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*The New  
Hungarian  
Quarterly*

**Hungary's Part in East-West Relations —** *Frigyes Pujá*

**The Challenge of our Age and the Response of Socialism —**

*György Aczél*

**Problems of International Indebtedness — as seen from  
Hungary —** *János Fekete*

**Economic Mechanism in the Mid-1980s —** *László Csaba*

**Mihály Babits—Poet and Essayist 1883–1941 —**

*Balázs Lengyel*

**Kodály Method—Kodály Conception —**

*Ernö Lendvai*

**Angevin Hungary —** *Pál Engel—Ernö Marosi*

# 90

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*This issue went to press on March 10th 1983*

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*June 6th 1983*



## NINETY

I am well aware that there are wittier headings than four score and ten, particularly since this looks like an issue that is particularly rich in new ideas and information as well as literature, and therefore deserving of a like preface. The reason for my choice is entirely subjective. Since the fiftieth issue it has become more or less an established convention in the office to celebrate every tenth issue at least by giving the preface a heading of this sort, and I am, as it were, inviting readers to join in this celebration. Thanks to a note at the end of *NHQ* 88 it is no secret that I also recently completed a decade, one score less than the paper, let me add. Will I still be around to head a preface 'A hundred', not out? Who can tell? Two and a half years is a long time, things depend not only on whether I shall still be in the saddle but also on the terrible threat to which the spaceship Earth is subjected not coming true. Those of us who write for, and edit, this journal, and that means not only the small staff whose name appears on the flag, on the inside cover, but more than a hundred Hungarian intellectuals, old and young, some in leading positions, do so in the firm belief that a journal in English, published in Hungary, can with its own meagre resources and limited opportunities contribute to fuller information being available which should help to reduce prejudices and the power of the obsessed.

The address given by Frigyes Puja, the Hungarian Foreign Minister, to the Institute of East-West Security Studies in Washington served this purpose, and so does its publication at the head of this issue. The strength of the idea of peaceful coexistence, and the emphasis given to Hungarian developments, and within them to the recognition, expression, and stressing of what are specific Hungarian national features, by foreign policy as well—though part of the press denies it—is exemplified by an article published by Mátyás Szűrös, the head of the Foreign Department of the



Central Committee of the HSWP—in the daily *Népszabadság*, an abridged and edited version of which appears in our From the Press Section.

Two sets of articles make up the backbone of this issue. One is primarily concerned with political, ideological and social questions, the other with some of the problems of the Hungarian economy, particularly with the further development of the much talked about economic reform. These two cannot (and should not) be isolated one from the other. Political, ideological and social questions were debated by a national conference convened by the Central Committee of the Party and attended by over six hundred men and women active in public affairs. The word debate should be taken literally, ideas and views clashed, contributors to the debate argued with each other, and with the keynote address given by György Aczél, a Secretary to the Central Committee which we publish somewhat abridged. I am using public affairs in the widest possible sense of the term. Those present included university professors, scholars, journalists, writers, artists, numerous economists, local government officials, many young professionals and also members of the Political Committee of the Party, government ministers, senior public servants. The discussion which ranged widely, occupied two days. György Aczél covered many burning issues. His style exemplifies that understatement which is characteristic both of him personally and of current Hungarian politics as such. For two days, from half past eight in the morning to half past seven at night, twenty-three speakers expressed their views. Only a few read a prepared text, the majority spoke off the cuff, linking their remarks to what had been said earlier. This also goes to show that not only the style of government has changed in Hungary but also that of debate. I will, I hope, be forgiven for quoting myself but as I put it, as one of the contributors to the debate, one of the great achievements of the 1968 economic reform has been to restore the right to be wrong.

The Conference was not called on to pass resolutions. The idea was not to issue a statement that closes off the exchange of views but on the contrary, to initiate a new stage in the reforms taking place in Hungary, spurring those present to go on thinking, something that applies to others outside as well who merely read about the conference.

There are good reasons for carrying on thinking in Hungary. That is why we asked László Csaba one of the younger economists, to write for us and that is why we are publishing an article by János Fekete, Vice President of the Hungarian National Bank, who can truly be said to enjoy an international reputation as a financial expert. Csaba discusses new aspects of the Hungarian economic mechanism, surveying structural changes which took place in the past two years. In 1978 a start was made on mod-



ernising planning and the state control system of the economy, in 1982 this work was extended to cover enterprise management. What is called the "competition price system" was introduced, and uniform rates of exchange for convertible currencies, and the organizational structure of enterprises was transformed. I shall not go on to outline the whole train of thought of this closely argued article—which provides detailed evidence for all it maintains. There is much in it for readers abroad as well who are not specifically interested in the problems of Hungary.

János Fekete surveys the indebtedness of the East European countries from a high vantage point which allows him to place them in context. His close familiarity with the persons and organisations that govern the banking world, and hence credit policy, helps. He does not, of course, try to minimize the difficulties but—showing that realism which is characteristic of Hungarian financial policy—he indicates the course chosen to overcome the difficulties. He concludes by saying that Hungary's example proves that the international organizations help a country which is ready to put its own house in order first.

The articles in this issue are longer than usual. At the time of writing I do not know yet what will have to be left out when the moment of truth comes and the pages have been made up and page proofs are available. I shall not therefore refer to other articles in the paper, with one exception: the texts collected to commemorate Mihály Babits. When I read Balázs Lengyel's authoritative essay on Babits's place and role in 20th century literature I once again felt that national sense of frustration which frequently recurs in the pages of this journal and which Gyula Illyés, called "the dumbness of the heart."

Ernő Lendvai demonstrates that Kodály's relative solmization is no mere educational method, it is a superior means for musical analysis, particularly applicable to romantic music.

It was when correcting these lines in the galleys that the sad news of Gyula Illyés's death on April 15<sup>th</sup> reached. As recently as *NHQ* 88 we celebrated his eightieth birthday. The next issue will also contain writings on and a poem by Illyés. Let me add, however, that the standing of his work and person is such that his works, prose or verse, or their discussion, do not need the excuse of an occasion. As evidence let me mention not only that I naturally relied on his turn of phrase when writing about Babits who had been Illyés's friend and colleague as editor over many years, that two of his plays are discussed in the theatre review of this issue.

THE EDITOR



## HUNGARY'S PART IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS

by

FRIGYES PUJA

**G**eographically the Hungarian People's Republic is placed in Central Europe, in the heart of Europe one might say. Hungary, thanks to her political past, her culture, and economic relations, is one of the oldest states in Europe—with more than a thousand years on the banks of the Danube and the Tisza, in the middle Danube basin, to look back to. The Hungarian people are now engaged in constructing socialism in Hungary, creating a society where social justice is effective in all spheres of life, where human rights find fulfilment and the needs of the inhabitants are satisfied to a growing degree. Speaking about the situation of Hungary it should be said that internal order is firm, and that there is an ongoing realization of objectives regardless of the deteriorating conditions abroad. The masses support and endorse the Hungarian government's home and foreign policies.

### *Peaceful Coexistence and Cooperation*

In defining Hungarian foreign policy I start with the recognition that peace and security are indispensable for the construction of a socialist society. In our view socialism is part and parcel of peace, of an international order in equilibrium, of the peaceful coexistence and cooperation of states with differing social systems. We regard cooperation between states with differing social systems as an objective necessity and not as something transitory that depends on the trade cycle.

Text of an address delivered at the Institute of East-West Security Studies, Washington, D.C. September, 1982.



I am well aware that the two principal alliance systems have a determinant influence on the international situation, including the development of East-West relations. Hungary is interested in the establishment of a system of international relations in which the two social systems demonstrate their right to existence by peaceful cooperation and economic competition. The Hungarian government is firmly convinced that this is the only reasonable option.

The specific features of Hungary's foreign policy are given by socialist commitment, history, cultural traditions, geographical facts, the soundly judged national interest and a number of other factors. It is from the angle that I wish to approach the state of East-West relations, the part played by the Hungarian People's Republic and the possibilities the country has in shaping them.

The government and the public opinion of Hungary realize with regret that in recent years the international situation has considerably deteriorated and the international atmosphere continues to be tense. Political *détente*—which in earlier years had been the determining factor in the development of East-West relations—has ground to a halt and has been relegated to the background, while forces which stimulate the growth of tension have come to the fore. Hungarian policy confronts efforts designed to change international power relationships with a view to achieving military superiority, it opposes the intensification of the arms race, the fomenting of local conflicts, and strengthening attitudes of confrontation. The country's efforts are directed to safeguarding the results attained by *détente*, to put an end to the arms race, and to the creation of a military power equilibrium on the lowest possible level. All our strength is engaged in the service of the continuation of peaceful cooperation in East-West relations. We unswervingly hold that the dialogue between leaders of the socialist and the Western countries must be continued, and that questions at issue be settled by negotiation.

I presume that the Institute for East-West Security Studies is familiar with the Hungarian position on the alleged excessive armament of the Soviet Union and the other Warsaw Treaty states. I do not propose to go into details, but allow me to stress on this occasion as well: the socialist countries need peace, they need to reduce their military budgets for a peaceful life, to carry out their economic objectives. This is not a sign of weakness. The socialist countries have the strength needed to repel any attacks.



The shaping of the situation in Europe is at the focus of Hungary's attention. The country and the people are vitally interested in peace in Europe, that fruitful cooperation in all fields of life should strengthen between countries belonging to differing social systems. This continent is now experiencing the longest period free of war in its history, and in the past decade it has proved to be a peaceful and safe part of the world. This is also due to the joint efforts of realistically thinking and acting politicians.

#### *Partnership in Europe*

Hungary is a supporter of the furthering the process of détente in Europe. In 1969 the Warsaw Treaty member states' appeal for the convening of a European conference on security was issued in Budapest. Hungarian diplomats took an active part in formulating the idea of the Helsinki conference, and in the years following the Budapest Appeal, together both with Hungary's allies and with interested Western states, the country busily prepared the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. In our view the Final Act of Helsinki has stood the test of time. It has become one of the facts of life in Europe. The signatory states undertook to implement the recommendations of the Helsinki document in their own practice and in their bilateral relations. With respect to bilateral relations Hungarian foreign policy, after the Helsinki conference and then after the Belgrade meeting, chose the specific method of presenting to nearly twenty Western governments exhaustive proposals concerning most diverse areas of international relations, including some which—beyond political, economic, trade, and scientific relations—served to promote cooperation in other fields as well.

Experience as a whole is favourable, a considerable part of Hungarian proposals for the improvement of cooperation have been carried out or are in the process of implementation. I have to tell, however, that Western negotiating partners have occasionally failed to display that readiness for constructive and *bona fide* cooperation which imbued our drafting of the proposals. Hungary fails to understand, for instance, the attitude of Western countries regarding visas. The Hungarian visa authorities usually issue visas within 48 hours, but it is also part of practice that those from the West who travel by air or by road are given their visas as the point of entry without prior applications. On the other hand Hungarians who travel abroad, including holiday-makers, often have to wait weeks or even months for their visas. Let me put on record that more than ten states which are part of the Western world have given negative or evasive answers to suggestions concerning facilitating the issuing of visas.



Talking about the Helsinki Final Act I should like to make special mention of three problem areas—economic relations, human rights, and cultural and scientific cooperation.

*Economic Relations, Human Rights, Cultural and Scientific Cooperation*

It is superfluous, I think, in this Institute, to analyse in detail the present state of the world economy. The fact is that, in conjunction with the recession in Western states there have strengthened the protectionist and discriminatory tendencies which detrimentally affect also East-West trade and economic cooperation. Some seek to restrict or reduce East-West economic contacts, wishing to use trade as a political weapon. Anxiety that this kind of trade policy might undermine the material foundation of détente and economic cooperation is, in my opinion, justified.

It is common knowledge that Hungary has an open economy; about half of gross national product is realized by foreign trade. Trade with Western and developing countries accounts for nearly half of Hungary's foreign trade. In the interest of the country's economic development economic relations with Western states should be undisturbed and even improved. We wish to attain economic objectives while further strengthening the connection of the Hungarian national economy with the world economy. Hungary's joining the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank is also a manifestation of this intention. With a view to developing the Hungarian national economy we shall also in the future need to make use of outside sources, we are willing to accept foreign participation in carrying out certain investment projects.

Western media and Western statements on international platforms suggest that the West sees itself as the exclusive protector of human rights. Allow me to insist that the socialist system of society by its very nature guarantees the rights needed for a free, creative human life. The ways and means of the effective implementation of those rights, however, cannot be isolated either from the given level of socio-economic development or from the customs and conventions that were shaped by the history of a given country. We do not allege that our legal system is perfect as regards the different aspects of human rights, considering either their implementation or their effective exercise. The legal system is based upon the social conditions and is itself bound to change as a result of their progress.

There is an essential and certainly enduring difference between the Western and the socialist interpretation of human rights. We are not afraid of discussion; if discussion is honest and free from ulterior thought, then



it is of mutual benefit to participants with a different view of things. But we are against the exploitation of the noble cause of human rights, against the employment of human rights as a political weapon in East-West relations.

In our view reciprocal knowledge of cultural and scientific values is an important means of promoting understanding, friendship, and peaceful cooperation among the nations. Taking this as a starting-point we attach great importance to the development of cultural, educational, scientific, and technical contacts with the countries of the West.

Concerning certain Western countries there is a disproportion to Hungary's disadvantage in the interchange of cultural values, especially in respect of literature, the cinema, and the theatre. This disproportion is manifest also in Hungarian-U.S. cultural exchanges. An average of 1.5 million copies a year of works by classical and contemporary American authors are published in Hungary, enjoying considerable state subsidies. Our cinemas present fifteen to twenty American films on a yearly average, and a hundred to a hundred and fifty American films are shown on television, mainly in prime time, likewise on a yearly average. On the other hand, products of Hungarian culture find their way to the U.S. public only in insignificant quantities. Since the early 1960s all in all thirteen works of fiction and twenty-nine other copyrighted Hungarian works have been published in the United States, and the American public is only now and then shown a Hungarian film. Such a disproportion cannot be explained away by the quantitative differences in cultural products or population figures!

Hungarian foreign policy took an active part not only in the preparation of the Madrid meeting but also in the conference itself. Up to November 1982 eight Hungarian proposals were submitted either independently or jointly sponsored with other countries. Four of these are intended to further economic and trade relations between the participating states, but proposals were also made aimed at improving human contacts. Such is, for example, the Hungarian resolution, seconded by Finland and Iceland, for the promotion of the teaching or propagation of languages and cultures of lesser currency, or the proposal dealing with the use of the mass media for making cultures better and more widely known to each other. The bringing of people closer together is similarly aimed at also by the joint Hungarian-Soviet resolution which presses for the broadening of cooperation between youth organizations and for the granting of facilities furthering the travels of young people.



The improvement of the atmosphere in Europe depends also on the results attained at the resumed Madrid meeting. We on our part look forward to the meeting with realistic expectation. We expect a result which will make it possible to carry on the process of European security. We see that the majority of the Western countries are also interested in concluding the meeting with the adoption of a final act that contains results satisfactory for all.

### *War or Security*

In connection with war and peace, with armament and disarmament, let me recall a few facts which are common knowledge but which some people seem to have forgotten.

The concept of war or security in the United States means something different from what it means in Europe. War has spared the territory of the United States, neither killing men nor destroying assets. The U.S. frontiers are safe and have been invulnerable for long periods. The sense and fact of vulnerability are of recent origin, and American strategic thinking seems to have so far been unable to digest them.

Europe was devastated by two world wars. A large proportion of the tens of millions of casualties were civilians; personal and public property, thousand-year-old objects of art were destroyed. Thousands of nuclear weapons are deployed in this continent today sufficient many times over to convert this part of the world into a nuclear desert. The concept of general and limited conflict has a relative meaning for the states of Europe, since the issue is the survival of peoples threatened by even a few nuclear missiles.

These specific historical experiences and these specific military-political conditions explain why, just as in other states of Europe, grave anxiety is created in Hungary by the escalation of armament, by the sharpening of tension between the two nuclear great powers and between the two alliances.

It is a source of satisfaction that after long preparations Soviet-U.S. talks on the limitation and reduction of strategic arms and European nuclear devices have started in Geneva. It is with expectation but without illusions that we look forward to these talks. Progress in arms limitation depends on the outcome of the Soviet-U.S. negotiations. This does not mean, of course, that other states which do not possess nuclear weapons could not and, moreover, should not contribute to the lessening of military confrontation in Europe. This is why it would be to the purpose if the Madrid meeting led to an understanding about the convening of a conference to discuss confidence-building measures and disarmament.



### *The Importance of Bilateral Relations*

It is first of all in bilateral relations that the Hungarian People's Republic, as is evidenced by experience, was and is in a position to make an effective contribution to the broadening and deepening of East-West relations, to the furtherance of détente and the safeguarding of its achievements. By normalizing bilateral relations with Western states Hungary contributed to the establishment of a favourable political situation that is necessary to the creation of one of the most important factors of détente, an atmosphere of mutual confidence. We pursue this activity also in the present in order to help put a stop to the continued deterioration of the International situation and the growth of tension.

The bilateral relations of the Hungarian People's Republic with Western states are shaping and developing in accordance with the principle of peaceful coexistence, on the basis of equality and mutual benefits. In spite of the sharpening of international tension bilateral relations have essentially suffered on rupture, set-back or stagnation. Relationships are indicative of positive development, in accordance with the usual trend of earlier years, without interruption. In recent years the calendar of Hungarian-U.S. events has also become more lively.

Most notable of all, as a joint effect of specific historical, economic, and cultural traditions, has been the development of relations between Hungary and the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Austria, and Finland. But the limelight of Hungarian diplomatic activities was entered also by medium-sized states or others of the same size as ours, such as Greece, Portugal, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Norway, and Turkey.

### *International Organizations*

Hungarian diplomatists participate in shaping East-West relations not only in the bilateral sphere, but also play their part in multilateral forums.

Here I mention only by way of illustration that the Hungarian People's Republic is a member of about one thousand international—including sixty intergovernmental—organizations. One of those intergovernmental organizations, the Danube Commission, has its seat in Budapest.

On the governmental level Hungary is a member of twenty-seven major agencies and bodies with elected or appointed members, which belong to the United Nations family, another ten positions are filled by representatives of Hungary in their personal capacity. In the Geneva Committee on Disarma-



ment a Hungarian representative holds the post of chairman of an important working group—that dealing with the prohibition of radiological weapons. As is commonly known, the representative of the Hungarian People's Republic has been elected to the office of president of the United Nations General Assembly for its 37th session.

The country's foreign policy is imbued by the awareness that the Hungarian People's Republic is a relatively small country with limited resources and possibilities, that it cannot devote equal attention and energy to all the problems of international life. One of the specific features of Hungarian foreign policy is, however, that we concentrate efforts on such burning problems of our age which have a direct effect on the peace and security of the world. In the complicated system of East-West relations the Hungarian government always follows the principle that actions and positions should strengthen what unites us, what improves confidence, and not what divides us. This is how Hungary endeavours to contribute to the improvement of East-West relations, to the broadening of fruitful cooperation, to the reduction of tension, to the curbing of the arms race, to the strengthening of security and peace.

## FROM OUR NEXT ISSUES

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*Béla Kádár*

LIQUIDITY PROBLEMS AND ECONOMIC CONSOLIDATION

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HUNGARIAN PEASANT ECONOMY

*Péter Szuhay*



# THE CHALLENGE OF OUR AGE AND THE RESPONSE OF SOCIALISM

by

GYÖRGY ACZÉL

**H**ungarian society responds to growing difficulties and the challenge of the age by showing more active initiative. Increasingly effective forms of adaptation to the current more difficult situation have developed and continue to take shape. In conjunction with these and by supporting them we intend to reinforce the respective processes also in the ideological field. This brooks no delay, all the less so since it is common knowledge that great difficulties have arisen because the Hungarian economy had only reacted to the changes in the world market with some delay. [ . . . ]

What is more, there are features in Hungarian intellectual life to which we cannot reconcile ourselves. In the eyes of friend, critic, opponent, and foe alike, here at home and beyond the frontiers, we have risen in esteem thanks to our capacity for renewal and reform, successfully giving effect to our national character in the construction of a socialist society.

There are some who try to expropriate this policy and its continuation. Others present themselves as the unmaskers of the sectarian—dogmatic distortions of the 1950s, and yet the HSWP had clearly broken with that policy more than a quarter of a century ago. This is demonstrated by the political practice as a whole since that time. True, we have pretended to be neither the rescuers of the nation nor prophets, we have devoted all our attention and energy to improving things. [ . . . ]

A shortened version of the keynote address at the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party's national conference on questions of ideology, society and culture in Budapest on January, 12 and 13 1983.



*The international situation*

We have to start, first of all, from those facts of international life which decisively defined the situation of Hungary as well. [...]

*The end of Clausewitz's dictum*

According to Clausewitz's well-known dictum war is the continuation of politics by other means. Nuclear war, however, is the continuation of nothing human, but it is the end of everything. Not a single problem of our age and our world—least of all that of mutual security—can be solved by armament programmes, be they of conventional weapons or thermonuclear missiles.

One of the best-known features of our age is that certain historical processes have become irreversible: socialism, for the first time of history, can no longer more be suppressed by war or by force. This is one of the major achievements of the history of socialism and of all human history.

We are well aware that even in the developed capitalist countries there are sober politicians who reckon with the facts, including bourgeois, social-democratic and other progressive-minded statesmen.

The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union already declared that war was no longer fatally inevitable. In the quarter of a century which has passed since the two systems have taken merely the first steps—but it is not our fault that they are only the first—along the road of peaceful coexistence. But this is already proof that a new stage has started not only in the history of social progress but also that of mankind.

It would pay to go to the bother of thinking right through—and this is also an important ideological duty—what peaceful coexistence, Lenin's great idea that is so often repeated really means. There were some at the time who interpreted it as a simple slogan: as a tactical manoeuvre, a concession aimed at gaining time, a concession made by a Soviet Russia which had been weakened by interventions and the civil war.

Truly, right from the start there was more to it, and there is more to it now. A new revolutionary system calls upon its principal adversary: instead of an armed confrontation let us cooperate where we can—competing for the favour of the peoples, putting to the test which is able to offer more attractive ideas, ideals, and to follow a more successful practice in the interests of men and the masses, of peoples and nations.

Since we have got over the illusions that socialism can finally outstrip its



rival within a short time, we are also aware that peaceful coexistence and cooperation will be part of an operative historical programme as long as antagonistically opposed social systems exist. All this means with reference to the present that we are interested in overcoming, and not in aggravating, the current world economic crisis.

*A more realistic image of capitalism*

In the spirit of that political realism which already governs the course of our practice, a new quality must be achieved in the analysis of the social and economic processes of the developed capitalist countries.

Fortunately, we have outgrown the habit of predicting from time to time the day of the immediate and definitive collapse of capitalism, nevertheless we cannot be satisfied with the thoroughness of our analysis of the actual crisis processes. We must be aware that today's world economic recession not only affects particular economies but is a new stage of the general crisis of the capitalist system, a serious structural crisis of modern capitalism.

The crisis symptoms in the West are novel. A high rate of unemployment is present together with inflation, in a way that makes effective action against one possible only at the expense of the other. Inflation is just now being brought down and as a consequence unemployment rises. If there are new investments, unemployment will go down—though still remaining on an immense scale—but inflation will at once rise, curtailing the incomes of workers and upsetting the nervous system of the economy.

The socialist countries whose world economic contacts are considerable have proved sensitive to the crises of the capitalist world economy. The crisis has coincided with the switch to intensive economic development which has made it necessary to stop unprofitable production and make a start on a speedy transformation of the structure of production in all the socialist countries. All this is made difficult by the need to adjust to more unfavourable terms of trade and intensifying competition.

We have to deal more thoroughly with the general crisis of the capitalist system in our ideological work, not only for the sake of a more realistic image of capitalism but also for that of a more authentic image of socialism.

*The image of socialism*

The main features of our image of socialism took shape during a period when no one reckoned with difficulties and tasks like those we are faced with,



when we projected into the future the conditions of smoother development promising a more mechanical, unbroken and linear growth, and we identified this course with socialism itself. First of all we have to rid ourselves of the illusion that the planned proportionate development desirable and attainable in socialism automatically follows from the socialist conditions of power and property. People should be made aware that the advantages hidden in the fundamental facts of socialism can be put into effect only by a political and economic practice which is capable of dynamically responding to internal and external conditions and changes while retaining what has stood the tests of time, and renewing or reforming what is obsolete and outdated. Our image of socialism must reflect better the historical experience gained in building the new society, the lessons drawn from this and present and future possibilities.

The confusions in the image of socialism entertained by our thinking are due not only to the survival of earlier illusions but also to crisis phenomena which have made their effect felt in Poland as well as, to a lesser extent, in other socialist countries. Hostile propaganda refers to these difficulties when striving to demonstrate that the socialist system has reached crisis point.

These propagandists argue that present difficulties in the development of socialism are not just due to earlier mistakes by the Polish leadership but are signals pointing to the bankruptcy of the system as a whole. These days they do not confine themselves to talking of paralysis induced by over-bureaucratised economic planning, a rigidly centralised economic policy or the absence of reforms. By today, it is said, what was true from the start according to them: that socialism is not viable.

Proof of the viability of the socialist alternative and of the socialist economy is that today the socialist countries are responsible for 40 per cent of world industrial production, that the European CMEA countries—whose populations add up to barely more than 10 per cent of the world population—make nearly 30 per cent of the world's steel, some 25 per cent of its cement, 21 per cent of electric power, or, of energy sources, 19 per cent of the petroleum products, 68 per cent of lignite and 26 per cent of anthracite. On the other hand, we are well aware that, as when it comes to important quality indices of production, mainly concerning productivity and efficiency, we are still in a long way behind the front runners.

Socialism is not complete, and by its nature, it never will be; it is still a system in a stage of becoming, in the process of formation and continuous evolution. Today as well it has to meet requirements deriving from its fundamental objectives and ideals and respond to the dramatic challenge of



our age at the same time. Achievements and problems must be sized up and appraised in this context.

There are bourgeois ideologues who accuse socialism of being a closed society and that although openness in a vital condition precisely of socialism, in the first place in the sense that it must be able to absorb any influence consistent with its fundamental values, it should be able to work out or, if you like, to experiment with alternatives, with options of development which lead towards its ideals, but which mankind has never before tried out in practice anywhere.

Our present problems and our difficulties derive first of all from the fact that external conditions have changed abruptly, one could say dramatically, so we must alter the quality and effectiveness of our work at an appropriate rapid rate. Adaptation to the outside processes and shortening of the time of adaptation have become decisive factors. This is the lesson taught by the Polish events as well. The distortion in Poland's economic policy which triggered off the political crisis of 1980 was due to a large degree to the former leadership's failing to react at the right time to the changes in the world market and in the world economy in general.

#### *Two specific Hungarian features*

As regards our country, or rather our ability to react to the increasingly severe conditions, I should like to point out two things in particular.

It is of great importance in Hungary that more than 40 per cent of the gross national product is exported, that the economy entertains extensive and wide-ranging relations also with capitalist markets, that is with countries with convertible currencies and that consequently we are exposed, to a greater than average degree, to the impacts of international, including capitalist, economic processes. This, of course, certainly has not only unfavourable consequences. [...] But it also follows that the capitalist recession and deteriorated market conditions sensibly affect the Hungarian economy. Accumulated liquidity difficulties have proved to be a particularly heavy burden.

A second specifically Hungarian feature is related to the fact that we have deliberately continued with the reform of economic management for nearly twenty years now. On the one hand, this has prepared the economy for the most rigorous requirements and, on the other hand, it has created a sort of over-confidence; as if we were already over the hill, as if world economic impulses could not do us much harm.



Though we have done a great deal recently to get a more adequate picture of the situation, this is not yet reflected properly either in production standards or in consumer demand. What makes the gravity of the situation most palpable are the prices consumers have to pay, we resort to price rises only when forced to do so. It would be too much greater advantage for us to improve the equilibrium of the economy by more effective incentives, more and bolder initiative, better and more rational organization in production, by stepping up productivity, sensibly regrouping the labour force, putting an end to unprofitable production and preventing a disproportionate outflow of wages. [...]

We have no need for illusions; the sudden deflation of illusions is what usually provokes panic. What is needed is the precise and authentic knowledge of reality which stimulates to action, revival and enterprise. [...] Our desire is to ensure that, as a response to the challenge of our times, socialism, the society in process of transformation, is in a state of readiness of a kind which allows to maintain its specific values and its capacity for renewal, emerging from this severe test stronger than ever. [...]

We live in a decisive period which will determine the future of the people and the nation, and of socialism, for a long time to come. The present and the immediate future can be expected to decide whether we will succeed in definitively putting to an end to the historically rooted disadvantageous position of Hungary, the vestiges of backwardness, more precisely, of having always been late developers in the past, and in raising our country to the ranks of those which are not only socially but also economically most developed; or whether we have to face a long and lasting stagnation which would restrict the so encouragingly budding creativeness of the people, possibly exhausting their energy and vitality.

*The question of national identity and the  
national minorities question*

These days Hungarian intellectuals take a lively interest in questions of the national identity and the national minorities question. This is understandable since a sense of identity, the clarification of where one belongs linguistically, historically and culturally, has come into prominence all over the world, even in small communities.

This is natural for Hungarian as well since the major social changes of the past few decades have altered the character of the nation, making the working classes the determinant force of the nation. Today, instead of classes



opposed to one another, cooperating classes and strata engaged in the building of socialism live in this country.

It is natural also because the formation of nations in Central and Eastern Europe, owing to the state of economic and social backwardness, got growing later than elsewhere in Europe and, and owing to the tangled state of ethnic arrangements not only dominating and oppressed nations were set against one another but antagonisms among the oppressed were hatched as well.

It is finally natural because Hungarians in large numbers live beyond the country's borders who are linked also to today's Hungary by many ties owing to their native tongue, history, traditions and culture. It is therefore not surprising that there is much discussion about the national and the national minorities problem. Extreme voices also make themselves heard.

We do not agree with those who see what they call an economy-centred policy as a threat endangering the fate and future of the nation. In any event we cannot agree with the confrontation of economics and culture, of economics and national feeling; we do not believe in national cultural and moral progress that is not based on firm economic foundations. But we also know full well that we have to give special attention to the moral and mental condition of the nation. A successful economy is the decisive prerequisite, but not an automatic guarantee of the nation's intellectual and moral progress.

The second large group of questions in the focus of present discussion made up by what are called the vital problems of the nation, such as the demographic problem, alcoholism, the many suicides. Some make these issues appear as if responsibility for their unfavourable trend rested on the policy which, they think, neglects such matters and concentrates too much on the economy. It is enough to look about in the world to judge these questions in their true context.

Our society has to cope with such problems as well, even if we know that we often have to consider remote antecedents when we look into their origin. Ever since statistics have been kept in our country, for the past hundred years, the number and percentage of suicides and alcoholism have always been alarming. Socialism has inherited a great many things for which it is not responsible, still it is committed to coping with them.

These are serious problems, even though not decisive for the nation. In order to overcome them much remains to be done, more than has been done so far, but first of all we have to clarify the ways of their possible solution and the priorities of action.

The tragic view of history has been revived by some, who identify much in the Hungarian past as well as the present as avatars of nemesis; the whole



of Hungarian history is seen as a sequence of disasters, defeats and failures. There are some as well who wish to rehabilitate the Horthy system, and by exaggerating external constraints they want to revise that proper, just, well-arranged historical judgement which the reactionary régime provoked not merely by its foreign policy but by its social conservatism and profound hostility to the common people.

Extreme criticism trying to keep a foot-hold in moral and historical arguments is emotionally shored up also by concern for the Hungarian national minorities in neighbouring countries. This, however, cannot be used against the Hungarian political leadership on the ground maintaining that we are doing nothing in their interest.

National identity and national consciousness have real problems under socialism as well. It has turned out to be true that real or supposed interests—or offences against them—can feed national differences and nationalism even under socialism. It became clear also that the socialist countries do not all tackle the national minorities problem in the same way, that the principles of a Leninist minorities policy do not automatically govern practice in every country that has set a course towards socialism; on the contrary, ancient nationalisms are revived and there are attempts to curtail the rights of national minorities and to carry out their forcible assimilation.

In the awareness of all this, we affirm that, for the past quarter of a century, we have done our level best, relying on our most positive national and internationalist traditions, to further, improve and increase the consciousness of our nation as one of the most important ideological cohesive forces of socialist Hungary. The progress made in this period has made it economically possible for the vast majority of the Hungarian people to grow in wealth, fulfilling the ardent desire of every Hungarian patriot who ever wanted to act in the interests of the people. By putting an end to mass deprivation, to the vulnerability of the working classes and their exploitation, and by making it possible for growing numbers to study and educate themselves in improving conditions, making sense of their lives, the HSWP and the socialist state have made a national programme come true. They stand for the true interests of the nation.

*Nationalism is no answer to nationalism*

[...] Our people are more and more fitting out this country to be their true home; their national consciousness draws strength not only from the past but increasingly also from the present, and we have no reason to be



ashamed of this present of ours. We have laid foundations allowing us to act producing results in the future. Our national self-respect can justly take its source in the successful building of a society that is freer and more democratic than any earlier one, in the creation of an economy which even our enemies are compelled to admit has passed the test. They know also that, in a number of its elements as well as in its entirety, this economy suits the conditions of the country and reflects our national character. Paradoxically, however, the national characteristics of this economic order, its specifically Hungarian nature, are recognised mostly by others, while we have done little effort to make it one of the props of a justified national self-esteem.

Socialist development has allowed us to join the great current of universal progress. Never before has Hungary attracted the interest shown in the achievements and experience of our socialist country. [ . . . ]

The strands of our past are closely intertwined with those of other nations. Hungary used to be a multinational country, so certain processes and events and personalities are judged differently by historians in different parts of Central and Eastern Europe. We have no objection to scholarly discussion of these issues, but do not agree that history should be exploited to shore up current political doctrines. [ . . . ]

When studying the history of the peoples of the Danube basin some like to warm up past grievances, searching for facts that will help them to establish a pecking order of atrocities. Even when the recent past is the subject they single out not common action or cooperation, or the service to progress that unites many nations, but they occupy their minds with ranking Horthy and Antonescu and Tiso and possibly Pavelić according to the intensity of their nationalism or even fascism.

Such manifestations are often explicit answers to the the nationalism of others. We hold that nationalism, chauvinism and national hatred cannot be answered by nationalism, chauvinism and national hatred. It is our conviction that a neglect of the rules of scholarship and historical research and the cult of various anachronisms should not serve national consciousness either here or elsewhere, so we oppose every attempt in that direction. The nationalism or chauvinism of others cannot be an excuse also because nationalism cannot be applied selectively. He who reverts to the position of nationalism in one direction cannot maintain his internationalism elsewhere either and is bound to induce a chain reaction of the old nationalism.

We have no desire to confuse the problems of today with historical issues. Saying with Lenin that the Versailles and environs treaties were imperialist in character means stating an historical fact. It does not, however, imply that



socialist Hungary is interested in any kind of revisionist policy. In the spirit of the Final Act of Helsinki we profess that frontiers are inviolable. This is not national indifference but a realistic political attitude that serves the interests of the nation.

We look on the national minorities in Hungary and the Hungarian national minorities in the neighbouring countries as communities which, from several points of view, but first of all culturally, can play a bridge-building role. The socialist countries should act towards the national minorities in accordance with Leninist principles. Hungary does its best in this direction supporting the diverse activities of the nationalities and guaranteeing them all civil as well as collective rights.

We do not look on indifferently when national minorities anywhere are discriminated against, when they are hindered in using their native tongue or in being educated in it, when they are unable to maintain contact with their kith and kin in other countries. We desire in the name of the universal interests of socialism, that every national minority, whatever the country, be free to assert its economic, political and cultural rights. The experience of Hungary suggests that national minorities best serve the interests of the country of their citizenship, if they feel part of that country and identify with it. [...] It is in this spirit that we call to common action all those who have to learn from history that the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe must not only live together but must work in common to allow this region to close the gaps of the past, becoming instead a paradigm of the brotherhood of nations.

#### *Socialist democracy*

The democratic features of our society and socialist democracy are much debated issues. As we have already declared on several occasions, the increasingly rigorous conditions of the present mean that democracy must be extended and not restricted. Greater scope for democracy should spur a sense of responsibility, constructiveness and action, all these being needed also to accomplish higher objectives.

The economic challenge calls for a concentration of creative forces, more efficiency and competitiveness, improved flexibility to a degree inconceivable without the further growth of socialist democratism. We shall continue the reform process and the structural changes decided on and started in the sixties. [...]

Once before, in the early 1950s perilous external conditions produced distortions that had tragic consequence occurred. [...] In November 1956



we decided never again to set that course. We have based the renewed socialism on confidence. This is what we have to thank for our achievements, and we shall remain true to this practice in the future as well.

Today and during the hard times to come maintaining of confidence, and still more its growth, is not automatic. Democracy cannot be exhausted by promises related to confidence.

*The self-limiting exercise of power*

In the wake of the consolidation following the suppression of the counter-revolution of 1956, the HSWP having learned the lessons of the period of the personality cult, exercised power in a self-limiting way. In the course of decision-making it knowingly builds on control by the masses and consistently strives to subject itself, or rather its decisions, to mass control. [ . . . ]

We recognize as not only rightful but necessary the demand for information, for knowledge of the facts needed in decision-making. At the same time we have to create guarantees that can be understood and may be required for the implementation of decisions, for the elimination of mere formalities and mere appearances. In this respect it is often the decision-makers' actual practice that needs improving.

Even higher intellectual bodies, academic or university forums, often do not excel in the exercise of democracy; more than once the secret voting favours the interests of cliques that dare not show themselves openly. Regional organs also often exemplify an odd sort of order of values in which supposed and real interests are confused and the priorities of local and the common interests are reversed. ( . . . )

Renewal is needed first of all in the functioning and the atmosphere of the existing forums and the openness of their style. We need forums where the conflicts and problems can be clearly presented, where different options are proposed, where opinions are listened to patiently, and—as is already indicated by some instances—where it is possible to make decisions which the community identifies with and in the implementation of which it takes an active part. Socialist democracy is not a social mechanism that either occurs automatically or on prescription. It is not a safety valve for letting off the steam of accumulated emotions: steam in this country should work the wheels, not the whistle. [ . . . ]

No end of complaints are expressed—justifiable complaints: why do we lack better management and organization, why are the reserves of society and of the economy not better exploited, why does good work not receive its



reward, why are abuses not unmasked earlier, why are interests not channelled in the right direction more clearly and so forth. [ . . . ]

We think that the standard of democracy is a comprehensive exchange of views, and responsible participation in society-framing action, including the working masses, public opinion, party members and those who are not—in party and mass organizations, in Parliament and the local government councils, in the forums of shop-floor democracy, in various trade unions and professional associations and in the entire system of institutions of this society.

We further socialist democracy and shape our political mechanisms accordingly. We reject those who wish to force on us—as a sort of formula for salvation—the ideas, structures and forms of the political pluralism of classical bourgeois societies which reached crisis point long ago. The necessary improvement of socialist democracy cannot be produced nor can the genuine contradictions of socialist development be overcome by the models of bourgeois democracy.

No doubt: a decisive condition for the growth of socialist democracy and its vitality, is the cognizance that the political system takes of the various and diverging—in some cases conflicting—interests and views which are struggling to prevail. [ . . . ]

Some things one reads give one the impression that it would be enough for all strata and groups to be given the opportunity of expressing their interests, and every problem would solve itself. We agree that opportunity should be given for expressing one's interests and also that trade and professional organizations should show more spontaneous activity. The definition and expression of particular interests is however only a condition for facing up to various interests, to take into consideration what in a given place and situation are the rightful interests and how they can be reconciled with the social interests. In other words, a fundamental issue is not only the articulation of interests but also their reconciliation. [ . . . ]

### *The hegemony of Marxism–Leninism*

The HSWP has for a long time already made it a principle of its ideological work that in this country Marxism–Leninism enjoys no monopoly but hegemony. Hegemony is not less than monopoly but something different. It does not mean that we have lowered the sights but that we have set ourselves the only aim that was realistic.

It is therefore our immediate aim to develop the hegemony of Marxism.



This implies the recognition that Hungarian society is not ideologically homogeneous, that there is—to use a fashionable expression—ideological pluralism beside the decisive role played by the Marxist ideology.

Lately, however, there have been endeavours to do away with the hegemony of Marxism. The more moderate of them would be satisfied with letting Marxism be one of several ideologies, but what some extremists have in mind is outright pluralism without Marxism.

There is no need to argue at length against such fancies. How could one imagine a socialist society without an ideology that serves socialism and holds a position of hegemony. The idea of socialism was born of the ideology that serves socialism and holds a position of hegemony. The idea of socialism was born of the ideology of the party of the working class, the party which has set itself the objective of radically transforming the old society, drastically changing the conditions of power and property, destroying their ideological foundations. [ . . . ]

We are well aware that Marxist ideology is today grappling with a series of questions that remain unanswered or have not yet been answered adequately. We have arrears to make up for. There is no denying that. The higher level of socialism itself requires, as does the international situation, that we should be equal to the new tasks and new demands. [ . . . ]

But we must not carry such criticism to the point that Marxism can be neither upheld nor propagated, where it should practically be suspended until it has been able to answer the new questions. This is an absurd way of arguing. How could the theory be developed and further applied if it did not offer valid lessons to be upheld, defended and propagated, if everything had become uncertain and doubtful? [ . . . ]

#### *The HSWP and its allies*

Our starting-point is that perfect, complete Marxism does not, cannot and will never exist. He who expects Marxism to solve all questions has not understood what Marxism is, has not rid himself of habits of dogmatic thinking, however much he may talk about modernization and progressiveness. It is obvious that ideology also has to develop as society progresses. This is how it becomes possible to avoid pitfalls and all the dangers that go with impulsive or pragmatic action. [ . . . ]

There will be some who will interpret the need to protect and strengthen the hegemony of Marxism as a desire to create a sort of *tabula rasa*, to create



order in the ideological field by issuing decrees and having them implemented by law enforcement agencies. I think the past 25 years offer sufficient evidence that we are well aware that lasting and genuine results in ideology are only possible by debate with the different persuasion, by applying the instruments of ideology.

The present task is thus not more law-enforcement but prompter, more effective and more extensive responses by Marxists. [...] The HSWP invariably carries on with a policy of alliances, being determined to cooperate with all those—irrespective of their way of thinking—who are not opposed to the socialist system, who accept its constitutional order and contribute their labour to the building of a socialist society even if their opinions on a whole range of subjects differ.

This is attested by the sound and proper relationships we have established with the denominations and their adherents; this is demonstrated by the contacts we have built up and maintain with those raised in traditions of patriotism of a progressive though non-socialist spirit or the values of bourgeois democracy; this is reflected by our cooperation with men and women committed to the standards of their professions whose apolitical attitudes we cannot agree with.

We have not the least intention of overburdening this genuine ground of the policy of alliance with artificial campaigns of an ideological sort. Those are mistaken, however, who imagine that the relationship with extremist of marginal groups comes with the scope of the policy of alliances.

*Those who think differently*

We welcome with open arms everyone who cuts his links with opposition groups. As earlier we are ready to wipe the slate clean for anybody who wants to form part of the national consensus, who constructively searches for a solution to those social problems which occupy us too, though the approach might differ. We are not in dispute with those who think differently, for even those present here differ in their ideas on a good many issues—reform, democracy and also Marxism—from colleagues, comrades and partners in discussion, who are likewise in this hall. Nor do we want to standardise opinions or intellectual life. We need debates, and want to put to use what we can of any criticism, even of criticism prejudiced against socialism, against the Hungarian and eastern European practice of socialism. In order to be able to answer the questions towering before us we cannot pass on a single genuine problem to those opposed to us.



