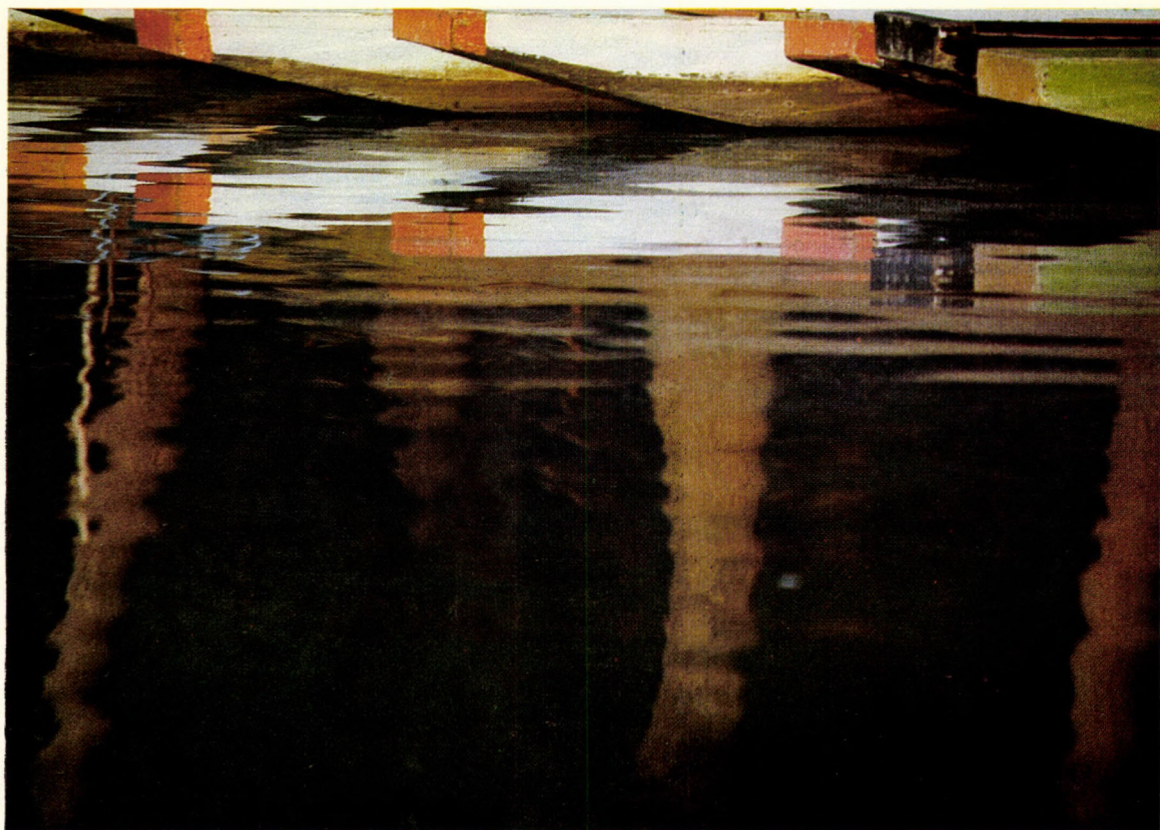
ZOLTÁN SZENTIRMAI: LANDSCAPE WITH NEW  
HIGHWAY. BRONZE, 30 × 30 × 35 CM

ISTVÁN KATONA: LANDSCAPE IN MIST









ISTVÁN KATONA: REFLETS DANS L'EAU; TREE; BIRDS





Wiener's book *Cybernetics and Society*. After reading it I felt as if a light had been switched on in my head. I knew immediately that the most significant event in my life was this book of Norbert Wiener, the inventor of cybernetics. I couldn't explain how I found gradually in cybernetics the method of my own art but this is just the experience my works wish to convey."

Q: "The application of cybernetics to art has led to surprising and new results. You have proved that even the computer could be used in art. But computers don't function without a program, and to program a work of art in to a computer you need a new interpretation of the substance of art."

A: "Quite true. I realized slowly that there were only three substances: light, space and time. These are the final blocks of life: if one of them were withdrawn from the world, life would cease instantly. When I finally understood this I decided to build my works only from these three substances. If I wished to demonstrate their presence I had to entrap them. Everyone of my works is such a trap.

So, for example, I build a space-trap and shut in space. By the way, space is not mere emptiness, it has dynamism and weight which presses on us. In the space-trap I use as few and as transparent substances as possible so that the organisation of the structure remains imperceptible. Within the trap, however, spectators must feel the dynamics of space. Capturing light is even simpler. I give you a very obvious example: the illusion born in the dark space of the cinema is also based on the entrapment of light. Naturally there are much more complicated processes too."

Q: "Time, like space, is a natural medium for man as water for fish. Therefore we are rarely aware of the impossibility of stepping out of time if only for a moment. How can you set a trap to time?"

A: "Probably this is the actual secret of the time-trap. Whatever I do with space and light in my works, everything is enacted in

time. I divide time into small time-units, give visual information per time-unit, and the chain of information is composed into a time program. In order to avoid cyclicalness in the visual program and repetitions, time-programs were prepared for my works with cybernetic or other, aleatoric methods, for instance. With the timeprograms build into my works I wish to exert an impact on the psychological space of people, try to influence their life-programme.

I believe time is a flexible substance which can be expanded and condensed. The life-span of the fly is two and a half months, the average life-span of man 65 years. So the entire life of the fly is concentrated into 75 days. Men are racking their brains ceaselessly about how to prolong life instead of wanting to enrich the actual time of their life this would truly mean the expansion of time. By the way, music has been able to do this for a long time. As example the strong chord that comes around the 8th minute of Haydn's oratorio *The Creation*. You can see in concert halls an audience always jumping up at this moment. Music has suddenly expanded the moment, and almost lifted people out of their average, banal and grey life-programme. Everybody knows that two hours spent in a concert hall are not identical with two hours spent in a coffee-house, smoking cigarettes and staring ahead into space. I can imagine that two hours listening to music are worth more than two years banally dropping out of life."

Q: "You have opened up new paths in modern art with your ideas and creations?"

A: "People accept revolutions in art very reluctantly. The technological revolution, on the other hand, has found doors open almost at once. Men even accepted the existence of the atom bomb, although in Japan it had once been dropped on their head. Revolutions in art are no less important than revolution in science because they anticipate social changes. But ideas on art are still nourished from the past. Marcel Duchamp once said ironically that people delude themselves



with the false belief that every work of art made in the past is beautiful, and that in the coming 8 or 9 billion years during which, according to scientists, the Sun will incinerate our Earth, artists will have nothing to do other than imitate the old works."

Q: "You have written in one of your essays that in your view the work of art cannot be the ultimate goal of the modern artist; works of art must exert an impact on the life of society. You have called this the socio-cultural role of art."

A: "After the Renaissance the arts were split artificially. I want to reunite the fine arts, architecture and town planning, and I don't think that I am chasing shadows here. The discoveries of modern science and technology have created the possibility of restoring these broken threads.

I try not to apply technical solution for their own sake, I try to conceal my tools behind the aesthetic effects which I bring about with the help of those tools of modern technology. I think it goes without saying that it is not possible today to create lasting works using older artistic techniques. We travel in airplanes, not in horse-driven cabs. Artists must also adapt themselves to this, however comfortable the old and well-tried

techniques may seem. I plan my works for large open spaces in cities: I would like not only visitors to exhibitions but all city-dwellers to see them. My smaller-sized works are also models for this purpose. Artists can catch the fancy of people because they are practically the only ones who are able to transcend the given social possibilities. True works of art suggest new vistas to people, and our real task is to convey our message not only to the elect few but as far as possible to the population of entire towns. This is the only way to fulfil our task in the community, our socio-cultural task.

Bertolt Brecht said that nowadays many talented artists tried to create works for the masses, not for a narrow élite. But this is a mistake—said Brecht. The real problem is not that we have to work for the masses: we must bring about the narrow élite changing to a large élite. I have no wish to serve mediocrity but through my work I want to convey to the greatest possible number of people the message that today mankind no longer lives in the cultural past, and that we must prepare for the events of the future."

ENDRE T. RÓZSA

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## THE REPENTANT AND THE ANNOYED

### *Exhibition of medals and plaques in the Vigadó Gallery*

"It is surprising indeed how man feels that badly done work is a punishment. With time he will also realize the mistake made at the start, and—unless he destroys the work for correcting it—he will continue to repent and be annoyed." Well, yes. This was written in the fifteenth-century by an Italian, actually about the problems of building a house. It is highly topical because our house, the Earth, is in the process of collapsing.

It is quite obvious today that some people at some time have worked badly, selfishly, and short-sightedly. Even those who do not read the papers and do not watch television can see that fish are floating in water with their white bellies upturned, that the mountain brooks are red or yellow, depending upon the chemical agents used, that the acacia in front of the house, although young in years, is dead and has become wintry for eternity. The process has arrived at a point where environmentalism has given a programme not only to the "green" parties but has given birth to a new iconography which creates works of art from the signs of the "peaceful" destruction wrought by man.

Thus it has come about that the exhibition of medals and plaques in the Vigadó Gallery under the title "For a Human Environment" has offered a place to everybody who wanted to express repentance and annoyance in bronze because of the sins of others.

The repenters were more numerous but the latter were more believable. Any large danger threatening mankind brings forth reflex commonplaces in the forms of globes, broken trees, dying birds, or allegorical female figures with gestures of protest. All these are, of course, spectacular confessions but they fail to speak to our heart.

Some other artists, however, seem to have been divinely chosen as protectors of the environment. They need the appeal of no

programme: for years they have known and practised in their work that the surface of the earth is a sculpture in itself. A non-figurative sculpture which, with its cracks, curves, glassy smoothness, and creases gives information on the state of our dwelling-place. For these artists the medal is not a medal but a tiny relief map intended to demonstrate minute model processes. These annoying bare facts provoke stronger emotions than the pathetic-symbolical figures modelled for atonement. Enikő Szöllősy, for one, meditated on the loss of our beautiful waters, and very correctly and with impact, she has covered her minute glassy surfaces with metal debris in three phases. Real anger and despair clearly lie behind her impassibility. Ildikó Várnagy is concerned with the chemical agents which eat the grass, the air, and the water: very correctly and with impact she has covered her plaques with freakish, acid-corroded creatures. Her clinical picture is an indictment. The most suggestive works, however, were created by those who refrained from smuggling into their work even this amount of emotion, or pathos, or "repentance." They kept to the facts, strictly to the facts, and succeeded in sculpting them.

*Water*, a medal by Róbert Csíkszentmihályi, would have been placed twenty years ago in the Museum of Natural Science. This palm-sized medico-legal constant shows what the news-reel cameramen use to travel for and wide for. Here is a natural lake now shrunk to a puddle, flora suffocating from the refuse left on the shore, a towering tube which "remained dry," and, as in real life, there is no trace of man to make order in the chaos.

Zoltán Szentirmai's work is almost an audio-visual aid but this "almost" is a masterpiece, an unexpected hit in the exhibition. And yet his plastic work *Scenery*



with *New Highway* was certainly not made under the impact of some extreme event. However sensitive its modelled ribbing, it follows faithfully the organic movement of the effective surface, its true pulse, independently of artistic representation. The gable-roofed tiny houses reflect the ground-plan of the ancient settlement as we know it from history, ethnography, and maybe here and there from reality. And the blank-polished beautifully curved modern highway does not cross but crosses out this landscape and this village, as a teacher would cross out a faulty word or an accountant an erroneous entry. This work will mean always a model for the man who has planned the new highway soullessly; but those for whom it means only a breach with tradition have

never walked in mud up to their knees and never sat behind the steering wheel wishing to travel from A to B.

The *Scenery* will reveal itself only to those who understand and feel the delight of natural small-scale life but also know that the roads here are already impassable; people who know that highways are necessary but understand and feel that the place where they have been laid is no longer the same. To return to our quotation, bad work in such cases really provokes annoyance but only on the surface. Our emotions, associations, and thoughts surround the subject with so much melancholy that this in itself is an invitation to repentance.

JULIANNA P. SZÜCS

## THE NATURE OF LANDSCAPE

István Katona's photographs

How can landscape be photographed? One obvious answer is that it can be photographed according to the artist's intentions and inspiration. Yet all the possible approaches leading to a really satisfactory result have in common the fact that the original world changed within the limited space of the photograph, deprived in a sense of its wider context, becomes antropomorphic. The potential relationships of the elements of the landscape are re-arranged through the camera, are emphasized and thus they are capable of expressing the complicated relationship between man and the world or between the photographer and the world. In significant work differences in approach affect the result only in the amount of subjectivity present, in whether it is confessional self-revelation which will dominate or the mapping of creative man's relation to the world, of his beliefs and hopes.

Whatever the photographer's attitude there is a diversity of means which permit satisfactory results. He can, for instance emphatically develop the structure of the landscape by separating the elements of the homogenous world so that the photograph organizes them into a system of different character. Into a system which can, from the original, both evoke and create logical and sentimental relations. As a probable consequence of this, when the photographer makes statements on the world and his relation to it, his beliefs and hopes, he "strips" the landscape in order to find the bare structure which can be a formal analogue of a wider system of connections. It is hardly an accident that most exciting landscapes come from rock-plateaus, limestone formations, saline plains or from the time of autumn or early spring: these are places or times where the structure of the landscape reveals



itself, when its system is not hidden by foliage, when and where certain elements can be particularly emphasized in the photograph. Naturally all this is one possibility among many. There is also a solution where—mainly when using colour—a pastel of vibrant light and colours build up a magic world. It is the revelation of structure which seems best suited to expressing the photographer's beliefs, hopes and opinions on the world, working with colours can often be the means to a more subjectively revealing statement.