Let no one, however, expect us to treat as allies those who, counting on the deterioration of our situation, aim to undermine our achievements and trample on our laws. [...]

It would be disservice to this policy of alliances if one were to take the well-known slogan "whoever is not against us is with us" and distort it to mean "whoever is against us is also with us". [...]

*The hierarchy of moral values of socialism*

The struggle for the hegemony of Marxism is waged not only in the theoretical spheres of ideology, and will not be decided there. The ultimate aim of the struggle is to have a new scale of moral values accepted, to implant the new norms of the society building up socialism in customs and behaviour patterns. In this regard socialism is at a disadvantage in comparison to the societies preceding it.

A huge force of inertia exists in human behaviour. Over centuries generations have passed on customs and habits as well as the hierarchy of their values to their heirs and successors. Numerous habits have become ingrained in class-structured societies which one cannot or should not have resorted to socialism. More precisely which in the deepest layers of the mind protest day after day against norms and principles of thinking which require new behaviour patterns in socialism. Such are violence, oppression, selfishness, grab as you can, the humiliation of and contempt for others, hatred of foreigners and so forth. But servility, the poor man's fatalism, the arrogance and conceit of those in power should also be listed.

The hierarchy of values of socialism contradicts all these. This contradiction means either strict prohibition or gradual ousting but in any event it attacks deep-rooted bad human qualities attached to the traditional sense of security. On principle everybody agrees with this struggle as long as there is no need to change yourself: when it comes to repressing these habits in oneself, one begins to feel ill at ease and often blames socialism.

In reality, of course, the hierarchy of values of socialism and the socialist conditions are not realized in a pure state. Socialism is a society in transition also in the sense conditions which continue to strengthen the old habits in practice survive in a good many fields.

True, mankind has also values and customs that are no less ancient which point towards cooperation, mutual adjustment and personal integrity. Such are righteousness, honesty, readiness to help, friendship, love of one's family, patriotism, human pride and dignity, an understanding for others, politeness,



respect. One should also remember demands for education and a widening horizon, good health and hygiene, as well as love of order and, in the first place, respect for work.

Inasmuch as socialist policies, social organizations and education rely on such habits and fit their support into the ideological, economic, political and cultural system, socialism also promotes its own legitimation in the eyes of honest folk who are in the overwhelming majority. [...]

We must be aware that the socialist character of daily life cannot be created at one fell swoop. [...] While shaping, propagating and establishing moral values, we have to reckon better than before with the complexity of values, more than once also with their contradictory nature. Justice or freedom, for example, which all of us long for can—as Bacon already pointed out—often torment us. Security, which offers dignity when linked to merit and performance, destroys and stultifies if it guarantees the accustomed way of life also without work. [...]

We talk more about the hierarchy of values of socialist morality these days also because the demand for morality is traditionally powerful amongst Hungarians. In this transitory age we strive in vain after unequivocal, teachable moral norms that can be clearly formulated, which even when they are offended against—and often just thanks to their violation—can enhance our ethical self-assurance. No kind of ethical dogmatism can solve our problems. [...]

The neglect of values is alien to the public morality of socialism. Thus, for example, mere absence of religious faith is in itself not valuable. It is easier to conclude an honest secular alliance in support of the common socialist tasks in the service of humanity with a religious believer than with a nihilist who negates any sort of moral standard. It is essential to emphasize this against the vulgar atheism that still raises its head from time to time these days. [...] We have to retain, even under increasingly difficult circumstances, unconditional respect for reality, attentiveness to human beings, and developing the humane character of our society. [...]

### *Responsibility of negativism*

An historic change has taken place in the culture of Hungarian society. The educational standards of Hungarians correspond both to the state of socio-economic development and to those of Europe in general.

At the same time we have to recognize that cultural inequalities in our society are still considerable. The cultural differences between various strata,



although they have been reduced in the past decade, are greater than the differences in incomes or in per capita consumption. [...]

The mood of the country and of the majority of working people, the growing problems, is characterized today in the first place by efforts to get on top of a situation due to world political troubles and domestic difficulties. Concern about preserving what we have achieved and about peace is a gut issue for all of us.

It is hardly possible to confound the nihilistic outlook that has overpowered some of the workshops of intellectual life, the negativism refusing every historical value and attainment, the off-hand resignation proclaiming that there is no kind of way out, ideologised disillusionment, sometimes an outright doomsday mood. With responsible social criticism, even though passionate, but still committed to a good cause, or with the responsible presentation of contradictions. In the above mentioned manifestations we look in vain for the meaning of the human struggle and of all the effort and the fought for results. [...]

The traditional national missionary consciousness of the arts—of Hungarian literature in the first place—is not the business of exhibitionistic, self-appointed insistence, not an eternal right and predestined function of redemption, but possibility which can be exploited but also gambled away, in keeping with the actual performance of each and everyone.

In certain areas of intellectual life—in scholarly institutes, in dramatic performances, in literary and cultural periodicals, in films—the critical attitude and the ardour of social criticism have switched to negativism. This negativism today is directed not only at the 1950s, but also at the post-1956 consolidation and the revival of the policy of alliances.

We do not expect intellectual life and agitprop to provide a veneer that will cover up and hush up the contradictions of socialism: we need a critical analysis of past and present realities, a proper processing of the lessons that can be learnt. This was clearly stated already by the HSWP cultural policy directives issued a quarter of a century ago.

But social science publications, works of art and sociography should judge the stretch of the road covered on the basis of the socialist values and should not suppress what we have achieved. We invariably hold to what was repeatedly laid down in the science policy directives of 1969, in the HSWP programmatic declaration and the resolutions of the 1980 Congress: in our society any question is open to research, there are no taboo subjects and no prescribed conclusions. [...]



### *Style and taste*

We do not wish to judge works of art using political instruments, we do not meddle with questions of personal style and taste. Man-moulding ideological and moral influence prevails, if at all, thanks to the artistic radiation of the totality of works, and not owing to one or another element of the message. We consider it, however, politically important for valuable and enduring works to be produced—albeit we can only help by improving conditions. Our role is greater, on the other hand, in the propagation of good works which by their broadly interpreted realism, give strength and moral backbone to their present readers and transmit an authentic picture of our present reality to our heirs and successors.

In this world weighed down with problems it is particularly difficult to carry out the mission of art, its specific reality-exploring and man-moulding function. It is no easy thing to discern, to grasp and record the essence of our age, of our reality. And although the principal historical alternatives—peace and war, progress and falling behind, socialism and imperialism—cannot be obscure to artists of high sensitivity to the intimate processes of the human soul, it is true that much cannot be seen clearly or seized in art. One should accept with understanding that many honest and well-intentioned artists struggle with dilemmas, retire into their memories or experiment seeking new answers to the challenges of the age.

Nevertheless, it is those talented people who today create, who feel a profound sense of responsibility for progress, for the fate of mankind and the community they live in, who—despite of their discontents and anxieties—measure progress by the historical scale of the road, present and future, of socialism. Among the novels, films, works of art, dramatic productions there are mature, authentic works conceived in conscious socialist and humanistic commitment, though there are not as many as one might hope to see. [. . .]

Of course, neither art nor scholarship can be expected to act as a redeemer to provide in every case treatment and not only a diagnosis. But if the intention of diagnosis is not to lead to recovery but to hypochondria or merely to shocks for the sake of shocking, then the authenticity of even a limited truth becomes questionable. [. . .]

We have to state in a spirit of self-criticism that our work in this field is not satisfactory. Inconsistencies can be observed in practice. We cannot be satisfied either with the standards of theoretical or analytical activity in the Marxist spirit or with the readiness to show initiative in this type of work. Thus, forced to put out fires, our work often shows the signs of indecision



and improvisation. We find ourselves on the defensive also where there is every reason to take the initiative.

Some would like to persuade us it would be democratic to allow a tiny minority to operate in certain institutions and workshops, financed by public funds, abusing the commission they received from the people, spreading their own pessimist morale, or ideas, often enough fixed ideas. Fortunately, such cases are few and far between, but the confusion caused by those few cases has a disruptive effect in the whole field. The toleration of striking manifestations of irresponsibility dulls the sense of responsibility elsewhere too, misleads those at work, the heads of workshops, those employed in directive agencies and public opinion alike. Selection according to ideological, intellectual and artistic values is minimal in many places. Planned and demanding commissioning, a relationship with authors based on high principle and discussion of matters of substance before publication are practically unknown in some workshops.

*Freedom for progress*

We insist a practice well-tried since 1957 that the HSWP's guiding role in the ideological and cultural fields be primarily of an intellectual and sign-posting character, that the concrete activity going on there is directed by the competent workshops, research institutes, university departments, editorial offices, studios, publishing firms, theatres, etc., with the fullest autonomy and responsibility under the encouraging control and supervision of the intermediate authorities of the HSWP and the government.

We do not think of centralizing this work organizationally, for this would entail the proliferation of administrative methods, hamstringing the workshops and narrowing the chances of sound initiative. On the other hand: if we succeeded in ensuring that the workshops participated more responsibly and more actively in the creation and propagation of what is valuable, in ideological discussion and encouragement, then we would improve the social influence of cultural values, and there would be more realistic conditions for speeding up the necessary process of democratization. [...]

The creative freedom which is the guarantee of the genuine development and enrichment of science and the arts is inseparable from the freedom-creating order of socialism. This freedom obtains meaning, as does any effective freedom, not in isolation, not in freedom from social progress but, on the contrary, in freedom for progress. [...]



*The major questions and the search for answers*

In analysing and answering theoretical questions we have to rely more boldly on the international forces and achievements of Marxism. Marxism tries to answer the big questions of mankind, it therefore has to point far beyond the "Hungarian globe". This is another reason why international cooperation is indispensable for us.

No one will, however, answer our problems in our place, no one will analyse our experience for us. But this experience also has its own international import: it forms part—and perhaps even a worthy part—of the international practice of socialism. By analysing it Hungarian Marxists can contribute also to the international progress of Marxism–Leninism.

To cope with our current ideological tasks, however, more is needed than theoretical work.

Is there any need to prove that, to undertake the more difficult and more risky climb, we cannot do without moral and ideological toeholds in the strengthening of which culture has gained immense significance. [...]

Against the quasi-ideologies based on the semblances of everyday consciousness, the truths of Marxism, of socialism, can often be verified only through the exploration of essential and scientific relations. This also makes it more difficult for us to make our ideas understood and to propagate them, yet we have to make considerable headway in the use of the most up-to-date methods and experience of the mass media. In our open world it is impossible not to reckon—because of a mistakenly interpreted modesty or out of conservatism—with the nature and power relations of shaping the thinking of the masses. [...]

If there were need to provide a brief summing up of our tasks ahead I would say: a united stand against trends and manifestations opposed to Marxism, truth and justice, humanity and socialism and for high Marxist theoretical standards, debates and intellectual fermentation in the recognition and answering of new questions.



# PROBLEMS OF INTERNATIONAL INDEBTEDNESS — AS SEEN FROM HUNGARY

by

JÁNOS FEKETE

**F**or the past two years the external debts of the countries of eastern Europe have been making headlines in the world press. Unfortunately the approach was, for a long time, one-sided, the issue being taken out of its context. Voices which drew attention to more extensive ramifications found themselves suppressed in the unfavourable climate—in part politically motivated—of the rescheduling of Polish debts. Many other countries, indeed continents, had to make the headlines before the world placed the problem in the right light. Recent events suggest that the recognition is gaining ground that we live in an interdependent world the problems of which can only be solved together. I hope that we are now witnessing a reevaluation which will lead to a lasting upswing based on cooperation and attention to mutual interests.

For this to happen, however, the mistakes of the past must be borne in mind in order to avoid their repetition.

## *From inflation into recession*

The causes of the present situation must be sought in the inflation of the seventies. This inflation of a new kind had two essential causes: excessive expenditure by governments, enterprises and private persons, and the absence of an international monetary system following the destruction of Bretton Woods.

Excessive expenditure was further encouraged by deeply rooted expectations of inflation. Negative real rates of interest made debt-financing attractive. Inflation led to a loss of confidence in paper-money and in turn to a decline in long-term deposits. Few productive investments, insufficient new jobs and growing unemployment were the result. The Bretton-Woods system

Based on "Das internationale Schuldenproblem aus ungarischer Sicht" in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* February 1983 (Handelsbank N. W. Zwich)



which had served reasonably well for twenty-five years turned into a strait-jacket for US expansion towards the end of the Vietnam War. The policy of the US, abetted by its allies, was responsible for the state of financial anomie which followed the destruction of Bretton-Woods by the US administration in 1971. The closing of the "gold-window" and the resulting absence of a *numéraire* that kept its value led to the introduction of floating rates of exchange with extreme oscillations and the export of inflation and recession. Floating as a system proved a major error. It should have been used as an emergency exit only. The vicious circle was closed, and it kept on reproducing and potentiating itself. The oil-crises added fuel to the fire and brought the situation to a head. Excessive fuel-prices so deteriorated the terms of trade for the majority of the oil-importing countries that losses could only be financed by increasing foreign credits, this becoming one of the main causes of the chronic indebtedness of whole regions. The huge oil-incomes of countries with economies of small absorbant power were generally placed on short-term deposits, subject to great and mass mobility, thus becoming a huge factor making for instability. Trading banks were of considerable service by recycling short-term deposits as medium and long-term loans. This recycling ensured the necessary growth-financing for developing and fuel-importing countries starved of credits, opening the sluice-gates to a dynamic expansion of world trade for some years. As time passed this recycling tended to serve unproductive objectives, such as the financing of trading deficits and the maintenance of standards of living not warranted by national income.

The mass-transformation of short-term funds into long-term loans made possible by the wide-spread use of roll-over credits, moved the trading banks into a dangerous risk-belt. A wobbly credit-pyramid to the tune of 1,000 milliard dollars came into being that was liable to be collapsed even by a relatively small shock.

Meanwhile inflation had assumed proportions which threatened to disorganise business. A series of fruitless attempts manifesting themselves as a stop-go policy finally produced a historic turn of events in the US in the fight against inflation. It was, however, forgotten that this was a new kind of inflation which would not respond to ancient remedies. The gravamen should have been the reduction of budgetary deficits, complemented and supported by weapons from the armoury of monetary policy.

The new course set in the US at the end of 1979 however confined itself to monetary policy exclusively. Lulled by the ideology of monetarism the central bank of the US concentrated on controlling the weekly changes of various technical indices on the quantity of money without giving due



attention to changes in rates of interest. As a result the nominal rate of interest in the US reached records in excess of 20 per cent. It is true that this reduced the rate of inflation but since delays were involved unbearably high real rates of interest were one consequence. Investments drastically declined and unemployment rose fast. High American nominal rates of interest forced other countries as well to raise the interest rate. A massive capital flow to the US raised the exchange rate of the dollar against other currencies to unreal heights. These and high rates of interest caused huge losses to debtor countries and made the servicing of debts unbearable. A world-wide deflationary spiral ensued which led to a deep and lasting recession. Exports were made more difficult since each state employed protectionist measures to defend its own agriculture and industries. The indebtedness of many regions, including eastern Europe, can only be understood in the context of this world economic background.

#### *The story of the fall*

Who was really at fault in this modern fall from grace might be open to dispute, but one thing is certain, a credit transaction is not a case of unrequited love. Many forget these days that granting credits is not grace and favour but business. Credits result in income from interest, and credits must be repaid.

Early in the seventies all the socialist countries undertook major investment projects in order to speed up economic growth and to secure the investment goods necessary for the switch from the extensive to the intensive phase. This period coincided with that of political *détente* which had furthered economic cooperation.

The East-European countries raised medium and long-term credits in the West in order to finance imports of Western investment goods. This coincided with the active search for credit outlets on the part of Western banks. Western exporters, thus hitting on dynamically expanding markets, were highly satisfied.

It must of course be admitted that some of these investments in certain countries were too ambitious. The production envisaged was often too import-intensive and the products were not of a standard required by the intended markets. Once the recession in the West got under way it became increasingly difficult to export to western markets. Add the new Common Market restrictions against CMEA agricultural products, while western firms multiplied efforts to increase exports to eastern Europe.



A certain imbalance in East-West trade was the result which was reflected in the balance of trade of the socialist countries. Western trading banks were happy to finance these deficits since they disposed over considerable liquid funds and the credit rating of the socialist countries was high.

### *Two theories*

Two theories have been formulated in the West concerning eastern European debts. The first, sometimes called the umbrella theory, presumed that, in the last resort, the Soviet Union guaranteed the debts of the other socialist countries. Many, however, were deeply disappointed when this theory did not function in the manner that western creditors had imagined. Not even the Soviet Union—in spite of its great efforts and good will—can afford to finance the mistaken economic policy of other countries *ad infinitum*.

A further shock was produced by changes in the policy of détente which, starting with 1981, produced a deterioration in the international climate. Greater tension was evident on the money market as well. New credits for Eastern Europe became rarer.

The international money market started to panick when first Poland and then Rumania were not able to repay loans when due. A second, even more dangerous, theory spread like wildfire. It was never made explicit but it influenced many decisions. One might call it the pot theory. According to it all the countries of eastern Europe were in the same pot: the financial difficulties of this or that country would soon be followed by those of the others. The panicky massive withdrawal of deposits from eastern Europe which followed developments in Poland meant that even countries with a sound economy experienced a fast erosion of reserves and liquidity troubles soon afterwards.

As a banker I can understand those who refuse to throw good money after bad, to try and redeem what was already lost. For many months though, and on every platform offered I warned however that if such a policy continued good creditors might soon be transformed into defaulting ones. There is no bank in the world that could repay all deposits immediately if all creditors would clamour for them all at once. The oft-mentioned domino effect is present all right but in an altogether different sense. If individual cases are not isolated and other countries are also forced to reschedule then the chain-reaction cannot be stopped at will at the frontiers of this or that region. In a world of interdependent money markets all of us, and I stress, all of us,



without exception, find ourselves in the same pot. It took some time before this recognition found general acceptance.

Rumours and calumnies were spread about the credit standing of the socialist countries, unbelievably exaggerating their problems. Such speculations were sometimes repeated by respectable financial journals and institutes of economics which certainly did not help to alleviate the panic. A variety of economically irrelevant analyses appeared and country-risk tables of doubtful reasoning became popular, all signs of turbulent times. A serious credit standing analysis cannot confine itself to a few indices, a realistic picture demands a synchronised survey of numerous economic facts.

a) Much depends on whether credits are used to finance consumption or for export-incentive projects which will pay for themselves, also whether such exports can already be counted on when repayments are due. It is not the size of the debt which causes anxiety but how much of it was used to increase productive capacities which will secure a currency income that can be used to service the debt.

b) A number of indices also facilitate an analysis of the stock of debts. The relationship between GNP and the size of the debt, or that of exports and the debt are most often used and judged to be the most objective. It should be noted, however, that these indices, though they serve as a guide, are in themselves insufficient and can even be misleading. This is certainly true for the ratio of exports to debts as far as the socialist countries are concerned since in general and arbitrarily only hard currency sales are considered though these countries' trade in fuels, raw-materials and food is generally arranged by clearing agreements. The economic performance of a country expressed in exports cannot—obviously—confine itself to convertible exports.

c) Other indices—such as per capita debt—lack any economic justification and are therefore misleading although they have been much favoured lately. True, per capita GNP gives some idea of the economic development or wealth of a country but per capita debt in no way indicates the ability of the country concerned to repay. Thus it was calculated that Hungary had the highest per capita debt of all the CMEA countries. The much too high figure of 822 dollars was mentioned for 1981. (Agefi Bondletter.) Let me draw attention to a few facts without going into the precise figures. A country risk-table would thus have to accord a high credit standing to e.g. Pakistan with a per capita debt of 105.7 dollars (1981 figure, Reuter 19.10.1982) or India (37.5 dollars for 1980 according to the World Bank World Debt Tables). Denmark on the other hand with 2.631 dollars (Financial Times 19.7.1982) or Sweden with a per capita debt of



over 2,000 dollars, would make up the rear. To put it mildly: that does not reflect the real situation.

d) Last but certainly not least: the credit-worthiness of a country depends in the last resort on the stability of its political system, the determination of its economic policy, the readiness and ability to carry out reforms and its readiness to adapt to a new situation.

Fortunately there have been men of standing and importance who have warned against mistaken snap judgements. Thus Gordon Richardson, at the time Governor of the Bank of England said, when addressing the General Meeting of the Federal Association of German Banks in Bonn on 14.12.1981 that "each country should be judged in terms of its own performance."

Dr Fritz Leutwiller, President of the Swiss National Bank and of BIS repeatedly expressed himself in a similar manner, warning against the dangers of a short-sighted credit policy. (Address to the Chamber of Industry of Rhine-Hesse, Mayence, 23.3.1982)

Karl Otto Prohl, President of the German Bundesbank wrote: "The problems we are confronting are large enough, in my opinion there is no need to increase them by contemplating the deployment of credit as a weapon. I am thus opposed to placing all the countries of eastern Europe in one pot in this respect instead of judging each case on its merits. Of what advantage would it be to us to deliberately steer international finances into a crisis? No one can tell where the weak link or links are in this credit chain which might perhaps break." ("The international currency policy scene" *West-Ost Journal*, September 1982.)

### *The moment of truth*

Times have meanwhile changed abruptly. My own pessimistic cries in the wilderness\* have become more persuasive all the more so since the world financial system has suffered more frequent and more powerful shocks. The list of countries, banks and firms confronted by liquidity problems has growing apace, including rich oilproducing countries, banks of good repute and multinationals of world-wide notoriety. The moment of truth really occurred when Mexico's intentions to reschedule became known, and the other great South American countries were shaken as well. The pot-theory was warmed up and the East European syndrome, the retreat of

\* "Back to realities," an address to the CA Akademie, Vienna 25. 2. 1982.



money from a whole region because one country had got itself a bad name, was repeated in South America. Writing off South America with a mountain of debts of around 300 milliard dollars was however beyond the comprehensible for everybody. It had become obvious that something had to be done urgently to ward off the very real threat of a collapse of the whole world financial system.

*Back to reality*

It is only natural that many of those whose offices make them responsible for maintaining the world financial system are these days warning against exaggerating the problems in order to avoid self-fulfilling prophecies. Being a banker in a small country which intensively participates in world trade and finance I think it necessary to stress that these problems cannot be exaggerated. I am convinced that we have not, since 1929, been as near to a world wide depression as right now. Never before have the US and Western Europe both been in a recession while growth also slowed down considerably in Japan and in the OPEC and CMEA countries. In many important industrial countries the number of the unemployed has reached heights without precedent in recent decades. 1981 was the first year since the Second World War in which world trade actually declined.

The figures are alarming. Let me hasten to add though that I am not a fatalist believing the world-wide depression to be unavoidable. On the contrary. I am sure that we are very close to it, all the more reason for urgent, comprehensive and energetic action which will make it possible to avoid it. There is therefore need to return to reality.

First: the world cannot afford a deflationary policy with such high real rates of interest for much longer. For many years I have indefatigably fought inflation in Hungary and abroad. Even now I have not suffered a sudden conversion and I certainly do not support a return to the inflationary policies of the 60s and 70s. Deflation has, however, become the Public Enemy No 1 of the world economy. It has therefore become urgent the governments, including the administration of the US, the most important country of the West, should adopt a policy which simultaneously puts an end to recession and does away with the fundamental causes of inflation. The policy of economic normalization should start with an essential reduction of high nominal and real rates of interest. One should not, of course, treat the danger of a revival of inflation as superficial. Instead of fighting inflation with monetary means alone a brake ought to be put on it by combining a sound



monetary policy with tough anti-inflationary fiscal measures. "Monetarism can be an effective anti-pyretic but it has not so far restored anyone's health," Harry Taylor, President of Manufacturers' Hanover Trust said on 25.6.1982 at the 35th International Banking Summer School held at St Andrews in Scotland.

Second: the international financial system requires the sound coordination of governments, central banks, trading banks and international organizations.

The latter could have a major role. International monetary and credit institutions, such as the BIS, IMF and the World Bank ought to be essentially strengthened and provided with wider powers.

A mechanism is needed in the first place to ensure that the temporary lack of liquidity of some countries, due to importuning of excited creditors, should not become insolvency. Speedy and decisive action is needed blocking the process of deterioration by short-term credits, so that the financial world should get the message that this particular country would not be abandoned. Such emergency action is, of course, of limited effectiveness only. No outside help can cope if the country itself does not help itself, even taking unpopular measures such as a tightening of belts. Comprehensive and realistic programmes to restore financial health must be worked out.

In such cases as well the aid provided by a reinforced IMF could be decisive. The IMF can cooperate both in the drafting and the implementation of the programme. Purpose-bound funds with the right conditions attached could be ensured for the restoration of economic equilibrium. A significant raising of IMF quotas are urgently needed to this end.\*

The conditions—and control over implementation—would ensure that the sums drawn are properly used. Care must, however, also be taken that the conditions be bearable for the debtor country. As the Governor of the Bank of England said at a dinner given by the Lord Mayor for the bankers and businessmen of the City of London on 21.10.1982 (as reported by the *Financial Times* of 21.10.82 and the BIS Review No 208): "It is much better to give the debtor the chance to repay over a realistic period rather than force him into rescheduling." But even with greater resources the IMF cannot bear the burden alone. "The banks must accept that it would be self-destructive if they tried to reduce quickly their commitments to countries whose credit standing had altered."

Wilfried Guth, the spokesman of the Deutsche Bank (as quoted in Bundesbank press clippings for 19.10.82) expressed his anxiety faced with the

\* Since the first publication of this article the Interim Committee of the IMF has decided at its February 10, 1983 session to raise the quotas by 47.5 per cent to 90 billion SDRs (approx. 100 billion dollars)



danger of an over-hasty retreat of the banks from international business. That would not be in the banks own interests either since, in the last resort it would only increase the number of reschedulings. It would anyway be absurd if after talking about international collaboration in the financial world for years on end one fell back into egoism just when such cooperation was most needed."

Paul Volcker, President of the Federal Reserve System, asked the trading banks "to help developing countries with liquidity troubles not only by a rollover of ancient credits but by new ones in the first place. The Federal Reserve System was ready to relax some of its standards for such new credits." ("Volcker Plan versus crisis of indebtedness", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18.9.82.)

\*

The socialist countries are determined to call a halt to the process of indebtedness and to make a start on reducing the quantity of debts. Measures have already been taken and the results are there for all to see in the figures for 1982.

But such a reduction depends on both sides. The West should buy more from the CMEA countries and should not place protectionist measures in the way of a growth of East-West trade. The socialist countries for their part should produce goods of sufficient quality and quantity for export to the West. Import restrictions should remain short-term emergency measures. A sound and dynamic growth in foreign trade is the only possible long-term solution. Mutual endeavours are needed, a return to political detente in the first place.

Getting back to my own country, I think I am justified in citing Hungary as an example of functioning international cooperation. It has been Hungarian policy since 1978 to give priority to internal and external equilibrium. To ensure this the government has shown itself ready to take tough and unpopular measures, restricting consumption and investment and furthering export industries. Thanks to such measures Hungary was unanimously granted IMF and World Bank membership six months after giving notice of the intention to join. Liquidity problems in early 1982 were bridged by readily granted BIS short-term credits to the tune of 510 million dollars.\* Following thorough consultation with an IMF mission in Budapest the Executive Committee decided in December 1982 to put a medium-term

\* They have since been fully repaid.



standby and compensation credit of altogether 550 m SDR at the disposal of the country. In the awareness of such good cooperation between Hungary and the international monetary institutions the large trading banks also showed a readiness to grant new medium term credits. In August 1982 the Hungarian National Bank raised a major consortial credit from consortia, one of them, of 260 million dollars, organized by Manufacturers' Hanover Trust.

Hungary is an example proving that the international organizations are prepared to help a country which is ready to put its own house in order first.

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# NEW FEATURES OF THE HUNGARIAN ECONOMIC MECHANISM IN THE MID-EIGHTIES

by

LÁSZLÓ CSABA

**M**ore than four years have passed since the December 1978 session of the Central Committee of the HSWP instigated fundamental changes in the direction of economic policy and in economic management. The original growth concept and the original priorities of the Fifth Five-Year Plan (1976-1980) were abandoned and an end was put to the partly centrally administered, partly locally initiated, spontaneous<sup>1</sup> recentralization processes, which denied at the level of everyday management the spirit and principles of the regulated market economy, commonly known as the new economic mechanism. The meeting gave high priority to the restoration of equilibrium of the balance of payments in convertible currencies, and marked a resolute return to the original principles in economic management. The meeting went beyond the 1968 modifications, declaring that the urgent need to reform (re-reform and further reform) economic management practice was closely tied to adjustment to changes in the international economic environment and also to necessary changes in economic policy (unlike in 1968, when the slogan was "our economic policy is sound, it is just the means of implementation that have to be altered").

What are the results and dilemmas of this new economic line? Two undisputable achievements hit the eye: the ability to maintain the country's solvency in extremely unfavourable foreign economic circumstances and especially in face of increasingly restrictive international credit practices, and the ability to put an end to the recentralizing tendencies of the seventies, avoiding the temptation to institutionalize emergency measures that were adopted between 1979 and 1982 in order to attain specific short-term objectives. A third achievement might be the change-over to a new development path, but it has to be understood that this is still more of a recognized



requirement rather than an accomplished fact. Attention has been rightly drawn to the fact that in economic theory one development path differs from the other not in the overall rate of growth of gross output (GNP) or of industrial production, but in the efficiency of investments (expressed at the macro-level by ICOR, for incremental capital-output ratio).<sup>2</sup> In this respect unfortunately there has been no meaningful change in the Hungarian economy since 1978, despite a marked slowdown in output indices, so foreign economic equilibrium has been attained primarily at the cost of cutting back investments\* and living standards, whereas production has remained sluggish—industrial production in the first place—in adjusting to external and domestic demand. Industrial exports for convertible currencies stagnated in real terms in 1980 and 1981, 1982 brought a decline of 1–2 per cent instead of the planned growth of 6 per cent “Improvement is still slow in the quality of enterprise management (apart from energy saving). Progress is far from adequate in the production of items that are modern, competitive on Western markets, import substituting, and material-saving. There is not enough initiative or enterprise around. This is the main reason why the financial situation of many enterprises has become strained and in the course of 1982 liquidity problems began to grow, so both the number of permanently insolvent companies and the quantity of unpaid debts was on the increase. . . . The state budget proposed for 1983 is based on the realization of the tough fact that, although 1982 results are positive as a whole, they are nevertheless not large enough to serve as a basis for further development,” writes Antal Pongrácz, an official of the Ministry of Finance.<sup>3</sup>

What are the causes for this development? Among the multitude of factors and numerous possible interpretations the following point, made by János Hoós, the State Secretary for the National Planning Office, deserves special attention.<sup>4</sup>

There are two options for a new development strategy. One is “hard budget constraint,” i.e. demanding efficiency standards for enterprises, including the possibility of bankruptcy for those that do not prove competitive. In Hungarian conditions this means discontinuing support for notoriously non-competitive economic units, a vigorous structural policy, including the divestment of declining, industries, marked differentiation of incomes according to performance, and long overdue staffing changes in management and authorities of central control. Such a line inevitably widens

\* The share of investments in net material product decreased from 30 per cent in 1978 to 14 per cent in 1983, while imports for convertible currencies were 20 per cent less in 1982 than in 1978 (about 75 per cent of this cutback being a product of 1982); real wages fell in 1979, stayed on the same level in 1981–2, a further drop being planned for 1983.



and makes explicit the gap between the value-judgements of the market, and of political ways of thinking and local vested interests. This would, however, produce palpable results within a few years.

The other policy option is to determine the pace of changes by giving priority to local stability and by a practice of shunning conflicts even at the local level. This line seems to be politically more feasible, since it can be related to arguments stressing the security aspects of socialist society, such as job security (meaning the maintenance of each existing job), smaller rates of open inflation, and the absence of open political conflict. But this option involves slow or no growth, in some ways it is the equal of the postponement rather than the solution of structural and balance of payments problems. After some time, which can serve as a process of learning for society, the very same problems emerge as with the first option, only in a larger magnitude.

Let me confine myself to stressing at this point that it was the second option that largely determined the earlier summarized real economic and also institutional, management developments in Hungary in 1979-1982. A detailed analysis would be needed to offer the evidence.\* This policy was reinforced by foreign economic developments. It means first of all that the earlier mentioned credit squeeze, which resulted from a completely unjustified generalization from the side of Western banks,\*\* who mechanically evaluated the risks of credit granting to Hungary in much the same way as for Poland and Rumania, whose economic policy, management system, internal situation, and above all, the movement of each classical index of credit-worthiness (such as the debt-service ratio), were quite unlike what was true for Hungary in 1979-81. The growth of international political tensions following December 1981 led to the withdrawal of an unexpectedly large body of—normally revolving—short-term deposits, coupled with a virtual credit embargo and the then high rate of interest, which hit especially hard just because of the country's forced reliance on short-term financing. These developments "not only hindered the normal way of running international financial relations, but also obstructed the application of traditional economic policy norms."<sup>5</sup> This meant that the traditional methods of planning, assuming pre-fixed tasks over a longer period and a set of more or less stable economic instruments, serving the accomplishment of these pre-determined goals, derived to a large extent from extra-economic considerations, convictions, value-judgements, and concepts of an idealized future, could not be maintained.

\* See e.g. László Antal: "Reflections on the Hungarian Economic Reform." *Acta Oeconomica* (forthcoming).

\*\* See János Fekete's article on p. 34. of this issue.



In the period under scrutiny, some of the basic underlining presumptions of the 1981–1985 Sixth Five-Year Plan had to be significantly modified. Hungarian planners assumed in 1979 that the country will have to achieve foreign trade equilibrium only by 1985. Trade deficit, which ran at 60,000 million forints or 11 per cent of the Net Material Product (rouble and non-rouble areas together) was cut back to 16,000 million by 1980 and to 10,000 million by 1982 (hardly 1.5 per cent of national income),<sup>6</sup> but as a result of the bottleneck in medium-term credit flows from April 1981 to August (in fact December) 1982, the Hungarian leadership was still forced to make extraordinary efforts in order to be able to maintain the equilibrium of the balance of payments of the country. This included emergency measures such as restricting imports, giving greater importance to the role of import substituting projects,\* and also of reorienting imports from one trading area to the other as well as forcing—mainly agrarian—exports even at unfavourable export prices or at a loss.<sup>7</sup> This meant that these days realism in planning meant not only a passive recognition of facts and unfavourable developments, or a less *dirigiste* approach to speeding up microeconomic adjustment, but rather continuous adjustment to changing circumstances through macro-level, and often directive operative actions, which also involved the modification of aims and also of means.<sup>6</sup> On the side of aims, not only a balanced but even an active trade position has to be achieved in relation to convertible currency areas, and not in 1985, but already in 1983, as a part of a credit deal, which seems to be a very strained task indeed, rightly described by Ferenc Havasi the Secretary of the Central Committee of the HSWP in charge of the economy, as the most difficult goal in thirty years.<sup>7</sup>

On the side of means, already in the 1979–1982 period it involved increased government interference in economic processes, also in directive forms,<sup>8</sup> and, within the year, changes in financial rules and regulations.<sup>3</sup> It is nevertheless accepted at the political level that a long-term solution can only be a consistent application of the 1968 principles, meaning more decentralization, rather than further centralizing measures. This paradoxical situation does pose a problem for the Hungarian government as expressed by Finance Minister István Hetényi: “We weigh with equal precision such measures as are necessary for the immediate improvement in foreign economic equilibrium, which occasionally also bear the signs of forced adjustment, as well as requirements that serve our preparation for the future, such as the continuous development of the institutional-organizational system.”<sup>9</sup>

\* This aspect is stressed several times in the guidelines of the 1983 plan, as reflected in the communiqué published on the December 1 session of the CC of HSWP. See: *Népszabadság*, December 3, 1982.



This basic contradiction between long-term and short-term aims and means plus the earlier described cautious policy option made a decisive imprint on management changes of 1979–1982, and also determines changes implemented from January 1983.

*Changes in Planning and the State Management of the Economy*

One of the contradictions of the reformed Hungarian economic management system was that while changing the role and means of planning and also of financial regulation, it left the organizational-institutional system unaltered. The continuation of an overcentralized organizational system—the concomitant of the directive planning system in 1962–1964—as well as unchanged institutions and personnel of the industry ministerial supervision became a major curb on the 1968 reform itself. While the computation materials of the national economic plan—as well as the plan itself—were not legally obligatory throughout the seventies, industrial ministries and regional authorities kept on pressing enterprises to adjust their activities to comply with these figures, rather than to market signals. Inherent problems in control, narrow departmentalism, continued and were a major factor of cyclical overinvestments in 1971–1972 as well as 1977–1978, contributing significantly to the growing indebtedness of the country.

Among other factors these developments motivated the decision to merge three major industrial ministries in 1980 into a single Ministry of Industry. This, in fact, was originally envisaged for 1966–1970, but then postponed. However, this step follows from the very logic of the indirect system of economic management. Since physical planning requires increasingly detailed specification of tasks, it results—as shown by economic history experience—in a growing number of economic management organs. In a monetarized, decentralized economy, at the other extreme, where profit is the sole index of success in the competitive sphere, there is no need to distinguish between light and heavy (or any other) industries.<sup>10</sup> Consequently the maintenance of industrial ministries was truly superfluous already in the seventies. It is important to note that this reorganization acquires its true meaning if it does not remain an isolated step, but is complemented by like-minded organizational changes among and also within those other state management bodies, which are for the time being still shaped and structured according to the traditional industry-by-industry principle.

Until these far-reaching changes take place, however, the Ministry of Industry has to function among other—usually traditionally organized—



management organizations. The new ministry had to adjust itself to the management style of the majority, and also to the experience of its own staff, recruited chiefly from the ranks of the earlier industrial ministries, who are accustomed to the practice of detailed supervision of enterprise activity. This contradiction seems to have been temporarily solved in a way that resembles more the old industrial ministries than the new structure and the new line of thinking.

Day-to-day market supervision has become the job of the National Prices and Materials Board (although in theory it seems questionable whether the supervision of fair market practices can usefully be made the duty of a state authority, rather than that of economic tribunals,\* especially if this organ has other major duties apart from acting against the restriction of competition). The role of the National Prices and Materials Board has been significantly enhanced by the fact that it administers the new price system of 1980 (see below). Beyond this and market supervision it also acts as a watchdog against making unjustified profits or braking centrally set rules of price calculation.

Of two government commissions the State Planning Commission takes major decisions concerning long-range economic strategy, the Economic Commission on the other hand has the right to supervise any external or internal economic problem it takes an interest in and is entitled to take certain short-term steps in order to solve it. This was thought to be necessary since it was found that in some cases it was mainly interdepartmental inertia and bureaucratic procedures that hindered quick and flexible adjustment to external disturbances.

It is also the head of the Economic Commission who has the right to supervise those import restrictions, which had to be imposed because of balance of payments difficulties.\*\* Worsening discipline of supplies from CMEA countries—which was criticized at the 1982 Budapest session of the Council by several delegates—made it inevitable to strengthen the central, government-level supervision of the timing and carrying out of delivery obligations to and from CMEA trading partners. This is also looked after by the Economic Commission, while the State Planning Commission approves central development programmes and action programmes (such as

\* Of course, the newly created National Council of Consumers (organized within the framework of the Patriotic People's Front), representatives of industrial interests—such as the Chamber of Commerce—as well as of state quality-control institutions can be instrumental in initiating legal action against unfair competition, but these are not a substitute for something that is the equivalent of a Cartel Office.

\*\* In September 1982 the Hungarian government officially notified GATT signatories of the imposition of quantitative restriction imports from hard currency areas.



energy saving, or waste reprocessing programmes), and this authority decides on the fate and restructuring programmes of notoriously unprofitable organizations.

Macroeconomic planning has been modernized both conceptually and methodologically. Partly under the pressure of practical requirements of the period under discussion, the continuous nature of planning—in contrast with the earlier discretionary, i.e. step-by-step practice—has been accepted both in practice and in theory. The coordination of long, medium and short-term plans has been improved from several aspects. It has become clear that long-term planning is not meant to produce a document containing detailed plan targets for 15–20 years, not even one determining priorities with the same detail in each main field of the economy. Long-term planning is thought to be primarily an intellectual exercise which facilitates the clear formulation of the type of problems medium-term planning is about to face—the alternatives as well as consequences of current medium-term plan decisions, and their impact on future plan periods. The setting of priorities is concentrated—again not quantitatively as a rule—on social aspects of economic development and infrastructural projects. In this sense long-term planning itself is becoming a continuous process.

In drafting the plan for 1981–1985 the principle of openness has been stressed, meaning that economic management authorities no longer press for the unconditional fulfilment of quantitative plan targets—few of them are listed in the Sixth Five-Year-Plan itself—and decisions on some major questions were deliberately been postponed to 1983 and 1984. This way Hungarian planners try to avoid earlier mistakes, when decisions—often taken in physical rather than in value form—of the first year(s) of the plan overdetermined developments of the last years of the plan period, not leaving sufficient room for manoeuvre in adjusting to changing circumstances.

It has to be added, however, that this truly major change in approach to macroeconomic planning could not be fully realized so far. Analysis of financial flow between 1979 and 1981 indicates<sup>11</sup> that central development programmes—such as for coal-mining, for pharmaceuticals, for intermediary products, for economizing energy—basically still took precedence over considerations of efficiency and also over rules of normative financial regulation. For instance, the investment credit contingent for 1982 was already 100 per cent pre-allotted by in-kind decisions, formulating—or stemming directly from—central development priorities. A similar situation is reported for 1983 by the President of the National Bank, stressing that to obtain some room for manoeuvre the Bank will have to re-evaluate and in certain cases even revoke already granted investment credits.<sup>5</sup>



One of the earlier weak points of the Hungarian economic mechanism was tackled by the November 1982 government decrees on modernizing upper enterprise management forms. The state of direct dependence of upper echelon enterprise management on the supervising industrial ministries—and partly also on regional control organizations—has become instrumental in enforcing the earlier criticized practice of the seventies of compelling legally fully independent enterprises to obey expectations formulated by the above bodies rather than market signals. According to a recent series of case studies conducted by the Chamber of Commerce<sup>12</sup> Hungarian managers in industry feel that they are still more dependent on the comprehensive evaluation of their performance by the supervisory authorities than on profits, especially that this evaluation tends to level incomes that are differentiated by enterprise profit-results. Expectations are usually formed in quantities or in some general form of a defined partial aim, such as meeting a certain quantitative convertible currency plan for exports (usually set by regional bodies), or the supply of the inhabitants of a given region with goods in demand that are unprofitable for the enterprise. Setting such objectives might well not be a necessary evil in itself—although in economic theory it would be difficult to reconcile such a paternalistic approach with the logic of the market. But the actual way this power was wielded is well exemplified by the case of two bankrupt organizations. The agricultural producers' cooperative Aranykalász of Ráckeve, for instance, each year in 1977–1980 received the Grand Prix of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Food Industry before going bankrupt in mid-1982, and the construction company TANÉP of Heves County, whose bankruptcy is also illustrated by the prosecution of its corrupt managers, received awards of the regional offices and of the Ministry of Construction and City Development on ten occasions, the last just in the year of bankruptcy.

It therefore clearly makes sense for the November 1982 government decrees to aim at loosening—though not cutting—direct dependence of enterprise management on the state hierarchy. Supervisory committees of enterprises, composed chiefly of outside experts, representatives of the functional bodies, trade unions, and employees of the firm were given the right for the comprehensive evaluation of managers, and the right to evaluate—although not to reject—long-term enterprise plans. Employer and owner functions, such as dismissing the manager or taking decisions binding on management, however, have not been granted to the supervisory committees,<sup>13</sup> so they will only mildly loosen, but not replace, enterprise dependence on central supervision.

The second set of decrees develops the institution of a board of directors.



This body is meant to strengthen the position of member-enterprises of trusts and of nationally organized multi-firm enterprises. Plants are entitled to delegate a representative to this body, where intra-trust coordination of interests and conflicts are made more explicit. This legal body will acquire its due role when the current dependence of incomes and promotion of lower level managers on the general manager will cease. If that will occur then\* the new legal form can create a framework for transforming the present dependencies into independently taxed economic units, whose former centre acts as an agent rather than as the boss of the member-plants.<sup>14</sup>

A third innovation is the introduction of applications for the post of general manager, whereas their deputies are going to be appointed by them, not—as earlier—by the industrial ministry. This change strengthens the general manager's position *vis-à-vis* the ministry, and also makes currently utterly secretive personnel plans and changes more public and more competitive. It has to be noted, however, that the decree unfortunately stops short of making this form compulsory, and even if it did, experience with this method elsewhere (e.g. at the research institutes of the Academy of Sciences) shows that without further changes in the interests of those choosing among the nominees, without making their income dependent on the performance of those chosen, the institution of applications may remain formal. A further weak point is that procedures for dealing with the dismissal of managers still have to be worked out, and the role of those representative bodies which conventionally express the earlier criticized expectations in relation to enterprises, will also remain dominant in the nomination, appointment, and dismissal of managers.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Changes in the Financial Sphere*

Beyond doubt, by far the most important change in the financial sphere was the introduction in January 1980 of a competitive price system for about 60 per cent of industrial activities, i.e. for about 35 per cent of national production. While the 1968 changes did not affect the self-determination of the price system, since it continued to reflect domestic prime costs plus average profits, starting with 1980 capitalist world market prices started to have an immediate influence on the domestic industrial price structure of Hungary. Whereas in 1968 the basic aim was to increase the

\* This can be connected to the expansion of newly established forms of capital reallocation, which puts an end to the current situation where investing within one's own organization is always more useful (even at a lower profit) than investing elsewhere (say in an affiliate).



share of free and maximum prices at the expense of fixed prices, the chief objective of the 1980 modifications was different. Setting out from the premise that the basic choice under present Hungarian conditions cannot be other than between a cost plus conventional type officially fixed price system and an export profit-led officially administered one,<sup>15</sup> the second option was accepted. This means that at what is called a leading enterprise (where the new pricing principle is most clearly applied, i.e. a firm, where more than 5 per cent of the output is exported to the West) the profit rate on the rest of production cannot exceed the profit rate realized in sales for convertible currencies, regardless of what actual supply-demand relations might justify or allow on domestic and CMEA markets.

There are further enterprise categories, where the new pricing principle is not, or not directly, applied. They constituted 65 per cent of enterprises in 1980 (according to their contribution to NMP), and their share has been increasing since that base year. For several categories domestic cost plus type of pricing remained in force (such as agriculture, transport, and the building industry, as well as consumer services). These two major groups—one with world market pricing and the one with domestic pricing—are connected by those, which are followers to leading enterprises. Their prices, in principle, are derived from the prices charged by the leading enterprises by setting prices proportional to these. Setting proportional prices is, of course, not a very sound or precise economic method and although this is done on principle by the enterprises themselves, the fact whether or not they have transgressed the rules and limits set by the price authorities concerning unjustified profits needs continuous supervision by the prices authority. Of course much room is left for bargaining, since again, price calculation is not an internal matter for the enterprise, computing costs and benefits for its own use, the calculations being accepted or corrected by the market. As a consequence, the calculations are in themselves a means of incomes bargaining, since in the last resort it is the enterprise and the prices authority together who have a final say about prices.

A fourth category of prices is one where import prices are the guide. Fuels and raw materials are in this group, and it ensures that natural resources are valued in Hungary at their marginal cost. The dovetailing of the four categories has not been an easy task, and the—not always final—decision on which category an individual enterprise should fall into was also a result of—sometimes renewed—bargaining with the authorities, since there was no objective base to decide on a number of individual cases.

The main purpose of the introduction of this system was to exert deflationary pressure on the economy, as well as to apply—although in an arti-



ficial manner—the standards of the world market to domestic industrial production. In the absence of actual import competition an attempt is made to simulate what might happen if there were competition. At the time of the introduction of this pricing system it was stressed<sup>16</sup> that the above-summarized solution is not a crystallized model, nor an optimal but a second best solution, a result of a compromise with forces of protectionism. It was also to be of a transitory nature. Competitive pricing as described above was to be applied for two or three years altogether, and its success was to be measured—according to Béla Csikós-Nagy<sup>16</sup>—by Hungary's success in switching over to an actual market and a corresponding market pricing system, and also to actual import competition. It has to be added that currently such a change is not expected to occur and so this artificial pricing system is to remain in force to the end of the 1980s.<sup>17</sup>

Several misunderstandings seem to be unjustified in this context. 1. The Hungarian price system is not based on world market prices, but on domestic average prime costs plus a profit rate, which is set by official regulation, making it compulsory for leading enterprises to apply the actual export profit rate to domestic and CMEA sales, irrespective of their actual profitability. 2. The Hungarian price system of 1980 has nothing to do with a free market price system, where enterprises set prices at will, constrained only by market competition. On the contrary: a large number of strictly defined and continuously supervised central regulations applies to the ways and the magnitudes of profits industry can calculate. 3. This price system does not open up the economy to direct world market pressure, instead it is itself a substitute for something which is in reality non-existent—i.e. import competition.

Theoretical economists of different persuasions have disputed the usefulness of introducing competitive pricing from the very outset. The system is artificial and is irresponsive to changes in domestic supply and demand. In fact, given the institutionalizing of enterprise categories and of such calculation procedures as require continuous central supervision, it was the category of free prices which was abolished in 1980, whereas free prices constitute the heart of any market system. Although the incredible extra bureaucracy, produced by the practical need to administer such an artificial system, was sharply criticized by the architects of the system itself,<sup>18</sup> this is faint consolation, as bureaucracy is an inherent by-product of a system, which lacks a self-correcting automatism, so the *sine qua non* of its functioning is operative interference. Practical economists are of the opinion that the more detailed a regulation is, the bigger the number of unregulated individual cases is bound to be.<sup>19</sup> In practice the basic pricing regulation—



decree number 6/1979. Á.H.—has indeed had to be supplemented by a growing number of decrees of implementation and modification. As a result of the 5 per cent construction itself, calculations of each leading enterprise also have to be continuously supervised. It is not some invisible hand, but the price authority with its rule on unjustified profits who ensure compliance with the export price following rule. In order to avoid cost plus pricing becoming more advantageous, a very low, 4 per cent, profit rate was set for these units. Among conditions of an economy of shortages and state ensured monopoly positions, the temptation and the possibility to achieve higher profits was very strong, and so price supervision of cost plus pricing enterprises also had to be strengthened.

These developments led to two consequences. 1. The dependency structure of enterprises on the state hierarchy has become more complex: plan bargaining and bargaining about financial regulators has been supplemented by a third dimension, i.e. bargaining about the rules (and their application) for pricing.<sup>20</sup> 2. One of the basic principles of the 1980 changes, i.e. that of uniform or normative regulation, had to be systematically broken, as bargaining about the application of a large number of rules could be done only in an individualized manner. This made possible the rebirth of those non-normative subsidies, which it had been the intention to wipe out, as both individual tax-exemption and individually allowed tolerance in applying pricing rules in the last resort mean ensuring the survival of uncompetitive economic units.<sup>19</sup> Partly as a result of the economic policy attitude making way for the above development, partly as a result of the Finance Ministry's adjustment to individualizing pricing practices and individual plan and operative management decisions, the income regrouping function of the state budget could not be limited. In 1981, for instance, as much as 75 per cent of all enterprise income was related to this activity of the Budget.<sup>21</sup> Since balance of payments difficulties could only be managed at virtually stagnating national income, growing income needs of the state budget could only be attained through instituting a large number of non-normative financial regulations, even those within the course of the fiscal year.<sup>3</sup> Such were the increases of certain taxes before the end of the fiscal year, first freezing than taxing away of the reserve fund of enterprises, an extraordinary speeding up of paying back credits regardless of the growth possibilities of the development fund and many others.

Important changes took place in exchange rate policy too. In preparation of Hungary's joining the IMF from October 1981 a unified rate of exchange for convertible currencies is applied. This seems to be a theoretically justified step, but it also has to be borne in mind that (a) the unification of



commercial and tourist rates took place without an overall price, taxation, and wages reform (although each of these elements were modified but not with an eye on exchange rate policy), (b) since the galloping inflation on world markets the National Bank of Hungary has had a forint-revaluating policy. Since in 1976–1980 the rate of revaluation regularly exceeded improvements in costs of obtaining a unit of hard currency, one could hardly dispute the position of a leading Hungarian authority on international finances, who spoke of a “daring turnabout” when the original Sixth Five-Year Plan set the continuation of revaluating exchange rate policy and cut-backs in export subsidies as parallel objectives.<sup>22</sup> It has to be judged therefore as a positive step that in July 1982 the continuous revaluation trend of the Hungarian forint, which used to be economically unjustified in view of the continuously large balance of payments deficit, has been reversed, and the financial plan for 1983 envisages continuation of the devaluation trend.<sup>3</sup> It seems that the exchange rate has up till now been unilaterally subordinated to price policy goals (i.e. for filtering out external inflation) which is justified in a plan directives economy but brings about a number of problems in a more or less monetarized economy like the Hungarian. First, in view of the above developments the exchange rate of the forint to the US\$ is calculated not even at the level of average costs of obtaining one unit of \$—which would still be below the theoretically desirable marginal rate\*—but even below the average. As a result 2/3 of Hungarian exports has to be subsidized in the formal sense. These subsidies are not real subsidies—strictly prohibited by GATT rules—but only return to exporters those incomes that would normally be generated by a marginal exchange rate.<sup>23</sup>

Concerning imports a consequence of the present exchange rate level is that restricting imports and giving incentives for efficient substitution of imports is not even attempted through the exchange rate. It has long been argued *concerning imports*<sup>15</sup> that Hungarian demand is inelastic regarding the exchange rate, a postulate which was refuted by the dramatic effects of the introduction of marginal pricing of fuels and raw materials on material and energy consumption in 1980–1982. Furthermore, the application of a below average cost based exchange rate subsidizes rather than curbs imports, it inevitably increases pressures for the administrative regulation of imports, which cannot be implemented in any reasonable way. Since the precondi-

\* Marginal exchange rate: the cost in the national currency of the marginal unit of the foreign currency. In practice the average cost of producing a unit of foreign currency of the least efficient 10 per cent of the enterprises that produce the quantity of exports necessary for balance of payments equilibrium. It is known as the equilibrium exchange rate since, if it is applied, foreign trade equilibrium can be ensured wholly or largely by a normative monetary regulator which applies equally to everybody, without particular individual measures or incentives. I here use the two terms interchangeably.



tions for a unified exchange rate were lacking, this step, the attainment of which chiefly motivated regulating exchange rate revaluations, has paradoxically by itself become a brake on the further monetarization and decentralization of the Hungarian economy, as long as it limits the scope for normative financial regulation both from the import and export angle.

One further reform step of 1983 deserves brief attention: a principal change in the wages system which was based up till 1983 on regulation upward from the achieved level. The resulting modest but steady growth requirement is one of the worst legacies of the directive system. Such a wage system has always acted as a major anti-market factor in the economic reform. From 1983 on wages will depend not on an increment, but on the level of profits. The full impact of this truly essential change cannot sufficiently be felt in 1983 yet, since the strained export targets of the plan set rigorous limits to the growth of domestic use of GNP, including wages. As a result, the measures of the new regulation have become utterly restrictive: generally 6–10 forints of development fund can be converted to 1 forint of wages plus bonus funds. In other words, the incentive function of wage regulation has unfortunately again been subordinated to the aim of limiting purchasing power in order to maintain equilibrium on domestic markets.<sup>24</sup>

#### *Changes in the Organizational Structure of Enterprises*

In the enterprise sphere first steps have been taken to discontinue the economically unjustified, overcentralized enterprise structure. Some large enterprises have been dismembered certain plants once again becoming independent economic units. Several horizontal trusts have been dissolved (such as those governing the production of tinned food and of soft drinks, car-repairs, and sugar refining). In other cases central bodies of former trusts lost their power to regroup the funds of member-enterprises, and continue to exist as technical servicing or marketing centres (breweries, coal-mining). Still other large, national multi-unit firms developed a more market-oriented internal cost-accounting system, and the right to compensate losses of one plant at the expense of another has been circumscribed by law.

A 1982 declaration by the Hungarian government means that agro-industrial associations can only function as experimental units. It seems probable that their current number of four will not increase till 1985, as it has been functioning<sup>25</sup> that they are shaped to the requirement of a different—that is directive—concept of management of agriculture, and not the present Hungarian one. It is not necessary to prove that their present right to regroup funds of the member-cooperatives—the extension of which is



advocated by Vince Hanyecz<sup>25</sup>—as well as similar endeavours of newly created Agricultural Co-Managements is just as contrary to the spirit of the indirect management system, as is the case with industrial trusts.

In agriculture where from the early 1960s small and large firms as well as different ownership categories organically coexisted, auxiliary industrial activities of agricultural enterprises have become widespread. In 1978, for instance, 94 per cent of all state farms and 83.4 per cent of all agricultural producers' cooperatives were engaged in some form of industrial activity, with a total workforce of 77,900. Half of these were vertical extensions of agricultural activity.<sup>26</sup> Their main field in the 1970s was the production of spare parts for large industrial units, so the recentralization campaign, initiated by large enterprises, hit the initiators themselves hardest. By the end of the decade the problem of background industries (i.e. makers of component parts, etc.) became critical. This has led to the re-evaluation of earlier ideas, and the recognition of the usefulness of small entrepreneurship.

Legal regulations of January 1982 cleared the way for such ventures in state, cooperative, and private sectors, in production, trade, consumer services, and intellectual work alike. One important feature of the new legislation is that local authorities lost their former right to decide, whether the new venture is socially necessary, and it is up to the consumers to decide. Local councils may only check trade or professional qualifications, and if they are not lacking, the applicants cannot be denied permission to start their venture. This decision is a logical consequence of practical experience that in some fields, especially consumer services, diseconomies rather than economies of scale exist. In a period of reduced investments, this is one reasonable way to develop an infrastructure and consumer services alike. The emergence of small firms might divert some of the most enterprising people from large economic units in the state sector. However, this may also make a positive impact, as it induces large state enterprises to become more competitive. One aspect would be to induce differentials according to performance, and promotion by merit, rather than according to other criteria. Another might be laying off inefficient labour to be able to pay extra to the best workers. A third positive impact of competition could result in changes in the present, utterly conservative, internal management structure and personnel policy of large enterprises. This is reflected in the fact that in 1980 in Hungary among upper and middle management the ratio of those with a university degree\* amounted to only one-third, whereas only 15.6 per cent of university graduates were in some kind of managerial position.<sup>27</sup>

\* This number includes those who have earned their qualifications at the 3-year course of the Evening University of Marxism-Leninism.



It has to be added, however, that as a result of all these steps the number of industrial units increased by less than 10 per cent between 1980 and 1982, since amalgamations also took place. In the first nine months of 1982 most of the new small firms were established within the framework of socialist—state-run and cooperative—organizations,\* and only 7,000 people were working in small units, formed outside the socialist sector.<sup>28</sup> This also shows that the overwhelming dominance of the state and cooperative, i.e. the socialist, sector has been preserved.

Nevertheless, the first attacks on the still nascent changes, which are described as excesses, warning against what these authors see as an already present free marketeer approach, have been published in the specialized press.<sup>29</sup> However, earlier outlined changes may indicate that the danger that “in the present great impetus even some of those large units are dismembered, which utilized centralization for creating specialization and cooperation; thus a concentration of efforts becomes impossible even in those cases, where the market would require it”<sup>29</sup> has not appeared in practice even once. On the contrary, the typical case was that large economic units wanted to get rid of outdated dependencies making a loss as a means of improving their profitability, as happened with Tungsram in the case of its former Pécs plant “Sopiana”.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise in 1982 both large industry in general and the man in the street adopted a wait and see attitude, as shown by the predominance of intra-enterprise forms of small entrepreneurship. These are often just a means of overcoming rigidities in wage regulation—the Minister of Industry, Lajos Méhes, pointed out—still it would be a mistake to limit them, since they help to satisfy actual demand by large enterprises, they open up reserves and prove that, with an appropriate intra-enterprise incentive system, with better organization the productivity of labour can be increased significantly,\*\* if income depends on performance, something that is not allowed in such a direct form by general wage regulation.<sup>30</sup> With their contradictory position these small units only reflect some

\* The January 1982 regulations concerning small enterprises allow for a multitude of forms. Apart from the private and the cooperative sectors, they also detailed a number of organizational forms that can be applied within large state-owned enterprises, such as leasing, organized overtime work, (contractual associations of various kinds registered under various headings provided by Hungarian commercial law), etc. This means, that workers in the state sector can form small units within the gates of their own enterprise, and help to alleviate by overtime and other work beyond the line of duty bottlenecks in repairs, servicing etc., thus contributing to the improved performance of the large unit. There are special forms of accounts which allow small association to run a whole section of a large unit with full independence of action, i.e. with much greater flexibility. This form guarantees an income for the large unit, and extra income for more flexibly performing workers.

\*\* According to case studies by as much as 90 per cent, in transport by even more.



of the ambiguities of the current situation of the economic mechanism. These can be finally solved only when wages regulation will make it possible for large units to compete on the labour market, which implies the introduction of much greater cost sensitivity for them, the full realization of the newly created forms of capital re-allocation, which will provide an objective measure and mechanism for deciding which large unit is really more competitive than the small ones, which organizational size of a particular enterprise is economically optimal, etc.<sup>14</sup> It means that further measures, which add up to a comprehensive further development of the 1968 economic reform, is needed in the long run.

### *Prospects Ahead*

As has been shown above, practical economic management has become more operative in 1979–1982, chiefly under the pressure of short-term balance of payments problems. This is why it is of real significance that the June 1982 session of the Central Committee of the HSWP did not institutionalize those transitory and *ad hoc* changes that were not in accordance with the logic of the decentralized system of plan-based management.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, the meeting opted for a comprehensive further perfectioning of the decentralized system of management and for the more consistent realization of 1968 principles. Although some measures are already under way, the actual set of measures implementing this resolution are expected for 1985. Analysis of enterprise activities indicates that 1979–1982 changes proved to be insufficient to change enterprise behaviour. According to a series published in *Népszabadság*, enterprise which found themselves in a difficult position in 1982 were much the same as those which ran into difficulties in 1979 and also in 1972. And what were the practical causes of these problems? The most important included the unrealistic planning of developments in the medium term, especially on Western markets, large investments in crisis-ridden industries, poor forecasting of domestic demand, neglect of exchange rate changes between the forint and the US \$ and also among different convertible currencies, as well as poor organization and low working moral at the notoriously loss-making enterprises. How can it be—*Népszabadság* justifiably asks—that while in the world whole industries are closing down, in Hungary hardly an enterprise has declared bankruptcy?<sup>31</sup>

The developments of the last few years have shown that in order to produce fundamental changes in Hungarian enterprise behaviour, reforms that are more thorough than the 1968 changes are needed: in addition to



economic changes social, political, and governmental reforms are also necessary. Among the economic measures the most important ones would be to find new ways and also new institutional forms of exercising the ownership functions of the socialist state. Owner bodies should organizationally be separated from such as wield administrative and public functions. Without such changes it is impossible to modify current paternalistic relationship between the state hierarchy and enterprises, and make state enterprises interested in profits rather than in meeting other, non-economic expectations. The problem of capital re-allocation mechanism and the creation of its adequate institutions has to be tackled. Foreign trade should be freed from what József Bognár termed "the primitive forms that have been dominating since the early fifties."<sup>32</sup> This would imply more sweeping changes than the currently instituted small steps, such as the extension of legal forms of associations, and granting foreign trade rights to some forty more economic units.

Some of the measures preparing for these changes are already in the pipeline. Territorial aspects of decentralization deserve attention because of the overcentralized structures that dominate the Hungarian economy. That is why the breaking of regional monopolies of wholesale and construction companies, started in 1982, is of immense significance. Also important are the newly created regional representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Trade which aim at helping small and medium firms and cooperatives in the provinces in exports; furthermore, the gradual easing of the commodity monopoly of foreign trade firms, and the establishment of competition among them. It is also typical of the present situation that the most important among 1983 changes in foreign trade is the easing of the very strict 1982 import restrictions by many of the industrial enterprises receiving a pre-determined amount of foreign currency—as a percentage of 1982 imports. They are entitled within this framework to decide for themselves what and when to import. Partial as this solution may seem, it is a sign of a reversal in a style of operative management, which tended to resemble of management practices of the fifties and which had a good chance of establishing itself, endangering finally—just as between 1972 and 1977—the regulated market character of the Hungarian economic mechanism.

Further plans include a thorough reform of the banking system: the central bank is to become an independent body, subordinated only to Parliament, the present regional offices of the National Bank however ought to be transformed from local branches into independent, profit-oriented commercial ventures. Macroeconomic plans could be worked out in alternative variants, and representative bodies could choose from these preceding the



technical finalization of the national economic plan. Opportunity for granting individual financial exemptions and subsidies should be organizationally<sup>33</sup> limited.

It has become a majority conviction by now that a comprehensive reform is a package deal: piecemeal changes can only be a prelude but neither a substitute for, nor a way of implementation of, a set of measures that can bring about effects if realized concurrently. This is needed to alter enterprise behaviour in a fundamental way, so as to make them market, rather than hierarchy-oriented. This is the condition for Hungary's successful adjustment to the challenge of epochal changes in the world economy.

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# MIHÁLY BABITS

1883-1941

## A POET'S PLACE

by

BALÁZS LENGYEL

**E**ver since the time of Goethe we have known here in Europe that literature is no less than world literature. Now that Europe is no longer the world, not even the cultural world, we have proof every day that literature is not world literature. Or to put it another way, it is and yet it is not. Though great literatures do have an impact which effects all the world insofar as the basic forms and concerns develop out of them; but this impact is by no means as synchronous and immediate as we think it is, as it would be if there were a unitary world literature. This unity is an illusion and is the illusion that only the "great powers" in literature nurture; thus what appears in one of the lesser diffused languages rarely if ever has an impact of consequence. Here, however, I am not concerned with this desperate lack of reciprocity.

I should like to give two examples of how trends and ideas may occur at widely separate times in different literatures and cultures. At an international conference, a writer from a small Asian people (they number some 25 million) boasted that his work was successfully developing the level of picture stories. On seeing the wry faces he went on to explain that his language has no usable refinements of literary expression and writers consequently cannot rely upon readers understanding anything beyond the level of picture stories. Of course, around the world, this example is by no means unique. It is evident that even the minimum of unity in world literature can only be observed between those peoples who have relatively the same level of culture, one which is based on relatively similar traditions. Even here, however, contemporaneity is a question of some delicacy. If we were to produce a small map—and this is my second example—to show the spread of the literary trends of the 19th century, a map on which flags would indicate the dates of the respective triumphs of romanticism, symbolism and impressionism, there a striking discrepancy in time would surely emerge (depending



mainly on the national cultures and social conditions of the region). We would even be able to state as we scanned the map from West to East, that two or three tendencies, totally different at their place of birth, have usually become fused through a single writer's work, in the countries of Eastern Europe. In East Central or Eastern Europe, even at the end of the last century, there are numerous romantic symbolists to be found (often among the major talents creating and furthering their national literatures); later on, at the beginning of this century, there are, surprisingly enough, symbolist avantgarde poets. We have to reckon with special, regional variants for the most important taste-forming trends. This is true of our age, too. If we refuse to recognize this, we would deprive the already uncertain concept of world literature of the rich possibilities in variation which these regional literatures offer.

When speaking of Mihály Babits, the previous chain of argument might seem blasphemous for a Hungarian reader. Why? Because Babits's orientation, his work and his example had as a primary goal the elimination of this time lag; there was also something in him through which world literature itself would be advanced, providing, of course, that there was considerable reciprocity. As a poet, as an enormously influential essayist and as a novelist he could have had the chance.

#### *Transplantation of symbolism and plus*

But I have run ahead of myself. A writer's career is especially determined by circumstances and the given conditions of his life. Writers who work in major languages feel this less; it is only the rare historical disaster which makes them aware of this. Of course everyone has his cross to bear, but crosses can be of different weight—we can surely admit this, if we look beyond our national boundaries. Mihály Babits's career was, for example, determined by the fact that it took place within the literature of a society in which some vestiges of feudalism still survived; his career began in a short and positive period, but after the catastrophe of the Peace Treaty of Trianon of 1920 he lived in opposition to a system slowly turning fascist and looking suspiciously on any modern phenomenon. This, for the most influential figure in modern Hungarian literature, was not a light cross.

At the beginning of the century, at the time when Babits started as a writer, the talents of modern Hungarian literature gathered round a journal whose name itself was a manifesto. This journal, *Nyugat* (literally; the West) wanted to make Hungary western both spiritually and socially. Its emblem was a Hungarian, reflecting in the light of a candle with his elbow on the table, and looking into the distance. *Nyugat* supported the moderniza-



tion of the country, and it fought for all the rights and opportunities which accompany this in the social, intellectual and literary fields. *Nyugat* opposed an ideal to the rudeness of the time and outlined this in its literary columns. (Endre Ady, the great champion of the journal up to the time of the 1918-19 revolutions, illuminated almost all aspects of modern living and of a modern world view.) The ideal of *Nyugat* was of an urban, advanced society in which cultural achievement plays an integral part. "The time can be foreseen," wrote Ignotus, one of the first editors of *Nyugat*, in an essay, "World Literature," (an expressive title) "when the whole world becomes a metropolis." Already one of the editors of the journal at the time of the First World War, Mihály Babits wrote of Shakespeare's anniversary that its very celebration should prove the indestructible unity, the essential family of European culture in the face of despotism. This was written at a time when Hungary, as part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, was at war with Shakespeare's country.

Even more than the declarations of purpose in the journal, it is the translations by those poets who gathered around the journal which reveal a policy directed at being part of world literature. With considerable self-sacrifice, often pushing their own work into the background, they—and mainly the best poets—initiated a sort of assault and mediated an enormous quantity of both classical and contemporary works from foreign languages. (This phenomenon is scarcely intelligible to the foreigner.) Babits himself translated (faithfully, of course, as regards form, since the Hungarian language is capable both of quantitative and stressed versification), Sophocles' two Oedipus plays, all of the *Divine Comedy*, *The Tempest*, Goethe's *Iphigenia in Tauris*; he also transplanted into Hungarian a collection of wonderful medieval Latin hymns entitled *Amor Sanctus*. From contemporary writing, not to mention much significant work on Tennyson, Robert Browning, Poe, Walt Whitman, Wilde, and others, it was mainly Swinburne, Verlaine and Baudelaire which stand out. For a poet, it is not only what he translates which is typical of him but also the point up to which he follows through his translations developments in other literatures. And it is doubly typical of Babits that, as opposed to the Hungarian poets who followed him, he did not translate to order or publisher's commission, but he rather considered translation as the fulfilment of this national tradition, and as the workshop of his own poetry. While young, he had a somewhat freer attitude towards translation and tried out the tones, the poetic attitude and devices he wanted to make use of in his own poetry, so as to enrich Hungarian literary expression. If we glance back at the list of names above, we can immediately see what he was reacting to and what he was not reacting to during the 1910s.



He reacted to symbolism, and also to impressionism to a certain degree, and also to the fin-de-siècle decorative use of language, but not to what was known as the avantgarde. As a choice, it was typical, indeed a fundamental position for the *Nyugat* poets who were engaged in reforming Hungarian lyrical poetry at the beginning of the century. There are hardly any exceptions; it is only in the other leading poet of the time, Endre Ady, that certain avantgarde elements appear in his consistently symbolist structures. The Hungarian avantgarde proper was created in the second half of the 1910s by Lajos Kassák from a totally different purpose, induced by socialist ideals; Kassák was a worker before becoming a poet. But this is another story.

The young Babits transplanted into Hungarian the formal decorativeness of the fin-de-siècle; against the language of the time which was worn-out and unimaginative he opposed the thematic and semantic largeness of symbolism. This was being done by major poets in other countries and languages. What distinguishes the process in Hungary is how Babits carried it out and the context into which he transplanted those features of contemporary poetry he wished to emulate. To answer the latter question first: he embedded it into the whole sequence of world poetry up to that time. With the matchless empathy which was his outstanding quality he produced poetry of his own which scanned the whole range of European lyrical poetry through a modern sensibility. Thus he used older forms as a disguise to his new sensibility, writing, among others, a Greek tragedy of destiny, Horatian odes, Virgilian eclogues, new leonine hexameters, theosophic songs, courtly poetry, medieval hymns, Dantean tercines, and eventually arrived via the ambivalent depths of Baudelaire's symbolism and the pleasures of Swinburne's word music, to his own time: to the experience of the cinema, the American thriller, the airshaft of the tenement houses in the city. Did he re-write the lyrical verse of the world? Far from it; he wrote himself in the lyrics of the world, finding his real self in recreating. Playing with style, it was in his brilliantly executed imitations that he hid away his reading acted as a cloak, somewhat as it did for T.S. Eliot. Babits himself said about this:

Thus the song should be always new,  
the old ideal should change cloak a thousand times,  
the old form as clothes of the new ideal  
should arise again. (*Prose translation*)

But it is something more than just this. From the point of view of the development of lyrical poetry, it was more than a very modern form of



symbolist expression, a discovery of man's inner world; it was more than an affirmation of the fin-de-siècle light at a time when the horizons of Hungarian poetry were limited and narrow. Or if we may simplify, Babits aimed at the transplantation of symbolism, yet through his natural reticence, his instinctive avoidance of self-revelation, he went a step further. He moved until he had reached abstract objectivism and arrived at the attitude of the objectivist poet. The forms and content Babits took from other poetries are projections of his lyrical 'I,' its transmutation into something else. This was an achievement that only one or two other poets of the 1910s, in any literature, had arrived at.

*The lyrical 'I' and the world*

It is sad though not unusual that innovation meets with opposition. But for Babits what was even worse was that he was to be misinterpreted even by his admirers. He was not properly understood for half of his life, which in turn created a grudging silence round his oeuvre for some three decades after his death. The reaction during his own life-time can be explained by the striking gap between Babits's intense, philosophical mind and the intellectual sensitivity of the wider Hungarian reading public. Excellence and recognizable superiority undoubtedly go together with aloofness. Babits was clearly perplexing and aloof even to his supporters. He was, apparently, extremely shy even among them. He was constantly and passionately excited by philosophical problems, yet he was also subject to strong emotional impulses. This is the essence of his early poetry. But it is too concentrated despite the sensuous quality of the writing; any thought or experience, however new or large, is worth as much as the poem is capable of communicating tangibly. One of Babits's basic problems which he treats almost philosophically is the relation between the 'I' and the world. Or, it is the tormenting yearning after total apprehension and the impossibility of fulfilling this yearning. This impossible satisfaction is for him a human and a poetic condition. He expresses this desire with his precise sensuousity:

I want to get drunk on every wine,  
to pick every pretty flower  
and with mouth, eyes, ears and nose  
devour the whole world. (*Prose translation*)

Somewhere else, in a poem entitled "Song, called a chanson by the French," he puts it like this: "how thirsty is my limited soul / for you, limitless world" but—as some would have it today—his dialectical process



of thinking provides the antithesis through the variations on this refrain: "how limitless is my soul / how limited you are, world!"

A solution to this tormenting contradiction, valid for poetry, is found in a famous poem entitled "A Lyricists's Epilogue" (translated in this issue). For many years critics indulged in their antipathy towards Babits by interpreting this poem as a confession of the writer's inability to break out of his isolation and his own private being and to identify himself with the larger human world. He, they go on, is the alpha and the omega, the only one. What these critics have totally missed is the poet's refusal to accept this role, his expression of despair and of not being able to break free. Again, these critics ignore completely the poetic solution to the philosophical problem the poem implies: "I only am the subject and the object"—that is, the interchangeable position of the 'I' and the world in objectivist poetry.

This is, of course, just one aspect of Babits's philosophical inclination, one which led to incomprehension and misinterpretation. He was described as a cold and speculative poet, merely a *poeta doctus*, not a real, not a "born" poet. In his time, and indeed for long after, the general taste was not sympathetic to reticence and objectification. It was the self-revealing, romantic, confessional poetry which was still popular in Hungary. Babits' reserve and fastidiousness in his manner of expression made him appear foreign, a Hungarian returning from abroad, as it were.

This alien quality, this icy atmosphere vanished slowly and temporarily. It vanished during the First World War when he wrote his great anti-war poems ("The Young Soldier," "I Played with her Hand"—he lost his teaching post because of this one—"The Lord's Prayer," "Before Easter," and others.) They were attempts to seek remedy, protest, against the common torment. But after the Károlyi government and the Republic of Councils, when there came to power a new order hostile to the independent morality of literature, the air froze again around him. He wrote on post-war conditions in *Politika* ("Politics"): "An age of Martinuzzis' is now come again. Gripped teeth / Bitter compromise, Transylvanian guile. / I can already see the heroes of closed mouth and open eyes / The old lights are still burning in front of us, not diminishing, not swinging / but our feet are careful, so as not to trample down our crops / and the Faith has become in us silent, kept with held breath." (Prose translation). As a hero with his mouth closed and his eyes open, in front of whom the old ideas continue to shine, Babits changed somewhat his attitudes. In a hostile era which saw the new literary movements as having prepared for the defeated revolution and which, like the Bourbons, learnt nothing and forgot nothing, Babits proclaimed the independence of the literary world, declared that it, along with the world of the



intellect, is above and independent of politics. Using his immense authority and the respect he was held in, he emphasized the integrity of literature, its apartness from the deformation and blemishes of everyday life, yet he never enclosed himself in an ivory tower. In one of his first poems he cited Horace: "I hate you. Keep aside from me, low mob!," but went on to say that through his entirely new poems he wanted to join those hidden forces that bring about change; surrounded by a mob that was not only low but also hostile, he laid even more emphasis on the independent mission of literature, a force with its own reasons and laws. It is difficult to make clear today the extent to which intellectuals were menaced and went through a long ordeal and a form of social expulsion in Central Europe in the twenties, where the redrawing of political boundaries roused particular passions and hatred. Babits wrote in "Faith Instead of Confession" which prefaced his collection of poetry "Island and Sea" (1925): "I believe in the art that opens up the world for us, and removes us from a point of space and time, makes us Catholic and citizens of the cosmos; *l'art pour l'art* yet not *l'art pour l'art*, because art does not seek local or ephemeral goals, which is precisely what makes it a fighter in a greater cause. I believe in that art which denies nothing, neither *l'art pour l'art* nor naturalism, yet develops beyond both, for it is not tied to either." In an emotionally charged atmosphere, this was to become the origin of the accusation that Babits stood for *l'art pour l'art*; it was an accusation which grew and even reached the textbooks appearing after his death and influenced the reception of his works, impeded their publication and dissemination and relegated his devotees and followers into the background in those critical years of the fifties when the example of the poet's lack of dogmatism, universality and moral courage was more than ever necessary.

From this accusation comes the false claim by some literary historians that in the culmination of his late poetry, his masterpiece "The Book of Jonah," Babits is, as it were, pronouncing judgement on his own previous attitude, admitting to himself that "He who is silent among the guilty is an accessory." But Babits had no reason to feel that about himself. For "The Book of Jonah" is exactly what a reader might imagine it to be from its title: a paraphrase of the biblical story, made personal and through its overtones acquiring a special significance in a Hungary facing the menace of becoming Nazi. With the immense power of suggestion typical of his late poetry, Babits provides an example of the imperative of travelling to Niniveh to preach, to utter the word, dangerous, unpleasant and momentarily futile though it may be. He who is chosen for the mission cannot do otherwise. It is a confession which is an example of the moral commitment and the



moral imperative of the writer's mission. It is a declaration of mission which Babits followed faithfully all his life, whose duty he affirmed again and again, even from his death-bed (see in "Between Autumn and Spring," and "Jonah's Prayer,") and affirmation ancient and new and personal all at once.

*The language barrier*

Yet the effect of a poet does not depend so much on his ideas or his aims, his morals or his ambitions as on his words. This is an *aperçu* from Babits himself. "Every genuine writer," he said in »Everything Depends on the Word,« "who observes the process of his own creativity, sooner or later realizes that the excellence or lack of such of a literary work is, in the last resort, a question of style. It is a question of words, stylistic linkage and devices—at least in so far as the writer can see and establish. Much though I may have studied, rich though I may be in experience and knowledge of the human character, true and powerful though the feelings which inspire me, all this is worthless if the right word in the right place is not at my disposal; my work will taste of paper and my descriptions be uninteresting." There is a modern poet who amplifies this thought of Babits's: poetical quality is a question of choice between synonyms. Either we accept these two views as they stand or we consider that they need amplification; however they do touch on the root of the relationship between words and poetry. And with this we have come to the main barrier between a poet and his entry into world-literature. Ideas are translatable, the particularity of an attitude towards life can be conveyed, new ways of feeling can be interpreted, structure can be imitated, and the tools of technique, imagery and metaphor, —even if with difficulty—can be transferred into a foreign language. But can the atmosphere that is hidden in words, can their aura of associations, can the sensitivity of the original selection of words be translated? No matter how brilliant the translation, the evidence of the relations between words somehow disappears or, at the least, is dissipated. This is the mysterious something by which we recognize great poets after reading only a few words, the something by which we recognize immediately Shelley, Hugo, Eliot, or Rilke. This is the something by which the Hungarian reader can recognize Babits. But this recognition can only take place within a mother tongue. Though it is a determining factor for poetic quality, it is impossible to explain across a language barrier.

To return to what can be described and communicated: the quotation above is from Babits as essayist, and his essay oeuvre is no less long and monumental, no less profound and original than his poetic oeuvre. It is



the Hungarian equivalent of that form of essay, not academic yet not without scholarly foundations, in which Brandes and later Valéry, Eliot, and Thomas Mann exerted a wide intellectual influence. Here as well Babits's impact was limited to Hungarian literature, but within this—and we, Hungarians, are fully aware of his comparable status—he created a school under his influence. It was from him that the remarkable flowering of the Hungarian essay in the thirties came. In that period, when the new generations of writers made their contribution, the seeds that Babits had planted in his early essays came to flower. In his essays the philosophical background to Babits's poetry which I have mentioned comes into its own, creating a kind of stage on which the drama of thinking takes place. His guiding principle is to arrive at the fullest possible knowledge through close scrutiny and through rationalism—which is itself not without problems. "Still I believe in the mind," he wrote in the already cited "Faith Instead of Confession," "that the mind as far as it can extend is a faithful servant of the Something it cannot attain. . . . Let it build our lives!"

This, as we would say today, reserved adherence to rationalism, was the dialectic formula of his belief in the mind, a belief which knew its own limits. It is aware of the monstrous nature of the various beliefs and schools based on rationalism. The contradictory turns along Babits's path document all this well. In 1908 he was the first to expound in Hungary the intuitional philosophy of Bergson in a detailed, descriptive essay. Aware of Bergson's international influence, he thought that for Hungary to absorb it would be a topical task. "Inspiration and life are parallel, writes Bergson on the shield of art. Every moment is new and creative, he writes on the shield of life. This is the concept the 20th century needs: everybody must have the feeling of being overwhelmed by the mechanistic view of the world. Yet our art was in opposition to our view of the world, and our view of the world was in opposition to life. This mechanistic view of the world does not have to be dispensed with; it has to become a step rather than the goal. Thus poetry and science, intuition and intellect will be comrades-in-arms instead of enemies."

In this last sentence Babits wants to arrive at a truce between intuition and rationalism on a higher degree. This thought recurs again and again, his desire to find a synthesis of the concepts underlying his poetic experience and his philosophical beliefs. Yet in 1917, at the nadir of the War, and for him a turning point where certain connections became clear, he blamed anti-rationalism and vitalism for the guilt which made humanity accept war, the decisions achieved by violence and a form of morality servile to facts. The 1917 essay *Dangerous World View* (see page 87) anticipates the



arguments later put by most thinkers, after Babits's death (1941) or even later, following the devastations of the Second World War. Here, the main enemy is anti-intellectualism or anti-rationalism. He describes in detail how anti-rationalism has become a tendency in philosophy: "the whole modern philosophy has functioned so as to undermine mind and intellect. It was Kant who began this by strictly defining the limits of mind. He withdrew the *Ding an sich*, the essence of the world, from the influence of mind." Then Babits goes on to Schopenhauer (to whom mind is but a small lamp lit by blind Will) and through Hegel and his opponent, Nietzsche, to the philosophy of force and egoism and *Wille Zur Macht*. Nor does he omit from this process Renan or Bergson, or even Kipling, and he arrives at last at Barrès, whom critics of Hitler's race theories were much later to identify as the starting point. "The *culte de moi* of Barrès is in fact the cult of experience, the cult of the past. For this the 'I', the *moi* is nothing other than the sum of experience, the setting of our past. Not only of our own past, but the inherited product of the race and nation in us. We all carry in ourselves this blind past, as a terrible moment of inertia, and to put on a pedestal or to make a cult of this means a rejection forever of any reasonable shaping and improving of life." This in itself is sufficient to summarize Babits's chain of thought. But we should go on to the sentence that follows, a declaration from 1917, which was to be demonstrated stunningly by history: "Where the only possible and remaining aim is the formulation in art of the *moi* which grows out of the past, then we have accepted all the senseless horror which the horrible and obstinate power of that past hides in its womb."

*The world of Babits's essays*

Despite the unequivocal argument which concludes that this "dangerous ideology" is the main enemy, Babits puts the question of whether or not to create art which is based on the mind. Shall we deny instinct, experience, the mysterious subconscious, on which modern poetry is based? Shall we bring back the pedestrian rationalism of 18th century philosophy? Naturally, the answer is no; it is the poet who is spinning this philosophical thread for he is someone who is well acquainted with the role of experience, who knows how to exploit inner reality and to use the creative force of intuition; fortunately it is the poet who is concerned and not the philosopher wrapped up in his abstractions. Babits's answer was thus to synthesize opposites, to reiterate a newer form of rationalism on a higher level, one which implies the older rationalism.



This question goes on taking formulation in Babits. In 1928, following Julien Benda's *La Trahison des Clercs*, he again took up the explication in a long essay. What had been a tone in the discussion of vitalism and rationalism comes to the foreground in this essay. Babits extends Benda's statement and declares that the basic question of the age is a moral one. As such it is mainly a problem for the *clerics*, because they are precisely those who should be pointing to the universal morality which is above interest-group, nation, race, and class as a guiding-light, as a pole-star; they should point to those truths and universal laws which are valid for all men, which spring from our being human and not to relative truths. Here Babits, at the same time as Thomas Mann, or indeed slightly ahead of him, proclaimed the humanists' responsibility in our time. This he found in the natural and consistent knowledge of the instinctive part of life, of the depth of soul, of vital forces, even those which tended to deviate; so also did Thomas Mann with his brand of rationalism which was both humanistic and illuminating. He pointed to the heroism of the lighthouse as an example to the intellectual, something which stands immovable and points in the true direction; he himself followed this example by his behaviour throughout the difficult years to come in the thirties and during the war.