It would be going too far to analyse the possibilities inherent in landscape, the more so because they are too complicated for criticism to attempt even a basic statement of principles. Yet to deal with the exhibition of István Katona we are forced to cast our minds over at least some characteristics of landscape which occur relatively often in photography.

István Katona builds up a peculiar world in the "two dimensional space" of the photograph, primarily when working in colour, because he dispenses with the time-honoured methods of photography. Instead of separating the elements of the landscape, he fuses, merges them; instead of stripping the landscape to its naked structure he prefers to dress it in haze and mists. Yet this world dressed in haze and mists does not become a mystic or magic world because in the homogeneous space of his best coloured photographs he manages to square the circle: structure without structure.

Viewed from relatively close—four or five paces—a homogenous, subdued surface whose colours are chosen with infinite care, the eye cannot find a fixed point other than, if at all, the sharp line of the horizon high above or bright patches in the surface of the sky. And this infinitely subdued world reveals only from closer its elements, as haze, mist, colours and lights; at first they are seen as deviations from the homogenous prime colour, then the colours of the sky are revived as the landscape revives in itself the just discernible light of evening or just before dawn. Woods, trees are born out of these landscapes which are more silver even than the pale prime colour of sepia.

The surfaces of his coloured works seen from a distance are homogenous, when seen from close in they resolve themselves into structures yet preserve their homogeneity.

The secret of István Katona's art lies in synthesizing methods usually belonging to differing approaches and at the same maintaining the priority of one of the possible approaches. It means that he approaches the world above all from itself, its own moods. In this world—created, as it were, with his personality projected onto it—he allows, even helps structure to be born. As if man, his tensions and bitter experience can find release and resignation in the intimate harmony of small relations, in the reasonable and practical beauty of nature, in the "nature" of the landscape.

ISTVÁN SZÁVAY



# MUSICAL LIFE

## A NEW APPROACH TO BARTÓK

Tibor Tallián: *Bartók Béla*. Gondolat, 1981. 339 pp.

Another new book on Bartók? The critic takes up Tibor Tallián's book with some amount of scepticism, and is inclined to see it as part of the 1981 centenary industry.

Above all József Ujfalussy's definitive book available in several languages, and often reprinted, is such that it forces the critic to ask if the time is ripe for it to be replaced. Especially as the results of recent research have nowhere shaken Ujfalussy's conclusions on essential issues; for the time being there remain the professional treatises to supplement Ujfalussy. A new summation—we might imagine—will be necessary some day in the form of a large work more wide-ranging than the relatively modest scope of Tibor Tallián's book.

Yet, after putting down Tallián's book one's first reaction can only be that this book on Bartók had to be written. The reaction perhaps comes just because of the many, many exaggerations and frequent provincialism in the Bartók literature. József Ujfalussy's fact-weighting and objective interpretation is not characteristic of a great deal of Hungarian writing on Bartók. Leaving aside the work of László Somfai, György Kroó, János Kárpáti and a few other authorities, which are deservedly acknowledged, as a legacy of the defence plea of the 1950s on the synthesis to be realized, the joining together of East and West is heard in Bartók's music—and in his alone! Bartók grows into a mythical figure, his music into a

mythical world; a natural concomitant of this mythology is a liturgy with its own ritualistic quotations.

Tallián places question marks one after another where exclamation marks had previously stood. For him the words written in a letter by Bartók in his twenties and quoted interminably ("For my own part, all my life, in every sphere, always and in every way, I shall have one objective: the good of Hungary and the Hungarian nation") do not embody a sacred ideal, but appear to be the somewhat naïve pledge of a young man who "does not yet know the meaning of Hungarian nation, Hungarian homeland." For him the Bartók oeuvre was not necessarily an endless march of masterpieces; there was even a composition (the Opus 15 cycle of songs written after *Bluebeard's Castle*), which "dangerously approximates" "expressionistic rubbish."

The author gives his account in an easy-going, conversational manner, making his remarks sometimes even frivolous; then gradually, almost unobserved, he changes his tone. The critical attributes gradually disappear from the elegant sentences, and the distance which at first separated Tallián from his heroic figure shortens from page to page. The extremely disrespectful beginning suddenly gives his words and expressions extraordinary weight. After the naïve, romantic Bartók image, drawn with much affection and no little irony, the



portrait of the mature Bartók creates an entirely different impression; after presenting the partial solutions of Bartók's youthful years the author shocks his reader into the awareness of the character of the later masterpieces with far more force. Following on such antecedents this method makes the lines formulated without pathos towards the close of the book more than usually moving; this is how an iconoclastic book on Bartók turns into a passionate appreciation.

Ultimately the reader is compelled to admit that Tibor Tallián's book is the work of a musicologist profoundly committed to Bartók. Tallián is disturbed most by the mystical ranking of him as the creator of the century's great synthesis, the popular verdict on Bartók. He rejects the debate on whether Bartók's *œuvre* could, or should be placed above that of Schoenberg or Stravinsky; in all his writing Tallián again and again points out the superfluous nature of such comparisons. We only have to turn to a single one of Tallián's arguments: that on the folk-music issue. This is generally the leading contention, along with the superiority of the Bartók ideal of style. Its dubious validity can clearly be seen in the fact that the opposition also refers to folklore most of the time. Adorno, for example, reproaches Bartók with naïve folklorism, a Bartók, who, even in his opinion, conquered impressive heights in his string quartets. While this war of words rages, it is the essence which sinks into oblivion. This essence is that it is worth approaching Bartók's *œuvre* from the great questions of the era, of history, and of art alone, because this *œuvre*—as do Schoenberg's and Stravinsky's—seeks and finds answers to the most important problems of the era with European validity, exceptional sensibility and impact. It does so with devices abstracted from folklore; that this is a specific characteristic of Bartók's art, Tallián stresses, but these devices must not grow into a fetish. This is something to do with Bartók, not with folklore; it is one,

and only one, of the paths of twentieth-century music explored by a goe at talent.

In a certain sense, Tallián's attitude-shaping work is both early and late. It is late in that a correction to the image of Bartók's human and artistic stature, often created through commonplaces and simplifications, has long been overdue; and at the same time it is early, because the anniversary years has provided a few important new elements—for instance, Bartók's family correspondence—which was not available to the author, and which he could have supported many of his claims with. (Precisely on the folk-music question he could have relied on a few letter excerpts unknown up to recently, which would have given strong support to his claims and conjectures.) Finally, as regards the limits of the scope of the Face to Face series (in which this book is published): Tallián succeeded almost completely in turning necessity into a virtue, in giving the well-known documents new meaning; in places he even serves up some genuine novelties, for example, Bartók's lecture on relations between the State and Art appears in this book for the first time. But there are parts where obviously he, as well as the reader, feel the limits of the form of the work. One or another interesting attributive or conclusion is not always followed, for reasons of space, by further explanation; we would have been pleased to hear at greater length why the author regards Bartók's Quartet No. 1 "sincerely and rightly Beethoven-like"—apt though the judgement is, it does deserve some elaboration. We could cite a few further instances of this type. Perhaps in new editions it will be possible to make some desirable expansions (additions), as well as correct a few lesser misprints (above all, the printer's error in the only music example). We can hope that the planned English edition will provide an opportunity for the book to add to the universal and deserved acclaim it has already earned in Tallián's own country.