This philosophic way of thinking, bordering on ethics, was complemented by his constant analysis of his own medium, Hungarian literary and intellectual life. Babits's essays open up new vistas for Hungarian readers. It is a territory just as rich in achievements as the philosophic orientation which goes back to the Bergson essay.

In 1913 he wrote the essay which can be considered a milestone in Hungarian literature's assessment of itself; the essay discarded the innate narrowness coloured by national prejudice, the whole *extra Hungariam non est vita* attitude; it attempted to see eight centuries of Hungarian literature from the vantage point of world literature. Though he points out at the outset that "art is the more worthwhile the more national it is, the more differentiated it is in every direction, including the national direction;" he believes, however, that world literature needs special points of view, that appreciation in world literature is *sui generis*. Discussing the features of this *sui generis* he concludes that Hungarian literature from its very beginnings has always been one of the forms of expression of the great European culture and through its national colours has brought something to this wider culture even although its impact has been slight. In Babits's opinion, our report-card in world literature "looks like this: great forces—few worthy oeuvres—almost no success!" The potential lies only in the future.

The evaluation is unfortunately true; Babits arrives at it through a com-



bination of literary, historical and psychological approaches. This judgement is complemented by a number of essays in each of which an even more careful application of the psychology of creation produces a portrait of a great Hungarian writer. He discovers them anew, and points out how they anticipated the present; in these essays Babits has done no less than form and shape modern Hungarian literary thinking. This part of his essay-writing and criticism, his work as an editor remain, however, essentially a Hungarian affair.

The work which does have a significance beyond the Hungarian world is the enterprise completed in the evening of his life, the two-volume *A History of European Literature*. A history of literature? From a mind and poet of his calibre? The reader may well be astonished. In terms of the conventions of the genre, Babits broke out of the genre. His main concerns were not to identify the origin or development of genres and themes—though he did so—but something totally different. He was interested rather in drawing attention to what was still alive and vital in European literature. A poet and a philosopher (who is one of the most diligent of readers) sums up his experiences as a reader, narrating how the great process formed a living unity in him, work by work. He writes expressively, freely, with spirit, using all the means available to him as a poet without descending into lyricism. One has the impression that he had read every work he discusses at that very moment and is forming an opinion of the work just then. His statements can be amended or accepted, his enthusiasms can be considered slightly exaggerated at a distance of forty years, his rejections can be queried; but it is impossible to deny the captivating interest of his work, impossible not to enjoy this immense vision of European literature.

#### *The novels*

Let me close with a few general words on Babits's novels, as seen in the perspective of world literature. Though his was an all-embracing talent, in comparison with his essays and poetry, his fiction was not outstanding. In contrast to his poetry, his strength in fiction is not animation but rather meditation. For this reason I am not concerned with an assessment of those social novels which have been widely translated ("Sons of Death," "House of Cards"); here I would rather lay emphasis on two experiments. One of them is a 1916 novel, "The Nightmare" (*A gölyakalifa*). The other "Elza, the Pilot, or Perfect Society," would be called today a work of science fiction, set in the future. "The Nightmare" borrows its central idea from Freudian



doctrine: if it is true that "life is a dream" and also that "dream is reality," how can one tell through pure logic which is real, the waking life or the dream? Babits takes the thesis to absurdity: he makes his central figure live two lives, he divides his mind into two, and this tormenting dichotomy only ends through his suicide in a dream. His body is discovered "awake" with a gunshot wound in the forehead, but no weapon is found near him. This basic question of modern anxiety thus remains unsolved.

"Elza, the Pilot" was inspired by his experience of the war and of the spirit of the political systems which followed the war. It was published in 1931 and it is set in the future, somewhere in the 20th century, a time of permanent war. This war has been going on for fifty years, in the air and under the ground in mines, and its most deadly weapon of destruction is gas. Villages have already disappeared, towns have been forced to move underground, where their inhabitants live it out in "air-caves." A terrible autocracy has organized this "society living a fighting resistance" into one where women too are soldiers, where the average life-span is twenty odd years, where reading is a crime and an expression of one's personal opinion means immediate execution. Elza, the heroine, a pilot, arrives at a comprehension of this terrible mechanism, and, rejecting inhumanity, she flies to the enemy's camp. But there she finds the very same society.

This should be enough to indicate that the basic thought behind "The Nightmare" comes from the results in the sciences which influenced the European experimental novel in the tens and the twenties of this century (Gide's *The Vaults of the Vatican*, or Joyce's works). The concept behind "Elza, the Pilot", is similarly related to the anxiety for and the utopian examination of the future, which produced, among others, *Brave New World*. In other words, Babits felt the urgency of the time and reacted at the same time as the great literatures did; the fact that his works did not enter the stream of contemporary world literature is neither here nor there. The dates alone are eloquent proof of this synchrony. It was, however, not only the lack of reciprocity which prevented this recognition taking place even after Babits' death; there was also the particular circumstances which applied in Hungary, whose effect was to neutralize the cultural value, the humanist force which Babits' work stands for in Hungarian culture. (Let it be added that this neutralization was effected through distorting and often contemptuous criticism and, what is far worse, thirty years of silence.) Babits summed up our contribution to world literature as "great forces—few worthy oeuvres." We have to add that in the 70 years since then more than one 'worthy' oeuvre has been produced. *Primus inter pares* is that of Babits himself.



## POEMS AND PROSE BY MIHÁLY BABITS

### A LYRICIST'S EPILOGUE

*A lírikus epilógja*

In all my poems I must be the hero,  
and in each song of mine the first and last one;  
to rhyme the universe I am a tyro;  
though keen, I seem to stay with the first person.

And now I come to think that this proviso  
contains it all, or what's the explanation?  
God only knows! Blind nut, the nutshell's hollow  
filling; it must crack, to my revulsion.

No chance of breaking from my magic circle.  
Desire alone, my arrow, can escape it.  
I know its intuition is in error.

A prison for myself at every angle,  
I only am the subject and the object,  
because I am the omega and alpha.

(1908)

### THE OWNER FENCES HIS HOUSE

*A gazda bekeríti házát*

My soldier-posts are standing in a line, enclose  
this piece of earth, my little plot of land, like light  
pikemen they stand on guard, mighty in their belief



in truth; justice they represent, they are the law;  
 they are my strength, my work, my peace and my reward,  
 sign that I am, spines of my hedgehog-life in this  
 ripped-up existence, they exclude the alien,  
 admitting nonetheless whatever is common  
 between brothers, the landscape's spell, the redness of  
 skies in the distance and the air sweeter even  
 than milk; though these days also there's the cold of this  
 windy October, April's younger brother with  
 more claws to clutch at us—

O we are hardened to  
 clutching young brothers, for we who are older arrive  
 from the last treasure-laden year; so, should we flatter  
 the latest winds? Autumn! barbaric, murderous, lying.  
 Bumptious autumn! Louder than summer! All for wild  
 noise, tussle, dancing! Under a thousand birds  
 the trees have never swayed or groaned so much! But is  
 this life? Clamour, squirming? Silently the seeds  
 grow in the earth. Quiet the fertile night; and slow  
 the growth of grass—*that's what life is!* My garden, defend  
 grass seeds remaining from the treasure of last year,  
 and do not trouble yourself about barbaric winds!  
 Let the wild dance come, tearing, drunk, a ruttish fake  
 undressing flowers to the bone; and let the blind  
 snigger come down upon well-tended plants; let come  
 the white-hooded penitent, winter; you just remain  
 custodian of last year, and when, on looking down,  
 the new arrival says: 'I am the new!' you say:  
 'The old was better!' Heroic behind your posts you are  
 like the medieval monk confronted by the grim  
 helmeted hordes, nomad degenerates cracking  
 the whip, burning old images: until the spring  
 you hide your seeds as he would hide a few old books,  
 in place of fallen soldier-posts, lilacs will grow,  
 inviting with their scented blooms the future's bees.

(1926)



## LIKE A STRANGE HERALD

*Mint különös hírmondó*

Like a strange herald who has brought no news, one who has spent  
all summer far off, watching, and sitting on top of a hill,  
who saw beneath him, when evening lights of the city came on,  
that they were neither bigger nor any closer than stars,

who would hear buzzing he would make a guess at: car, aeroplane,  
or speed-boat on the smooth Danube? and when he heard knocking far off,  
sporadic and muffled below in the valley, he'd think that a house  
was being set up by masons, or that over the river

the evil neighbour could be trying out a machine-gun—  
it was all the same to him, he knew the human as silly,  
unable to keep still, spoiling even the good, for centuries  
building, and then, in a childish fracas, destroying the lot;

all that the gangs had shared out with pain was more urgent to him  
than flowering of earth; persistent gods blinded, spirit and love  
made to flame to the sky—this the hilltop herald understood,  
and he hid far away from the news; but when that whistling,

lashing rake, the wind, whips up, and the declining sun  
cruelly watches, with a libidinous smirk on his face,  
his abandoned lovers, the leaves, in suicidal sorrow  
fade for him and sway, down to the dying fall of a dancer;

then it is that the herald stands up, takes his stick and sets out  
for the populous valleys; great news in pursuit he goes down,  
but when asked for the news he can only say this: Autumn is here!  
He cries out the great news that everyone knows: Autumn is here!

I too am aware of great news, and, as the crag swells with springs  
when the snow squats upon its head, so my old heart swells with words;  
but of what kind of news am I the bringer? and what do I care  
for the news? The world is seething, and days, in competition,



are running with years, and years are racing with centuries;  
 mad nations in turmoil: what does it all matter? I only look  
 at autumn, feel the autumn like wise plants and tame animals  
 must do, I can feel how the earth is turning towards the more

langorous provinces of sky, breath failing like losing lovers,  
 o holy rhythm, eternal love's great rhythm, rhythm  
 of years, rhythm of God's poem, how tiny all these human  
 occurrences are! I can hear the soft tread of the winter;

the white tiger cometh, and he stretches himself out over  
 the landscape, snapping his teeth, biting, lumbering along  
 as he lopes on his awkward limbs, the meadow-lands matted with  
 his fallen fur; he disappears in spring's odorous jungle.

(1931)

#### BETWEEN AUTUMN AND SPRING

##### *Ősz és tavasz között*

Autumn's drunken singing is exhausted.  
 Cellar's coolness is already fetid.  
 Wind and water hit the barren vine-stock.  
 Clay of hill becomes a skin of goose back,  
 crumpling, squeezing mud, it soaks to soften,  
 like the naked body of a dead man.

Evening it is now, the rush of evening  
 treacherously comes like old age gaining,  
 quietly, a sudden thief on tiptoe  
 stealthy in his leaping, here . . . our lives go!  
 We no more can cheat ourselves or shake it.  
 Death alas must take us, all must like it!

Snow has fallen now the earth is paltry,  
 perhaps as a disguise, it is so ugly.  
 Now as white as in our room at evening





MIHÁLY BABITS, 1914. PHOTO OLGA MÁTÉ





MIHÁLY BABITS AND ENDRE ADY. JULY 1917. PHOTO ALADÁR SZÉKELY

MIHÁLY BABITS WITH HIS WIFE, THE WRITER SOPHIE TÖRÖK, IN THEIR ESZTERGOM SUMMER HOME 1924. PHOTO AZ EST ARCHIVES



MIHÁLY BABITS AND GYULA ILLYÉS IN THE BABITS HOME, 1931. PHOTO SOPHIE TÖRÖK





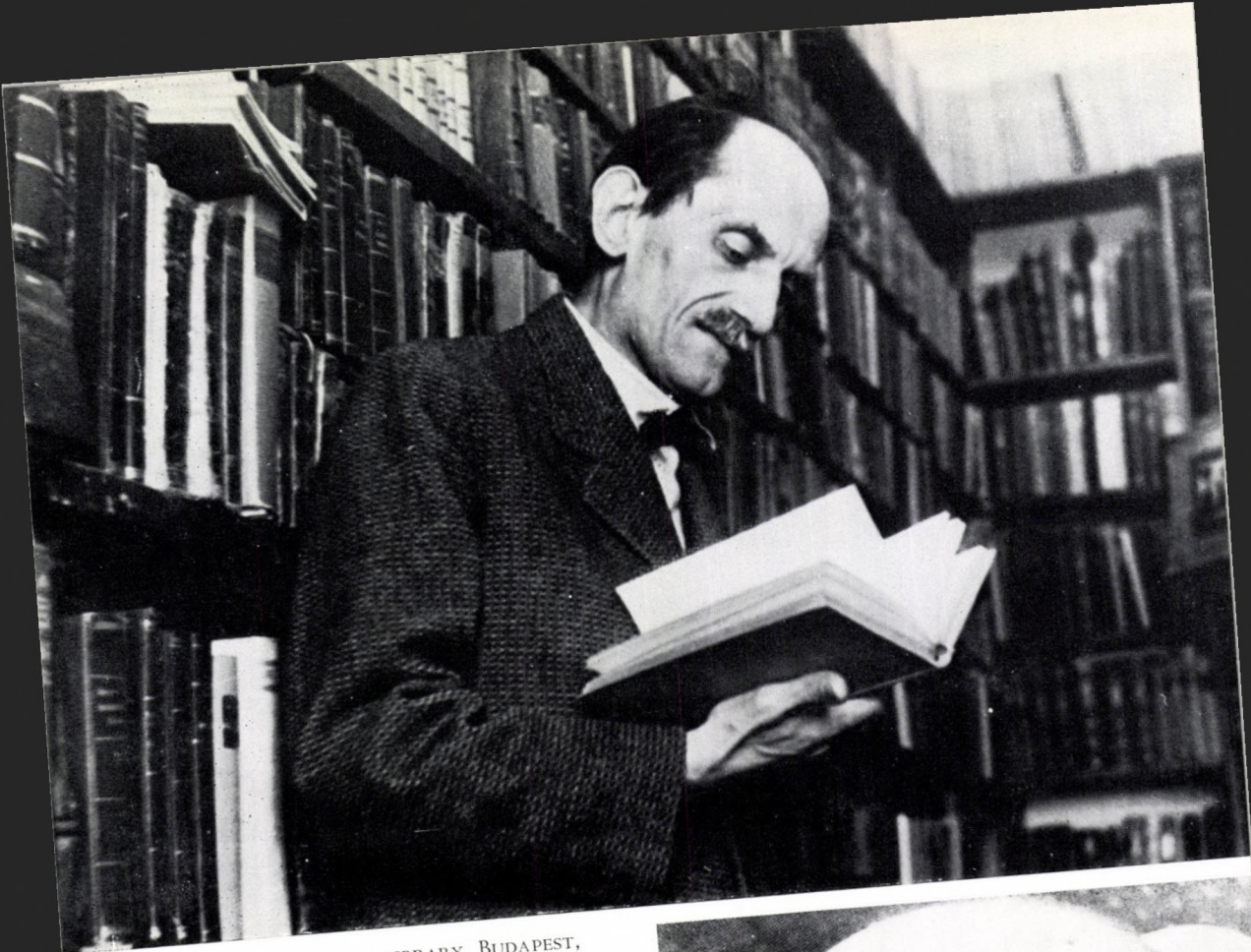


MIHÁLY BABITS SITS FOR JÓZSEF RIPPL RÓNAI IN THE LATTER'S STUDIO ON GELLÉRT HILL, BUDAPEST, 1924.

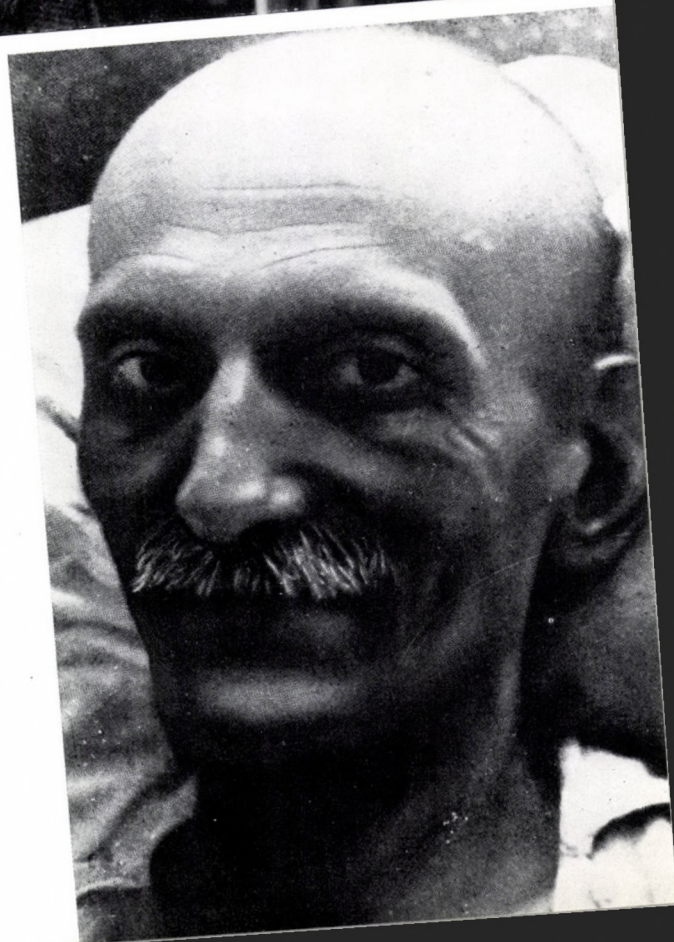
MIHÁLY BABITS ON HIS 50TH BIRTHDAY, NOVEMBER 26TH 1933. PHOTO SOPHIE TÖRÖK







MIHÁLY BABITS IN HIS LIBRARY. BUDAPEST,  
1940 OR 1941.  
PHOTO SÁNDOR BOJÁR



MIHÁLY BABITS SHORTLY BEFORE HIS DEATH.  
BUDAPEST, 1941.



our bed looks when made and ready, waiting,  
 our soft eiderdown, each spotless pillow:  
 it's as if we walked on our beds somehow,

like hobgoblin children when they do not  
 feel like sleeping as they should, not just yet,  
 strut and stagger, swaying on the bed-top,  
 till their mother comes, good woman, fed up,  
 orders: 'In your bed! Good night! And stop it!'  
 Death alas must take us, all must like it!

Yet the year, just like a sand-glass, turning,  
 as the old runs out, is also running,  
 as the sand-glass leaves the sand it's tired of  
 so the last year's worries are disposed of.  
 How much work is waiting! and our leisure  
 left unpicked the loaded tree of pleasure . . .

Like a sentry's our impatient hearts beat;  
 each a waiting guard, a change in prospect.  
 Nervously a hundred drawers we open.  
 Kisses chill with taste of valediction.  
 In joys past no comfort is implicit.  
 Death alas must take us, all must like it!

Snow melts, spring is longing for beginning.  
 Do I know how I would shape my being?  
 As the snow melts, I, a melting snowflake,  
 flow away with tears and sighing heartache.  
 By the time returning birds have reached here  
 earth will dry to leave no trace of winter . . .

Only my own winter is not fleeting.  
 Only my own death is never dying.  
 Birds to which I gave their freedom never  
 will return to me flushed from their cover.  
 Foliage which fell from me—no green will deck it.  
 Death alas must take us, all must like it!



One by one all friends of mine forsook me;  
 those to whom I had done good disowned me;  
 those who had my love no longer love me;  
 those to whom I was a light inter me.  
 Figures my twig scratched in earth's fine powder  
 floods of mud in springtime will dismember.

Dried-out vine-stock, last year's host bored rigid;  
 even spring to me is foe and frigid!  
 Only you incline to me, like roses  
 over broken mesh, a woman's kindness.  
 Fear has struck my eyes, you cover, kiss it. . .  
 Death alas must take us, all must like it!

(1936)

#### JONAH'S PRAYER

##### *Jónás imája*

To me already words are faithless things  
 or I've become a flooding creek which brings  
 its shoreless aimlessness, wavering, vain,  
 bearing old idle words, so many, torn  
 and carried onward in the same way as  
 a rambling flood bears hedgerows, signposts, dykes.  
 O how I wish my Master had supplied  
 my creek's flow with a bed, so it could glide  
 with safety to the sea, and that my poems  
 could all be tipped with His prefashioned rhymes,  
 and, as it's on my shelf and clear to see,  
 His Holy Bible were my prosody,  
 so that I could, like Jonah, indolent  
 and skulking servant, on my dark descent  
 into the fish, into the living, deaf  
 darkness of flushing pain find for myself,  
 over not just three days but three whole months,  
 three years or centuries before a mouth  
 of a yet blinder and eternal whale



swallows me so I vanish for good and all,  
 find the old voice, my words correct in lines  
 of battle order, speak His bravest tones  
 as prompted, and as well as my sick throat  
 allows, and never tiring till the night,  
 or as long as heaven and Nineveh comply  
 to let me go on speaking, not to die.

(1939)

*Translated by Alan Dixon*

## THE KADARKA OF SZEKSZÁRD

*An autobiographical sketch*

**T**here is a dreadful fog; Vérmező has gone under. When I look out of the window I see only an endless grey expanse of water, a mysterious Lake Balaton whose opposite shore is lost in the mist. I am no longer in town, and my imagination can freely take wing, the houses have disappeared, I can replace them with whatever I want. So I am now standing in the vineyard which covers the hill at Szekszárd, the centre and asylum of the first period of my life. There is certainly nothing to prove that I am not standing there. The thought breaks through like the sun: suddenly the fog lifts. I have not been standing here long, and when I was last here, the place did not offer much consolation. Only half of the vineyard was still standing, the other half belonged to strangers. The press-house was falling down for lack of attention it was shedding plaster and wooden shingles from its roof. I dare not look back, I am afraid that I may see and also that I may not. The vintage is over, and I can't even remember when I last took part in it. But right now I see a different picture before me: I am at a vintage feast as my memory runs this film, projecting it on the fog, like a colour picture on a grey screen.

The choice of this film was not entirely arbitrary. The morning post had brought a few sheets of writing, an offprint that I read immediately and with greedy pleasure. It was a paper on the Kadarka wines of Szekszárd,

Chapter from *Keresztül-kasul az életemen* (Back and forth around my life), Nyugat, 1939.



written by Rajmund Rapaics, an expert on Hungarian gardens and orchards. Reading it had led to this recall of vintage feasts long ago, I learned many things from his article, for instance, that the name *Kadarka* derives from the place name of Skutari, that is, it comes straight from Asia Minor. Some Serb tribes called Skutari "Skader," and our *kadarka*—brought to Hungary by Serbs—has once been known as "skadarka." Perhaps it came from the same region as did my ancestors presuming that my name is also of Serbian origin. Whatever the case, *kadarka* is a Hungarian drink, a noble Hungarian wine—as Hungarian and noble as the poetry of Berzsenyi or Vörösmarty. Similarly, the occasion of vintage is a noble Hungarian feast—although it is not Himfy's wine harvest\* that I see here in the flashback of memory. Where once sat the proud squires of old, there around the stone-table in front of the outbuilding, are now gathered their town-coated descendants, who have tumbled down to petty clerical work. To whom all that remains of the ancient estates is the portion of the wine-covered hill. . . .

Even that portion, that view is sliding away from me. . . . Yet the image of a *kadarka* vintage at Szekszárd does not convey to me a feeling of transience, but a feeling more of that mysterious permanence which lurks in the depths of everything that passes. For, though the vineyard seems to be slipping away from me, this is just a dizzy spell; I am still actually standing on that wine-covered hill and the vintage may have been going on ever since. This is truly the reality and permanence. I see before me my childhood paradise more sharply than any place I visited yesterday. It seems as if it was not the landscape of Szekszárd that I had printed on the mist over Vérmező but rather the contrary, it is as if this dimly blanketed 'Fild of Blood,' the distant ghost of houses and even the entire city of Budapest were merely a shifting and changing mirage on the veil of mist provided by the whimsy of fate—a veil that can only fleetingly and haphazardly cover the gentle curves of the familiar hills which keep peering out from under the dim covers.

Let me not attempt a description. I have no wish here to enter into a contest with those poets of landscape who have shared out each county among themselves, and I have no mind to revive the old vintage-feasts. The press-house, as I said, has lost several skins of plaster since then; the big tub which went up right to the beam so that the treading was done from the attic is no longer in use. Indeed there is not much treading done today,

\* Himfy: the hero of two cycles of narrative poems by Sándor Kisfaludy (1772-1844). The second cycle (1807) contains idyllic descriptions of rural life including vintage-feasts.—The Editor.



it has been replaced by much more modern methods, and now our proud presses seem to be ancient and obsolete artefacts—just like the presses of the printers of long ago. Today I can hardly say, as I could in my student days scanning the *Georgics*, that the vintage has not changed since the days of Vergil, for in the photographs Rapaics publishes not even the typical buttcarriers of the Hungarian vineyards are present and I can only wonder whether or not there can still be seen today the sweet and accustomed movements of the grape-picking girls who, on tiptoe, reach over moustached men to empty their baskets into the butts. All this is not very important, for what used to be still is in some way; nothing can be lost from life, for life is a single entity in its own historical unity—just as a country is. Just as, for instance, Hungary is.

This is the mysterious permanence that is lurking in the depths of everything that passes. The spirit lives not only in the present, it has a dimension in time just as objects do in space. Memory only returns what in truth and in law always has belonged to us. I am riding my white stallion into the past and retaking the hills of Szekszárd. No longer are these simply fleeting veils of mist: here I am worth something and in no way by chance. That was the primeval layer, the link with my fathers, with that company of cellar-visiting and wine-sampling Hungarians, who still brought in the vintage after the fashion of Vergil. My life extends beyond itself. The Kadarka also links me to my Serbian ancestors, if indeed I have Serbian ancestors. You can see much from the wine-covered hill of Szekszárd. When I was a child we used to boast of seeing in fair weather as far as Kalocsa, way beyond the silver ribbon of the Danube, and indeed—with the help of a primitive telescope made up of two hazelrods to which the lenses were fastened with raffia to prevent them from slipping—even farther. Even without glasses, I was able to see much farther. From that hilltop I saw all of old Hungary as a spacious garden around our vineyard lodge, this tiny vineyard itself a small but sweet part—down to the levelcrossing and to the stone cross erected by my grandmother. Since that time some of the vineyard has come into the possession of strangers—and some parts of the large garden also belong to strangers, for all that a section has been recently returned. For me, however, the vineyard still stretches down to the levelcrossing and the cross—as the large garden does from the Carpathians to the Adriatic.

To the south beyond this Hungarian garden lived the Serbians from whom our Kadarka comes, and far, very far from us to the east, the Rumanians whose borderlands I stayed in for several winters always returning home for summer. My vineyard lodge, in the centre of the huge garden,



lay within the projection of the distant Balkan mountains. Yet that did not bother me much: when I got home I had the feeling that I was in Western Europe, in the land of an ancient culture where Roman coins were turned up in the soil while spading the fields, and where, on the shelf under the withered grapes hanging in the mud-floored presshouse lay a book by Madame de Sévigné, in French, the ambitious reading of a kind aunt who oversaw those who worked for us. Yes, this was Europe. Europe as it should be. Our very superstitions reflected culture; we did not abandon the decencies or religion, but liberalism was the way we looked out on the world; we despised the Austrian military, did not believe in war and did not hate the Jewish wine merchant more than seemly. Naturally, I did not like all of this and found this culture as a whole just a little backward. And, indeed, it would have been more at home in the middle of the last century than in the early part of this one; it was more like 1840 than 1900. But I was translating Verlaine and Oscar Wilde because that was then my way of being one of the moderns—and because these were threads leading from my vineyard to Paris and London as well as to Skutari, and there were other raptures besides those Kadarka provided to make one's head spin. Yes, from here one could see far into the seething alien present as well as into the familiar Hungarian past.

Only the future was barred to one's vision. That itself was enough, for it was the actual reason why we could not make *aszú* wine as at Tokay or Ménes. The weather was too extreme and uncertain for the grapes to be left on the vine and allowed to wither. They would have been caught by the rain and simply have rotted. A gamble with small chances of success. It is a sad sight to see the beaten, muddy clusters of grapes, under vines that are becoming bare-headed, to see the torn vines with single naked grapes hanging out, their dark skin stripped by the showers like human eyes dripping and dangling loose from their sockets. It brings to my mind the spoilage of life, life which starts in the hope of tranquility and fair weather, sweetly ripens, grows and gains in flavour, prepares for a huge vintage feast, does not rush to its goal, improves itself with overlong preparatory studies and generous self-education in order to achieve outstanding results—and then suddenly comes war or revolution, there is a political crisis, some parts of the country are annexed, there is no work, no bread; studies have to be abandoned, life sours on the vine and the vintage will never mature. I am thinking of myself, of all of us, of our own ruined life.



## THE DANGEROUS IDEOLOGY

*An essay*

**T**here are days, even weeks, when I relapse into the monomania of war. I cannot get used to it. I cannot think of anything else. Every insignificant event, every word, every face, every small atom places the whole horror of life in front of me. Every small atom of life is already infected by the whole horror. At times like that I try to shut out life. I take refuge in books, in ideas, in culture. But suddenly I find myself looking for the buds of war in books, in ideas, in culture as well. Seek and you shall find. Even my favourite books are infected! Every idea that was recorded before the war by our wise men, our poets, becomes significant: as if a state of mind or world-view peered out of everybody which was an expression of the deepest causes of war, of those causes which are not contained in the events or in the squabbles of politicians, but in the secret soul of the age.

Everything can be explained after the event. If only we move away a little we are inclined to discover regular shapes, human faces, and animal figures in the most capricious arabesques.

This is true of events too.

The more important an event is, the less we can reconcile ourselves to its having been brought about by the blind course of the world: the stupid trundle of facts, which—although closely determined by causes—will always somehow appear haphazard to us. We will always look for deeper causes, moral necessity—the logic of history: seek and you will find.

This too is one sort of self-consolation. It is easier to be consoled about something that we think necessary and of importance to the way we see the world. But the power of the insignificant, the petty, and the extraneous causes is dreadful. And yet, it is these that govern the world.

I am convinced that history has no logic, and that the War also lacks what are called the deeper causes. The War is the most monstrous contingency of history: inasmuch as everything is contingent which does not originate from far-sighted intention and plan but from the meeting in time and interaction of petty causes. Such is the War. It was made by men, undoubtedly, and by some among them with complete and criminal intention. But their intentions are contingencies in history. It is a contingency for the masses with whose life it has interfered so deeply and so accursedly. It is something extraneous to them; it has no necessary root in their soul. Whoever sees the necessity of war as following from the present stage of the



lives, thoughts, and emotions of the great masses, sees this only as one sees human shapes in the clouds, or faces in the whimsy of arabesques.

But though the war was not caused by ideology, something must have existed in the ideology of the times which made it possible.

What I have in mind in the first place is what made it possible that people should put up with it.

For this is the most unexplained thing about the War: that in such an intellectually enlightened age, provided with all the resources of free speech and thought—one hundred years after the triumph of the French Revolution—such a pointless horror should be possible; the complete suppression of every freedom and right, without precedent on this earth. The old wars could be put up with. The fist fights of ferocity could be put up with when minds were not yet familiar with nobler and freer horizons. The mercenary hosts of princes could be put up with as long as a more noble person was relatively free to exclude himself from their brutalities. The wars of religion and the struggles for freedom could be put up with as long as some idea or slogan provided at least a semblance of goal and reason. But how can the war of aimlessness and servitude be put up with given today's intellectual horizons? Do we put up with it, because we must? But history has shown often enough that people do not put up with constraint either if it is opposed to all their thoughts and feelings—to the current way of seeing the world—they will rather perish and beat their heads on the stone wall.

When was the contradiction between constraint and the way we see the world clearer than today?

Some cause must be concealed here in the way of looking at things itself; some strength or weakness in this entire present mood which made the tacit acquiescence of the world with all horrors possible or compulsive. We can then nevertheless speak of the ideological foundations of war. It is certain that this present toleration cannot be imagined for every kind of outlook. Who after all would have dared to undo the chains of the furies—making the world a prey of contingent interests and powers—if he had not felt in the air around him, in the mood of the entire world, in the mood of the intellectuals of the world the possibility, the certainty of toleration and acquiescence? That they might say at the most:

“Things have always been this way and will always be this way. This is a wicked and mindless thing—but the world is not governed by reason.”

The ideological foundations of the war should not therefore be sought in some kind of warlike way of thinking, nor in patriotic or militarist convictions. War is not made by convictions. If everyone were to act according to his better judgement, there would be no war. It has never happened



before that such a huge majority has done important things against their judgement, has lived and died so completely against their judgement than today. And not because of wickedness, or only because of weakness, but because that was their world outlook.

This cannot be the outlook of militarism, it is rather some kind of fatalistic cynicism, a resigned sort of a 'who cares' philosophy. This is the real enemy who must be fought, this is the dangerous ideology which makes war possible. Shall I draw the portrait of the enemy? I can only do it sketchily, with a few pencil-strokes so that it will perhaps resemble a caricature. But I can explain all the better why he is evil, what there is in him that must be fought.

The name of the enemy is: anti-intellectualism or anti-rationalism. There is no other possibility. The acquiescence in mindless horrors can only be imagined in a time which has lost its faith in the power of the Mind, in the power of Reason, which sees the world as being totally blind and without meaning, when people no longer dare to believe in, or even to wish for, a life governed by reason.

Such is our time: the great reaction to the eighteenth century. This is the time of disillusion with reason. Even its philosophy is such. Shocking though it may be it is literally true that the whole of modern philosophy has laboured for a century to undermine the authority of reason. Kant made a start by setting strict limits to reason. He excluded from its competency the *Ding an sich*, the essence of the world. This essence is not only unknowable, but something basically irrational. It is only we who claim to recognize in it the categories of reason, space, time, and cause. Our minds are forced to think all thoughts according to their own categories. But these are only categories of our minds: not of the world, not of the essence. The essence is *not* necessarily reasonable and open to understanding.

The importance of this train of thought for human life is immediately manifest in Kant's ethics. Morality is most closely connected with the essence. If the essence is something unreasonable, why should moral commands be reasoned or logical? The categorical imperative does not tolerate a "why?" Don't ask the reason why, the morality of blind obedience, genuine Prussian morality, militaristic morality was thus shored up by philosophy.

This dangerous view of the world ideology did not stop there. Thinking moved at a fearsome speed towards complete anti-intellectualism. As if the honed weapons of the mind, of the dialectic, served only to attack the prestige of mind and reason, placing hostility to reason on a pedestal. Hegel made contradiction respectable in logic. For Schopenhauer the mind is only a small lamp which blind Will lights for itself—rather late—in the struggle



for existence. It is a servant and tool of this entirely illogical something, which is not permitted to assert itself against the Will in anything.

As the authority of logic diminished, that of facts grew. The philosophy of facts is fatalistic. The world is not something reasonable: one must resign oneself to the facts, whatever they may be. This is the common philosophy of the age: the greatest enemies, Schopenhauer and Hegel, again meet at this point. This is the root of Schopenhauer's pessimism. But this is also the root of the view of history which started with Hegel and was typical of the entire nineteenth century. History must not be criticized from the aspect of rationality or teleology. History is the struggle of forces, of blind forces. The logic of events has nothing in common with the logic of the mind. The law of facts, the right of the powerful triumphantly emerged from such views. The philosophy of selfishness and power, of the *Wille zur Macht*, was born, the philosophy of Stirner and Nietzsche.

These great philosophers themselves felt the danger inherent in their doctrines. Nietzsche expressedly protested against the militaristic and pan-German conclusions which could be drawn from his works. "For this reason, I even considered writing my books in French," he said somewhere. He was nevertheless unable to stop his doctrine becoming the name-plate of warmongers—and entirely understandably so.

Modern thought continued to develop—towards open anti-intellectualism. The law of blind facts became both common property and a commonplace. Every philosophy which had some influence on the *fin de siècle* mood agreed on one thought: the mind is not able to understand, let alone govern the world; only action is important and intention, the *élan vital*

The pragmatists adjusted the notion of truth to fit in with this. The sole criterion of the truth of ideas became their possible influence on our actions. In other words, not logical but biological criteria. The mind descended from the judgement seat. Fact is the sole and eternal ruler, and with it the Past, void of mind and logic, came to power. Fact, as soon as it is born, turns into the past. The past accumulates, as an invincible force, in life: in vain does present recognition contradict it. Life as a whole is but the past which ceaselessly accumulates. It cannot be stopped or killed. We ourselves are it. Bergson's philosophy is rooted in this thought.

Such philosophies open a new door and create new rights for every kind of conservatism, for every acquiescence in existing and powerful evil.

Acquiescence in evil, and courage to do evil! The mind lacks the power to direct action. Action, on the other hand, is independent of the mind and of rational morality. These are the two corner-stones of an ideology which is fatalistic and nevertheless adores Action.



Both originate from the same mood and give birth to the same mood.

For it is moods that are involved here and not views, not ideas which born in the rooms of philosophers, but a mood which has pervaded the entire emotional world of our age. As the Nile inundates the soil of Egypt in spring, so that every small plant is fed by its moisture, however remote it be from the river, likewise, every small fruit of the spirit of the last decades—every work of literature as well as of philosophy—gives off this flavour of a bitter and poisoned soil.

What is an explicit idea in philosophy is, however, a deep and blunt feeling in literature.

It is a deep feeling mainly of the irrationality of the way of the world, of the weakness of the mind, of the terrible blindness of events. This sceptical, nihilistic type of literature is the legacy of a Frenchman, Renan. How curious! This is a literature of which there was none more filled by reason and *esprit*, the children of Voltaire! Here too the mind flagellates itself with its own weapons, the spirit of the eighteenth century matures into a cruel reaction to itself. Some works by Anatole France are the pamphlets of the mind against the mind, the self-denunciation of the enlightenment. They show that the mind is so weak that it is almost dangerous, like a bad rifle. Every form of good intention or of enthusiasm to extirpate the unreasonable horrors of the world will only give birth to new horrors. Like the idea of the French Revolution, which called for peace and fraternity but led only to new and more horrible bloodshed. *Les dieux ont soif*.

One cannot help the world. It must be left on its own blind, mindless, terrible tracks.

This is the pessimistic colouring of this ideology of despair. In modern English literature, however, this same idea developed into a kind of heroic optimism. This is perhaps even more horrible from the aspect of the consciousness of war! Browning and Meredith offer an analysis of human fate and life where reason and superstition, truth and lie, goodness and selfishness are finally confused. No essential difference separates the unmasked medium from the seer, the bishop without faith from the apostle, the great lord respected for his charity from the selfish tyrant, except for the superficial and the contingent. Wells too presents the power of contingency—and not only in his futuristic fiction—the frightening multitude of possibilities, the external and trivial mainsprings which carry forward fate.

In this confused world, which opens the gates wide to all irrationalities and horrors, living as such is a heroic deed with its own reward. The splendour of manly fight, the joy of the rich experience become the only values.



It is easy to see the path which leads from such a heroic ideology towards an openly militaristic one. In Kipling, English literature has arrived at this point.

The feeling which justifies war may have two different kinds of stresses. The English stress the value of a manly fight, the poets of the Continent, on the other hand, sing the glory of experience. The most open poetic appreciation of the world in this spirit is in Barrès. Barrès's *culte de moi* is the cult of experience, the cult of the past. Because the ego, the *moi*, is but the sum of experience, the summary of a personal past. Not only of our personal past, however, but the inherited resultant in us of the past of our race, of our nation. To place this blind past on a pedestal and to make it the object of a cult, this blind past which we all carry in ourselves as a horrible "moment of inertia," amounts to giving up forever the reasonable formation and improvement of life. Where the only aim left and possible is the artistic cultivation of this *moi* grown out of the past, there we have already accepted in advance every mindless horror which is hidden in the horrible and obstinate power of the past.

This is the final consequence of all this emotional Bergsonism, which is no less than today's poetry. Yes: contemporary poetry sings in a thousand songs what contemporary philosophy also endeavours to prove: that every truth and every glory is that of experience, which is deep, instinctive, and which cannot be understood and expressed rationally. Instinct, experience, the irrational depth of the soul, the mysterious, the subconscious! This is the ideology of modern poetry. The world view of Verlaine, of Swinburne.

Experience! . . . The soul cuddles its experience, it wallows in it. . . . Even painful experience becomes for it the source of pleasure, an object of reverence. Slowly the longing arises for adventure leading to experience. New, artificial, tortuous experience is sought. A sort of intellectual perversity ensues. Good and evil, rational and irrational: these distinctions have lost their meaning! Experience becomes its own justification. It is this intellectual longing for adventure that we sense in the whole of contemporary German literature, this all-conquering dilettantism, which tries out every genre, empathizes with everything, translates everything, turns decadent because of its own thoroughness and classical in decadence: translated into the language of life, this means a longing for a greedy and conquering experience, a war-like philosophy. We sense the same longing for intellectual adventure in the world-view of D'Annunzio and the Futurists who, in the War, have drawn all the possible conclusions that followed from this.

This respect for blind experience, and even the longing for it—which in



addition does not recognize the right of the mind to pass judgement on experience—what could have been more suitable for preparing the intelligentsia of the world for the resigned, and even enthusiastic, acceptance of a terrible and tremendous experience? This is the “dangerous ideology!” This is the enemy!

But shall we fight against this, can we deny it? Is it not right? Are the great thinkers not right in their critique of the mind, in their experience which has confirmed the power of the experience? Are the great poets not right that experience is the depth of the world, the depth from which art and light spring? Shall we make an art of the mind? Shall we bring back into philosophy the platitudinous rationality of the eighteenth century?

No, modern knowledge and feeling cannot be denied and it is not possible to return to an earlier stage. Modern rationalism cannot be the same as that of the eighteenth century. We cannot lose what we have acquired since then. But . . . has this contemporary ideology lost the eighteenth century? Has it not developed its own reaction precisely out of the ideas of this rational century? Is this rationalism not also part and parcel of our contemporary culture? If this is so, it is only a question of emphasis, that's all. A fortunate change in emphasis—and rationalism will be victorious, with a blessed victory, one which does not annihilate the values of the defeated world-view either in the fashion of a barbarian war-lord, but appropriates and develops them, and becomes enriched by them, as Rome was enriched by the treasures of conquered Greece.

(1917)



## THE TURNED-UP COLLAR

*Short story*

by

GÉZA BEREMÉNYI

**I**t was glorious weather—the October sun shone with a brilliance that brought to mind the summer. And Magda Szukics was not allowed to go to school. Shutters closed against the heat, she had spent the summer vacation in bed with a persistent myocarditis. She had hoped to get well before the autumn term began. Her parents had enrolled her in a model secondary school and had urged her to put up a better show in the future. But her illness prevented her from attending the opening ceremony, and school-day after school-day passed until her unknown schoolmates had got so far ahead of her in the curriculum that by October it looked as though she would have to repeat the year. She found the continual, compulsory state of repose difficult to endure. Books covered her blanket; she would begin to read one only to discard it to start another somewhere in the middle. At the time she had fallen ill she had had a dream that continued from one night to the next, but later the dream too became jumbled. She had no visitors; the fresh linen on her bed every week was the only change in her life. She got well suddenly, when everyone thought she had fallen behind for good.