SÁNDOR KOVÁCS



## NEW RECORDS: BARTÓK, KODÁLY, AND AFTER

Since I first became acquainted at first hand with new music in Hungary, in about 1970, the situation in that field has changed almost beyond recognition. No single composer, or group of composers, had then emerged to fill the vacuum left by the death of Kodály three years before, and at the same time one sensed a lack of initiative and independent resource on the fringes of "orthodox" musical activity, in precisely those regions to which at that time, in Britain and elsewhere, young composers gravitated by a kind of centrifugal instinct. Today the position is very different. As the sheer variety of new music put on record in the last year or so shows, there is now absolutely no inhibition in the matter of style or technique on the part of Hungarian composers under the age of, say, 40. Instead there seems to have been a tendency, presumably unconscious, to institutionalise the many and various aspects of new musical life in a sophisticated modern culture. This tendency is a sort of Hungarian equivalent of the slightly earlier development in Britain whereby avant-garde music became an officially approved activity through the sponsorship of the Arts Council and the BBC. The development is one which one views with mixed feelings. One likes the idea that artists can enjoy public encouragement in place of the vilification which has often been their lot in the past. Yet one is vaguely uneasy at a situation in which the artist cannot valuably disturb his audience's *idéés reçues*, precisely because he is officially expected, and indeed paid, to do so. In Britain the absurd situation has now arisen in which it is the traditional composer who is regarded as a freak, and who finds himself whistling in the wind. My impression is that this is not the case in Hungary. But instead a kind of even-handedness seems to prevail there, under which the various dif-

ferent types of music are treated equally and with a certain dispassionate fairness, like so many local delegates at a national congress. Under both dispensations it strikes me that artistic judgement has to some extent, and in some cases, been usurped by values which are rather statistical and administrative.

An example of this, taking the specifically Hungarian context, is a record entitled "Young Hungarian Composers" (Hungaroton SLPX 12178). This features the music of six composers now aged between 27 and 34, recorded under the auspices of the Young Composers' Group (a branch of the Association of Hungarian Musicians) and, in the words of the sleeve note, endeavouring "to give account of as many varieties of style as possible." The motives behind such an enterprise are wholly worthy, and indeed it deserves stressing that in Britain such a group of composers would be extremely unlikely to find their music on a commercial disc of any sort, let alone one produced by the leading national record company. And yet when one examines the record for itself rather than for what it represents, doubts begin to stir. For a start it is quickly apparent that the "varieties of style" would be more accurately described as "varieties of type" since, although the six composers write markedly different *sorts* of music, most of them do not (yet) speak with a sufficiently individual voice to be dignified with that rather specific term "style". In any case why should either style or type be a criterion at all for this kind of record; one would have thought artistic quality much more important. But if style (or whatever you call it) has governed the choice, it seems almost certain that these are not the best six young composers around, since quality does not as a rule distribute itself in such a neat and convenient way. The



chances are that there is another composer of, say, sharp-etched piano miniatures nearly as good as László Borsody's *Sonata mondo* (to my mind the best work on the record) who has nevertheless been excluded in favour, perhaps, of Barnabás Dukay, representing the minimalists of the New Music Studio through his (unfortunately) rather feeble *In memoriam Lucretii*.

The fate of this same New Music Studio illustrates the related problem of the "official" avant-garde to which I alluded before. I do not know the detailed history of this group, but I assume that it began life in some spirit of dissent from the prevailing character of the musical establishment, as such movements, from Cage onwards (and even before Cage), have started in other parts of the world. Indeed minimalism seems to me the typical form of protest of the modern artist who has been robbed of his traditional weapons of complexity and wild individuality. These qualities having been institutionalised, the protester can only expunge them, extravagantly and absolutely. Minimalism is the newest form of *épater le bourgeois*.

In fact it is no longer very new as an idea, and in any case its resources are, by definition, extraordinarily limited. In the new record of music by Zoltán Jeney (SLPX 12059) the self-imposed limitations are harped on at such length that even their whimsicality, which might have been the music's one saving virtue, acquires a patina of solemnity and portentousness, as if in so studiously saying nothing the composer were telling us something of the most frantic importance. But for Jeney the final irony must surely be that he too is now a "recognised" composer (even the New Music Studio seems to have started life as a branch of the Young Communist League's Central Art Ensemble). So even the anarchic side of his nature is a part of the rule of law.

The positive benefits of this situation must naturally be acknowledged. From the composer's personal point of view the degree

of comparative security and stability he now enjoys is doubtless welcome, even if *vita longa* does mean *ars brevis*. But perhaps anyway it doesn't. Where established composers are concerned Hungaroton's positive but even-handed approach is much easier to defend in the light of what it actually produced on record, since here we are dealing with artists who came forward on merit under very much less favourable circumstances.

This is strikingly true of Attila Bozay. Bozay is just the sort of composer who stands to gain from an institutionalised new-music set-up, since he is a peculiarly self-contained artist with strong ideas about a composer's duty to his own talent, while writing the sort of music which, in the nature of things, will never be commercially successful (or even viable). To my mind Bozay would not be successful in London, since he is too refined and introspective. In Budapest he has always been acknowledged as an important figure, precisely because the system there has never held his refinement against him (whether it has counted it positively in his favour I leave on one side). In particular Bozay has been generously recorded, which is why his music is modestly well-known in Britain (at least within the small circle of those who take an interest in new music from abroad). Yet he has never, I'm convinced, compromised his artistic nature one iota. So we are fortunate to have on record (SLPX 13058) music of such great strength and sureness of purpose as the *Second String Quartet* (the *First Quartet*, recorded long ago, is also a fine piece), the ensemble work *Malom* (The Mill), and the *Improvisations* op. 27 for recorders with string trio, all in committed and so far as I can judge technically good performances. Incidentally it is also a great pleasure to read on the sleeve Bozay's own cogent views on the relation between technical pre-planning and free fantasy in the composition of his music, views which to my mind not only express Bozay's artistic personality as accurately as is possible in



mere words but also provide a well-considered answer both to those who think modern music too mathematical and to those who think it too arbitrary.

Endre Székely, whose music is I should say less well-known outside Hungary, is nevertheless apparently a more outward-going artist than Bozay. A work such as *Sonores nascentes morientesque*, which heads the new Székely record (SLPX 12129), has more purely colouristic appeal than anything I know by Bozay, even his fantastic concoctions for virtuoso zither. And while Bozay seems temperamentally genuinely close to Webern, Székely can write a *Concerto in Memoriam Webern* dominated by an ostentatious and extrovert part for solo horn (superbly played on the record by Ferenc Tarjáni). The chamber orchestral work *Humanisation*—with loudspeakers, by the way, not “megaphones,” as the record malapropistically informs us—demonstrates as much as anything the somewhat theatrical cast of Székely’s language.

So far as I know, however, Székely has never actually written for the stage, whereas both Emil Petrovics and his contemporary Sándor Szokolay established their reputations in the opera house, though neither of them has really stuck to any pattern in this sense. Petrovics’s four cantatas (SLPX 12320) are nevertheless a welcome reminder of his feeling for the voice and his interest in the dramatic quality of words. His choral *Cantata No. 4*, though unambitious in scale, has an intensity of feeling which reminds me a little of Shostakovich, while the two solo cantatas on the record, widely separated in time, are alike in the lyrical flow of their vocal writing. Szokolay is perhaps less fairly represented by a new record of Christmas songs and arrangements, whose naive, tinselly attractiveness soon palls (SLPX 12399). Where the Petrovics cantatas are a central part of his work, the Szokolay seems to stand apart from the music by which he is best-known and perhaps shows a division in his artistic nature. I daresay, however, that of

all these records this is the one most people will buy for unmixed enjoyment.

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Kodály’s centenary has naturally been marked by the issue of a number of recordings, and I am happy to report that these have included several of his works that are not so often encountered in the normal musical round. I emphasize that I speak here as an outsider. It was Bartók who characterised Kodály as the most quintessentially Hungarian of all composers, and this judgement is clearly borne out by the comparative neglect of all but a handful of Kodály’s works abroad. But the implication that Kodály’s most personal music does not travel well is surely quite false. Take his chamber music, of which Hungaroton have brought out a series of three separately available records (SLPX 11449, 11559, 11864). No doubt there is nothing here as powerful or original as Bartók’s finest quartets (Kodály’s own string quartets do not, incidentally, figure on these records): yet in their more spacious and rhetorical way the *Sonata for solo cello*, together with the associated *Capriccio* using the same scordatura, the *Cello Sonata* with piano, the less well-known *Duo* op. 7, and the to me previously unknown *Serenade for 2 violins and viola*, op. 12, are all major achievements whose impact is blunted by Kodály’s tendency to rhapsodies. These works are variously coupled here with some early pieces, a few fragments, and some Bach arrangements; and on the whole the performances are good, though the out-of-tune clarinet in the *Epigrams* on record 2 (11559) ought not to have slipped past the producer’s eagle ear.

An even more welcome contribution is a two-record set of songs by the master—not, of course, a complete survey but a well-concentrated selection from his earlier period, including the broadly conceived *16 songs*, op. 1, with which, in his Grove article on the composer, Eöszé links the aging Ko-



dály's remark that "our age of mechanisation leads along a road ending with man himself as a machine; only the spirit of singing can save us from this fate." These early songs undoubtedly show the extent to which Kodály's style was a "singing" style, just as this very quality occasionally diffuses his purely instrumental work. I cannot comment on the well-known quality of Kodály's prosody. But even to a non-Hungarian speaker the quality of his line impresses by its naturalness of flow and contour, while his accompaniments are typically decorative and supportive. There is some fine singing on these two records, notably by Éva Andor, and, briefly, Sándor Sólyom Nagy, which tends to bear out the point.

Also superbly sung is the new version of Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* under Fe-

rencsik (SLPD 12254). Here the soloists are Russians singing in Hungarian: Elena Obraztsova in steadier voice than sometimes of late and singing with an apt dark colouring; and Yevgeny Nesterenko, a powerfully dramatic Bluebeard. Though the recording is digital it does not match the recent Solti version for range or depth of response (and Solti's soloists, it will be remembered, are Hungarian). However, the playing, by the Hungarian State Opera Orchestra, is very fine and attains an overwhelming, if somewhat strident, vehemence in the extended climax of the fifth door. My one regret is that it was decided to omit the short spoken introduction, which Solti includes and which contributes much to the atmosphere of the opening.

STEPHEN WALSH



# THEATRE AND FILM

## THE END OF A SEASON

Ferenc Molnár: *Liliom* (Carousel); Zsigmond Móricz: *Úri muri* (Gentlemen's Spree); Lajos Zilahy: *Fatornyok* (The Spires of my Country); Imre Sarkadi: *Oszlópós Simeon* (Simeon the Stylite); Goldoni: *Mirandolina*

The end of the 1981/82 season sees a certain amount of relaxed muddle in Hungary (and not only in Hungary). Productions are staged in an overstretched tempo of rehearsals, premieres slip over to the next season, guest artists appear and leave their visiting card with greater or less success, and directors and actors bid farewell to companies. So this season's end, May and June, has been marked by a general change of residence, visitors, sighs of relief at closing, and the accumulation of strength for a fresh start.

László Babarczy, the head of the best regarded theatre workshop, the company of Kaposvár, one of its best actors, and a talented stage designer set out for Szolnok where they put on stage *Liliom*, Ferenc Molnár's „suburban legend.” The reactions of Hungarian critics to this play are conflicting; according to general opinion it is “bad lemonade” with a taste of its strong rum seeping through. The plot is known to non-Hungarians from the musical *Carousel*: *Liliom*, the suburban tough and good-looking barker, falls into love with and marries Julika, the pure-hearted servant girl. However, the old restless life pulls him back, he does not like hard work and treats his faithful and gentle wife unfairly. With the encouragement of a friend, he tries to steal some money, and thereby meets his death. This is not the end of the play—the play's great dramatic novelty in 1909 was that *Liliom* comes before Saint Peter who suspends final judgement and per-

mits him to go back to Earth in disguise and see what has become of his family. Here drama turns into melodrama: *Liliom* would like to remain with his wife and a teen-age daughter born after his death, but he must be parted from them as a punishment for his past life on Earth fiddled away in song and drink.

Generally, productions of *Liliom* and *Carousel* have never been able to avoid the kitsch of the last scene. Babarczy seems to have hit upon the only possible solution, as simple as ABC, but ingenious all the same. He brings Heaven down to Earth, interrupts the chain of episodes, and with a tactful dramaturgic intervention puts the epilogue-like scene into its more logical place. So the play becomes homogeneous in substance and effect, simple and severe.

In the theatre of Kaposvár performances are generally “ugly:” this is deliberate as far as the exterior effects, the visual aspects of settings and props are concerned. This material “ugliness” is intended to express the disharmony of our world. When the company stages an operetta (seldom and only as a persiflage), mirrors are dull, draperies tattered, and colours mawkish. When they play Goldoni (they have done at the end of the season with a *Servant of Two Masters* directed by the young János Ács and already praised in these columns), the sunny Venice has also been set in an emphatically shapeless space with the stage open to the back walls.