Still she went bravely to school. Into her bag, following the time-table set for the day, she placed exercise books with blank pages, text-books that had never been opened and a ruler for the new, unfamiliar subject, technical drawing, the last two classes on that Monday morning, held by a teacher she imagined would be strict, Dezső Villányi by name. The sun was shining brightly on the other side of the door. Magda Szukics was happy to walk the few steps to the tram stop, happy to be wearing sandals

This story, which evokes the atmosphere of the early 1960s, was adapted by the author and Péter Gothár for the script of *Time Stands Still* (1982), directed by the latter. The film has won numerous international awards, including the Youth Prize at Cannes, and the New York Film Critics' Circle Award for Best Foreign Film.—The Editor.



and nothing but her panties under her blue school smock. On the crowded tram only the noisy groups of blue-smocked and capped students could catch and hold her attention. She tried to guess which of them would be her future class-mates.

Pintér recollected seeing Magda Szukics in the classroom for the first time but his memory was playing him false. Though it hadn't been more than a glance that had passed between them, their first meeting had taken place on the staircase of the school at the time the first bell had sounded. Pintér was talking to a fourth-form senior and had his back to the new girl who was just arriving. The sunshine, the jostling crowd of students at the school entrance and the unexpected semi-darkness that had met her as she stepped in, a gloom that cleared only on the mezzanine where the dazzling light streaming in from the large windows transformed the shuffling students into mirage-like apparitions, had made her dizzy and so she had stopped on the first landing, flattening herself against the wall to let the jostling, rowdy crowd pass.

When she looked up she saw a tall, good-looking boy, elbows resting on the banisters, who stood among milling blue shoulders and uniform caps. Many girls would have found him handsome; Magda Szukics did not. But it was good just to watch him standing there, half-way up the staircase, facing her and looking upwards. He was speaking to someone—nodding his head at another boy who stood a couple of steps further down on the stairs. The handsome one was so engrossed in the conversation that he would not have noticed the new girl for anything—not even if she had begun to walk up the stairs and shoved him as she passed. Magda Szukics was curious to see the other boy—what could he have in him to fascinate such a good-looker to the extent that he doesn't even notice a girl nearby? Then suddenly the crowd was gone, a few late-comers ran up taking two stairs at a time and with them the clamour receded into the distance. Only the new girl remained on the landing, and the two talking by the banister.

The other boy stood with his back to Magda Szukics, speaking to his handsome friend with his chin raised. His shiny brown trouser-legs stirred restlessly. The collar of his short blue smock was turned up. What a stuck-up thing to do. Can't he think of something better? The two boys laughed, the handsome one facing her doubled up for a minute, the other threw his head back. The first bell went. Its last echoes had died away but still Magda Szukics did not stir. The two boys stayed. The one with his back to her had his school-bag under his arm. A long ruler stuck up out of it, pointing straight at Magda Szukics. The new girl made to move. Just then the one with the turned-up collar changed position and the ruler continued to point



at her. And she had a ruler too. A shorter one, one that fitted easily into her bag. And according to her time-table her class would have two hours of technical drawing last thing that day.

At last Magda Szukics started up the stairs, she passed slowly by the still-laughing Pintér with the turned-up collar, who did not notice the new girl look at his face. Just glance at it for a minute. Then hurry on up the stairs, her bag pressed tightly to her breast, scuttle along the corridor to find shelter in the new classroom.

Pintér continued his conversation with Pierre, the tall fourth-former, until the second bell went. He knew that Miss Lovas, who had the first class that morning, was always a few minutes late. He and Pierre had a last laugh together, took leave of each other as the last bell went. By the time he reached the classroom Magda Szukics had already asked somebody which seat was vacant in the girls' row, had sat down and introduced herself to her neighbour. When Pintér with his turned-up collar burst into the classroom the new girl took another good look at him and thought that she couldn't really like him as much as she thought she did. She only wanted to see his eyes and to know when he would notice and look back?

Miss Lovas stepped into the classroom, the monitor brought the class to attention, the students stood up from their desks. The white-smocked, spectacled school-mistress glanced around the room as she listened to the monitor's report. Her experienced eyes rested for a moment on the new girl, then passed quickly on so no one should notice her thinking, Oh dear oh dear, she's not going to be easy, that one. Wonder where they found her?

The home-work that had been set for the day was a poem by Petőfi.

Everywhere in the school monitors were making their report. Whistles shrilled in the gym, balls thundered across the floor. The fourth form corridor prefects were the only ones allowed to remain outside their classrooms. They bawled at the late-coming juniors scurrying along the corridors, checked the toilets to make sure they were all empty, the stamp of their running feet resounded down the echoing corridors; one of them gave a last loud whoop and at last they too disappeared. The corridor-prefects wore blue arm-bands with a big P embroidered on them in red wool by the female members of the parent-teacher association.

Pintér's school was silent. Until the next break. The old building was founded upon tradition, but its weatherbeaten walls had consented to admit the achievements of many new eras. It housed a primary and a secondary school, a consequence of its ample size being that inexperienced children of primary school age would lose their way from time to time in the labyrinths



of its corridors. This is why the prefects always had a last check after the third and final bell had gone.

At the end of the day the school would release its students. In the afternoons there was extra physical education for those who wanted it in the basement gym; study circles were held in the laboratories. The feeble glow of light-bulbs in the corridors would mean parent-staff meetings were taking place in some of the classrooms. Every now and then a dancing school or class party would break the sound of silence with the faraway tinkle of a piano or the loud blare of a tape-recorder. But finally all would be silent and dark in the building once more.

So its days passed.

When morning broke the sunlight would form pools upon the green oil paint of the walls and benches and would settle on the pictures nailed to the walls. Their mute, infinite ranks covered every possible inch of surface. Pictures, each in its uniform brown frame made of plain laths, each under its sheet of glass, all the result of decades of afternoons spent in the wood-work circle. The roving eye would light upon them everywhere in the building. Over the years they had completely inundated the school, becoming so congested in places that the frames almost touched, forming a jumbled tableau, then thinning out again the line would continue, slowing down unexpectedly only when some larger, broader specimen broke the uninterrupted flow that continued around the corners, into niches and hollows, into the darkest nooks; its labyrinthine course mapped out the whole school from the coal-cellar door to the attic. There they hung, as if conscious of the inconsistency, the disregard of chronology and values which had determined their position in the procession—pictures of great moments in Hungarian history, portraits of prominent figures who had distinguished themselves during those moments, portraits of the great examples cheek to jawl with characteristic paintings from each of the representatives of Hungarian and foreign artistic schools. In a plain brown frame hung Ladislas the Fourth of Hungary on horseback, tending his hand to Rudolph from the House of Habsburg to whose aid he had gone, celebrating the victory of Masch Plain; a couple of turns of the corridor and there were the Hungarians again, but the insurrectionist Kuruts armies this time, cutting down Habsburg soldiers with their three-cornered hats, raiding the army that had become strong enough over the centuries to attack those who had once come to its rescue; all this taking place soon after the battles along the frontiers with the Turks, which were represented, in addition to a few paintings in oils depicting the courageous defenders of fortresses in action, by the portrait of the great poet, Bálint Balassi, carrying within himself the contradictions



of his age mirrored in his work, and were found somewhere on the second floor, next door to pictures of international revolutionaries, Soviet soldiers waving their weapons in greeting from their tanks, and the crowd greeting them hats off and kerchiefs in the air, which hung facing the photograph of the marble bust of the enlightened philosopher, Voltaire, renowned for his vitriolic pen, followed by a reproduction of the impressionist masterpiece entitled May picnic and a drawing of Attila József in ink, poet of the proletariat. But in the company of those who sought and found a way out, of those who sung in praise, those who followed and those who were steadfast, a place was found for those who made vain attempts to remain non-committal and sought refuge in the ivory tower of *l'art pour l'art*; a place was found for the vanguard, for those forced to recognize the contradictions of ages long become a lesson for today, for those who pointed them out, at them and beyond them, for those who, all in all, in spite of their class-limitations, had been progressive, in their fashion, who had passed beyond the boundaries of their class prejudices, who had portrayed and had stood for the complexity of the long-forgotten conditions and the tragic problems of their age, problems resolved only by the present—a place was found for the geniuses who, with lasting validity, because with visionary force; the ages which had carried the germs of; the prophets who had interpreted it in their way, and the revolutionaries who recognized it and created it in spite of transitional regress—a place was found for all of them. Some of the pictures depicted typical scenes from critical moments of history, periods when the course of development was recognizable only with great effort, when ideals were glowing embers under smothering ashes, and smouldered only in the best minds of the people. The geniuses represented on the walls desired the collaboration of the progressive forces, the standard-bearers tended their hands toward the oppressed, and were replaced by others when they preferred death to compromise. The students of the school often referred to these paragons when questioned but seemed to forget them at breaks, when they would repeat one name, and one name only: Pierre, Pierre.

"Have you seen Pierre?," Pintér heard the arm-banded corridor-prefects shout to each other above the racket produced by the juniors as he ran by them.

"Do you think Pierre's all there now, do you?"

"Do you know what Pierre's gone and done again?"

"Is Pierre going out with Kati or has he still got that platinum blonde bird of his?"

Pintér heard the name repeatedly from the fourth-formers at break-



times. Their classrooms were on the top floor; it was from there that the loud-voiced big boys came down when the bell went for break to watch over the juniors. They walked in pairs, talking to each other with voices raised against the uproar. When they lost patience they rolled up their soft-bound textbooks and hit the nearest boisterous youngster within striking distance on the head. "Steady on, kid!" Then they continued to stroll down the corridor, because they thought it more important to discuss Pierre's latest doings. From the snatches of conversation overheard by accident Pintér spun an elaborate web of fancy around the figure of Pierre.

The first-formers discussed him too during breaks in the toilets where they retreated to smoke. Most often it was little Körmendi who began; he liked to draw and make no secret of it, boasted of it even, and so had been christened Cocky. Cocky Körmendi thought Pierre was like the hero of a penny-dreadful; he said Pierre had once bent a coin in two with his thumb and forefinger under the nose of a grey, defeated teacher nicknamed Ficere and had promised to do the same thing to him if he dared plough him at the end of the year. The old, grey-haired teacher has been trembling with fear ever since, as anyone can see for himself—you've only got to watch him walk down the corridor in his brown smock, staring straight in front of him, his head trembling like a leaf. According to Cocky, Pierre plans to join the Foreign Legion; he spends half the night running in the park so as to be in form for marching in the desert. He plays in a band, his father's in prison and his mother is persecuted because of her origins, they've had their ancestral estates taken away from them. Cocky Körmendi will take Pintér to visit them one of these days, but first he must ask Pierre because he is a bit suspicious of strangers. He's got his reasons for it though. He's had some trouble with the cops. "Hey Pintér, you really don't know which's Pierre? He just went by. Weird you didn't see him, he even said hello to me. Didn't you notice? If I don't feel like coming to school he always gets me a medical certificate. He's got this doctor girl-friend. She's great!"

Pintér stared at all the prefects during breaks. Perhaps that one in glasses is Pierre. He's got a deep voice and he's really strong. But he wears glasses. That one there is too fat, he's disgusting. He picked one of them out at long last, a blond one that the girls in his class had found the most attractive by quick vote. Pintér, after he had named him Pierre to himself, followed him everywhere at break. He eavesdropped on his conversations, deliberating over the way his companions treated him. But he soon lost interest. Finally he watched his candidate greet Rajnák, the deputy head, and heard Rajnák's reply. After that he wasn't surprised when he saw another fourth-former give his chosen one a friendly thump on the back and



say cheerfully: "Don't piss in your pants, man, Pierre's not mad at you. He was just having a bit of fun, you know how he is when the mood takes him."

Pintér took extra gym with Cocky Körmendi. One day they arranged to meet on November 7. Square. Dusk had settled early that day, the street-lamps were lit and it was raining, not heavily, but in a steady, disagreeable drizzle. Pintér waited for Cocky at the top of the steps leading to the underground station. He wore a leather coat that was much too big for him and his uniform cap. For a while he banged his gym bag against some railings which sent up clouds of steam into the cold, heavy air. It was the rush-hour and it seemed as though the traffic-jam on the square could not get any worse; as though all the cars in Budapest had converged here on the gleaming wet asphalt to obey the signals flashed at them by the traffic-lights. Herds of cars zoomed thundering at the first blink of green, impatiently sounding their horns, spattering their horns, spattering the brightly lit trams with mud as they overtook them. Because of the weather Pintér didn't much feel like prancing about in the gym, but the gym teacher was not overfond of him for some reason and his sympathies, said Pintér's mother, must at all costs be won through paying the fees for the extra gym course and through showing a lot of enthusiasm for the subject.

Cocky Körmendi was late and Pintér, bored stiff, began to examine the photographs displayed in the photographer's window beside him. The simpering children and the smiling women, commanded even here by the manly, stern faces of fathers and fiancées sporting moustaches and clenching pipes did not hold his attention for long. Instead he turned toward the crowd preparing to cross the street so as to appraise those coming towards him one by one. The biggest mass of people the day had seen so far surged across the street in the rain; there was nothing in their faces or their clothes to catch the eye. The crowd flowed around Pintér, brushed by him or jostled against him and he stood in the middle of them, their words jumbled incoherently in his ears. By the time the lights had turned yellow they were all on the pavement. On the gleaming, empty asphalt only the cars waited, legitimately impatient, headlights glaring, ready to spring.

And this was the moment that a solitary, perturbing figure chose to cross the street. As soon as he stepped off the kerb the lights turned red for him and deservedly green for the cars, but that did not bother him at all. He walked sedately, at a leisurely pace, oblivious of the shouting around him; stopped even in the middle of the road in the glare of headlights, turned to face one of the columns of cars, spread his arms wide, stopping them all. "The public is warned," he shouted, but the rest of his words were lost in the din of cars whipping past him. And he punished them for



ignoring him, bringing his palms down on their tops with a bang; afraid of a collision, they could take no revenge, and speeded on, seething. The other column of cars could not move for the figure with the outstretched arms; people jumped out of the first car, tugged at the jaywalker, almost pushed him under the cars arriving from the other side of the square.

We know now that this was Pintér's first meeting with Preston. He could not take his eyes off him; he was drawn to the edge of the kerb, gym-bag swinging from his hand, to watch him being dragged off the asphalt. And as one is wont to give arbitrary names to the characters of one's dreams, whether the apparition bears resemblance to the bearer of that name in real life or not, so Pintér was certain that the conspicuous figure in the square could only be Pierre. We know that the delusion lasted a few days only, but it was a characteristic mistake, as characteristic as Preston's behaviour.

After having forced a column of cars to wait for the next green light, and when the rest of the cars had moved off, Preston shook himself free of his pursuers and walked straight towards Pintér. From behind and beside Pintér pedestrians moved forward because the lights had changed again. Preston knew his way around; he too recognised his man in the crowd. He took one look at the boy in the uniform cap and stopped in front of him. He was tall and dripping wet, only his usual dark-blue jacket covered his bare chest. Pintér would have been shaking with cold in his place. They did not say a word to each other. Preston performed one of his characteristic gestures, one which we were all familiar with: he extended his arms and placed the edges of his palms together, which meant "give," or, rather, "give if you want," staring all the while with the unblinking eyes of a priest celebrating mass into the eyes of the honoured chosen one—honoured since he did not ask just anybody and always in good cause. A lot of our money wandered into his pockets this way.

Pintér thrust his hands into his pockets. He had four forints put by to go to the movies. He took out the two coins, discoloured with age, and placed them into Preston's extended palm. Then, suddenly remembering, he silently lifted a forefinger for Preston to be patient. He had a silver five-forint piece in the pocket of his trousers, a rare treasure at the time. He held it up, then dropped it on top of the others.

Preston recognized the distinction between the two bequests. He slipped the two-forint pieces in the pocket of his jacket, then took the silver coin and placed it slowly, ceremoniously into his breast pocket, smoothing the material covering the coin twice to emphasize that it would there be held in esteem. It was a practical trifle—or a solemn promise, hand to breast.



Pintér could choose as he wished. With a nod of the head Pintér agreed to join the disciples. In answer Preston performed the rites of initiation by way of moving on. He really knew how to go about it. As they stood on the square soaked through he took hold of the boy's collar and in the tumult that surrounded them shook the jacket once, as if adjusting it. Then he turned up the collar and walked away. A thousand duties awaited him.

Pintér watched him walk away and thought he had met Pierre. He made a note of the light duck trousers and the blue Czechoslovak tennis shoes. At the time Preston did not care for ties and winkle-picker shoes. For practical reasons perhaps? The main thing was that his clothing was original. We couldn't say a word, he'd invented himself.

For years afterwards Pintér always wore his collar turned up. His teachers often warned him that he would have to leave the class if he persisted in wearing his collar pointed toward the sky; after all, it rarely rains in classrooms. Pintér always took heed of the warning but as soon as the bell went for break, up went his collar again. He wore his coats in the same way.

"If that was Pierre you saw then I'm Pierre too. It couldn't have been Pierre on November 7 Square because Pierre's at the seniors' party, OK? He can't be anywhere else, there's a bird he's after, at the party. You really don't know where it's at, do you?" Cocky Körmendi underwent an extraordinary transformation every time he spoke of Pierre. As soon as he had uttered the name his whole body began to shake, his shoulders humped, his head twisted this way and that and his voice became throaty, guttural, as if he were singing a pop-song with a maddening rhythm. He wanted to express a singular feeling, enchantment, enthusiasm, an idealised passion that must be devoutly protected from the whole world. While he was speaking the conductor asked to see his ticket, and Cocky Körmendi, because he was speaking about Pierre, thrust it at him with a recklessly insolent gesture, though he was normally a bashful boy. He even began an impudent dispute with the conductor. "Who asked you anyway?," just to be true to his chosen ideal. Pierre gave him courage and strength. Occasionally, he relieved the glazed look Cocky acquired during class, rid him of his accidental grimaces and changing moods, gave him a secret language, a pledged, private code; incited him to make provocative, witty rejoinders. With Pierre's help the fat, bespectacled Cocky Körmendi was able to ignore the gibes and sneers of his classmates, the lectures of his parents; was brave enough to face any conductor on any tram. And this he tried to reciprocate by growing up to those exalted feelings which he could express when dreaming of Pierre. His body shook and his voice became throaty even when he was muttering to himself—and not only in front of the mirror.



He used the role bestowed upon him with growing confidence, as if in himself; woke with it more and more often in the morning, began to consider it his own, his true self, made it his only pride and joy. He was faithful and unexpectedly conscientious. Pintér jealously watched him tackling the bad-tempered conductor, unperturbed by the interjections of the rest of the passengers, calling him a hysterical, wretched old fool, and knocking his hand away so adroitly that he even escaped a slap on the face. He grudged Cocky Körmendi his Pierre.

The rain did not seem to want to stop. It was still pouring heavily when they came out after gym. Pintér turned up the collar of his leather jacket and mumbled something about a girl he was to meet to get rid of Cocky. He walked a couple of steps in the opposite direction and when Cocky had disappeared around the corner he ventured back into the darkened building.

In the school only the landing lights had been switched on, illuminating the first few pictures from the endless procession aligning the walls; the battle-scenes that had made history, the geniuses and other illustrious figures of the curriculum were lost in shadow. Pintér took the stairs one by one, sliding his hand along the banisters as he walked. From around the region of the first floor he heard music and the strengthening sound of voices singing, the sharp notes of a guitar and somebody screeching. The darkness deepened as he neared the source of the sound. He swung his gym bag in rhythm to the music. The seniors' party was on the third floor, where the lights had been switched off even on the landing and the sound of singing became dangerously loud. An only-just male voice was belting out a song in English in an incoherent falsetto with delightful shamelessness, as though he were crying and did not deem it necessary to control himself, as though, lost to the world, he were celebrating his sorrow, demanding, in an exorbitant desire for immediate satisfaction, more and more from the feeling of anguish, because it was his and his only, because it was a pleasure to lose himself in it, a true experience, an adventure, an adventure that raises one above duty and obligation and achievement and constraint and inexorability and goals and aims to be transfigured, realised, to bloom henceforth only for oneself; to disintegrate and let one's desires wash over one, to celebrate that one is liberated from law and order and their standards, to experience with one's body that one is at last left alone with one's sensual needs. Pintér proceeded into the cavernous depths of the top-floor corridor, and when he could no longer see a foot ahead and felt he could not stand the smallest increase in the volume of sound he stopped and leaned against the wall. He stayed there for an incalculable length of time.

The first thing he could distinguish was a green eye. The only source



of light was the tiny lamp of the tape-recorder, shining, as it turned out, from within a classroom which had both door-wings wide open. The desks had been carried out and in their places the white shirts of the final-year boys swirled, clinging closely to the blouses of the girls who had been invited. The song ended, the bright pieces of clothing stopped and waited for the next song to begin. Then from very near Pintér heard a girl's voice whisper "Pierre!" The voice came from a window-niche close by and was at once full of fear, curiosity, reserve and admiration. Pierre must have done something which she was not expecting but would now have to accept reverently. Then she began to pant, and moan a little, softly, but loud enough to be heard above the new English number blared out by the tape-recorder. You could clearly hear her whisper, breathless, full of wonder, "Pierre!" The third time she cried the name out loud. But Pintér strained his ears in vain for the slightest sound that would attest to Pierre's presence; he did not betray himself with a single word. Whatever he was doing he did silently and mercilessly. He was playing with her as one played on an instrument; he wanted to coax his name out of her and that was all.

Pintér drew one of his three cigarettes out of his pocket and lit it. He felt capable of everything. He thought the gesture with which he had struck the match and flicked it away into the darkness had been grand. In a flash, like the sudden flare of the match, it came to him that soon, any moment now he too could arouse the admiration of someone; he too would hold a girl close, feel her body and make his own felt, would find someone to his taste at last, one of those from in there. Soon, any moment now. He was sure, there on the dark corridor, leaning back against the wall again after his last puff while a singer, much taken with himself sung in English inside, that faceless somebodies had already formed a line, were preparing themselves for an unparalleled, unprecedented meeting with him, and the discoveries soon to be made awakened a feeling of superiority in him. He felt strong and was excited. How shall it happen to him? He did not try to guess because it was the uncertainty, the feeling of risk that gave the most pleasure. That they would present themselves incalculably at last, through a superb freak of fortune, and the choice shall not be made for him this once. Not even by him. He shall simply be set free.

"I'll be off soon," thought Pintér after the last puff before he threw the butt into the darkness. Then he pushed himself away from the wall, and strolled slowly to the end of the corridor, away from the blare of the tape-recorder and the girl who was still repeating that name.

*Translated by Eszter Molnár*



# FROM THE PRESS

MÁTYÁS SZŰRÖS

## NATIONAL CAUSE — COMMON CAUSE

On 26 February, 1983 the daily *Népszabadság* published an analysis of the foreign policy of the socialist countries by Mátyás Szűrös, the head of the Foreign affairs section of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the HSWP. He first discussed the nature of cooperation between them in the context of the changing international situation of recent years.

The concrete meaning of the unity of the socialist countries is changing as socialism advances and evolves, and the international situation changes as well. It meant something different in the early years when one spoke of the socialist fifth of the world, at the time of the Cold War, and something else again at a time when an advanced socialist society is in process of construction and a balance of power exists between the two world systems.

The recognition of an objective identity of interests, their harmonization and the formulation of methods of common action of course depend also on subjective factors. This may lead to different interpretations of the notion of unity. It must be remembered that socialism is being built within the framework of state frontiers. Every socialist country decides independently on domestic issues, and also has its own foreign policy features. The reconciliation and harmonization of national interests takes place between sovereign states, and it depends on

these what and how much they are able to undertake of steps serving common goals, and how they realize these. The depth and lasting nature of the unity of the socialist community rests precisely in the fact that the different socialist countries contribute voluntarily and independently to its coming about and consolidation.

*The article goes on to point out that though the basic social structure and the basic goals are shared each socialist country has many specific and characteristic features, ranging from differences in their weight in the world economy and in resources to cultural traditions which influence policy at home and abroad, as well as the effects which world political and economic factors have on each.*

In the current interpretation of unity within the community, the common interests on which it is based, as well as the variety manifest in the concrete realities of the socialist countries and their national interests what has to be recognised for a start is that the common interests of the cooperating socialist countries, and vice versa, strengthening unity enhances the legitimate interests of the different countries. Unity does not mean complete identity, but the proper recognition of the common interest, the reconciliation of the national interests, and accordingly implies actions identical in essence and of the same direction but of many hues and colours when it comes to the con-



crete form of what is due. Unity interpreted in this manner does not violate sovereignty or diminish identity, but on the contrary helps their fulfillment.

*An important aspect is the unity of the socialist countries' mutual interest in each other's success. Since the socialist countries are mutually interested in each other's achievements this communality of interests also potentiates their unity.*

One of the basic common interests of the socialist countries today involves an efficient coping with those difficulties which accompany a new stage of growth or are the consequence of unfavourable developments in world political and world economic conditions. Furthermore there is a connection with possible erroneous steps in politics or economic policy, not to mention that the system of economic management of the socialist countries and their mechanism of cooperation were unable to react to new challenges both promptly and adequately. Coping with these problems is an important requirement internationally as well, since the further spread of socialism depends primarily on the degree to which the socialist countries prove attractive. The influence of socialism is based on its achievements.

Overcoming economic difficulties in the different socialist countries and the growth of their cooperation are closely connected. From the second half of the seventies problems of a largely similar nature manifested themselves more or less simultaneously in the countries of the socialist community in Europe and this has made itself felt in both bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The uniting of efforts, the fullest exploitation of the advantages of socialist economic integration, consequently the indispensable modernization of CMEA operations, have major role in alleviating the economic problems of member countries. A thorough and analytical exploration of the causes of the problems, the reconciliation of the main trends of the economic development strategy of the member countries, the coordination of their eco-

nomie policies through consultations, the adjustment of the mechanism of cooperation to the new requirements and the common working out of measures aimed at providing a solution are indispensable.

It is not our aim to limit let alone put an end to economic relations between socialist and the capitalist countries. It was not the socialist countries which have applied discrimination, proclaimed embargos, or have taken measures restricting East-West economic cooperation in the past either, nor do they intend to shut themselves off or to establish national or community autarchy, on the contrary they desire to expand relations based on equality and mutual benefit.

The common interests of the socialist countries demand not only strengthening of cooperation, but also mutual observance of what is specific to each. The search for, the working out and implementation of measures adjusted to the different endowments of each realistic attention to concrete conditions—are an indispensable condition for the success of socialist construction. The progress of the socialist countries so far has confirmed in a number of ways that it is opposed to the common cause if national characteristics are disregarded and the experience of other socialist countries, with a different background and resources, is copied. If the latter is done problems and even serious tragedies may result like those which ensue if the universal laws of the socialist revolution and construction are disregarded.

*The new, intensive, stage of socialist progress has given rise to similar problems in various countries and the instruments designed to overcome them also have their similarities.*

The multifariousness of forms corresponds to the richness of reality, it does not weaken the joining of forces but further enhances the importance of the mutual acquaintance with each other's experience. We are rightly asked to learn from one another. A proper interpretation of the relationship between essential identity and the



multiplicity of forms must of course take into consideration that there are no correct solutions in the absolute sense, but only solutions which in the given concrete circumstances prove to be successful for socialist construction. It is therefore wrong and even damaging to meet the methods of others with suspicion and as wrong to claim that one's own are the only sound ones.

There are no abstract aims in socialist foreign policy independent of the particular interests of the different countries. The co-ordination of genuine national interests is most important also in the course of the formulation of foreign policy on the community level, the formulation of the aims and objectives of the common position. A great many facts bear out that common initiative is really successful if the different socialist countries exploit to the fullest possible degree such opportunities as are open to them, including connections rooted in the past. Let me add that every socialist country has its own foreign policy objectives, international aims, linked to its own features and justified national interests, which do not contradict to the common socialist goals.

Midst troubles and complexities in the socialist construction the question whether international relations help or hinder is of even greater importance. Thermonuclear war threatens humanity; all that this implies is diametrically opposed to socialist aims. Rearmament forced on us in itself siphons off huge resources that would be better employed elsewhere. It is the most fundamental national interest of every socialist country, and also their common interest, to bring about international conditions which further the realization of the major social and economic programme of socialism. This demands that a brake be put on the armaments race, and military equilibrium on the lowest possible level, the continuation of the dialogue and of relations between the socialist and capitalist countries, their further development, and the expansion of cooperation on the basis of mutual benefits. The

socialist countries are able to create such conditions only by a coordinated stand, and joint initiatives, as was done most recently in January 1983 in Prague by the Warsaw Treaty organization.

*The author concludes by pointing out that in working for common goals and implementing jointly worked out proposals every socialist country has its own role and responsibility which it carries out in a manner that is in keeping with its own characteristics and national interests:*

The Hungarian people three and a half decades ago chose the socialist course of social progress, holding on to it also in those difficult times. This fact defines who our allies and friends are and also our adversaries. It is our interest that the cause of national independence, social progress and socialism should gain ground all over the world. Hungary is—owing to her location and the nature of her resources and economy an open country. She has a vital interest in peaceful and calm international political and economic relations. This coincides with the common goals of the socialist countries, and the success of their combined efforts. As opposed to beliefs fed by western propaganda, we count on the particular features of our country not only when seeking a response to new challenges and in the solution of problems, but also in the working out and assertion of the common aims of socialist foreign policy. The Hungarian People's Republic participates in the common initiatives which are aimed at staving off the danger of a war that threatens mankind with destruction, at the development of relations between countries that are part of different social systems. These aims are common and at the same time they fully correspond to Hungarian national interests. When furthering these aims, just as in the assertion of those particular interests which are connected with the openness or other specific features of our country—we exploit every opportunity and make use of all instruments open to Hungary, that is to foreign policy.



# IN FOCUS

## THE ANCIENT WORLD IN A UNIVERSITY PERIODICAL

The Latin and the Ancient History Departments at the Kossuth Lajos University in Debrecen have both achieved a considerable reputation in their field. Since 1965 the two departments have published jointly the periodical *Acta Classica*, founded by István Borzsák, and now edited by László Havas and János Sarkady. Its volumes appear year after year, and have duly acquired a solid international reputation, to judge by citations, bibliographies and library catalogues.

Those writing for the journal include not only members of the Debrecen departments and scholars from other Hungarian universities, but foreign contributors as well. The fact that these latter, guests of the departments, are publishing in the journal is an indication of its international status. One of the young Debrecen classical scholars Zoltán Nemes has written on the society of Athens' golden age, from a particular approach, that of the *deme*. This middle level of social organization provided, as can be seen in the evolution of Socrates' ideas, the foundations for a consciousness of identity on the part of citizens. The relative independence of the *demes* was made possible by the tenacious collective ownership of land and

other property. The great authority on Roman history, Emilio Gabba (Pavia—Pisa), analyses in the preface to Vitruvius' work on architecture, traces of the political ideology of Emperor Augustus, an articulation of the notion of the imperial capital.

The "province"—in the historical meaning of the word—is of course present in the periodical. Lajos Balla, who has researched for years into the epigraphical sources for the ancient history of Dacia, discusses the biographical data and social standing of the historic personalities of the Roman provinces of Dacia and Pannonia. To write on this subject in a country part of which was once a Roman province, is a kind of local history, and may induce bias and, often, limitations. At the same time it is an area of research to be cultivated in the same way as the history of the great empire itself, always looking at the total entity, without a desire to find contemporary justifications in history. Balla's Dacia research points now towards a summary. The Romanization of the province affected only the surface and was superficial. He has clarified the role of the *scribatus*, the scribe-official in the administrative hierarchy of the city; he collected biographical data on the officials of the province, he analysed the relics of troops of Syrian origin.

Tamás Gesztelyi has also undertaken to study local source material. In Debrecen there



are two valuable collections of art objects from Classical times: the Déri Museum, whose works of art were acquired through the art trade at the end of the 19th century, and the famous Calvinist College, which owns, among others, a private collection from the 18th century. The author investigates a type of representation of the Roman *gemmae*, the satyr engravings, placing the Pannonia finds into the context of international Roman art. One of his conclusions, that the same workshop may have made some of the *gemmae* in several copies, still needs confirmation. The result of his brilliant detective work is that some of the objects from the Déri Museum collection lost at the end of World War II can be accurately reconstructed through prints and descriptions from the last century.

Although all the articles discuss subjects of Classical studies in a strict sense, there are hardly any which do not touch on Oriental aspects. Recently, Graeco-Roman studies have been integrated with disciplines dealing with the whole Ancient world; it always takes into consideration that in some cases the Orient may be reflected more exactly by direct sources. When discussing the Orient, our Classical sources often need to be deciphered and explicated; their real value lies in their mediation of the Orient-image of the Graeco—Roman world.

A study by Mária Szabó discusses a famous story by Herodotus, the tragic death of a prince of the Lydian royal family. It is a story which brings to life the image of the inevitability of fate. Prince Atys, despite the protection of his father, is hit by the iron lance mentioned in the prophecy, cast from the hands of the person ordered to protect him. The author—following though not referring to the Classical interpretations of Karl Reinhardt and Árpád Szabó—investigates those features through which the narrative purpose of Herodotus may be identified. Herodotus wanted to prepare for the fatal fall of Lydia through varied but always ominous stories of defeat.

Zsolt Visy investigates the names of two attendants of Mithras, the Oriental god who was popular all over the Roman Empire. Both of them, Cautes and Cautopades, obtained their names from the Greek verb "to burn", and took their shape under the influence of the Dioscure cult. Although the Mithras cult was ultimately of Iranian origin, all its essential images were created with a Hellenistic—Roman hue since they served the spiritual needs of the Western Mediterranean. Twin gods associated with the sun were frequent in the religions of ancient Western Asia, and the roots of Mithras' attendants perhaps deserve to be examined in this direction too.

An article by Ildikó Puskás and Zoltán Kádár collects and examines the data on the 'satyrs' in the virgin forests of India, attested by Classical authors; they are recognized as distant references to the apes and forest fauna of the area.

Naturally, contributors examine some of the topics central to the study of Greece and Rome. A series of articles by János Sarkady investigates the Dark Age in Athens history (twelfth—eighth centuries B.C.) through the use of archaeological data, settlement history, and references in later sources. The approximate reconstruction of the long process of the Athenian *synoikismos* ("living together", i.e. the political integrations of territories adjoining Athens or in modern terminology the development of the Athenian territorial state) necessitates the recognizing of the historic reality of various forms of tribal organization, and later of the small Attic states reflected in archaic institutions of Classical Athens.

A study by Miklós Szabó looks at the "primitive" Boeotian terracotta sculpture of the seventh—sixth centuries B.C. on the basis of rich unpublished material from Greece and museum collections abroad. He does not consider this sculpture a provincial or a popular survival of the archaic style, but on the contrary, a fashion phenomenon.

A series of studies by László Havas re-



searches the political history of the late Roman republic. Biographical data of the followers and adversaries of the plotter Catilina, the position taken by the Roman *plebs* and the mob in the political events and social tensions of the era all indicate that the social stratification of the first century B.C. was independent of the legal stratification. A study in which he tries to reconstruct the philosophy of history of Asinius Pollio grew out of his Catilina studies. Pollio's biological view of history derived from literary and philosophic roots, and in its time acted in defence of republican ideals and as a condemnation of the increasingly obvious efforts to autocracy. Pollio's echo in later historiography is significant inasmuch as it contributed to the representation of history as an irreversible process.

Nemes, Zoltán: "On Socrates' Public and Political Attitude," vol. 14, pp. 19-23; Nemes, Zoltán: "The Public Property of Demes in Attica", vol. 16, pp. 3-8; Gabba, Emilio: "La praefatio di Vitruvio e la Rome Augustea," vol. 16, pp. 49-52; Balla, Lajos: "Prosopographia Dacica," vol. 15, pp. 55-56; Balla, Lajos: "Le scribatus comme honor en Dacia et en Pannonie," vol. 15, pp. 67-70; Balla, Lajos: "Syriens de Commagene en Pannonie orientale," vol. 16, pp. 69-71; Gesztelyi, Tamás: "Satyrbüsten auf Gemmen," vol. 14, pp. 65-73; Gesztelyi, Tamás: "Sitzender Satyr mit Doppelflöte," vol. 15, pp. 71-77; Szabó, Mária: "Die Rolle der Atyrs-Adrastos-Geschichte in Herodots Kroisos-Logos," vol. 14, pp. 9-17; Visy, Zsolt: "The Name of Cautes and Cautopates," vol. 15, pp. 51-54; Puskás, Ildikó and Kádár, Zoltán: "Satyrs in India," vol. 16, pp. 9-17; Sarkady, János: "Gentilizische Formen in der frühen Polisorganisation Athens," vol. 14, pp. 3-8; Szabó, Miklós: "Vases plastiques et terres cuites beotiens à la fin du 7<sup>e</sup> et au debut du 6<sup>e</sup> siècles av. n. é.," vol. 15, pp. 3-16; Havas, László: "Die Catilina-Bewegung und der Senatorenstand," vol. 14, pp. 25-36; Havas, László: "The plebs Romana in the Late 60s B.C.," vol. 15, pp. 23-33; Havas, László: "Asinius Pollio, and the Fall of the Roman Republic," vol. 16, pp. 25-36. in: *Acta Classica Universitatis Scientiarum Debreceniensis*. vol. 14 (1978), 80 pp.; 15 (1979), 79 pp.; 16 (1980), 72 pp.

## THE CODEX CUMANICUS

The codex in question is not just one of the tens of thousands of medieval MSS, but a strange amalgam of Italian, German, Turkic, and Persian cultural history. It is rightly regarded as one of the most precious objects in the Marciana Library of Venice. Though the Codex was first mentioned in the seventeenth century, the complete text was only edited in 1880 by a Hungarian, Count Géza Kuun, who was a renowned Orientalist and historian in those days. Since then the Codex has been of great importance for research in Turkic studies. Professor Lajos Ligeti, the octogenarian doyen of Hungarian Oriental studies, has recently devoted a detailed article to its ramifying problems.

The repeated interest Hungarian scholars have displayed in the Codex Cumanicus can be partly attributed to the special place the Codex has in Hungarian cultural history. The Cumanians (or Comans), whose language is described in the Codex, were admitted to and settled in large numbers in Hungary in the thirteenth century by King Béla IV when fleeing from the Mongols. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this ethnic group had merged with the Hungarians. They were warlike nomads of the South Russian steppe region in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, speaking a Turkic dialect or rather dialects; after the Mongol conquest they remained important. Though some of them perished and some settled in Hungary, many Cumanians remained in their old homeland and constituted the basic ethnic element of the new Tatar Golden Horde. It is the Cumanian language of the thirteenth and fourteenth-century Golden Horde that the Codex Cumanicus describes.

Basically the Codex falls into two parts: the first or "Italian" section contains a Latin-Persian-Cumanian glossary and grammatical paradigms, while the second, more heterogeneous, part, the "German" section gives the texts of Christian religious hymns and prayers with Latin and German



explanations. The whole manuscript, in its present form, is made up of copies, and the two major parts were united only at a later date. The primary aim in compiling the first part must have been to provide assistance to Italian merchants in the Crimea. Professor Ligeti thus rightly describes the first section as the "Interpreters' Book." The second part, called by Professor Ligeti the "Missionaries' Book," was in all probability written by Franciscan monks, mainly Germans, who were active in the territory of the Golden Horde.

Professor Ligeti's article is a thorough examination of all the problems connected with the Codex. He deals with the dating and place of origin of the different parts of the work and he investigates the question of authorship. He dwells on the Cumanian, Persian, Latin, Italian, and German philological and linguistic problems the Codex presents. Sometimes he proposes new suggestions, sometimes he reveals his doubts. He is aware—as he says in his paper—that "the Codex Cumanicus has not yet unveiled all its secrets. . ."

Ligeti, Lajos: "Prolegomena to the Codex Cumanicus," *Acta Orientalia Hungarica*, vol. 35, fasc. 1, pp. 1-54.

#### I. V.

### A THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD PINE FOREST

The first comprehensive description of Hungary is a Papal list of tithes for the years 1332 to 1337; it lists all the parishes and records where and how much tax priests had to pay to the Pope. Up to this point approximately twenty thousand Hungarian documents are known, which is an infinitesimally small number compared to the quantities which have survived in England, France, or Italy. In these countries it would be unimaginable for a single scholar to

prepare an historic geography for these three centuries. No less than a geographic description of Hungary based on historic sources and which contains all discoverable data of natural and economic-social conditions is what is involved. György Györffy is already the third Hungarian historian to take on this huge enterprise, although—in common with nineteenth-century predecessors—he has not yet completed it. This time the value of the work far exceeds that of earlier attempts and it is to be hoped that it is not left unfinished. The volume in the alphabetic order of the counties covering A—Cs has already been published\*, the D—K volume is now at press, and the author will need, by his own calculation, seven to nine years to complete the task.

Given the methodology and technology available to modern information sciences, one might think that the course of this monumental undertaking would be greatly eased and accelerated by use of computers. However, the rather heterogeneous data used by Györffy resists satisfactory formulation and—this perhaps is an even more interesting problem—the knowledge stored in the human brain, to wit, Györffy's, allows interconnections to be recognized for which no computer programming as yet exists. The proof lies in books and studies by this leading authority on Hungarian medieval history\*\*. Here we will have to be contented with a description of a small *trouvaile* of his which is fascinating for its own reasons.

The Latin charter for Tihany Abbey on the shores of Lake Balaton, granted in 1055, is the first source in which a larger number of Hungarian words occur. Since this is a register of estates, the words occur mostly in the description of the boundaries. Györffy found that one estate must have been situated

\* *Geographia Historica Hungariae tempore stirpis Arpadianae*. Amsterdam, Hakkert, 1966 (second edition).

\*\* "The Thousandth Anniversary of St. Stephen's Birth" *NHQ* 38 and "From the Árpáds to the Anjous," 71.



between the rivers Danube and Tisza, at least 200 kilometres east of Tihany as the crow flies, in the region of Kiskunság. It turned out that the original boundaries were almost identical to the boundaries of today's village of Izsák. Thus far the identification may seem indeed be no more than a simple (or mechanical) procedure. However, the place-names in the document have completely vanished; as a result of the Mongol invasion and Turkish rule the population of the region twice disappeared without trace, in the thirteenth century and in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries. After the many disasters, of the original place-names of the Árpád period only the name of Lake Kolon has survived. Consequently the boundaries could only be identified through a survey and with the assistance of some geographic references (including their etymological analysis). Originally Györfly used old maps, but in summer 1982, at the request of an educational weekly, he took a jeep with two colleagues and retraced in it the boundary which the makers of the document had followed on horseback 927 years before. Fortunately these sandy marshlands, typical of the Great Plain, are today a national park, and have thus escaped the modern destruction of the environment.

The interesting journey made it possible to identify surprisingly many points which figured in the document. They found, for instance, among the traces mentioned, an ancient ditch which proved to be an artificial formation the direction of which had changed several times; some distance away, by looking down from a vantage-point, the connections between several parts of the text could be clarified. These included the spot mentioned as "black sands" on the shore of the lake, which is indeed covered by black lichen, and the vantage-point itself is obviously identical with the place described as "gritty sands" by the original document, because here the sand is mixed with humus. A bit further,

the trio found without any difficulty the part called "pine forest," one of the most beautiful places in the surroundings, a very old juniper grove. Here it has stood for nearly a thousand years.

Of course, those riding the boundary in the eleventh century did not use a compass but found east early in the morning from the sunrise. The village boundaries they delineated are 30 to 35 degrees out from the cardinal points. This proves that they rode the boundary in summer, after the 29th May. Around the time of the summer solstice the sun rises more to the north by 35 degrees. In other words, what appears to be south, is in fact south-east.

The author ends his article by recommending that ramblers and others should try to follow what has survived of an old boundary survey.

Fodor, L. I.: "Történelmi tatárjárás a Kolontónál" (An historic boundary ride along Lake Kolon). *Élet és Tudomány*, No. 1982, pp. 1064-1067.