This attitude undergoes no change in Szolnok. *Liliom* is set in a fun-fair such as may be found on the outskirts of almost every big town, cheap side-shows, hucksters, benches and all, hidden behind the shrubbery. Accordingly, stages are usually filled with artificial trees, bushes, and bird-calls, and the carousel itself is an opportunity for the designer to show off his techniques.

Babarczy's designer, however, has rejected all this. The dull greyish-browns of his set convey the impression of a waste-dump at the ends of a city (or of the world). Here Molnár's skilful mixture of naturalism and symbolism comes to life in a medium which would seem more appropriate to Beckett's plays. The hard-living people of the suburb, outlaws of society rebelling against their fate, servants, housemaids, petty clerks linger in misery here, but their lives are not without beauty, joy, and purity. Above the makeshift boards, drab props, and rickety furniture towers a huge structure: a big dipper (built of boards but which actually functions). This idea works triumphantly: through it, the designer, Péter Donáth, has managed to convey splendidly the atmosphere of the gardens, and at the same time creates a forceful symbol. The creaking and reeling dipper is life with all its ups and downs, a symbol for the fate of the play's characters. There is no change of setting for Heaven: the angel-privates of the heavenly armies are dressed in the same black uniform as the policemen on Earth. This ingenious set also differentiates between Heaven and Earth. *Liliom*'s friend, who is also dead, appears at the top of the dipper carrying a trumpet exactly similar to those carried by the carved and painted angels on shabby little merry-go-rounds. And the reddish glow which cuts through the dullness on stage brings to mind the fires of hell so that audiences are unable to suppress their laughter at this deliberate naïveté.

What stands out in this production in Szolnok are the modifications to the play and the marvellous set; the acting itself has some hitches. But the principles and intentions

behind the production are fascinating: to underline that, in an "ugly" world, beauty and inner peace were not denied even to the feeblest when long ago we queued up to receive our characteristics.

While this visiting production was successful, a similar venture in the Budapest Vígszínház flopped. György Harag, a director from the Kolozsvár Hungarian Theatre in Rumania, is a glutton for work: besides five to seven productions every year at home in Rumania, he also works in Újvidék (Yugoslavia), Munich, and Hungary. Yet it would be an error to believe that the reason for its failure was overstrain. This time the working methods and demands of the director, the character of the chosen play, and the acting style of the theatre company simply did not match.

Harag has also chosen a classical Hungarian play, a play famous and recognized as imperfect. Zsigmond Móricz, one of our finest prose writers between the two world wars, himself dramatized almost all his successful novels—in this case *Úri muri* (Gentlemen's Spree). It was premiered in 1928. Set in the late nineteenth-century, Móricz endows his characters with a realism in a play that erupts in passion. He shows up the total failure of the landed gentry, a class forfeiting its historical role. The hero is a gentleman-farmer, owning 300 acres, a young and gifted man of much character and vitality who realizes that on this relatively small property only the most modern farming and purposeful planning of production and marketing can bring him security and prosperity. His fellow squires, relics of feudalism and enormous in body but small in brain, ridicule him from behind their beer-glasses; the lava of their wild spree sweeps away the dreamer who wanted something new. The hero does not prove himself a hero—he falters, his indecision between two women harms also his economic plans—in the end he sets fire to his own house and turns his pistol against his own heart.

The wild passion, prophetic morality, and



characters, stronger in the novel than in the play, still fascinate readers but given that the class and the actual situation have both been things of the past for many years, the play has no topical interest. Harag, who recently staged a Chekhov trilogy in Újvidék, recognizes this and tries to "Chekhovize" "Gentlemen's Spree" and thus make it a tragedy of fate. In this way the class-aspect is played down and the "weak man" of the type of Ivanov, who is above his environment but emasculated when it comes to action or when dealing with women, is put into the centre. Harag, who likes to experiment, also wishes to change the play's severe realism and the representation which is too shrill and direct for a contemporary audience. The characteristic nineteenth-century setting: the banquet room of an inn, the outbuildings of a medium-sized farm, and so on, appear on stage in a sort of surrealistic detachment. So the haystack has been put together as if it were directly beneath the well-sweep from which a candelabrum hangs while the gentlemen proceed with their spree. At the end, gilded junk emerges caught in the fire which burns up everything and accompanies change with tragedy.

The Vígsház company, trained in the traditional conversational style, and more accustomed to the more sensitive and oblique work of contemporary West European and American drama, were unable to deal with life to either the specific realism of Móricz or the floating sadness and pain of Chekhov; they clashed with the surrealist settings spiced with twentieth-century effects, and they were absolutely incapable of producing the synthesis imagined by Harag. The production's slowness is not a natural tempo, it only bores, nor does the acting spring from empathy but from painfully accurate choreography—and the conception hangs loosely on the whole production.

Not long ago I praised Imre Kerényi for his direction of the *Csiksomlyói passió* (Passion of Csiksomlyó), based on fragments of old Hungarian drama. Kerényi's latest produc-

tion, *Fatornyok* (The Spires of My Country) was announced with great advance publicity; unfortunately, I found myself reacting with real indignation and exasperation at the production. Its author, Lajos Zilahy, was a rather contradictory but basically honest figure in Hungarian literature and politics between the two world wars. His talents were just above the average, but he was prolific and wrote a great deal of fiction, plays, films, and journalism. The last years of his life were spent in America but his ashes and his legacy have returned home; some of his manuscript works have been published and stayed in Hungary. Kerényi took advantage of this, when he directed "The Spires of My Country" in the Várszínház; the play was first presented in 1943, but this production uses the new dénouement found among Zilahy's papers. The performance is preceded by a lengthy film projection (contemporary documents and news-reels), a narrator in evening dress introduces and sometimes interrupts the action, and the festive mood of the premiere was underlined by the welcome given to Zilahy's widow who had come over from Rhode Island—the solemn ceremony was inserted into the play. In all this only one thing was forgotten—consistency of interpretation and presentation of the play itself. All this banality and bombast can be called a "performance" only in inverted commas. Kerényi is more interested in the "event" than in the play. He has generously played down the serious ideological and historical deficiencies in the play and ignored its psychological absurdities. Much of what is said on stage can only have been interpolated. The action and the characters are impossible to follow through the twists and turns. The cavalier who has been chivalrously flirting with the wife of a friend over twenty years does not ask for her hand when she becomes free. Why? And can one believe that the husband who emigrated long ago from Germany does not merely leave his family to serve advancing Fascism but that this henpecked husband and average petty bourgeois becomes



the general manager of a big chemical plant, Hitler's confidant, and a vile war criminal? And these are only the lesser, literary absurdities. The performance, in its programmed zeal, fell for them and made them worse.

The plays mentioned so far belong to the literature of the distant and recent past. Imre Sarkadi's *Oszlopos Simeon* (Simeon the Stylite) will soon belong to the recent past but only because of when it was written; it has permanent merits as the forerunner of a type of contemporary Hungarian drama which deals with the intellectual's self-destructive search for his place (the reader may remember that István Csúrkás's plays are also examples of this genre). The Simeon the Stylite of the title is János Kiss, a painter and teacher, uncertain in talent but sensitive in intellect, who reacts to the imaginary and real failures in his artistic ambitions and private life by despising himself and making what is bad worse. He places himself outside society and accepts no moral law other than himself. He destroys, liquidates, and sells everything, and like the biblical figure who sat on the pillar in the desert, he endlessly comments on events and chastises the world and himself. The final recognition he stammers out on his death-bed can only be that we don't remedy evil by making it worse.

This powerful play has been directed by an academy student as his diploma work. This is its first performance in the capital

since its *première* almost twenty years ago: expectations were accordingly high here, too. In vain: essentially "Simeon the Stylite" has still not been performed in Budapest, and perhaps it would be better to let it sink into oblivion. The soul-searching and self-destruction of the hero, which was originally motivated by the events of 1956 in Hungary, were given no justification at all in this production: they became empty ranting. And if, as the hero says at the beginning of the play, he can measure his relationship with and love for his mistress by the vibration of her hips, then the woman lost in a bulky nightgown and covered with an eiderdown made the audience lose all interest in the whole production. The performance was a collection of blunders such as this and worse besides.

Finally a few words on a new Goldoni production. A small group separated from the company of the National Theatre under its artistic director and has worked since the end of 1982 in the independent Katona József Theatre. The presentation of *Mirandolina*, with its portable folding décors, is permeated with nostalgia and the mood of farewell. "Don't forget *Mirandolina*..." says the title hero topped by a halo at the close. This farewell is intended to make us understand and remember what kind of theatre they wanted to have in the National.

TAMÁS TARJÁN

## KÁROLY MAKK: ANOTHER WAY

This year's symposium of FIPRESCI, the international organisation of filmcritics, was held in Milan and "The Status of Reality and its Audiovisual Presentation."

Participants looked at the topic from philosophical, aesthetic, dramatic, and cultural viewpoints, with especial reference to cinema and television in his or her own country. I chose a fifth aspect to illuminate the Hungarian situation: the histor-

ical viewpoint. Indeed, the particular way of presenting reality practised by the Hungarian pseudo-documentary school would also have been a fruitful subject: it is a cooperation between civilians who improvise their own dialogue on their own experiences and problems, and the combination of fiction and documentary in scripts which are only outlines and contain no dialogue. I might also have taken Jancsó's parabolistic realism



as a topic. However, I believe that what is most interesting in the Hungarian cinema is the evolution which has taken place in the situation and concept of reality in films over the last two decades.

I was in the fortunate position of being able to refer to two films which my colleagues were soon to see at the Cannes festival. One was the young Péter Gothár's *Megáll az idő* (Time Stands Still)\* presented in the series *Quinzaine des Réalisateurs*, which won the prize of the Minister of Youth Affairs of France, the other the Hungarian entry for Cannes, Károly Makk's *Egy másra nézve* (Another Way). It was awarded the international film critics prize and the Polish actress Jadwiga Jankowska Cieslak won the best actress award.

Both films are striking evidence of the gradual disappearance of the prohibitions which used to prevent the Hungarian cinema from representing reality. I do not wish to idealize our film directors and pretend that they work without problems or conflict but they seem to have achieved an enviable position so far as the extension and depth of their social criticism is concerned.

Péter Gothár's film is set in the sixties: the purposeless drift of children of a father who fled the country in the wake of 1956 here presents the negative aspects of the sixties, the decade which Hungarian politics rightly considers as a moral letter of credit. For these were years of a positive and dynamic social consolidation. A similar sincere and harsh criticism of the sixties can be found in Károly Makk's film. It is also noteworthy in that for the first time in the history of Hungarian and, probably the socialist, cinema it touches on a subject forbidden up to now: sexual relationship between two women.

The press at the Cannes festival understood and reacted favourably to this film. The reviewer of *L'Humanité* formulated what almost all critics said: "This problem does not appear in the film as a perversion

\* See *NHQ* 87.

but as a right to be different which is a right among others in a democratic society." The reviewer of *Le Matin* added: "Raising its voice for individual freedom and the famous 'right to be different' which we Westerners erroneously believe to have gained definitely, the film ends with a tragedy which reminds us how long a way we have still to cover before being able to freely dispose of ourselves... The way in which the film suggests the faults of a distant past gives evidence that today's Hungary respects truth well enough to permit itself their sincere exposure."

The director himself described his intentions as follows: "The private drama of the two heroines in the film coincides with an old obsession of mine that the degree of freedom—among others—can be evaluated on the basis of how tolerant the public is towards living, feeling and thinking in a way of which we are capable: living in a way we like or would like to." This was why he took the novel by Erzsébet Galgóczi *Törvényen belül* (Inside the Law), and adapted it for the screen in cooperation with the writer.

The film begins on a dark and stormy night in the late fifties when, on the Yugoslav-Hungarian border, a stray bullet from a frontier guard kills a woman who, despite repeated warnings, fails to stop or perhaps has not heard the warnings. Her documents identify her as a young journalist, Éva Szálanczky. At the same time another young woman journalist is taken to a hospital: her jealous husband has shot her and although her life is saved, she will remain an invalid all her life. This double or, rather, triple tragedy—with the husband sent to prison—leads off the film which then proceeds through flash-backs back to this dénouement. Although, *mutatis mutandis*, this could have happened anywhere in the world, Makk's story reflects Hungarian reality of that time. (Today or at any time since 1963, she would simply have taken her passport and crossed the frontier legally.)

This is no thesis-drama, taking a stand



for the "right to be different" in a didactic or agit-prop way; using psychological and social realism, Makk's film unfolds the tragedy as inherent in the heroines' potentialities and in the point of time she lives in; the stray bullet only confirms a fate which has been already decided. (The film leaves open the question whether this attempt to cross the border was a particular form of suicide).

Who is Éva Szalánczy? She is one of those Hungarians who, after the liberation in 1945 rose from a poor peasant background into the ranks of the intelligentsia. The cathartic impact of 1956 only strengthened her inherent commitment to say and write, as a writer and journalist, the truth and nothing but the truth. Thus her deviant behaviour manifests itself twice: in her sexual inclinations, and in her militancy as a civil-rights fighter who wants to protest every human indignity. And it is hardly particular to Hungary that the "deviation" manifested in her private life makes the "deviant" militancy of her public role suspect in the eyes of some.

Éva has not compromised herself in the events of 1956 so far as to suffer legal consequences but her participation is considered to have been sufficient to put her out of work and blacklisted for a considerable time. A friendly editor finally takes her on to the staff of a cultural weekly. Her sense of justice compels her to use her professional skills to battle the vestiges of the past; but these are becoming less and less relevant and what she writes either remains unpublished or is badly mangled. She falls in love with a young, pretty but married female colleague who, although she responds to Éva, social pressure and her own conformity do not allow her to accept the "unnatural" relationship as part of her, even though it is enough to alienate her from her husband. Éva is caught between the two pressures, right up

to the final tragic *dénouement* with which the film starts.