G. G.

## SCENES FROM PROVINCIAL LIFE

The name of the township of Szekszárd on the Danube is known to wine-lovers for its outstanding red wines. Those familiar with Hungarian literature will remember it as the place where Mihály Babits\* was born. His autobiographically inspired novel *Haldífiak* (Sons of Death) is linked by many ties to this region and its turn-of-the-century inhabitants.

The sociologist and social historian Zoltán Tóth has investigated the changes that took place in Szekszárd during the decades around the turn of the century and, of course, refers to some characters in Babits's novel. Most of the town's population were

\* See pp. 64-93.



at this time peasants and craftsmen, and the agricultural labourers and craftsmen's assistants who depended on them. The way of life of these two strata was rather similar, if for no other reasons than because the craftsmen usually owned a vineyard. Consequently their livelihood was seriously affected at the end of the century by the phylloxera which ravaged the vineyards. The agricultural and craftsman population, called market-town block by the author, was divided by differences of descent and religious faith. The Felsőváros (Upper Town) was inhabited by local Calvinist Hungarians, while the Alsóváros (Lower Town) in the eighteenth century had a mixed German and Hungarian Catholic population, and it was these latter who also settled the Újváros (New Town) in the nineteenth century. At the time Hungary was going through a process of rapid capitalist changes which involved the rise of a bourgeois class and offered various new opportunities for social mobility. The strategies by which families sought a way out of the viniculture and craft ways of living, varied considerably according to the confessional, ethnic, or neighbourhood group to which a family belonged.

The author found among the papers of the local orphans' court 272 cases, documented in detail, for the period 1880-1914, offering insight into the family organization and mobility ambitions of various strata and groups within Szekszárd society for successive generations. The individual family and personal histories moreover throw light on personal decisions, family tragedies, and success stories hidden so far behind general statements of earlier works.

In some exceptional instances the opening of a case was brought about by dramatic events. Such was the death of the master cooper Károly Schiszler. This well-off craftsman, somewhat under the influence, got into an altercation with his wife over whether the daughter of his wife's first mar-

riage should enroll in a teachers' college. This would have represented a sort of advance from the "market-town block" towards the professions. The cooper disapproved of the mother's ambition, because the girl was of great assistance to him in the book-keeping of the workshop. In the heat of the argument Schiszler shot his wife dead, and then, horrified by what he had done, committed suicide. Schiszler's finances were largely in good order but he had ordered some materials from the timber wholesalers on credit. After his death when hitches in the work of the cooperage began to occur, the wholesalers forwarded the unpaid bills of exchange to their own banks, and set into motion the banking and judicial system centred on Budapest and Vienna. Schiszler's assets were soon auctioned off. Thus in 1906, this master cooper, working with conventional techniques and supplying the wine-growing peasants of Szekszárd and its surroundings, depended on the Austro-Hungarian banking system.

Two houses stood in Schiszler's courtyard; the older corresponded in its design and furniture to the house characteristic of the better-off peasants of the surrounding villages; face to face with it was another house—in which the Schiszlers already lived—which represented a more urban way of building and furnishings. A change in the household possessions is attested by the fact that the master cooper had a revolver at hand. It becomes clear from the list of heirlooms and household goods, how the old softwood furniture characteristic of the "market-town block," with the ornamental bed standing in the most important place of the "ceremonial room," laid with feather-bedding and piled up pillows (according to the old peasant standards, the principal item of the trousseau of the daughter), was replaced by petty-bourgeois lounge furniture made by cabinet-makers. The type of house reflecting the old village and market-town tastes was gradually being replaced by houses of healthier design,



consisting of more rooms, and making a more differentiated use of the dwelling possible. If we look at what made up the assets, a conspicuous change can be seen in the fact that the ratio between the value of land and capital changes; for more mobile groups, who were adjusting better to the capitalist environment, the share of capital increases.

The changes occurring can also be deduced from different cultural models; these models are also strongly determined—beyond financial standing and position occupied in the stratification of Szekszárd—by historic antecedents. Thus it is striking that the houses and household goods of Calvinist Hungarians stay generally much closer to the traditions than do those of the Catholic mixed (Hungarian-German) and German families of similar financial status. These same Calvinist Hungarians appeared to be also much less flexible in adapting to changing circumstances and were much less able to make use of the new opportunities for mobility.

Ethnographers have often pointed out the aesthetic values carried by the traditional customs of individual local groups, and the assistance these beautifully elaborated rites gave to men and women in crisis situations. The other side of the coin is demonstrated at Szekszárd by the fact that the clinging of the indigenous Calvinist Hungarians to their traditions led to their children and grandchildren losing ground to the descendants of other groups which were more open and mobile.

These studies by Zoltán Tóth are a fine example of the new trend gaining ground in both Hungarian historiography and ethnography. Aimed at a more shaded and more realistic picture of historic processes through the serial analysis of the history of families and individuals, objects, pieces of equipment, buildings, etc.

Tóth, Zoltán: "Schizler Károly kádármester Szekszárdon. Egy kisvárosi mesterember gazda-

sági-társadalmi viszonyai a századfordulón (The master cooper Károly Schizler at Szekszárd. The social-economic conditions of a small-town craftsman at the turn of the century). *Agrártörténeti Szemle*, 1977. pp. 199-218; Tóth, Zoltán: "A szekszárdi mezővárosi block felbomlása a századfordulón. A hagyományos kistermelői együttes mobilitási modelljei" (The dissolution of the Szekszárd market-town block at the turn of the century. The mobility models of the traditional small producer group). *Agrártörténeti Szemle*, 1980. pp. 349-433; Tóth, Zoltán: "Polgárosodás és hagyományörzés a századfordulói Szekszárd anyagi életviszonyaiban" (The spreading of bourgeois customs and traditionalism in the material living conditions of Szekszárd at the turn of the century.) *Ethnographia*, 1982, pp. 177-231.

T. H.

## SCOTUS VIATOR AND HUNGARY

The dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy led to the dismembering of historic Hungary. Numerous factors were involved, including the growth of national ambitions and the flawed policies aimed at coping with them; no less important was the role played by the Western Powers, especially by Britain and France, in the last year of the Great War and during the conclusion of the peace treaties. Yet, both the British government and public opinion had traditionally been in favour of maintaining the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy; indeed almost up to the eve of the war, their intentions towards Hungary had been well meant. What caused the change? Géza Jeszenszky has already pointed out the role of Wickham Steed and of *The Times* in this process.\* Here he discusses another individual who had much to do with the change in British attitudes. This was R. W. Seton-Watson, the man considered by influential Hungarian nationalists as Hungary's principal enemy in the West; he was correspondingly respected in Czechoslovakia, Ru-

\* *NHQ* 87.



mania and Yugoslavia as someone who contributed to the creation of their new states.

Jeszszky argues that the British archives which have recently become accessible now make possible an accurate assessment of the actual role which Seton-Watson and the group around him played in the formulation of British policy concerning the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Hungary, and later in the birth of the successor states.

Jeszszky recognizes the good intentions of this publicist and historian who was earlier known under his pen-name of Scotus Viator. In 1905, Seton-Watson had already begun studying the nationality questions in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy with decidedly Hungarophile sentiments. It was only in the following years, partly through the influence of Steed and Austrian socialist leaders, but mainly through direct experience that he formed an increasingly critical opinion on Hungarian nationality policy. This he formulated first in articles and then in the book *Racial Problems in Hungary* published in 1908 and in a number of other works. He was justified in criticizing the oppression of national minorities in Hungary and the forced assimilation of nationalities; but in his passionate defence of the oppressed, however, he saw compulsion even in the process of natural and voluntary assimilation. Ultimately, he was not able to retain his impartiality, and came increasingly under the influence of the nationalities opposing the Hungarians.

Through his books and the press reviews of them, he had a considerable effect on British public opinion. During the Great War he moved closer to Steed, and Thomas Masaryk—founding with the latter the weekly *The New Europe*; he participated in drawing up government policy in 1917-18. By then he was committed to the complete dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and he had no faith in the democratic rebirth of Hungary after the revolution of 1918. Consequently,

he lent no support to the Károlyi government, whose Minister for Nationalities was the same Oszkár Jászi who had alone sided with him in the old Hungary. From the above, it can be seen that in a short critical period he was able to intervene and to influence the fate of an entire historic region.

Jeszszky, Géza: "A 'Vándorló Skót' és Magyarország" (The "Wandering Scotsman" and Hungary). *História*, 1982, Nos. 4-5, pp. 26-28.

G. L.

## SOCIAL STRATA IN HUNGARY TODAY

The social structure model applied by Hungarian sociology has been refined gradually in the past twenty years. In the 1970s most surveys distinguished eight classes and strata: managers and intellectuals, office workers, skilled workers, semi-skilled workers, unskilled workers, manual agricultural workers, self-employed craftsmen and shopkeepers, individually farming peasants.

In recent years several authors indicated in Hungarian specialist literature that for the contemporary conditions of the Hungarian economy and society that social structure is no longer valid; as to the methods of further development, however, there are arguments. In this study the author sketches a hypothetical model.

He discusses briefly the historic changes in the Hungarian social structure. In the pre-1945 capitalist-bourgeois society remnants of the gentry social structure had survived. Thus Hungarian society was characterized by an awkward "dual structure": the capitalist-bourgeois social structure (capitalists, industrial workers) lived side by side with the gentry social structure (gentry upper class, conventional craftsmen and shopkeepers, peasantry).



In the radical changes after 1945, first the gentry society collapsed and bourgeois society was only temporarily reconstructed, because the political turn of 1948-49 interrupted this continuity too. Following this a strategy for a new social stratification was applied which had the intention of implementing the model of socialist transformation evolved in the Soviet Union. The political sphere dominated all other spheres of society with the consequence that the duality of state and civil society ceased to exist. Every disposition over economic resources was vigorously centralized, central decisions were asserted both in production and distribution. Living conditions levelled out at a relatively low standard. In this social structure the mostly levelled masses became separated from the political society organizing centre.

This model fulfilled some of its objectives (rapid industrialization, abolition of the old ruling classes), but was disfunctional in other respects (personality cult, chronic shortages in the economy), and became the source of tensions which intensified the crisis to an explosion in 1956. After this it was first not the model itself which changed, but how it was implemented: slowing down the rate of accumulation, the active inclusion of the former middle level of the peasantry into the socialist reorganization of agriculture, strengthening the relative autonomy of the civil sphere, increasing the role of skill and knowledge in addition to political reliability in the leadership. However, by the mid-sixties the sources of accumulation of a model relying on extensive economic development became exhausted, and it became necessary to commence a continuous reform of the model.

As a result of these reforms, in contemporary Hungarian economy and society redistribution by the state and the market exist side by side and intertwined. In the state enterprise and cooperative sector redistribution has priority, but the market increasingly asserts itself. In the second

economy the market dominates, but the socialist large enterprises support and influence the second economy, and the majority of the small commodity producers even work in the first economy and engage in small commodity production only after working hours.

Through the reforms, the economic decisions-making became considerably decentralized, the role and influence of the relevant ministries and large enterprises grew in decision-making. Accordingly, the conflicting interests in the distribution of resources became obvious.

Because of these economic and political changes, the social structure became more differentiated. The author considers that the position occupied by the individuals and families in the social structure must be investigated in two dimensions. One is the first economy, where redistribution is asserted vigorously. Within this various interest groups have become formed (industry, agriculture, etc.). The second dimension is the second economy and the incomes derived from it, or the opportunity to obtain such income, which is far from being equal for all occupational and regional groups.

In these two dimensions, the author distinguishes eleven groups in the social structure.

1. The managers, who—depending on their position in leadership—form a rather differentiated group.

2. The professionals, who in many respects merge with the group of managers, since a degree is usually required for a managerial job.

3. The skilled worker élite, who occupy key positions in the large enterprises and some of whom may considerably supplement their income in the second economy.

4. The semi-skilled professional stratum, which includes the medium-level trained workers (technicians, etc.) and the lower groups of those with tertiary education.



5. The non-manual and manual workers in the tertiary services sector.

6. Those who live primarily on income derived from the second economy.

7. Those industrial workers in towns, whose skills cannot be utilized in the second economy.

8. Unskilled workers, some of whom (those living in the countryside) derive a supplementary income from agricultural small commodity production.

9. The stratum working in agriculture which derives considerable income from the household plots and auxiliary farms.

10. Clerical workers, who cannot be considered however an independent group, since they are mostly women who are linked to another stratum through their husbands.

11. Deprived groups which lag behind the average.

The last group does not mean poor people fighting for a subsistence level (although this also occurs sporadically), but those who lag behind average progress, for structural reasons.\* The author includes in this group some sub-groups: some Gypsies, those living in worker hostels and other institutional residences, urban workers living in factory settlements, those living in small backward villages. Each of these four sub-groups numbers approximately 200 thousand. To this must be added an approximately equal number of families who are in a deprived situation through some individual handicap (sickness, old age, large number of children, deviation).

In the last two years a great series of stratification surveys have been started, and empirical results will eventually verify this and similar hypothetical social structure models.

Kolosi, Tamás: "A strukturális viszonyok körvonalai" (Outlines of the structural conditions). *Valóság*. 1982. No. 11, pp. 1-17.

R. A.

\*NHQ 87.

## WEALTHY FAMILIES

In the seventies the number of families in Hungary disposing of considerable assets grew, the accumulation of wealth became a mass phenomenon. Nor has end been brought to this process by the stagnation and later fall in real income since 1979, it has merely meant a slowing down.

The author does not discuss capital wealth in her article. Her standard for wealth are those families which have a good home, car, summer home, and savings of approximately 100,000 forints. These families she puts at 300,000, with nearly one million individuals.

Here are some figures to provide a context. In Hungary, in the socialist sector, the monthly average income was 4,382 forints in 1981. Approximately 8 per cent of those employed in this sector had a monthly income exceeding 7,000 forints. The price of one kilogram of good-quality pork is 90 forints, a pair of men's shoes costs 400-800 forints, a refrigerator up from 3,000 forints, a Lada car 105 thousand forints.

The number of families disposing of great wealth is 15-20,000, which represents approximately 50,000 individuals. These families possess, in addition to the assets listed, a considerable quantity of valuables, art objects, and their savings amount to several hundred thousand forints.

Among various forms of assets, real estate is the most widespread in Hungary. The great majority of families have some sort of property, usually a family home or a flat; however, since they live there, it is not a liquid asset. Valuables are divided much more unevenly, and this applies even more to art valuables. Collecting of these last is the characteristic form of accumulation by the wealthiest strata.

The exchange value of the individual elements of wealth increases or decreases depending on how changes in their price are related to the changes in the price level



as a whole. In Hungary, the main form of money property is a Savings Bank account. The real value of these diminished in the seventies, since the average rate of interest did not keep up with inflation. (In 1980 the real interest on the total of deposits was 4.6 per cent, and the real interest on loans 6 per cent.) In contrast to this, the price of desirable real estate rose in ten years approximately threefold, that of precious metals and art objects even faster: the retail price level is only one and a half times that of the one existing ten years ago.

In Hungary, as in the other socialist countries, income which may be derived from wealth is restricted, but some income of this nature—for instance interest on deposits—has been officially recognized for a long time. The other large group of legal and continuous income derived from wealth comes from the letting of flats and summer homes. (Rents are relatively high mainly because of the continuing housing shortage.) The author estimates the number of families enjoying such an income at nearly 300 thousand. In addition, there are numerous forms of unlawful income derived from wealth. Nevertheless, the formation of wealth must not be restricted but stimulated. It does however matter what form the accumulated wealth takes. It would be desirable for the largest possible part of savings by the population to be put to use in a productive way, to be recycled into the bloodstream of the economy. It would, for instance, be possible to finance small enterprises in this way.

Falusné, Szikra Katalin: "A vagyonosodásról" (On the accumulation of wealth). *Közgazdasági Szemle*, 1982. No. 11, pp. 1314-1330.

M. L.

## ECONOMIC REFORM: ASSESSING THE LAST THREE YEARS

What is usually called these days the reform of the Hungarian economic mechanism, is in fact a lengthy historic process; it sometimes gathers momentum, sometimes slows down, and at some times it is even repressed. The author identifies three main groups of changes in this reform process between the years 1979 and 1982. He sees them as follows.

First, the changing of the price system and of financial regulation, with the two aims of adjusting Hungarian to foreign trade prices in convertible currency and of making the financial conditions for state enterprises "harder." The second group he describes as reducing the centralization of the Hungarian economy, especially industry, and the establishing of various small enterprises and broadening the non-state sector. The third is quite simply the slowdown in economic growth.

In many respects the price reforms and the reform of the financial system have not led to the results expected. An important intention of the price reform was that profits on the foreign and on the domestic markets should be linked by legal statutes. In fact, the two kinds of profits became more sharply separated for many enterprises. While profitability diminished on foreign markets, it increased in domestic sales. The differences in profits which had existed before were soon restored after the price reform. Many enterprises continued to be able to formulate their prices by adding a predetermined profit to the costs. According to Kornai, the reason for this is that the market mechanism does not yet fully assert itself among state enterprises since the majority of them continue to produce for a sellers' market. Furthermore, the final profitability of the enterprise depends to a large degree on the terms which it is able



to bargain from the authorities. The redistribution of income among enterprises, carried out by the organs of direction, has not diminished. Consequently, the constraints on the budgeting of large state enterprises have not become harsher after 1979.

Hungarian industry is much more concentrated than industry in other countries at a similar degree of development or in more developed countries. The profitability of enterprises diminishes almost monotonously in proportion to their capital. Between 1979 and January 1982 ten trusts and three large enterprises were dismembered by administrative intervention. In addition, large enterprises, ministries, municipal councils were given the opportunity to establish small enterprises.\* The establishment of small cooperatives has become possible. It is too early to decide how many small production units will be established as a result of these measures.

János Kornai considers the Hungarian economic system a "mixed economy of the socialist type," in the sense that state, cooperative, and private economic units operate side by side. The self-subsistence economy by the households also plays an important role, especially in food supply, housing construction, and transportation. In addition to the organized sector, a rather large informal sector exists, especially in supply, professional, and household services. The reforms introduced since 1979 have wanted to stimulate the cooperative sector, private craftsmen, and shopkeepers, and independent production done outside normal working hours. Opportunities have been created for various mixed forms; a good example is the letting of state-owned or cooperative-owned shops and small restaurants to private individuals. Within the Hungarian population there is a broad—

and hard-working—stratum which is willing to work daily or at week-ends after finishing their work at their place of employment. In other words, these individuals use their leisure time for further work, to obtain income. According to Kornai, this is one of the factors lying behind the frequently mentioned "Hungarian economic miracle." The latest reforms take note of this choice made by a considerable part of society and try to remove the administrative obstacles to this voluntary lengthening of working hours.

The slowdown of economic growth was not a consequence of the economic reforms, since after the reforms of 1968 the Hungarian economy continued to grow rapidly for almost a whole decade—as also happened in other socialist countries. This was at a time when changes in world economic conditions caused a considerable reduction of growth rate in the capitalist countries. The slowdown after 1978 was not a result of the voluntary decisions of the enterprises either, but of vigorous measures taken by the central organs of control necessitated by foreign trade difficulties. As a result, investment fell though the total volume of consumption did not; at the same time there was no increase in scarcity of consumer goods and services. It is especially important for public morale that the food supply is ample. This very important result is, according to Kornai, not so much the consequence of "market socialism" (since he finds that the larger part of the state sector is still not forced to compete for buyers), but is rather due to the "standard of living inclined" economic policy, and—last but not least—to the operation of the non-state sector. This latter sector is today one of the stabilizers of the Hungarian economy, being relatively less sensitive to the fits and starts of the state sector and the fluctuation in the balance of trade. Since a considerable part of it takes the form of formal and informal connections within the population and of self-subsistence consumption by households,

\* András Tábori: "Small Businesses in a Socialist Economy", *NHQ* 86.



it is able to achieve a modest but continuous growth if it is not restricted administratively.

To sum up Kornai's view, the latest reforms have achieved important results, but so far the economic reform has only been half-realized, since the state sector does not function truly as a market mechanism nor is a harsh budgetary constraint being exerted either.

Kornai, János: "A magyar gazdasági reform jelenlegi helyzetéről és kilátásairól" (Comments on the present state and the prospects of the Hungarian economic reform). *Gazdaság*, 1982, No. 3, pp. 5-35.

R. A.

## CHEMICAL EVOLUTION

Modern physical chemistry strongly interacts with other scientific disciplines. The term evolution and regulation formed in biology and in control theory, respectively, have penetrated the vocabulary of chemistry as well. The validity range of an enlarged chemical science could be increased fundamentally; interpretations of some biological regulatory phenomena may be attempted in a chemical context.

The research topics in the Department of Physical Chemistry of Kossuth Lajos University, Debrecen, headed by Professor M. T. Beck, reflect a tendency to integrate the results of research of some traditional branches of physical chemistry—coordination chemistry, and reaction kinetics namely—from the point of view of biology as well.

Adopting the scientifically established approach that no "vital force" was involved in the origin of life the possible role of transition metal complexes in the formation of vitally important compounds before the appearance of life was investigated. The study of the properties of transition metal complexes led to interesting results in the area of chemical regulation: multicomponent

equilibrium chemical systems may exhibit unusual behaviour: their concentration distribution can exhibit more than one peak. The detailed investigation of the equilibrium properties and the temporal change of the composition of the metal-ion complexes may provide useful information towards a possible mechanism for chemical evolution.

Conventional, generally simple, chemical reactions tend monotonously to their equilibrium composition. However, a very interesting aspect of more complex—often regulated—reactions may be characterized by the non-monotonous temporal course of some component concentrations. A particular class to be considered is the family of the so-called overshoot-undershoot reactions with some extrema in the concentration versus time function. The occurrence of the overshoot-undershoot phenomena has been experimentally proved in some illustrative chemical systems, while theoretical studies into the qualitative and quantitative nature have achieved some insight into chemical regulatory systems.

Although we are still rather far from understanding life phenomena in terms of chemical evolution and regulation, these results could be important building-blocks of a would-be theory on chemical evolution and regulation.

Beck, T. M. in: *Kémiai Közlemények*, 1982, No. 57, pp. 195-216; Nagypál, I.—Beck, T. M.: in *Coordination Chemistry Reviews*, 1982, 43, pp. 233-250; Rábai, Gy.—Bazsa, Gy.—Beck, T. M.: in *Journal of Chemical Society, Dalton*, 1982, pp. 573-74; Póta, Gy.: in *Reaction Kinetics and Catalysis Letters*, 1981, 17, pp. 35-39.

P. É.

## CAPSAICIN IN RED PEPPER AND PAIN RELIEF

Capsaicin is a specific chemical substance of relatively small molecular weight, which gives a variety of red peppers their pungent



flavour. Beside its well-known gastronomic appeal, capsaicin has been shown to exert an activating effect on a specific population of primary sensory ganglia at all cranial and spinal levels. (Sensory ganglia contain those nerve cells which through their long processes carry sensory information such as pain, heat, pressure, and so on from the periphery to the spinal cord and the brain.) A pharmacologist, the late Prof. Miklós Jancsó, and his wife, in the Szeged Medical University, initiated studies on the substance in the late 1940s, which they continued for the subsequent two decades. They have found that in adult animals the immediate effects of acute low doses of capsaicin are distinguishable from the effects of larger, chronic doses; the latter cause a reduction in responsiveness to chemical and mechanical stimuli.

Later studies have shown that this pain analgetic effect is related to the capsaicin-induced release of two neuropeptides, substance P and somatostatin of the central terminals of sensory ganglionic neurons which are specifically involved in pain sensation. (*Neuropeptides* are composed of several simple amino-acids and occur exclusively in nerve cells. They exert a modulatory effect on the information transmission between nerve cells. Some of the well-known protein hormones such as growth hormone, also known as somatostatin, also belong to this category.) In addition, recent studies by Miklós Jancsó's son, Gábor Jancsó, also of the Szeged Medical School, have demonstrated a dose-dependent neurotoxic effect of capsaicin on neo-natal rats, which causes massive degeneration of pain-processing sensory neurons.

Thus, under proper conditions the neurotoxic actions of capsaicin in the neo-natal provided an opportunity to dissect chemically a selective population of sensory (most probably pain-processing) ganglionic nerve cells. This effect is essentially similar to those seen after chronic capsaicin treatment of adult animals; in the latter case the effect

is not irreversible since the nerve cells in the adult do not die and can regenerate.

The pioneering studies by the Jancsós have led to the situation that capsaicin treatment in both neonates and adults is now regarded as of potential benefit in curing certain disturbances localized in the sensory part of the cranial and spinal nerves. Notably, it is conceivable that capsaicin or capsaicin-homologues will be used therapeutically in cases where it would be advisable, if not imperative, to neutralize certain physiological processes mediated by pain-processing sensory nerve cells.

Jancsó, G. et al., in *Nature*, 1977, 270, pp. 741-743; Jancsó, G. and Király, E. in *Brain Res.*, 210, pp. 83-89.

J. H.

## FRUSTRATION AND STUTTERING

The author is a child psychotherapist who has treated ninety cases of stuttering through analytic child psychotherapy in the last fifteen years. She observed that in each case it was possible to demonstrate that the children were severely frustrated in their attachment to their mother and had suffered traumatic separation experiences. The author is working on the basis of theories of Imre Hermann, the doyen of Hungarian psychoanalysts and a pupil of Sigmund Freud, who described a specific, phylogenetical instinct in small children which acts to establish clinging to the mother.\* Hermann's observations were reaffirmed by the well-known experiments of Harlow which provided proof that monkey babies also possess this instinct. The author found that actual or symbolic frustration of a small child's clinging needs can lead to stuttering behaviour.

\* See Antal Gábor's interview with Imre Hermann in *NHQ* 85.



Consequently the therapeutic relationship should provide a concrete possibility for symbolic clinging for the frustrated child. Moreover, the therapist has to intervene into the family, and has to try to break the frustrating relational pattern between mother and child by influencing the mother through psychotherapeutic means. With this method of treatment the author has had striking results, and has been able to return the majority of the children to normal speech.

Marcsek-Klanczay, Sára: "A frusztrált megkapaszkodás szerepe a dadogás etiológiájában" (The role of the frustrated clinging in the aetiology of stuttering). *Magyar Pszichológiai Szemle*, 1982, No. 3, pp. 301-310.

B. B.

## DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORIES

According to WHO reports the number of clinical diagnostic tests are increasing in Hungary by some 6 to 8 per cent annually. This can be explained partly by the growth in public health therapy and prevention, and partly by the introduction of new tests. Twenty to thirty years ago the hospital laboratories carried out tests to determine only 8 to 10 chemical components; today the measurement of 35-50 components is routine in clinical laboratory diagnostics. The integration of the health service largely meant that instead of around three hundred independent laboratories we have today central laboratory units operating in some forty to forty-five integrated institutions.

The diagnostic laboratories employ 750 specialist physicians and nearly 300 graduates of a non-medical background. (The proportion of women working in them is close to 80 per cent.) For one thousand staff-members with degrees there are 3,600 assistants, a ratio better than 1:4, which may be considered advantageous. In international experience, in principle these one thousand graduates should be able to meet

the country's needs in this area; automation should replace 40-60 per cent of the work of assistants using conventional methods. In Hungary, the cost per laboratory test is 12 forints, out of which wages take up as much as 60 per cent. After a long delay, a significant increase in automation began in the last five-year plan period, though this is still insufficient. The range of laboratory instruments is unevenly developed, and standardization of instruments, maintenance, and repair are causing worries through a lack of the necessary servicing systems.

A check on the diagnostic work of the laboratories is carried out regularly, four or five times a year, by the National Laboratory Institute. The checks have found that the analytical work of our laboratories is reliable, but it is still difficult to compare the laboratories due to the difference in methods. At the same time, the progress towards uniformity of chemicals and reagents is indicated by the fact that nearly 2,000 products from forty to fifty foreign companies were used earlier as against the twelve to sixteen companies which now provide supplies.

The development of the pathological-biochemical approach is prominent in the training of laboratory specialists. Thus these specialists should be able to cooperate more efficiently in therapy and prevention and be better prepared to participate in consultations.

Under the present conditions, it is not yet possible to ensure laboratory screening tests to cover the entire population according to age-groups. But there is progress on a society-wide scale in screening tests which aim at an early recognition of chronic diseases.

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# HISTORY

PÁL ENGEL

## THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN THE ANGEVIN KINGDOM

Looking back to the reign of the two Angevin kings in the fourteenth century (1310-1382), it appears as perhaps the firmest political system in the history of Hungary. Bearing in mind how unfavourable the prospects were at the beginning of the century, the outcome is certainly worthy of notice.

In 1301 when, after ruling for centuries, the male line of the House of Árpád became extinct royal power had been in a state of dissolution for thirty years already. The country had fallen apart into a number of practically independent fiefs, and it was questionable how long the common symbol, the awareness of belonging under the Hungarian Holy Crown, would be able to sustain the concept of the state itself. This awareness was certainly still alive and the lords dominating their own regions presented various candidates for the throne, being convinced that they needed a crowned head to legitimate their local rule. The struggle for the throne was won by Caroberto, one of the Neapolitan branch of the House of Angevins. In 1310 he was crowned with the Holy Crown and this marked the beginning of a new era. The new king took his office seriously: he wished to be the real sovereign of the country and not a figure-head above semi-independent magnates. A dramatic struggle followed, lasting more than ten years, in the course of which Caroberto, with the support of the

church and the lesser nobility who had enough of anarchy, gradually extended his dominion over the whole country. Fighting stubbornly he overcame the rebellious magnates one by one, shifting them from their castles with infinite patience, installing his own men in their place. In the final stage of the struggle, in 1321, his troops marched into the north-western counties, in 1322 Transylvania and Slavonia (present Croatia) surrendered to them, and with that the renewed foundation of the state could be considered as complete. From that time on no one ever questioned the authority of the Angevin kings.

The fruits of the work of Caroberto, a sombre and resolute king, were enjoyed by his son, Louis the Great (1342-1382). He corresponded much more closely to the kingly ideal of his times: he was merry and cordial, chivalrous and generous, and what was perhaps the most important, he appreciated war not as an instrument of politics but for its own sake, as the sole way to worldly fame and glory. Just about every year he placed the nation on horseback, mostly leading them to battle in person, risking his life. Sometimes the wars also served political aims. In 1358, they resulted in the conquest of Dalmatian towns, but that was still only of secondary importance. The main point was that the forays of the Hungarian hosts terrorized for decades the



weaker southern neighbours of the kingdom and at times made them acknowledge Hungarian supremacy. This combative policy, responsible for the epithet 'the Great' given to Louis, met with the full approval of the country's barons and nobility, so much so that not even his occasional defeats could shake the king's prestige.

Louis the Great thus did not have to fight unruly barons unlike most monarchs in his time, including Edward III of England, whom Louis resembled in a great many ways. The strength of Hungarian royal power intrigued contemporaries. A genuine explanation can only be hoped for from modern methodologies applied to the study of medieval political institutions. This conceptual renewal can perhaps most simply be summarized by saying that the concept of the state inherited from nineteenth-century constitutional history, together with the associated system of modern categories, tends to disappear. Earlier the description of medieval constitution included discussion of the functions of the state (central and local government, foreign and military affairs, public finance, etc.) as self-evident, and in practice omitted an effective examination of their mechanism. Today it appears more fruitful to speak, not of the state, but of the political or ruling system, whose structure and functioning can be discovered by analysing the real relations of power. This requirement has also changed the technique of research inasmuch as historians today are no longer only, and indeed not even primarily, interested in the institutions themselves as abstract entities, but rather in the men who kept the institutions going—their social background, lives and attitudes. The spread of the prosopographic method is the result. One tries to reconstruct the political structure of a given period by studying the lives of public figures. Applied to the Middle Ages, this is incredibly laborious, but is much more reliable than earlier methods, and frequently it leads to surprisingly new results. This also happened in Hungary in

the study of fourteenth and fifteenth-century political institutions. So far only the initial steps have been taken but I shall try to offer a brief summary of the essence of these.

A major recognition concerns the political role of castles. Stone castles on the western European model had been built in larger numbers in Hungary from the mid-thirteenth century onwards, and like everywhere in Europe, they were also centres of domains with considerable areas of land (10,000 to 20,000 hectares or 10 to 20 villages) and the varying incomes attached to them. After Caroberto had re-established the power of the king, and until the dynasty died out, the majority of the castles (about 150) were in the gift of the king. It has become obvious that this was of tremendous political importance, and it presumably was also mainly responsible for his firm rule. Earlier constitutional historians did not grasp the real significance of this fact. It was thought that the royal domains, notwithstanding their dependence on the castles, were primarily of economic significance, and that their income, which the king had administered through his castellans, increased the financial resources of the crown. This apparatus, depending on the person of the king, was generally considered as absolutely separated from that other apparatus of a more political character, which performed the functions of local government, administering justice, financial and military duties, and which consisted of *comites* appointed at the head of the *comitati*.

But a closer examination of the problem of royal domains has produced several unexpected results. It has turned out that, apart from seeming to be self-evident, there was no evidence whatsoever that the income of royal domains flowed to the royal treasury, the reasoning being based entirely on an analogy with modern conditions. The overwhelming majority of royal castle domains were in fact linked to some office (*bonor*), whose benefits were granted by the



king to the appointed person "as office" (*pro honore*) for the duration of his tenure. Recent research has also shown that in the Angevin kingdom there were no separate machineries of domain administration and public administration, only territorial government units which consisted of the offices of *comites* of one or more *comitati*, and also included command over the royal castles in the given area. So that *comes* and castellan were either one and the same person or the *comes* appointed the castellans for the castles in his area among his retainers (*familiares*). This system of government also found expression in the legal terminology of the time. Legally the transferred estate was a form of royal grant, which the monarch conferred (*conferre*) and the official held (*tenere, possidere*), and it only differed from a hereditary grant inasmuch as it was valid not perpetually (*perpetuo*) but only during the king's pleasure (*durante beneplacito*), and so ceased when the office was withdrawn.

There is no need to stress how greatly these recognitions have modified the established view about the leading class in the Angevin kingdom, a picture which was formed by projecting modern models back to the past. Naturally it was never in doubt that the real lords of the country constituted that small group of *praelati et barones regni*, the lords spiritual and temporal, who in historic sources feature at the side of the monarch as his advisers and companions in decision-taking. The identification of *praelati* has caused no difficulty, only that of the term *barones regni* (the barons of the realm). From the late fifteenth century the name *barones* referred to the richest of the nobles, who later formed the Upper House of the Diet, when they were called magnates. It seemed plausible, and later became an accepted view, that *barones regni* meant by and large the same in Angevin times—the country's most important landlords who sat in the king's council by right of birth and with whom the king was compelled to govern jointly. Since large landowners were con-

sidered as a group who were opposed to all forms of central power—one might say on principle—it was a constantly recurring question how then the obvious firmness of Angevin royal power could be explained. In the knowledge of the institution of royal *honors* this has become much more easy to explain.

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Prosopographic studies and more minute analyses of sources have shed a fairly clear light on the character and social background of the fourteenth-century Hungarian political élite. It has been shown that at that time the word *barones* still did not mean major landowner and indeed, up to the 1430s, there existed no distinguishing term even for the wealthiest of the *nobiles*. At that time, members of the nobility were differentiated not by property but by status, whose sole source was royal service, that is participation in political power. Status titles were usually conferred upon those members of noble families who in some way came into connection with the court and thus enjoyed a special part of the light of the royal power which illuminated the whole country. They were the ones who enjoyed the advantages of the political system, receiving privileges and land grants, who contracted suitable marriages, procured major church benefices for their relatives, and above all exercised power as knights or *iuvenes* of the royal household, and as tenants of royal castles and *honores*.

The uppermost layer of this court aristocracy were called barons of the realm. From the thirteenth century on, this term designated the holders of the country's principal offices; as a definition of 1270 has it "all those who possess the *comitatus*, dignities, and honors of our country." Together with the prelates they made up the royal council, which participated in all political decisions. The King in Council was the country in its relations with foreign powers. The extraordinary power and prestige of the barons



sprang from the character of their office: as service benefits they possessed the royal castles and domains, and so, considering their political status, they corresponded to the feudal tenants-in-chief of Western Europe. The members of the royal household executed the king's personal will and the barons as a body were his associates in ruling. The manner of government resembled that of the feudal kingdoms, but as Villani pointed out in Florence around 1350, the baronies in Hungary are not hereditary nor are they for life, but all are given out and taken away at the sovereign's pleasure (*le baronie d'Ungheria non sono per successione nè a vita, ma tutte si danno e tolgono a volontà del signore*).

Formally Villani was right. The king did have the giving of *comitati* and *honores*, and thus he could seemingly select at will whom to create baron, in other words with whom he would govern jointly. In fact the Angevin kings, although powerful, can certainly not be considered as possessing unlimited power. The character of the whole political system was determined by its being built on an extremely aristocratic society in which there was a great gulf between noblemen possessing land and commoners, who had no estate (*ignobilis seu impossessionatus*), and the sharers of political power could only be recruited from the nobility. The king's choice was further restricted by an unwritten but ancient law, according to which the council had to consist of members of the wealthiest and most superior clans. (According to thirteenth-century tradition, this rule went back to the age of the Hungarian Conquest.) This tended to be a pious dream on the part of the nobility which the kings both of the Árpád and the Angevin dynasties were reluctant to fulfil. Nevertheless it had always been true inasmuch as the barons had always been major landowners, or else they joined that class thanks to land-grants. When Caroberto broke the power of the oligarchs of the Árpád age and invested his own followers with that power, he at

the same time ensured their adequate social status by rich grants of estates. In this manner a new and wealthy aristocracy came into being in the fourteenth century which owed its power and position to the favour of the Angevins. By the second and third generations they were inclined to forget this, and after the death of Louis the Great (1382) they claimed power, based not on royal favour but on descent, property and the common law and custom. This new oligarchy, the "sons of the barons" (*fili baronum*) by 1387 already corporately signed a pact with the new king, Sigismund of Luxemburg, and reserved participation in government for themselves. By that time the king had no right to decide freely on office holders, as offices were the right of the highest noblemen, in keeping to their social status and rank (*secundum decentiam status et conditionis eorum*—1386). That meant the beginning of a process which in the course of the fifteenth century led to a small group of magnates (*barones*) separating from the nobility; the Estates of *barones* and *nobiles*, being thus formed.

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These problems had not yet emerged in the reign of Louis the Great. The new aristocracy served the king faithfully throughout, being aware of the fact that it owed its political influence not to its property but to the much more extensive royal *honores*. The factor that lent such striking power to the Angevin kings was thus the existence of royal castles and domains.

Comparisons are odious but if one makes them nevertheless in the fourteenth century Hungary represented in this respect a stage of development which the feudal states of Western Europe had left behind by the twelfth century. There it is under Carolingians and their successors that one encounters institutions on the like of which Louis the Great built his power some three to four centuries later.



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ERNŐ MAROSI

## COURTLY ART DURING THE REIGN OF KING LOUIS THE GREAT

King Louis I of Hungary died on the 10th of September, 1382 in the fortieth year of his reign. On the six hundredth anniversary of his death in 1982 an important exhibition opened at the King Stephen Museum of Székesfehérvár. The exhibition covered the arts of King Louis' time. Between September 13 and 15 a conference with international participants, *The House of Anjou in Central and Eastern Europe*, was organized by the Medieval Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

The second ruler to come from the Hungarian branch of the Neapolitan Angevin dynasty has long been discussed by historians. They have been arguing about his personality, evaluating his reign and policies in different ways. In both his own personality and in what he did are to be found elements that have remained with us in Hungarian history until recent times. His reign was very important for the mark it made on Hun-

garian culture in the later Medieval and the Modern Ages. Nevertheless the art of this period is not too well known.

In the last ten years there have been great advance in research into 14th century art throughout Europe, especially into what great dynasties such as the Luxembourg, Habsburg and Wittelsbach have left us. All of these have been presented in large and important exhibitions, the most recent being one which collected the achievements of the courtly art of King Charles V of France. As a result of all these efforts we have a new general view on European artistic culture of the period, but the culture of Anjou in Hungary is not to be found in this picture. Nearly all the examples of the Angevin art now scattered around the world, bear the signs of a relatively independent, highly developed culture, yet one in which its inner relationships are difficult to retrace. This remains in spite of the fact that, especially





Hungarian Anjou Legendary, four scenes from the legend of St Ladislav. Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana. Nat. Lat. 8541





Obverse of the double royal seal used by Louis the Great between 1342–1363. Seal impressions collection of the Art History Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences



King Louis the Great offering his crown to the Virgin. Typarium of the city of Újbánya. Silver. National Museum, Budapest

Keystone with female head from the royal castle at Diósgyőr. Diósgyőr, Castle Museum, Miskolc

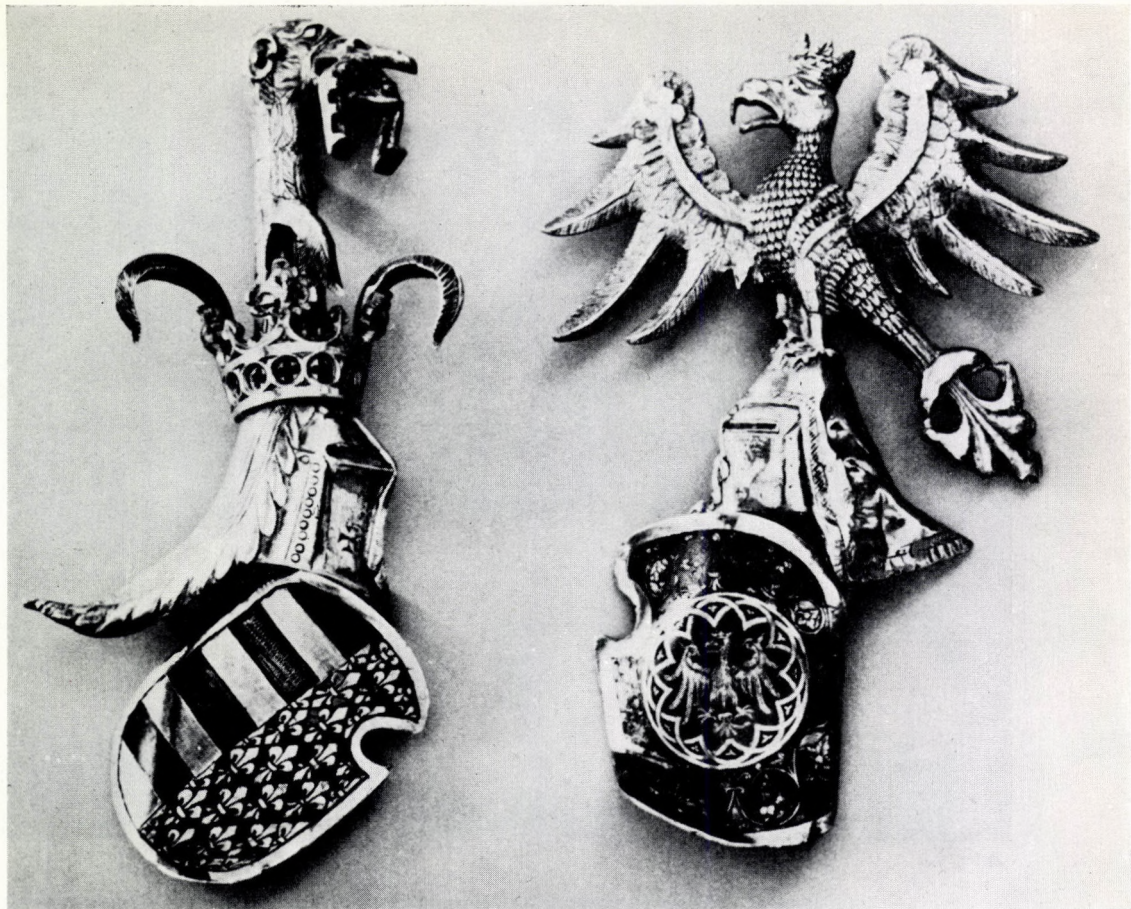


György Marky



St. Stephen the King patron of the town's parish church and miners, on the seal of Nagybánya. Seal impressions collection of the Art History Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

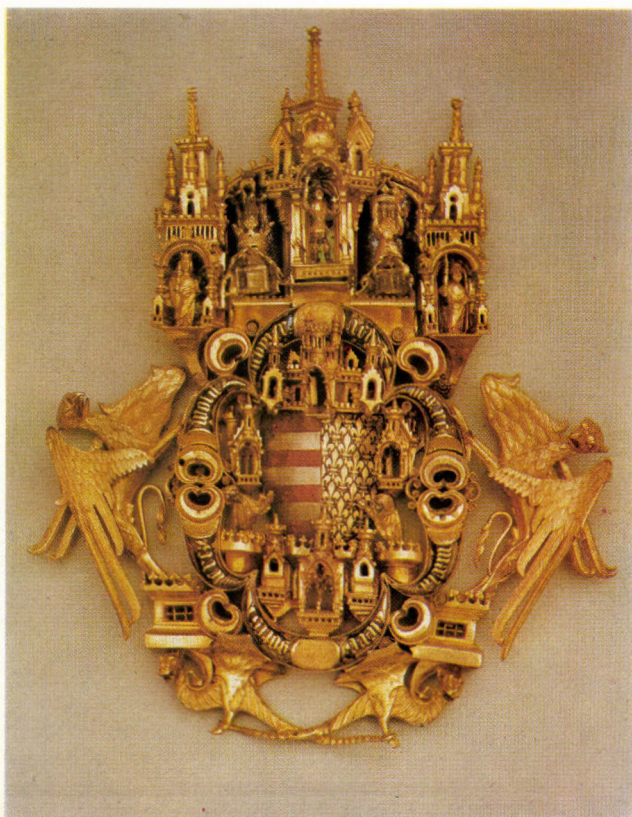




György Makky



Pair of mantle-fasteners with the Hungarian-Anjou and Polish, shields of Louis the Great, probably part of the adornment of the mantle donated in 1381. From the Hungarian chapel, Aix-la-Chapelle, Domschatzkammer



Big mantle-fastener with the Hungarian Anjou shield of Louis the Great. From the Hungarian chapel, Aix-la-Chapelle, Domschatzkammer

György Makky





▲  
Head reliquary from  
Trencsén. National  
Museum, Budapest

*György Makky*

The master  
of Saint Simeon's  
Sarcophagus in Zara  
and those who  
commissioned it.

Detail  
from  
the lid of the  
silver sarcophagus.

Francesco  
di Antonio  
da Mediolano,  
1377–1380





over the past thirty years new policies on conservation and protection as well as archaeological and art historical research in Hungary have discovered and reinterpreted many objects which lend a more definite contour to artistic developments in the second half of the 14th century. We already know of scattered treasures and objects accidentally preserved along the border area which dated from the forty years of Louis the Great's reign. Now we have come to know the centres of this court-culture as well in some detail. The elements which form this general view are not however commonly known in Hungary, and are even less known to the foreigner who cannot read Hungarian. After a long wait the jubilee exhibition of 1982 is the first attempt to assess the role of the court art in what was happening in the context of the 14th century Hungarian culture.

Paradoxically in this exhibition the precious objects of court art, the works of goldsmiths and silversmiths and the manuscripts, were only available through copies. There was only an opportunity to assemble and exhibit some objects which are still preserved in Hungary. In themselves they provided some material for tracing the significance of the epoch.

#### *Royal Representation Gains Prominence*

As for elsewhere in the Europe of the time the independence of court art and the particular and decisive role of its demands and functions have been demonstrated for Hungary as well. In this role we can trace the medieval interpretation of the principle of *decorum*: consequently court art seems to be almost an equivalent of one of the *genres* of modern art, and was considered to head the hierarchy. Its style is, in general features common to the style of the courts of Europe. The most universal of its goals is to represent majesty through a system of symbols and forms which had gradually

gained solidity and acceptance from around Carolingian times. As depicted on his seals of the realm, Louis embodies seals of the real, an ideal of the European king through his enthroned figure and his attributes, no different from the contemporary rulers in Central Europe: the seals of Charles IV, King of Bohemia, are particularly comparable to those of Louis. (Characteristically, Charles IV abandoned these schemata upon accession on the imperial crown; then he used another tradition of representation more fitting his rank.) The royal effigies on coins play a similar role and their form is inherited just as the types of seal effigies were, from Louis' father, Caroberto. Of these the enthroned rulers on the silver groat originally minted on the Bohemian model and the arms on the reverse are closest to the seal effigies; the heraldic character becomes dominant during Louis' reign in the golden *forint*, a coin which had before faithfully followed the Florentine *fiorino*. Those two characteristic elements of seal and coin are the effigy conceived as the pictorial sign of royal majesty, and the arms referring to his person. The meaning and correlation of the *Maiestas* figure and the royal device becomes obvious in these groats, which bear the legend "HONOR REGIS IUDICIUM DILIGIT" on the reverse, almost as a concrete demonstration of this interpretation. The enthroned royal effigy is to be interpreted in the most general sense as the symbol of the king's honour and majesty—as such equivalent to his coat-of-arms, the heraldic symbol of his person. In Louis' time the heraldic sign of the Hungarian king consisted of the horizontal *fesses* inherited from the House of Árpád, in the more distinguished right field, impaled with the Anjou *fleurs-de-lis*, with the ostrich device introduced by Louis' father, Caroberto in the crest.

The use of heraldic symbols derived from the accoutrements of knights in such a personal way was relatively new in Hungary they had been introduced by Caroberto, obviously in conjunction with other forms of



courtly representation. We have relatively little information on daily life at his court, but we can clearly infer the appreciation for and relative novelty of the appearance of majesty and its heraldic representation from the account on Caroberto's funeral, chronicled by János Tótsolymosi, archdeacon of Küküllő and Clerk of the Chancellery, who as such was intimately acquainted with the practices of the court. Here Tótsolymosi condemns as "improper" the former practice of laying the king out in state with his face covered. At the same time he mentions that in the funeral procession the figure of the dead king was represented by three knights, wearing his armour and devices.

#### *The Cult of Saintly Ancestors*

The practice of Louis's court was to lay stress on the ideal of the wise and just king—*iudicium* means both—who embodies those characteristics. Where are they to be found? Louis was doubly connected by his very name: generally, to the saintly ancestor of all medieval kings, the wise, devout and knightly French king, Louis IX, and directly to his father's uncle, the canonized Prince Louis of Anjou, a franciscan friar and later Bishop of Toulouse. The 13th century French king's example inspired the collections of relics in European courts, his court architecture became an enduring model for the gothic cathedral. In 13th century Hungary no cathedrals were built in the French style, aside from a single early attempt (the second attempt at Kalocsa cathedral). Now however, around the middle of the 14th century, the erection of two basilica choirs with an ambulatory and radiating chapels was begun. One of them, in Várad, is only mentioned in a chronicle, for the other, in Eger no written record survives, but recent excavation has brought its remains to light. These two churches in Hungary might seem peculiar were it not for the fact that in Naples (San Lorenzo Maggiore) somewhat

earlier, and in Prague and in Gniezno and Poznan (in Poland) about at the same time, French models were followed which had probably become outdated in France. It seems that Louis chose his models in the same way as his Central European contemporaries did.

Another kind of ideal beginning to emerge in the Hungary of the time was also hovering before the royal representation of the Hungarian Angevins. When Caroberto, grandson of Maria of the House of Árpád and of Charles II of Naples and, through his grandmother, heir to the Árpád dynasty, acceded to the Hungarian throne (1300). The first referred to his descent from the "stock of the holy kings" out of sheer desire for power. He had the Angevin shield of golden *fleurs-de-lis* on blue ground—identical with the *semé* arms of the ruling French dynasty—united with the Árpád field of silver stripes on a red ground, and by the end of his reign he even placed the latter in the more distinguished position, as an expression of greater reverence. He had the royal priory church of Székesfehérvár, founded by King Saint Stephen, restored and chose it as his burial site. Saint Stephen had been the object of special veneration for the century past, ever since the Golden Bull of King Andrew II of 1222, as the source of the rights of the Hungarian aristocracy and nobility. After him and his son—the prince Saint Emericus—the third member of the triad, the brave knight and King Saint Ladislas was given ever greater reverence in the 14th century. He who was extolled as *athleta patriae* in church offices, became the patron of the realm, the "pleasant protector of Hungary." The double cross of the later Árpád period on his shield was not only a symbol of the apostolic rule of Hungarian kings, but was also identified as the symbol associated, more and more deliberately at the time, with the realm itself. On the reverse of royal seals the double cross distinguishes the king as the righteous dispenser of justice; later it was consistently used by the state



council in those cases when its seal was substituted for the missing Great Seal of the Realm. Very characteristically, the typarium for the reverse of Louis' double seal was kept at one point not by the king, but by his mother and her councillors, so the application of the double seal was literally only possible with the agreement of both sides.

In this spirit the cult of St Ladislav spread in the court environment, much as did the cults of St. Venceslas in Bohemia or of St Leopold in Austria. His effigy replaces that of the patron Saint of Florence, St John on golden coins, that of the reigning king on the groats, and appears frequently in all forms of art and craftsmanship. The court made tireless efforts to widen the cult of its saints. It took a conscious effort to amplify the *Legenda Aurea* compiled by Jacobus a Voragine, supplementing it with legends of the saints important for dynastic reasons. Recent research has given the title *Hungarian Anjou Legendary* ("Magyar Anjou Legendárium") the manuscript, which survives in three fragments (now in the Vatican Library, the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, and the Hermitage of Leningrad). It consists exclusively of pictures bearing inscriptions indicating their subject-matter. In this manuscript, possibly made for Prince Andrew, who was living at the court of Robert the Wise of Naples as prince of Calabria, pictures were consecrated to the legends of Saints Ladislav and Emericus, together with legends of other saints of Hungarian, Polish or Neapolitan origin. Even though the available folios of the *Legendary* do not preserve the legend of St Stephen, there is an example of this legend closely related in both style and composition, in one of the two manuscripts of ecclesiastical law (*Decretales*, Padova, Biblioteca Capitolare which bear the date 1343 next to the name of the owner, Miklós Vásári who has studied in Bologna. Miklós Vásári belonged to circles close to the Anjou court, carried diplomatic duties and later rose to the rank of Archbishop.

*Stylistic links with Italy*

These illuminated manuscripts are significant, not only because of the themes depicted but also through their evidence as to style. Together with a fourth manuscript, the precious Bible of the Lord Chief Treasurer, Demeter Neksei (in the Library of Congress, Washington), they bear witness to the fact that court circles placed regular orders with the Bolognese illuminating workshops; indeed they must have taken an active role on occasion, for one cannot imagine the illustration of legends referring to Hungarian saints without the help of suitable models. This indicates that the Italian stylistic ties noticeable in the court art of Hungary were not simple consequences of the presence of a Neapolitan dynasty, but came about rather through commissions. The renewed political ties with the court at Naples did play an important role. In 1333-34 Caroberto brought his son Andrew to this court, at the head of a very distinguished retinue. More important than the diplomatic event itself was the fact that in the company of Caroberto there were these very court officials who played significant roles in defining Hungarian government and diplomatic policy. These were mainly former law-students from the Universities of Bologna and Padova, and they formed a cultural elite in the realm. Practically without exception, the traces of early appreciation of Italian trecento painting, of invitations extended to artists, are to be found from among this circle. The most distinguished member of this circle, Csanád Telegdi, Archbishop of Esztergom and a jurist, probably took advantage of his Neapolitan ties in order to bring a Tuscan artist to paint the chapel of his palace in Esztergom. The artistic views of the circle—in the absence of any written sources—is best witnessed by the works of art connected with them. At any rate we can ascribe to this narrow group the kind of avantgarde attitude indicated by the testament of



Petrarca. He noted of a Giotto painting in his possession that only the *magistri artium* were capable of appreciating it.

This outlook must also have been exceptional and quite exclusive at the court of Louis the Great: conditions were not yet ripe for the aesthetic acceptance of the plastic suggestivity of Italian trecento art. Traditional court art did not primarily open to artistic consciousness, its functions but gave more prominence to pragmatic aims. One of these was the representation of royal majesty at home and abroad. When the court endowed churches abroad—especially highly popular and much frequented pilgrim churches such as San Pietro in Rome, San Nicola in Bari, the cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle, the church of Mariazell, as well as the cathedrals of Prague and Cracow—with votive objects, it obviously did not regard them as works intended for intimate contemplation. The objects donated in 1367 for the Hungarian chapel beside the Aix-la-Chapelle cathedral show that the spirit of competition with the Emperor manifested itself chiefly in heraldic decoration in the gold and silversmiths' works. The votive picture of Mariazell is a similar and almost standardized product of the same workshop. At Aix-la-Chapelle the court took steps toward propagating the worship of its own saints by donating relics of the "holy Kings" of Hungary. It is likely that the Madonnas in the treasuries of Aix-la-Chapelle and Mariazell, probably remnants of a larger group, were also treated as relics. Their prototype must have been the one brought back from Italy by the dowager queen Elizabeth, perhaps at the time of her journey there in 1343. This gold-enframed picture was regarded as a relic and considered, according to the queen's 1380 will, a portrait of Mary "painted by St. Luke by his own hand." The encouragement of relic-worship was also the most spectacular aspect of the court's artistic activity at home: the rebuilding of the church of the Royal Priory at Székesfehérvár, or of the Cathedral

of Várad where the relics of St. Ladislas were kept, created new frameworks for relic-worship. St Gellért, the 11th century bishop martyred in Hungary, was laid in a silver reliquary tomb commissioned by queen Elizabeth for Csanád cathedral, and in Zara between 1377-1380 a silver reliquary sarcophagus was made, also by court commission, for St Simeon. The latter is the work of Francesco di Antonio da Sesto Mediolano and his workshop, and probably the last in the series of house or sarcophagus-shaped reliquaries which were popular in the 12 and 13th centuries; it is very conservative in type. Even more peculiar is the narrative scheme of this silversmith's work: this was because the only biblical scene featuring St Simeon is the Presentation in the Temple and the convention of relic-worship demanded the appearance of a whole cycle of relic-worship demanded the appearance of a whole cycle of legends. The formal demands were met by including triumphal court scenes (occasioned by the conquest of Zara by Louis in the course of his campaigns against Venice), as well as by unusually detailed pictures documenting the process by which the reliquary itself had been made, and by conventional *ex voto* miracle-scenes.

#### *A Central European Style?*

In sharp contrast to this very conservative way of illustration on the St. Simeon sarcophagus, there was another manner of representation of relics, which can be described in terms as quasi alive. Such a work is a reliquary head in the Hungarian National Museum; formerly it came originally from Trencsén but both its origin and the identity of the saint are unknown. It is a good example of the contemporary trend of art in Central Europe in the second half of the 14th century; its style also points to the generation of the Parlers of Southern Germany. (The Parler family had the



greatest importance both in sculpture and architecture.) The same style became dominant and was the vehicle for the forward elements in court architecture in the latter third of the century. At Buda, where around 1365 the foundation of the priory attached to the royal palace chapel, marks the apparently concluding phase of Louis the Great's palace-building, these stylistic ties are mostly evident in architectural details. Similar details can be seen in the two great residential buildings of the seventies, at Diósgyőr and Zólyom. The palace, at Visegrád was also ornamented with richly carved architectural details in this most up-to-date style of the time, especially variously wrought by stone carvers. The same stone-carvers' workshop was active in several places in proximity to the court and probably followed the Franco-Bavarian version of that sculptural style which was spreading through Central-European courts at about this time. This workshop must have been entrusted in the 1380s with the building and decoration of the sepulchral chapel consecrated to St Catherine, erected by Louis the Great beside the church of the Royal Priory at Székesfehérvár. Even the few extant fragments of this red marble building and of the sepulchral monuments are convincing a witness to the change in taste—to the increased interest in portraiture among other things.

It seems that the choice of particular workshop of builders and sculptors by the court sprang primarily from an effort to win the cooperation of those artists capable of producing the new qualities in demand. Here we can say that in the latter third of the century that appreciation of plastic values, which originally characterized the taste of the intellectual elite, had begun to be popularized. This change is witnessed by the miniatures of the Illustrated Chronicle (*Képes Krónika*) produced not long before 1360, in which the general representational intentions are realized partly through the series of idealised portraits of rulers organized into a genealogical cycle, and partly through

the abundant narrative illustration of Hungarian history the text presents. This work was not imported, but was made in Hungary by the miniators' workshop which also worked on the decoration of the more modestly illustrated *Secretum Secretorum* (Bodleian Library, Oxford). It seems that the Italian trecento elements, especially the basic compositional elements mostly played a general role only in this new style; probably best described in terms of that very complex Neapolitan style, incorporating French and Avignon elements, which dominated court art after the return of Queen Joan and her husband, Louis of Taranto.

In the same period of the seventies and eighties we can discern an interest in the new forms developed in Western Europe, especially at the court of Charles V in France. This connection was very productive for court art in Prague, but it also influenced courtly art in Austria and Northern Italy. From the early seventies the court of Louis the Great had an opportunity to establish ties with France through the negotiations for a marriage between the Prince of Orléans and one of the Hungarian king's daughters. The influence exerted by French court art over that of the Hungarian court has been assumed ever since it was proven that the royal seal of Mary (1382–1395), the daughter and successor of Louis, derived its peculiar composition from the seal used by Charles V of France *in absentia magni*. This work, by an excellent smith, shows close ties with the surviving fasteners, richly wrought with architectural, heraldic and figurative decorations, once belonging to the mantles brought in 1381 to add to the Treasury of the Hungarian chapel at Aix-la-Chapelle, as well as with the style of the gold belt-buckle found in the tomb of a prince of Wallachia at Curtea de Argeş.

Courtly art was probably not an isolated cultural phenomenon in 14th century Hungary, yet it is very difficult to establish the degree to which it was based on the cultural



strength of the churches and cities of the realm, or to what extent it served as a model to these. However the shift in the demands placed upon and the functions of art, which occurred within court art during the reign of Louis the Great, lasted for several generations afterward in other cultural am-

biences. We have seen that even at court it was not a sudden turn, but a rather slow development through the interactions of opposing trends and parallel outlooks. With these changes new forms were created, which helped solidify the particularities and the ensuing trends in medieval art in Hungary.

COMING IN NHQ 91.

GYULA ILLYÉS (1902-1983)

THE WONDER CASTLE; A WREATH — POEMS

*Translated by Kenneth McRobbie and William Jay Smith*

THE LAST TELEVISION INTERVIEW

*Mátyás Domokos*

SNAILS FOR DINNER

*Iván Boldizsár*

AT THE GRAVESIDE

*Béla Köpeczi, András Sütö, Gellért Belon*



# BOOKS AND AUTHORS

## NEW VOLUMES OF POETRY

György Rába: *Próbaidő* (Probation), Szépirodalmi, 1982, 253 pp.; András Fodor: *Könyomat* (Lithograph), Szépirodalmi, 1982, 163 pp.; Irén Kiss: *Magánrecept* (Private Recipe), Magvető, 1982, 98 pp.; Judit Kemenczky: *Sorsminta* (Fate Pattern), Magvető, 1982, 106 pp.

*Próbaidő* (Probation) is a generous selection from György Rába. Poems which have not appeared in any of his books head the volume and are followed by poems from six volumes in chronological order, from *Az Úr vadászata* (The Lord's Hunt) published in 1943, to *Rovások* (Runes), printed in 1980.

This principle of collection gives the volume a particular kind of unity. Its first and last sections, *Új versek* (New Poems) and *Rovások* suggest that what is fundamental to Rába's philosophy and poetry is time. The collection opens with *Óraütés* (Chime): "As the pendulum / starts to swing in me / to measure humanity's / aged time." This reformulation of Montaigne's statement that "every man carries in himself the totality of human conditions," comes from a poet who knows his Bergson well. The closing poem in the volume is *Előszó a halálhoz* (Foreword to Death). It has as motto a quotation from Plutarch on how Plato met his death. Rába varies the motto: "I bless my star / that I could be a contemporary of Socrates." This has several meanings: it leaves open the question whether the poet, in his reliance on timeless values, regards himself as the contemporary of Socrates or, perhaps, he has a contemporary of his own—unnamed—whom he can respect as Socrates. (The second is the more likely.) This is the poem which closed his *Rovások*, the title itself being susceptible of several interpretations. The Hungarian

word *rovás* (in the singular) means the characters of an old script; secondly, in the works of a Hungarian poet of the early nineteenth century it meant an act, a scene, or a phase; thirdly, if *rovás* is an element of a verb with a prefix it is synonymous with scolding, reprimanding, or punishing. When choosing this as a title to his collection, Rába almost certainly had all three meanings in mind. *Próbaidő*, the title poem of this new volume, first appeared also in *Rovások*.

"Rose flames as terms of probation" . . . Terms of probation for what? Life, death, creation, personal self-realization, variations on the "ego?" In *Rovások* Rába's hermeticism and ambiguity reached their peak; they are somewhat looser in *Új versek*.

In common with his contemporaries, Rába wanted to write "beautiful" poetry during the years of the Second World War. His ideals, again in common with his contemporaries, were the precision of the marvellous rhymes, the solemnity of classical form, the splendour of verse sentences and stanzas. He faced potential death with beauty, craftsmanship and a sort of abstract, timeless solemnity.

"The angels walk in and out in me / as stonemasons in a crumbling house"—he wrote in 1943 in *Angyalok honfoglalása* (The Conquest of Angels).

After the war, between 1946 and 1948, Rába was one of the editors and organizers



of the review *Újbold* (New Moon). Its declared aims were to aid the development of a generation. Rába found his individual voice in the group of poets around *Újbold*, and has developed and varied it consistently. In his successive volumes he has rigidly excluded all narrative elements from his poetry and consistently avoided direct representation and confession. "From under the sand of events the stone of truth and law must emerge; anecdotes and impressions are personal matters, in themselves uninteresting and incidental." He is totally opposed to the ethics and aesthetics of what is merely momentary and personal. He hints at tragedies, both interior and historical, but does not complain. In *Férfikor* (Manhood): "and I tumble in love as / soldiers into the trench."

Rába limits himself to essential emotions and discoveries; he imposes a strict hierarchy of values on his memories. His poems are fragments of interpretation of life towards an explanation of love and art and of a self-made mythology.

Both when he started on his career and later, in the fifties and sixties, characteristic of Hungarian poetry was an over-abundance of narrative elements. The poets told stories, recounted events, described and named persons and objects with an overscrupulous accuracy. In contrast, Rába, since his *Újbold* days, has been influenced by Mallarmé's dictum that giving a name to things deprives us of three-quarters of our joy. He was also influenced by T. S. Eliot's concept and use of objective correlatives. Moreover, unlike Eliot, he avoids direct statements and descriptions. He has learned also from the Italian hermetic poets whose works he lovingly translated. For Rába a poem is a festive act. Both the joy and a certain pathos in using verse show in his unexpected associations and elliptical, ambiguous sentences. Indeed, in the depths of the complicated, elliptically structured images and hidden dialogues one senses the melody of Hungarian folk-song.

I have said that one of the chief motifs of his poetry was time. It is a "breeze from space" or the "day-labourer of the universe." The years are "trained hunting-dogs." Elsewhere time is "the first chime of winter," elsewhere again he speaks of the "salt-traces of time," of the winding bark [of tree], or of the "chimes of the patrols." One of his poems bears the title *Közbeszólások Héralleitboszba* (Interjections in Heraclitus); it is built of allusions to aphorisms on time, change, and cognition.

In addition to time, dream and half-dream are recurring motifs in his poems as is the personality, summed up in the words "face," "mark" and "double;" *Próbaidő* is a drama of time and personality, where personality both changes in time and remains permanent against time. Jacob's struggle with the angel is retold though the figures are not directly named: he individualizes and generalizes the story. The closing line of *Viaskodás* (Struggle) can stand as his poetic credo: "I carry in my entrails the blessing of the struggle."

Although Rába's lyrical poetry is hermetic, it is however—and perhaps because of this—also a "letter," an "urgent message." *Kóbor ujjbegyeim* (My Errant Fingertips) is evidence for this: "what I am writing to you... is a never-ending report." The "you" may be a concrete person but it is also every one of his readers.

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András Fodor feels a profound sympathy for Auden. He himself has written of this both in prose and verse, and has edited and partly translated Auden's works. A most convincing and intimate proof of this autonomous and self-confident sympathy is his title to his volume of translations, *Frontier* (Mezsgyék). As Auden's *Cave of Making* to the memory of Louis MacNeice has it:

(At  
that frontier I wouldn't dare speak to anyone  
in either a prophet's bellow  
or a diplomat's whisper)



In *Frontier* Fodor published translations of twentieth century poets: among them are pieces from Larkin (to whom he has also devoted a complete volume), Graves, and Różewicz.

Fodor has, then, taken a key word from Auden to act as title to a volume of translations. What we have now is a further variation on the same theme. One of the most important pieces in his latest volume, *Könyomat*, is *A küszöbön* (On the Threshold). Here is a prose translation of its (characteristic) closing lines: "However wearying, it is better / to stand always on the threshold / and see both rooms at the same time."

András Fodor, the son of a country railwayman, read Auden for the first time in 1947; two poems in Hungarian translation. The consequences were far-reaching, though, of course, hardly foreseeable at the time; in an autobiographical essay Fodor states that he felt their liberating and encouraging influence instantly. Auden made Fodor understand that poetry had possibilities other than those offered by Hungarian poetry and the then very popular French poetry. Auden made Fodor understand that despite early criticism from a beloved mentor he should not consider his rudimentary experiments as unpoetic but develop them further by evolving his own technique and tone. To adapt Valéry, it may be said that reading Auden had its consequences. Now, more than 30 years after this first acquaintance, these consequences are obvious. Fodor's contemporaries, the poets around *Újbold*, that short-lived but important post-war literary review, wrote a form of poetry totally different to that being written by the graduates of the People's Colleges, poets who were mostly of peasant origin. (Only two or so years passed between the emergence of these two schools of poetry: the *Újbold* group were silenced until around 1958 for considerations of literary policy, and at the same time the populist trend was encouraged.) Fodor's poetry is in turn different from the bulk of the work in *Újbold* which favoured her-

metism and concision: some of the poems appearing there were on the borderline of silence and speaking. (Ágnes Nemes Nagy and János Pilinszky were the main figures in this trend.) Yet, Fodor's work is also different from the prophetic world-building rhetoric of Ferenc Juhász and László Nagy. He chose a third course between silence and volubility, between hermetism and the naming of everything, between creation of the inner, and creation of the outer world. The effect of Auden in all this was that he gave Fodor the courage to accept his apparently unpoetic inclinations; there was also the reply that Fodor could make to a criticism of being too private—Auden's own words, "for friends only."

Fodor has a great admiration for Bartók, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky, and has written numerous essays on them. He quotes Stravinsky's appreciation of Auden with joyful satisfaction. In his best poems Fodor creates a poetry which could hardly be told otherwise in prose. This poetry which eschews rhyme and uses the metaphor in its traditional illustrative function, can be distinguished from prose chiefly through its concision. Its arrangement in stanza and line adds to the briskness and rhythm of the texts and emphasizes the intellectual accents of their message. Fodor writes poems on discernible themes. In the title poem, *Könyomat*, he meditates on how our grandchildren will see our age; perhaps they will look back with nostalgia on our difficulties and ruin. The volume is a collection of autobiographical variations, important documents on the development of a personality. Reminiscences of a journey (to Scandinavia), the evocation of dead friends and admired poets, city and country scenes, diary notes, portraits, and moral parables. For all that Fodor records joyfully that the vine leaves "spread their palms as if in blessing," and receives with gratitude every beauty offered by nature, human life, or art. He is also a severe and accurate observer. He is most severe with himself: he writes that he does



not want to become an old man who is "unable to pay attention to answers." This is characteristic because both in his life and poetry Fodor is searching for the dialogue between persons and cultures.

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*Szélcsend* (Period of Calm) was the first book of poetry by Irén Kiss and appeared in 1974. The author, a graduate in Hungarian and Italian of Budapest University, wrote on her sleeve-notes: "my person embodies many things: the worker-peasant alliance, the peaceful coexistence of national minorities, and even changing social class. The latter was a gradual and painful process during my five years at Eötvös Kollégium. At the time our classmates from Budapest envied our way of life in the residence and the students in the Kollégium envied their fellow students who lived at home. I know now that we in the college were enviable."

Irén Kiss's second book was an autobiographical novel, *Allókép* (Still), recording the experiences and problems of life in a student hostel. In 1979 she brought out another collection of poetry, *Árkádiát tartozzák* (Arcadia Closed for Maintenance). The two collections of poems were ironic and humorous in tone, and displayed a mastery of traditional poetic technique; most of the poems had been inspired by some travel experience or other.

Her new book, *Magánrecept*, is an irregular work which balances on the borderline between poetry and prose. The author's own drawings and the photos of György Kőbányai complement the book; text and drawing, text and photo, text and typographical layout form an organic unit. Her sleeve-notes recommend her book to those "who have already asked themselves the question, what is happiness?" and to those "who love travel, old museums, jokes and games, the world of college canteens" and "who like to listen to

the words of one-time philosophers and philosophizing contemporaries."

Irén Kiss knows Italy well and has translated Italian poets; she has chosen Venice to set those poems where philosophy and life are to be sought out. She has often wandered through its streets and bridges and is well acquainted with its history. She speaks of Venice as the eternal and always new city and of the fact that Milton regarded its constitution as "perfect," and of the doge ruling over a city where Goldoni lived and where Goethe, Byron, and Thomas Mann once walked. Those who love Italian culture can sense their presence at every step. Today's Venice is a cosmopolitan city but a nostalgia for its autonomy still lingers as a memory of its past. The Florence of Savonarola and Padua are not far from the Venice where "300 years ago a woman succeeded in obtaining a doctor's degree."

In *Magánrecept* regular poems, dialogues, philosophical meditations, descriptions of street scenes, diary notes, grotesque ideas, jokes, inscriptions on streets and other *trouvés* alternate with each other. Real and imaginary characters wander through the book; Goldoni is present as are chance acquaintances and figures from the city's art treasures. Irén Kiss walks in the living past and present of Venice and carries with her everywhere her own traditions of folklore. Each page of the book—except the first—is divided in two typographically separate units. On top there are two or four lines which seem to be popular recipes or excerpts from medieval books of magic. Through all the 90 pages wise sayings and magic formulae against all kinds of diseases and ailments follow each other monotonously in never-completed sentences. The numbering of the pages comes after the two or four-line inscriptions which convey the impression of texts deriving from somewhere far away. Beneath them is a description of Venice, present and past, the two sometimes overlapping; here and there drawings and photographs are added to the text. The contrast



between the old recipes and the very personal accounts on every page explains the "Private Recipe" of the title.

\*

Judit Kemenczky attracted attention in the early seventies even before the publication of her first volume of poetry. Some of her work was published in an anthology of young poets entitled *Ne mondj le semmiről* (Don't Renounce Anything); she has also translated some examples of NO-drama.

Her first volume of poetry, *A vesztes* (The Loser), appeared in 1979, and was introduced by two mottoes; the first was from the *Bhagavad-Gita* and quoted Krishna's words on sacrifice, the second was a few lines from the 9th chapter of the Book of Revelations. The 11th line of the latter explains the title of her book: "They have a king ruling over them, who is the angel in charge of abyss. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon: in Greek the name is Apollyon [meaning "The Destroyer"]."

The motto introducing this present, second, collection comes from a letter of Van Gogh's on Christ. The first poem in the collection is *Nyitójáték vagy az istenek és a költők NO-ja* (Curtain-Raiser or the NO of Gods and Poets). Although it stands first in the book it is numbered 9; the other poems follow in a count-down order ending with a poem numbered 0 and bearing no title. They are followed by three poetic letters.

Some critics reacted in a high-handed, all-knowing attitude but I must sincerely admit to being intrigued, interested, and occasionally fascinated by Kemenczky's book. However, I am not sure whether I read the poems correctly, so I am starting by recording my impressions.

It seems to me that the 13 poems in *Sorsminta* (Fate Pattern) are parts of an autobiography. In technique they draw on NO-drama, film, rock music and that method of essay-writing which, for the sake of logical consistency, arranges the essay in points and sub-points. This last method is

used in *Küldetés* (Mission). Each line is a point or sub-point. This construction permits lengthy détours without spoiling the lucidity of the logical order. The title comes from a semi-documentary film of Ferenc Kósa's, *Mission*, on the extraordinary career of András Balczó, an Olympic and World modern pentathlon champion, who also appears in Kemenczky's poem.

The autobiography is an accumulation, not only of facts but of dreams, meditations, and appropriated cultures. Kemenczky's stories are usually set in Budapest and sometimes in New York: the actual setting and time may change within the same poem. She likes to make her topography and location precise: "lazing in the recess of Budapest II. Tövis u. 7." or "in New York when I went from 57th into 52nd Street."

Many small concrete objects appear in her poems almost always with their own special colour: the objective and the imagined alternate throughout: "On my palm / I garded a golden apple / shot to pieces / Its core glittered red / Its middle / was set in black / with diamond stones."

There is also a constant alternation between the concrete stories and objects of everyday life and the cultural myths and fairy-tale motifs which rise independently from metaphor. What is imagined, dreamed, and learned is also part of a person's autobiography just as is what he has sensed or understood from the lives of relatives or friends. An event can be put into perspective if it is compared with another event or cultural fact.

Kemenczky recounts her childhood and youth beginning with 1956 in almost naturalistic detail and in a matter-of-fact manner. This she does almost without the reader being conscious of it because she always uses the present tense (thus there is no sequence of time or development); time and space, concrete everyday objects and events, and references to a universal culture alternate and merge all the time.

Kemenczky is erudite; the character of



her erudition and culture distinguishes her from her predecessors and contemporaries. She moves with a natural ease not only in the mainstream European (Greek-Latin-Christian) culture but also in various spheres of Asian, Japanese, Chinese, and Persian culture. She refers to a Sanskrit tale on the cadaver demon, to a disciple of Confucius, to Aristotle, Paracelsus, Saint-Exupéry or Péter Pázmány, the Hungarian archbishop and seventeenth-century writer, with the same ease. The not yet 'established' subcultures of her generation (rock or punk) are treated with the same naturalness. Sometimes she adopts well-known lines or images from Hungarian or foreign poets wholesale, at other times she acknowledges them scrupulously. Beside herself, her father, and the great men of culture, the heroes of her poems

are her friends, referred to by their Christian names.

One may try to guess who have been her influences? William Carlos Williams or Hölderlin, to whom she devoted a poem in her first book? Or Eliot or, especially, Pound? Or of János Pilinszky, who wrote an introduction to her poems in the anthology *Ne mondj le semmiről?* Or was it Milán Füst, from whom she has derived imagery and who, in his long free-verse poems, confronted the grotesque and the coarsely realistic, the sacred and the profane, in a synthesis of different cultures? Or did she learn from the Sanskrit tale or from Lao-Tse?

The accessible yet hermetic poems of *Sorsminta* seem to be the products of an important poetic intelligence.

LÁSZLÓ FERENCZI

## FROM OUR NEXT ISSUES

### POEMS

*András Fodor*

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### ON NOT SPEAKING HUNGARIAN

*Robert P. Davies*



## FLIPPANT NOVELS

Emil Koložsvári Grandpierre: *Egy házasság előtörténete* (Antecedents to a Marriage), Magvető, 1982, 290 pp.; Ferenc Karinthy: *Budapesti ősz* (Budapest Autumn), Szépirodalmi, 1982, 205 pp.; Gyula Hernádi: *Hasfelmetsző Jack* (Jack the Ripper), Magvető, 1982, 187 pp.; Péter Esterházy: *Ki szavatol a lédi biztonságáért?* (Who Guarantees the Lady's Security?), Magvető, 1982, 187 pp.

Because of his advanced years, Emil Koložsvári Grandpierre should be one of the great old men of contemporary Hungarian literature; instead he is more its *enfant terrible*. In an earlier issue I pointed out that narration, plain old-fashioned story-telling is Koložsvári Grandpierre's natural strength. There is scarcely any other living Hungarian writer who absorbs himself more deeply in relating fictitious, and even more so true, events with such uninhibited naturalness and unclouded delight as he does. His informality, elegance, fluency, and loquaciousness almost seem arrogant and coquettish at a time when literature seems to be engaging in a scrupulous and harassed self-pursuit. His defiance of the theoretical is well-known and we can take it for granted that his kind of narrative, a sort of enjoyable consumer good, is deliberately, indeed ostentatiously, cultivated; his delighted malice and great erudition are equally well-known and it can also be taken for granted that he himself is fully aware of the charges that can be brought against his books. But just as he is for ever flouting and attacking prudery for its negative attitude to pleasure and enjoyment, he is also against what is ponderous or speculative in art, and battles it with the very facility of his works.

The critic, as such, tries to be objective and is bound also to present what is true in the "other side"—in "serious" literature—against Koložsvári Grandpierre's attractive partiality. The best thing, of course, would be for Koložsvári Grandpierre himself to silence one through work which, even under

its mask of flippancy, were serious literature; which it has been more than once during his career. However, the latest novel, "Antecedents to a Marriage" (*Egy házasság előtörténete*), rather than silence the critic's scrupulous balancing act, serves to increase his objections.

The novel has two parallel biographies, which, as against the axiom on parallel lines, meet not at infinity but at the end of the novel. Up to the end of the book, the reader would not even understand what the two stories—narrated not alternatively but one following the other—have got to do with each other, were it not for the assistance of the title which implies that these two lives are to be joined together in a marriage. The antecedents to a marriage could well be the story of a love-affair, here however it is a different question. When the twin protagonists eventually find each other, that in itself is the solution, and scenes recording their love are only attached to the novel as a sort of coda.

The author follows Ákos Árvai from the 1930s to that time in the 1950s when he is to meet his wife-to-be. Ákos Árvai comes from an old-fashioned, conservative family of lawyers who belong to that Christian (that is, non-Jewish) upper middle-class whose attitudes and way of life set both tone and fashion in the Hungary of the 1930s. His father cannot imagine his son being anything other than a lawyer, the tradition in Hungary being that middle class sons opted for the sinecures of the legal profession. However, Ákos Árvai's bent is towards engineer-



ing, and with the conspirational support of a bachelor uncle, he graduates as a chemical engineer while also attending the legal faculty to pull the wool over his father's eyes. Despite the war, despite the collapse of the old world, old man Árvai is still unable to reconcile himself to his son's betrayal; he disowns him in a theatrical scene, which is purely comical. The effect of the portrayal is to present Ákos Árvai no more than a passive party to a somewhat halting and half-hearted switch of career.

Kolozsvári Grandpierre devotes much more space to Eszter Turányi, who is indeed more interesting than her husband-to-be. Eszter also comes from a good family, but while Ákos Árvai comes from a thoroughly Hungarian gentilefolk background, that of Eszter's is cosmopolitan with a western orientation. Her father, a former ambassador to Brazil, has had his daughter educated in Switzerland, and after the war the family only returned to war-ravaged Hungary out of some muddled obstinacy of the father's half official duty and half national feeling. In the "year of change," when the Rákosi regime came to power, he was dismissed from the Foreign Ministry, and sharing the fate of 60,000 "declassified" fellow sufferers, the family was deported from the capital overnight; with only the most indispensable necessities, they were sent to the house of a peasant family in a village in the hills. The father, and especially the mother, have been accustomed to a certain life, and gradually give in to this burden of misfortune, finally dying of the translocation. However, their daughter, although at first lost among her derisive schoolmates, slowly steels herself to this new and harsher life; by the time their banishment, virtually a form of internment, is lifted, she has turned into an attractive, desirable woman ripe and longing for love.

In Kolozsvári Grandpierre's novel—and not for the first time either—the main problem facing the characters is in fact what to do with their usually excessive

sensuality. To be more precise, it is perhaps not so much the characters' problem as the author's who, like little Maurice in the old Budapest joke, is reminded by everything of *that*. Sensuality has nothing much to do with Ákos Árvai's problem, yet the reader is kept informed of his passing love affairs in regular detours from the plot-line. What we are told of Eszter Turányi's mother is virtually only a set of statements about the confusing incompatibility between her enormous breasts and her frigidity—and not always in good taste either. Eszter Turányi herself triggers off a lust in men that splits trousers and pulls off panties. The only trouble with all this is that it replaces delicacy of character portrayal. The main interest of these careers would lie in their individual social history; these histories, however, are only roughly and superficially sketched, almost merely as pretexts for erotic notions. Consequently the characters are being weighed and judged almost according to their sexual attraction, sexual fantasy and sexual life; the in-suitability of this measure seems, to say the least, grotesque amidst the ordeals history has imposed on the protagonists. Kolozsvári Grandpierre's at other times disarmingly witty malice, sarcasm, and peepy disposition lead him astray here and fail to electrify the plot with saucy vitality. In its uncertainty and somewhat makeshift form, "Antecedents to a Marriage" lacks a profound content, with characters being merely sketches of themselves.

The same makeshift character also marks Ferenc Karinthy's new novel "Budapest Autumn" (*Budapesti ősz*). The book was awaited with great expectations as the author had let it be known that it would be on the Budapest autumn of 1956. Karinthy added that he had written the novel after a thorough study of relevant sources, even examining documents only available in the United States. Furthermore, Karinthy is known to have a penchant for prying into delicate themes and tackling taboos; at the age of



sixty, he too counts as a kind of a literary *enfant terrible*. Like Kolozsvári Grandpierre, he likes and enjoys life, he is well versed in many subjects from Budapest sub-cultures to the Hungarian Diaspora in America, and from water polo to prehistory. He has known all the great figures in twentieth-century Hungarian literature and is himself the son of one of them; even today he knows everyone on the Hungarian scene. He too has the gift of fluency both in person and his writings; he too is a sworn adherent of well-written, round series, of gripping, readable narrative. All the auspices for "Budapest Autumn" augured for an exciting, animated, controversial book.

When it appeared at long last, its slimness in itself was surprising. That, of course, does not preclude its being a masterpiece. But the novel has caused disappointment. A considerable part of it is no more than a list of the external events of those thirteen tragic autumn days. Karinthy has selected a protagonist and taken him, through both some clever manœuvring and by arbitrary authorial machination, to all the most important, or at least to the most memorable, most dramatic street scenes. Gyula Páhy, director of a cultural centre, happens to be present in the middle of the insurgent crowd at the siege of the Radio, at the shooting on the crowd demonstrating before the Parliament building, at the actions of an insurrectionist group attacking tanks with "Molotov cocktails," at the lynching of the defenders of the Party Centre in Köztársaság tér, and among the militia-men determined to hold out to the last man against the Soviet troops marching in on November 4, and finally in the stream of those fleeing the country. Based obviously both on his own personal experience and on recollections and historical works, Karinthy no doubt recalls the facts and the atmosphere of those events authentically, precisely, and plastically, and what I consider to be even more valuable, he recalls in some inserted descriptive passages the street scenes as they were changing day

for day—the shop-windows with their broken glasses and yet untouched, the long lines queuing up before the bakeries, the cars and tanks destroyed by fire, empty darkened streets dark for want of public lighting, the changes in the autumn weather; these are the details which are the common experiences of everyone who lived through that Budapest autumn and which so far have only been touched upon rarely or fragmentarily in Hungary, in novels, films, and historical works. The trouble is that in "Budapest Autumn" all these facts are present in a kind of heap; for example, there is an extemporaneous account of an eye-witness, which shows no great difference from the manner of records either of contemporary reports or of later recollections. True, by the end of the novel it turns out that what we have read should be taken as the protagonist's account put to paper in Mexico, a few months after the events, intended for his wife who has stayed in Budapest, telling her in this form what he should have told and wanted to tell her during their last conversation, but was unable to do so. But it is precisely this personal character which the novel lacks. Although it is written in the first person singular, the narrator clearly remains the author, standing outside his protagonist; for the sake of making comments, he sometimes almost loses sight of his hero or only creates casual connections between him and the facts he conjures up. Again it is true that this impersonality, this impassibility follows in a way from Gyula Páhy's personality, or at least from what one has been able to learn of that character at all.