The film seems to me better, more clearly structured and psychologically more authentic than the novel, but the connection between the two character traits of Éva was more organic in the novel. However, Makk's insistence on the public aspect has not weakened his perhaps unique achievement in presenting the authentic emotions and tragic depths in this "unnatural" love. He conveys the eroticism of this relationship in a manner which does not alienate but excites human sympathy in "normal" spectators. The film is an artistic "agitator" for the right to be different and for the toleration of difference so that it strengthens respect among those who are not different—the universal respect for human dignity.

As always, Makk has made his film with minute attention to every detail. His ability to create atmosphere is outstanding, his scenes are accurate, his characters rich in nuance. Excellent casting has helped—especially prize-winner Jadwiga Jankowska Cieslak is unforgettable in the role of Éva. This marvellous actress makes the tragedy of the young woman accessible to everybody with human feelings. Her every gesture and tone is authentic, expressive, and imbued with empathy. A second Polish actress, Grazyna Szapolowska, is no less worthy in the equally sensitive role of the young married woman. A Slovak actor, Jozef Kroner, puts over the strength of the editor, vilified and imprisoned during the years of the personality cult, hardened to humanity and a sense of justice, with all the skills of an actor in his prime. Péter Andorka as the husband is also good though less forceful. Finally, a word for cameraman Tamás Andor who is faultless: his lighting in particular conveys atmosphere and tension.

ERVIN GYERTYÁN



## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

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BREUER, János (b. 1932). Musicologist, critic, staff member of the Hungarian Musicians' Association, editor of the journal *Magyar Zene*. His field is 20th century Hungarian music and its international connections, on which he has published several books, including *30 Years of Hungarian Musical Culture*, published in English in 1975. See "Pál Kadosa—Composer, Pianist, Teacher," *NHQ* 80, "Adorno's Image of Bartók," 81, and "Kodály in England," 87.

CSIKÓS-NAGY, Béla (b. 1915). Secretary of State, Head of the National Materials and Prices Office. Has published and lectured on price policy and other economic questions in Hungary and abroad. See "Socialist Economic Theory and the New Mechanism," *NHQ* 28, "The Monetary Framework of the Socialist Economy," 33, "Anti-Inflationary Policies," 59, "Ten Years of the Hungarian Economic Reform," 70, "The Hungarian Price Reform," 75, "New Features of Hungarian Economic Policy," 77, "The Competitiveness of the Hungarian Economy," 81, and "Nine Questions on Financial Incentives," 85.

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HALÁSZ, Zoltán (b. 1914). Writer and journalist. Deputy Editor of *NHQ* since its foundation. A graduate of Pázmány Péter University in Budapest, on the staff of a daily in the 30s, became an editor and later Rome correspondent of the Hungarian News Agency (MTI); a free-lance translator between 1949–55, reader at Corvina Press 1955–60. Published a number of books on social history (among them on the renaissance chronicler Antonio Bonfini, on Louis Pasteur, on Sir Aurel Stein), as well as novels, the latest one on Chancellor Metternich. See "Transylvanian Gastronomy," *NHQ* 85.

ILLYÉS, Gyula (b. 1902). Poet, playwright, essayist. Vice President of International PEN, an outstanding personality of considerable influence in contemporary literature. See his poems in *NHQ* 33, 35, 46, 48, his various essays and articles in 47, 50, 63, 66, as well as an excerpt from the novel *Beatrice's Pages*, *NHQ* 80. Original titles of poems in this issue: *Szomorú béres; Az élet fordulóján; E földön; Rendtevé; Út előtt; Féltett kincs; Nem lesz háború; Világjárás után; Üvegvilág.*



KÁDÁR, Béla (b. 1934). Economist, a graduate of the Karl Marx University of Economics, senior research fellow and departmental head of the Institute for the World Economy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Has taught at the universities of Lima and Santiago. Five books and numerous articles discuss questions of comparative economic policy.

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KOKAS, Klára (b. 1929). Musicologist, a former student and associate of Zoltán Kodály, specializing in teaching music to small children. Spent three years in the US at the Kodály Musical Training Institute in Wellesley, Massachusetts. See her "The Kodály Method and the Open Class in America," *NHQ* 44, and "The Kodály Method in America," 59.

KORNIS, Mihály (b. 1949). Novelist and playwright. A graduate of the Academy of Theatre and Cinematography. His first collection, *Végre élsz* (At last you live) appeared in 1980, and his play *Halleluja* (Hallelujah) is part of the current repertory of the National Theatre.

KOVÁCS, Sándor (b. 1949). Musicologist and critic, on the staff of the Bartók Archives of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He also lectures in music history at the Ferenc Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest. See "Bartók's System of Folk-song Classification," *NHQ* 83.

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RÉNYI, Péter (b. 1920). Deputy Editor of *Népszabadság*, the central daily of the HSWP, and a member of the Central Committee of the HSWP. See among recent contributions to *NHQ*: "Thirty Years to Change a Society," 58; "The Art of Politics," (on a book by János Kádár) 62; "Let's Make it Together," 66, "János Kádár in Vienna, Rome and Bonn," 68, "The Human Factor," 78, "From Gagarin to Farkas," 80, and "A *Népszabadság* Interview with Bruno Kreisky," 83.

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SZŰCS, Julianna P. (b. 1946). Art critic. Books include *Morandi* (1974), *István Szőnyi's Copper Engravings* (1978, also in English). Contributes art criticism to dailies and periodicals. See "The Fascination of the Garden," *NHQ* 73, and "A Caricaturist's Small World (István Hegedűs)," 86.

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"Elemér Gyulai and Visible Music," *NHQ* 23.

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VARGYAS, Lajos (b. 1914). Ethnologist and musicologist. Retired head of the Folk Music Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. See his review of a work by Ninon A. M. Leader, "Scholarship and its Pitfalls," *NHQ* 34, "Zoltán Kallós, Ballad Collector," 59, "Folk Songs of Hungarians in Rumania," 64, and "Bartók and Folk Music Research," 83.

WALSH, Stephen (b. 1942). Musicologist. Read music at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. Since 1966 he has been a music critic for *The Observer* and since 1976 a senior lecturer in music at University College, Cardiff. Publications include a book on the songs of Schumann and a book on Béla Bartók's chamber music for the BBC Music Guides. See his reviews on new records in *NHQ* 86, 87.

### IVÁN BOLDIZSÁR'S SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY

The Presidential Council of the Hungarian People's Republic has awarded to the Editor of this journal the Order of the Tricolour with Laurels for his work as a writer and for his contribution to public affairs at home and abroad.

János Kádár, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the HSWP, conveyed his best wishes on this occasion in a personal letter.







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