In actual fact Gyula Páhy does not have much to do with the events whirling around him. Karinthy's intention, which can be felt but has not been really realized, seems to be that Gyula Páhy is a sort of hovering character, thrown about in life. His father was a gendarme-officer under the Horthy regime, yet at the same time a member of the cultivated middle classes, who was im-



prisoned in 1945 and has been in prison ever since. (In one of the novel's scenes he is released by his own son—an incident for which there were real examples at the time.) Partly because of the call of the times and partly to move out of the shadow cast on him through his father, Páhy served the Rákosi regime as a cultural functionary. He is neither devoted enough to feel a major mental crisis over the disclosure and collapse of the regime, nor has he served it ardently enough for the rebels to want to finish him off when emotions break loose. To be on the safe side he keeps away from the centre where he works. In so doing, he strolls about in the city, looking around, meeting acquaintances, and becoming mixed up in this and that; in short he offers a suitable medium for the author to relate the events over his head as it were. During the course of the impersonal, impassive narration, there emerge some informative, descriptive dialogues, throwing a rather mechanical light on the particulars about Páhy. But this does not turn into a living knowledge, and the human, psychological, and social outlines of Páhy only appear very dimly. His passivity, his drifting intimate something but they are not filled with content.

But even this intimation carries problems for the reason that Páhy's fate has a marked conceptual and thematic connection with the October events. In some sense he is presumably to be considered a typical hero, whom the author has obviously not selected at random. But what does this Páhy represent? With his confused personal past, and hence far-reaching net of connections, he avoids being called to account during his wanderings; he gets a gun, but he only uses it to shoot down his own father who takes the head of a vengeful mob; he drifts between his constant, serious, and loyal wife and a light-minded mistress, an hysterical actress; he moves freely through the curfew with different stamped documents; when morally he reaches the lowest point, he joins an insurgent unit and then, despite

feeling that his wife is the only person in the world with whom he has links and whom he owes an explanation to, he flees to Mexico. Was it the Páhys who caused 1956 in Hungary? Or was it perhaps the Páhys who turned the event into a tragedy? Or is Páhy's irresponsibility and desorientation a model for that what happened? It is not clear who he is and why he is the protagonist of "Budapest Autumn"—and so Karinthy's work, despite some details breaking the taboos, is a confused, unclarified, inferior book.

Gyula Hernádi's new novel tackles a topic familiar to British readers, who however would find the Hungarian writer's knowledge of the relevant facts rather imprecise. The novel, "Jack the Ripper" (*Hasfelmetsző Jack*), starts out from the ravages of the mysterious murderer of the end of the last century in London. The prostitutes of the East End fall victim one after the other, and the police are helpless and without direction. Sherlock Holmes, an other immortal of Victorian England, now joins in and decides to hunt down the murderer within two weeks. He is engaged by Edward, the Prince of Wales, himself, as Queen Victoria is only willing to abdicate when and if this series of murders which are causing unrest and uncertainty can be put an end to.

Hernádi's novel naturally is not historical so much as historical burlesque (he himself terms the form he has created as "historical foolery"). Hernádi, who is also known as Miklós Jancsó's script-writer, has already produced several versions of this genre, usually for the stage. The play "Royal Hunt" (*Királyi vadászat*), considered to be his best to date, is based on a real historic event: in the 1920s, after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the dethronement of the Habsburg House, Charles Habsburg and his wife conspired with monarchist Hungarian aristocrats to enter Hungary from the west with the aim of restoring the monarchy through a putsch.



Horthy, who had just seized power, easily repelled this ineptly dilettante attempt at a coup; he put it down in his own interest and in that of the forces he represented. Hernádi's play begins with the fiction that the royal couple's plane from Switzerland crashes on landing on the western border of Hungary. The conceiver of the whole undertaking, a monarchist Hungarian aristocrat, tries to hush up the death of the couple and has doubles to take their place. They are to act the part of the returning royal couple, and should the plan come through, even to take the throne as puppets.

In a similar vein, "Jack the Ripper" goes to absurd extremes. Sherlock Holmes, although his genius fails to apprehend the Ripper for the time being, is led to a hair-raising discovery. He discovers that all the great political coups of the time have the same mysterious London criminal gang behind them and this gang presumably is also responsible for the Ripper's murders. With indomitable courage and peerless ingenuity, he duly discovers, in the course of blood-curdling adventures, that the Russian tsars Alexander II and III, the American Presidents Lincoln and Garfield, as well as Crown-Prince Rudolph of the Habsburgs, thought to have committed suicide, were all assassinated on orders from London; indeed they had been killed by the American actor Booth, who, according to the version given out to the public, had been fatally shot while escaping after the assassination of Lincoln. In actual fact he had made his escape, and was now living in England under various assumed names, including Moriarty.

Sherlock Holmes first thinks that Booth alias Moriarty is Jack the Ripper too. In his last burst of activity, already a worn-out man, driven with inner conflicts and no longer in grace, he finds decisive proof which shows that Jack the Ripper is Prime Minister Gladstone himself, with Queen Victoria as his accomplice who urged and planned the attacks.

This blood-curdler, written with great

ease, glib dialogue, nonsensical humour, and disarming humbuggery, is obviously and naturally a light read. Still even a light-minded parable also has its moral, and it is one which is not without correspondences in other Hernádi (and Jancsó) works. Queen Victoria resorted to her horrific deeds for political reasons. In Russia she wanted to get Tsar Nicholas to the throne, whom she could keep in hand through his wife, her granddaughter. She had Lincoln and Garfield done away with because she wanted to regain America as a British colony. Rudolph's crime was that he had corrupted the queen's son Edward. The justification for the rippings really sheds a sarcastic light on political motives: "Everybody was in terror, the harlots didn't dare go out into the street, Victorian mothers happily patted their unripped bellies and kept praying. All of a sudden there arose ten times as many of your policemen, secret agents, special squads, laws, and decrees as before the appearance of the Ripper," is the reproach of the Prince of Wales to his mother. The Prince has been left a secret will by Sherlock Holmes, also done away with on the queen's orders, and has at last found those arguments with which to blackmail his mother into abdication. The punch-line opens up still further perspectives—ripping continues after Queen Victoria's death and Edward's accession. "Jack the Ripper" is an uproarious parody of political manipulation, a tempestuous burlesque, whipped along by a bitter, passionate historical knowledge: in order to preserve itself, power may degenerate into common criminality.

Kolozsvári Grandpierre and Karinty's books have been written somewhat offhandedly to reflect their author's attitude, or in the latter case the protagonist's. Hernádi's flippancy is the means itself to irony. In Péter Esterházy's "Who Guarantees the Lady's Security?" (*Ki szavatol a lédi biztonságért?*), flippancy appears in the young writer's inimitable, typical guise. It gives



the appearance of an easy, faultless elegance. Esterházy pretends to step before the reader as a writer courteously handing him a novel; he abandons this every so often out of playfulness, linguistic arbitrariness, youthful foolery, a ceaseless disarrangement of the narrative—all of this with an enchanting wit. But while the conventional forms of writer and novel gradually disintegrate, a new kind of narrative begins unfolding in their place, a self-reflecting monologue, the subjective linguistic impress of a personality. Esterházy's books, including "Who Guarantees the Lady's Security?," are about how a man lives through the world that surrounds him, not least that part of him seeking to articulate his own self—the artistic urge within him—all that in the manner of linguistic articulation.

"Who Guarantees the Lady's Security?" is a "twin novel" with two, relatively independent, parts. The first part is a concise and coarse satyr play, the scene of the most elementary human gestures. It takes place in a rather murky night-club, somewhere abroad in relation of the narrator, who strays into it as an uninitiated outsider, and where through the patronizing indulgence of the "Kurfürst," the boss, he is led into the impenetrable jungle of instincts and impulses. "...just carry on, learned buffoons," beckons the Kurfürst; the actor grows stiff with submissive expectancy, 'show us what the world is like... what the world's arse is like, its backside, its reverse that is'..." This satyr play entitled *Daisy*, an enigmatic, whirling vortex of words, is therefore about what that reverse of the world is like where it cannot even be known for certain who is male and who is female—the concrete example within the epic medium of the text is the jealous rivalry of the transvestites in the night-club.

In *Agnes*, the other part of the twin-novel, the setting cannot be localized. Here too it is the tension of two places or rather of the dual links of one person that proves to be the real medium of the plot. The protagonist is

a publisher's reader, who lives in a certain city and is reading a book by a writer from another country. This writer from another country, who Esterházy playfully and ironically makes of "East-French" nationality, has written a book on the subject of spending some time on a scholarship in an unidentified strange city. The East-Frenchman's imaginary travel report, which we know through the publisher's reader's report, after some time converges on with the publisher's reader's account on his own experience; in other words, the book within the book becomes more and more identical with the book we are reading. This convergence becomes complete in the last sentence, which is the same as the last sentence in the book within the book, which we have encountered well in advance. In the same way the "East-Frenchness" of the East-Frenchman also becomes increasingly present in the life and environment of the publisher's reader, so that on the one hand the reader's city coalesces with the strange city which the East-Frenchman has visited, and on the other this strange city coalesces with the East-Frenchman's country. All this, however, only takes place within the reader's consciousness; within the concrete medium of the novel the basic situation remains valid all through, aside from the playful concurrence of the two closing sentences.

Certain marks seem to indicate that the strange city is West Berlin, and the East-Frenchman's country is Hungary. It is not without good reason that Esterházy has resorted to this encoding—the environment of the publisher's reader. This multi-layered character, endowed amongst other things with ironic biographical features, exists in the strange city where the intellectuals have Hungarian names but are international in type; so the city can also be considered as Budapest, but mostly it should be considered as a fictitious city where we "are." At the same time, the "East-Frenchness" also means the eastern half of a division



which in a broader sense does not only include Hungary. Perhaps it does not even only mean Eastern European, but eastern in the sense it is used in Hungary today in connection with the word "western." In other words, almost everything has an eastern and a western half, in Esterházy's novel even the female bottom, one half of which in the protagonist's eyes is East Paris and the other West Paris. And so why could someone not be an East-Frenchman?

The story of the publisher's reader vetting East-French writers (that is perhaps the Hungarian writer susceptible to the eastern half of things) is in itself very flat. The passages presenting the reader himself, his physical and mental totterings in a chatty, reflective tone, have fragments of scenes and dialogues inserted between them which relate the reader's hopeless love for Ágnes, a graphic artist with a chaotic life. The sad

futility of this love, the slow dying of the reader's mother from cancer, the wrecked phantomlike intellectuals whirling in the girl's orbit, bring a painful, anguished overtone into the playfully flippant composition.

The enigmatic title, "Who Guarantees the Lady's Security?," refers to a book by Géza Ottlik, Esterházy's master and a major figure in contemporary Hungarian prose. Taking into consideration the context, Esterházy's title can be interpreted as more than a gesture of homage—as an ironic demand to know who or what guarantees the security of these characters, their well-doing and happiness. Or perhaps it can be read to mean who or what guarantees the reputation of this whole literary undertaking? For my part, within my own modest sphere of authority, I am willing and happy to vouch for it.

MIKLÓS GYÖRFFY

## ANTAGONISTIC UNITY

József Nyilas: *World Economy and its Main Development Tendencies*, 2nd, revised and enlarged edition, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest and Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, The Hague, Boston and London, 1982, 276 p. Translated by István Véges; English translation edited by Imre Gombos.

The world economy is an intriguing phenomenon, a whole that differs crucially from its constituent parts, the national economies. József Nyilas, a Professor of World Economics in the Karl Marx School of Economics of Budapest, starts off the first Part which bears the title "Major Factors of the World Economy", with a painstaking definition of what the world economy is and what it does. According to him, the world economy is a system of the world's productive forces and production relations, one that integrates international production relations on the basis of an international division of labour which is growing fast.

Detailed analysis starts by concentrating on one of the key elements in the above definition, the international division of labour. The potential here depends greatly on differences and complementarity between countries and regions, on their natural resources, relative sizes and the levels of development of their productive forces and production relations. This is not the whole story, however: the comparatively recent phenomenon of the intra-branch division of labour seems to flourish most between countries that are not too dissimilar. It presupposes a high degree of organisation, sophisticated infrastructure and growing



inter-country and inter-company integration (whereas the older, inter-sectoral division of labour is better at maintaining dependence relationships).

After a consideration of world economic relations and their development, Professor Nyilas goes on to look at what he terms the main laws of the world economy. Perhaps the most salient feature of the world economy. Perhaps the most salient feature of the world economy is in the present epoch "antagonistic unity", the dialectical separation and interpenetration relationship of a socialist and a capitalist world system: it is thus obvious that different sets of laws will hold for each of the two world systems.

Part II of the book is concerned with the "Main Development Tendencies of the World Economy after the Second World War", including the impact of technological progress in the developed capitalist countries and the worldwide consequences, the evolution of world power, around two centres science and technology and the radical changes in world economic and political power relations. In a detailed exposition the scientific-technological revolution and that other revolution it has kindled in the forces of production are given pride of place. From them springs a host of novel features throughout the world economy and an urgent need to adapt to these. In the developed capitalist countries, the process of adaptation has tended to enhance the role of the state and to accelerate the centralisation of capital and of production. Centralisation went hand in hand with internationalisation, including that of the decision-making centres. The adjustment process has had a far-reaching economic and social impact: stagflation, subsidies, financing and intervention by the state, unemployment and a militant trade union movement developed more or less gradually. On the other hand the "price explosion" of 1973 shocked by its suddenness. It was the signal for a general abandonment of Keynesian policies in favour of monetarist ones, a change which

has resulted since, in the words of the GATT Secretariat, in a "dangerous erosion" of the principles of world trade.

The developing countries in their turn have to face bleak domestic economic prospects in bulk. They have, especially since 1973, become increasingly dependent on aid and bank loans emanating from the capitalist world: this has both helped them and increased their economic dependence. The efforts made recent years, both by themselves and internationally, to accelerate their development have become bogged down in the recent world economic quagmire. Yet an improvement of their lot must be regarded as one of the most crucial issues facing future world economic progress, one to which the world socialist system is to contribute more and more.

Among socialist system, adaptation to the new requirements of the world economy has to proceed hand in hand with a changeover from extensive to intensive economic growth, combined with vigorous and accelerating scientific and technological progress. The times demand a change in methods of economic control; there are to be made more exible, adaptable and efficient. The author posits that "the requirements can best be satisfied by the institutionalisation of indirect management, of economic regulation..." Yet "it would be harmful to overemphasise the significance of the indirect means of economic management... direct means and central economic directives under government sanction... are... necessary tool to assert the interests of society as a whole..."

A continuing effort within the world socialist system is aimed at bringing about a closer integration of member countries. Far from being smooth and wide, the road to fuller integration has many objective obstacles such as bottlenecks in production, balance-of-payment difficulties, debts to the West, differences in levels of development and in national systems of economic control, and so on. What is needed to overcome



these obstacles is modernisation in depth of the mechanisms of international economic cooperation, with the developed capitalist and the developing countries as well as among the member states. Once that end has been attained, Professor Nyilas is confident that "The association of the achievements of the scientific and technological revolution with the advantages of socialism via economic integration and thus through a steady increase in public welfare in the socialist countries not only provides a basis for the socialist development of the member countries but also promotes it on a world-wide scale".

There is a final chapter on "Scientific and technical cooperation as an important domain of adjustment to the new requirements of the world economy". It highlights the scientific and technological revolution as one of the major active forces operating in the world economy and goes on to consider ways and means of economic, scientific and

technical cooperation between countries whose productive forces are active at different levels of sophistication. The general conclusion is that the potential of such cooperation is enormous but that the effort needed to let the poor and weakest attain their share will be just as enormous. Laying down just and equitable basic principles for the international flow of science and technology should be one of the first steps in that direction.

The book closes with a consideration of the optimum development and integration of research and development capacity within CMEA.

Closely argued and concise, this book is intended for the professional economist and economic politician, particularly if he is working with or for an international organisation. The fact that it presents a consistent socialist, Marxist view of its subject — may entice many a lay reader to brave its depths.

BÁLINT BALKAY

## FROM OUR NEXT ISSUES

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# ARTS

## HOMAGE TO THE NATIVE LAND

### A Budapest Exhibition of Hungarian Artists Living Abroad

The first exhibition of Hungarian artists living abroad was held in 1970 in Budapest's *Műcsarnok*. That was when Hungarians belatedly discovered the sculptures of Amerigo Tot and Pierre Székely, the mobiles of Nicolas Schoeffler, the art of Victor Vasarely, (who made his first appearance somewhat earlier through a large retrospective,) and the graphics of Lajos Szalay. Since then there have been fairly numerous individual exhibitions of work, by Hungarian artists living abroad in Budapest and other Hungarian cities. These exhibitions, particularly ones on Tot and Vasarely, have had a strong effect on the public. To people who were reared on the aesthetics of the 1950s, the exhibitions provided a spectacular proof that more than one road leads to Parnassus.

A second Collective exhibition of Hungarian artists living abroad, in September 1982, displayed works from no less than some 500 artists. Naturally it is very difficult to summarize such an enormous exhibition in one word; it is particularly dangerous to apply the word "conservative" since this is a value judgement which has different implications for everyone. To my mind it is more difficult today to paint a landscape which is good by the standards of the tradition that was valid between the times of Turner and Utrillo than to invent an entirely new genre. Particularly if such a radical innovation receives recognition from most

critics rather than persecution, and indeed if everything turns out well, can produce financial rewards.

Because of this uncertainty, it seems better to forgo the word "conservative" for the exhibition. Let us say instead that compared with the work of young Hungarians living in Hungary, pictures by Hungarians working abroad did include more works which the viewer could find an answer to the familiar question, "what does it represent?"

This in itself, of course, does not tell us much about an exhibition that brought together so many artists, so many views and the filtering of so many realms of visual experience. Who should we take to represent the extremes? Do we take Sándor Bodó who lives in Nashville, Tennessee and is 63 years old, and who recreates scenes from American history in forms akin to nineteenth-century Biedermeier and the socialist realism of Hungary in the mid-twentieth century? Or Magdolna Csutak, who comes from Rumania, where she studied, is still under forty and has been living in Vienna for six years, where she creates porcelain figures that show a striking resemblance to a piece of paper crumpled and thrown away? Or Hugó Gelért, born in 1892 and living in New Jersey, who may be considered a unique figure in the recent art history, if only because he bases one of his graphic series on Marx's *Das Kapital*; his works are in both the Metropoli-



tan Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Museum of the Hungarian Working Class Movement in Budapest? The other extreme could be Szabolcs Szilágyi, born in 1949 and living in Stockholm, who has no interest in traditional techniques or the societal function of art, exploring the opportunities in film, video, and action. The difference in age between these last two artists is more than half a century, and they live in worlds different both geographically and in outlook. What they share is a spoken mother tongue, not an artistic idiom.

It follows from all this that the organizing principle of the exhibition could not have been more profound than that of a telephone directory. Just as a telephone directory contains those who live in a given area with telephones, this exhibition has gathered those who have moved away from the given geographical area they were born in and mainly live from their artistic activity. Thus the organizers could do nothing other than group this highly varied material in a way that would reflect good taste, by placing, whenever possible, those with related views close to one another. One such placing is of those whose work may be linked to the naives. Here we are speaking of forms, as today it is only in the remotest corners of the world that naives such as were the douanier Rousseau could live, or, for that matter, those Hungarian peasants whose pictorial flair was discovered 50 years ago. They and their successors have their own permanent collection in Hungary, and their work, which has been much written about, has clearly influenced, for example, Eszter Györy, who lives in New York. However, the exhibition has had few such comfortable opportunities for grouping.

#### *Artistic Metamorphoses*

When reviewing a group exhibition, the critic is always tempted to look for some kind of characteristic around which he can

align several artists. Such ideas must here be rejected. Is one to speak of the constant and the changeable? On this basis one really could compare, for instance, József Jakovits with András Beck, born in 1909 and 1911 respectively. Jakovits has been living in America since 1965, and his metal sculptures of barbaric force continue in the same vein he represented as a member of the Europe School around 1947 in Hungary. András Beck underwent a complete transformation in 1956, when he left Hungary. Around 1950, he was one of the leading figures in socialist realism; his works now on display seem to indicate that in Paris he has turned into a creator of delicate, lyrical, abstract statues and medals. The appearance of different periods in the work of an artist is normal, even if those periods seem to be in contradiction with one another. Nevertheless it seems that among the changeables one can differentiate between artists whose changes have been determined by a change in social demands and those with whom the change has followed from the inner logic of their life's work. László Lakner may be mentioned as an example for this latter. Born in 1936 and living in West Berlin. Lakner first attracted attention at exhibitions of the Young Artists' Studio in Budapest with paintings in a brilliant technique which preceded hyperrealism and later, after experimenting with a growing number of transitional forms, he joined the Hungarian "underground" that was taking shape around 1970. He has preserved his versatility and provocative talent to the present day: the legend on the brown, black, and white picture he sent to Budapest, and which is loosely linked with the new German abstract expressionism, quotes from a funeral oration from around 1200, written in ancient Hungarian: "In truth, we are but dust and ashes." Or to be accurate, we shall be. If all goes wrong, perhaps not only the individual but mankind as a whole. Earlier too, Lakner's pictures tackled profound questions, in a more detailed manner and more closely



linked to historical situations, preserving the ideal of beauty of the last century in the warmth of his colours.

*Statues in Various Dimensions*

There are artists whose career began in Hungary, but their development as a whole is linked to their residence abroad, as for instance Pierre Székely, the Paris sculptor, who first carved stone in a military labour camp, and went to Paris as a young graphic artist. This architect-cum-sculptor with a singular style is very popular in France, and has more recently become popular in Hungary. The first abstract statue to be set up in a Paris street was one of his and another, celebrating the ideal of peace, will soon be erected in Budapest.

Vera Székely moved to Paris as Pierre's wife, and she too has become a sculptor. The number of Hungarian woman sculptors active in Western Europe is amazingly high. They include Marta Pan in France, whose metal sculptures—pure forms created out of stainless steel—could now be seen in Budapest, and who twelve years ago exhibited thrilling mobiles, including one that had functioned as part of a ballet set in Paris. There is Vera Cardot, also living in France, whose portrait constructed of rope and plastic is a novel method. I have encountered few more telling formulations of "one-dimensional" modern man "without qualities." Katalin Hetey is also an abstract sculptor living in France, as is Magda Frank, who conjures animated, to some extent realistic, spectacles—both have been regularly exhibiting in Hungary too. Of the younger generation Éva Oláh Arré works in Italy, while Austria, just next door, has become the home of portraitist Vera Deér, a pupil of Wotruba and of Nyrom (Mária Neureiter), who exhibits elaborately animated abstract sculptures and who studied in Budapest and Cairo (a rare combination). Nyrom's work is to be mainly found in smaller museums in

Austria, their Hungarian counterparts not yet having discovered her. And somewhere between sculptor and painter is Anna Mark, whose abstract reliefs are so picture-like in their plasticity that they may virtually be called pictorial sculptures. Marika Somogyi-Harmat's (Berkeley) Wallenberg memorial medal is a small but very impressive work.

*Engravers, Illustrators*

Two graphic artists have achieved fame in the English-speaking world by developing and perfecting the style they brought from Hungary. One is György Buday, a master of black-and-white engraving and book illustration of a consistent tone; the second is József Domján, who has won popularity by his coloured woodcuts in a highly individual technique. Buday lives in Britain, and Domján in the United States. In France a group of poets and artists have rallied around the Hungarian-language literary and cultural periodical *Magyar Műhely* (Hungarian Workshop) in Paris. They carry on in graphic art the fine traditions of the Hungarian avant-garde periodicals of Lajos Kassák of the 1910s and '20s of course, they too have been unable to escape the fate of today's avant-garde—recognition.

*Architects, Photographers and Absentees*

Painting, sculpture, graphic art—so far we have surveyed genres of *grand art*. It is not only the difference in style, age, and geographic environment which makes this exhibition difficult to review but also the multitude of forms. The organizers have given space to architecture and photography too, and justly so, since they include highly significant names such as Ernő Goldfinger, active abroad, mainly in Britain, since 1919, his close collaborator Pierre Vágó, and Alexander Bodon, who lives in the Netherlands and whose name, together with Gold-





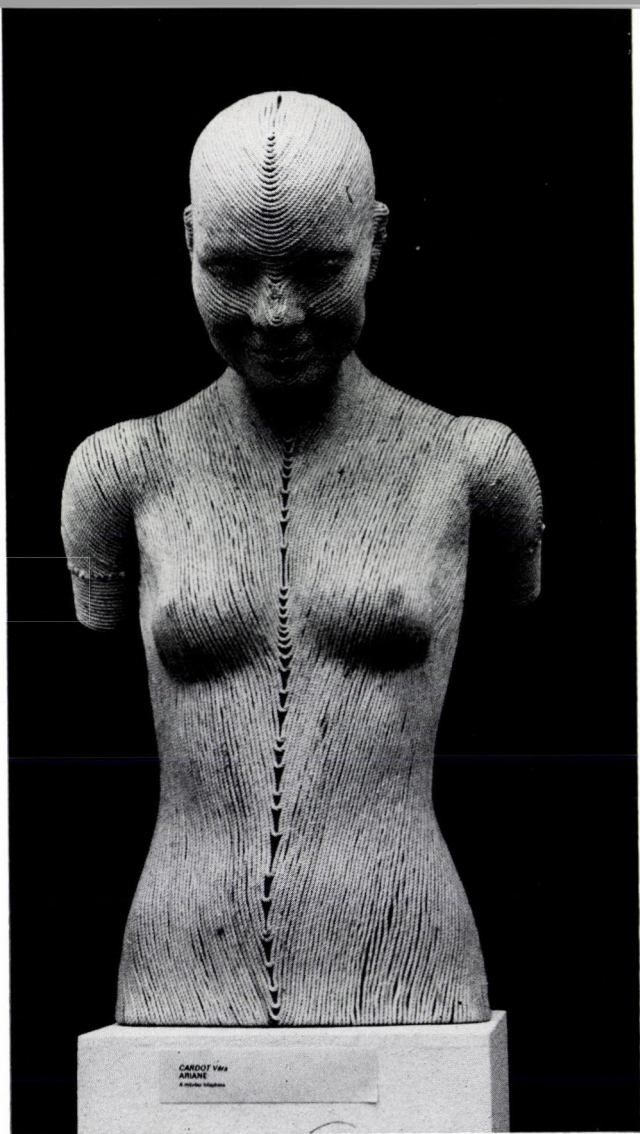
ÁRPÁD SZENES: THE TOWN. OIL, CANVAS, 89 × 146 CM 1965/66



*Franz Kovács*

JÓZSEF DOMJÁN: THE GIRL WHO WAS DANCED TO DEATH. A SERIES OF FOLK BALLADS. COLOURED WOODCUT. 65 × 50 CM. 1982





VERA CARDOT: ARIANE. STRING AND  
PLASTIC. 80 CM

*Eerenc Kovács*

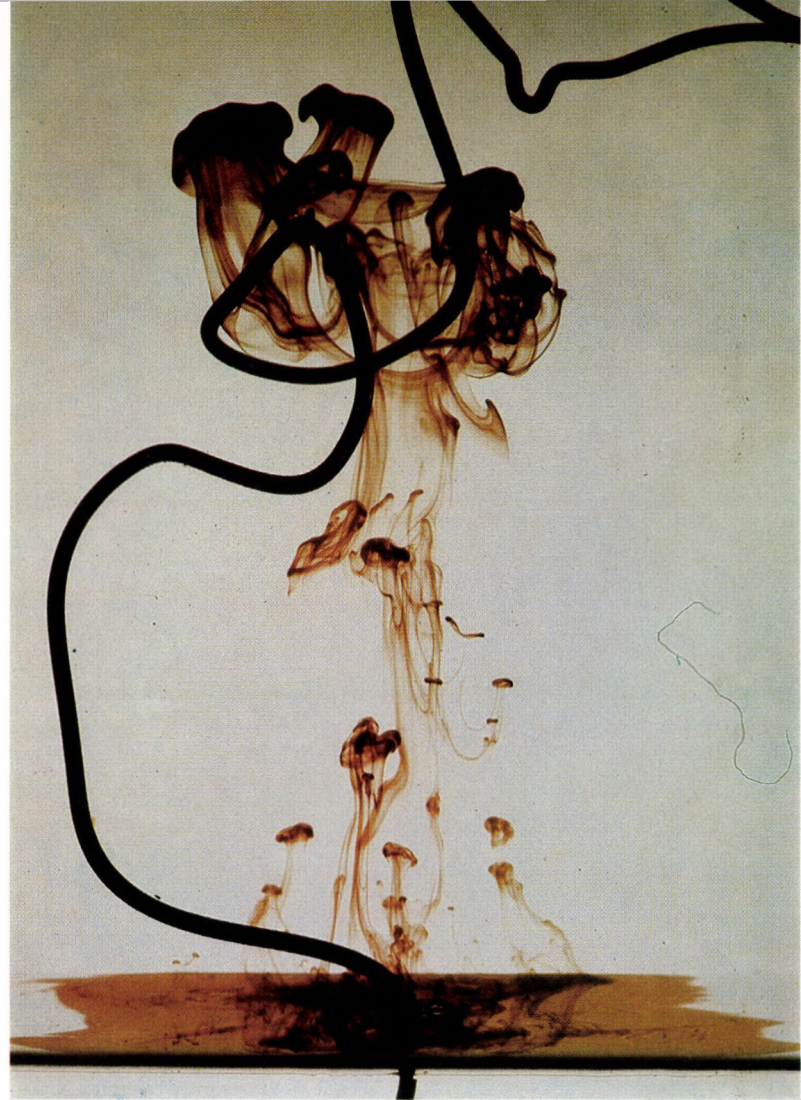


MAGDA FRANK: MASKS OF ANGELS. LIGHT CEMENT.  
120×60×25 CM. 1981





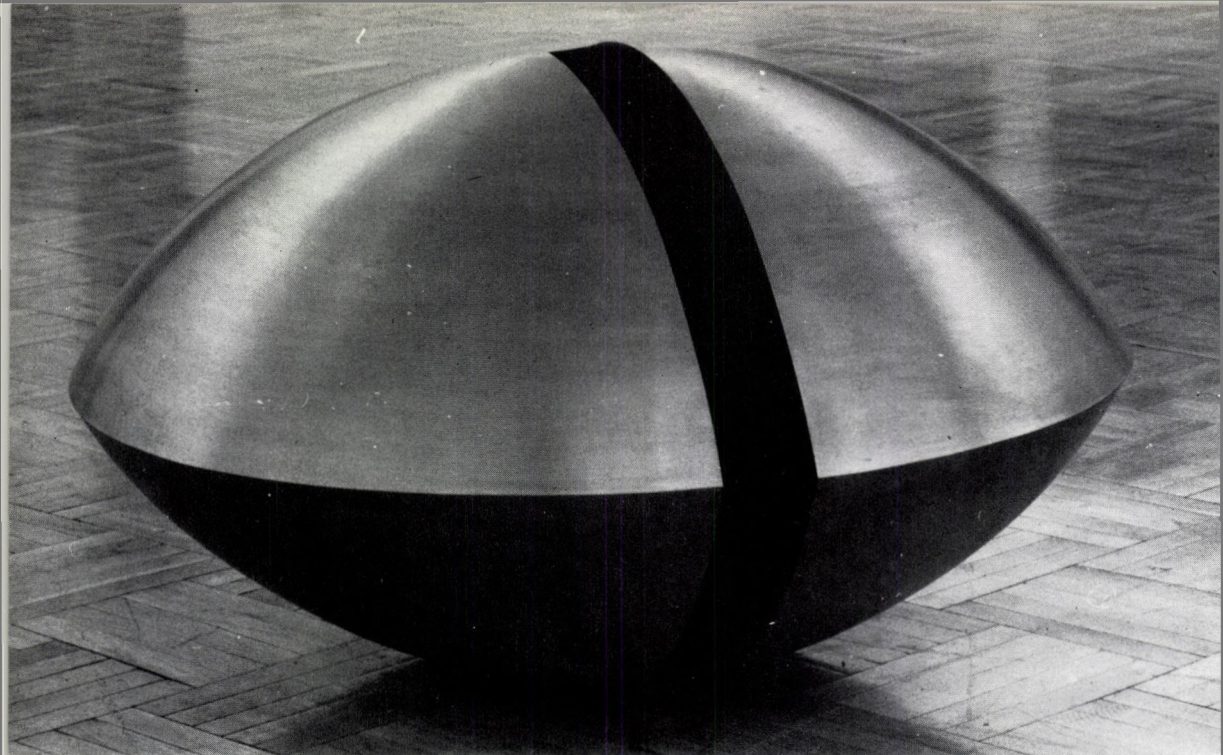
SIGISMUND KOLOS-VARY: THE WELL OF HOPE.  
OIL, 81 × 65 CM, 1980



*Erene Kovács*

GYÖRGY KEPES: MOVING NATURE II.,  
PHOTO, 49,5 × 33,5 CM, 1982





MÁRTA PÁN: SCULPTURE. 207. STAINLESS STEEL, Ø 120 CM. 1980



ANDRÁS BECK: SWALLOWS.  
BRONZE, 20 × 21 CM. 1968

Ferenc Kovács



ZOLTÁN BORBEREKI KOVÁCS: 1952-2000  
HÁROUSZONYI BEC  
MAGYARORSZÁG  
TRIANGLES.  
SODALITE AND STAINLESS STEEL.  
42 × 36 × 23 CM





LÁSZLÓ LAKNER: WITHOUT TITLE, ACRYLIC,  
DUCO, CANVAS, 232 × 316 CM. 1981-82

*Ferenc Kovács*

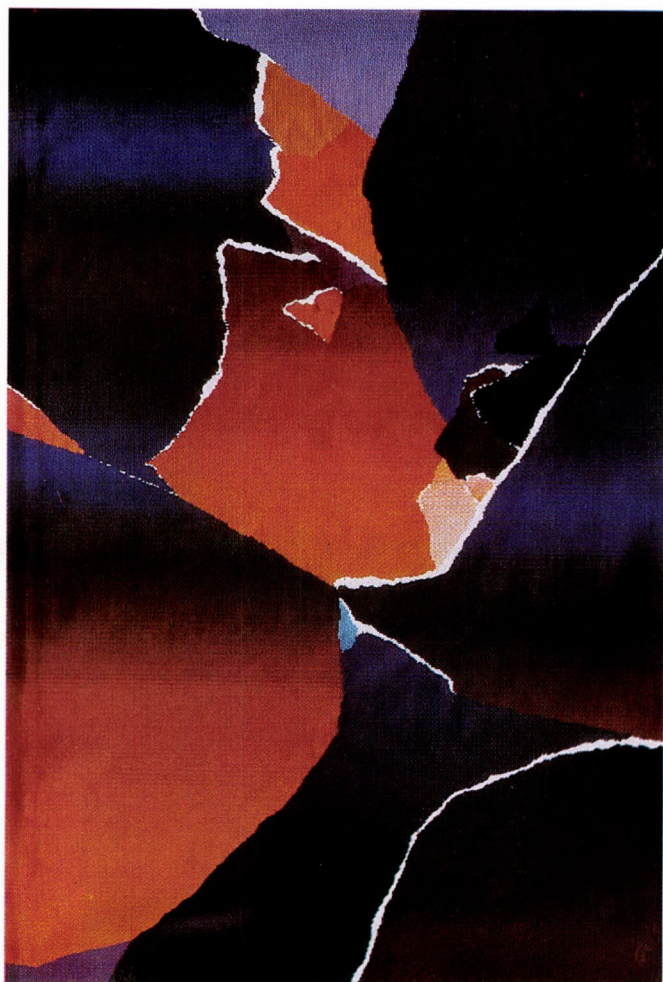


MIKLÓS SZUHODOVSZKY: "1919."  
OIL, FELT PEN ON GOLD PLATE  
52 × 57 CM. 1977

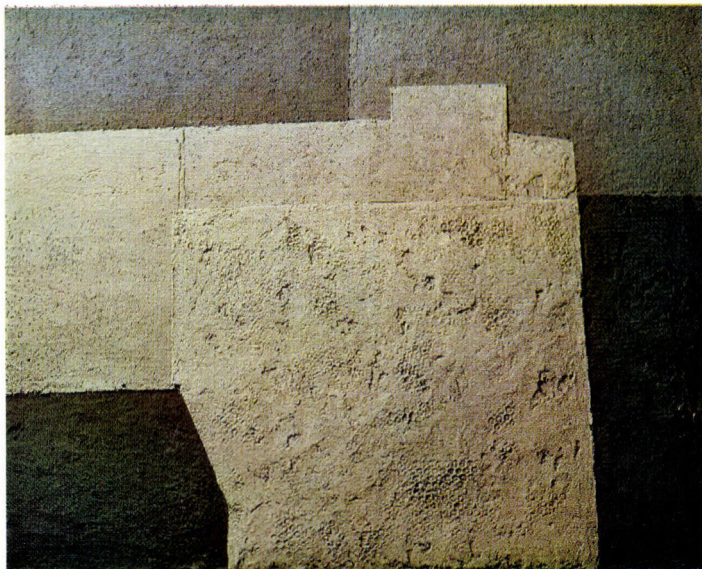
LAJOS TÜCHERT: BROKEN SURFACE  
TAPESTRY. 185 × 104 CM. 1975



RICHARD RAPAICH: PANNONIA. WOOL, GOBELIN.  
167 × 253 CM. 1978



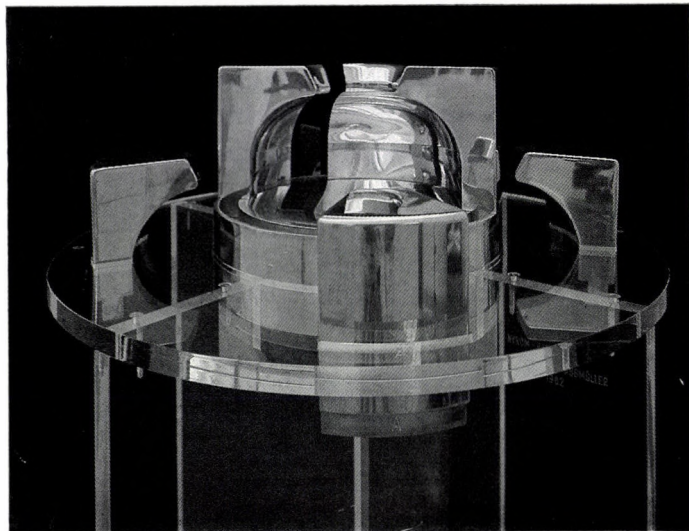




◀  
ANNA MARK:  
RELIEF. PLASTIC,  
130 × 97 CM. 1982

*Ferenc Kovács*

NYROM: STADIUM.  
ALUMINIUM, PLEXY.  
140 CM. 1971-78



JÓZSEF JAKOVITS:  
MOSES. BRONZE  
72 × 46 × 25 CM.  
1975-80

MARIKA SOMOGYI-HARMAT:  
WALLENBERG MEMORIAL MEDAL.  
BRONZE, 11 × 9 CM. 1982







ILONA BODÓ (FÁBIÁN):  
 HUSSARS ON PARADE  
 IN CHARLESTON.  
 ACRYLIC, 61 × 91,5 CM.  
 1979



▶  
 KÁROLY ROHONYI:  
 BERLIN,  
 ALEXANDERPLATZ.  
 COLLAGE, 42 × 55 CM.  
 1981



ÁKOS SZABÓ: HOLIDAY.  
 PASTEL, OIL,  
 60 × 73 CM. 1977

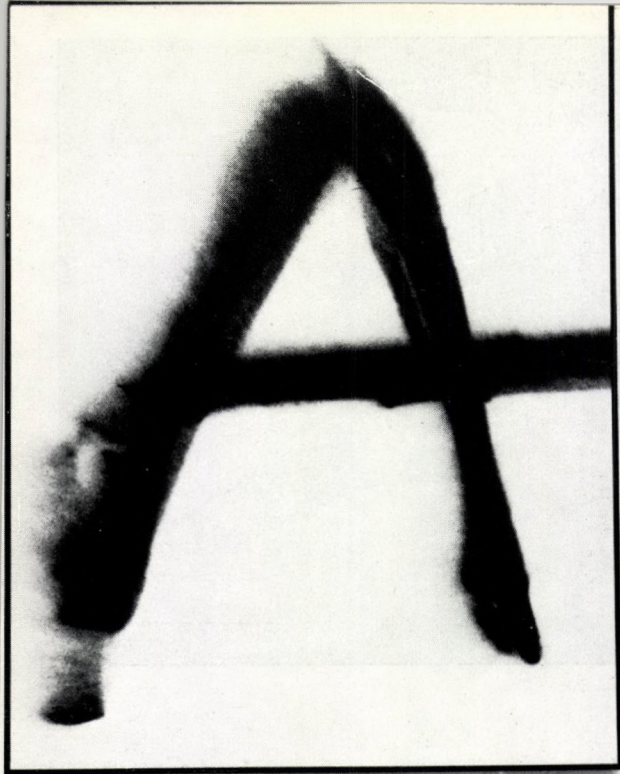


▶  
 ATTILA BÍRÓ: THE SOULS  
 IN THE FIRE  
 OIL, CANVAS, 195 × 195, 1977

*Ferenc Kovács*



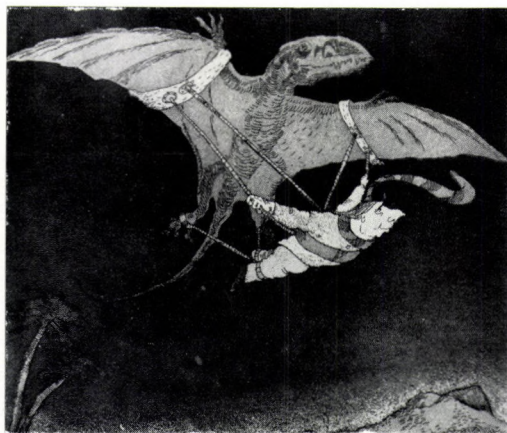




SZABOLCS SZILÁGYI: ART, 1982.  
MIXED TECHNIQUE. 166 × 100 CM

*Ferenc Kovács*

ANDREAS FLORIS: AT TWILIGHT.  
PEN AND WASH, 22 × 25.6 CM, 1976



ANDRÁS KARAKAS: SUMMERTIME. COPPER  
ENGRAVING, 53 × 39 CM. 1972







▲  
LUCIEN AIGNER: FRENCH  
SAILOR DANCING WITH  
A MIDINETTE ON QUATORZE  
JUILLET.  
40.5 × 50.05 CM. PHOTO

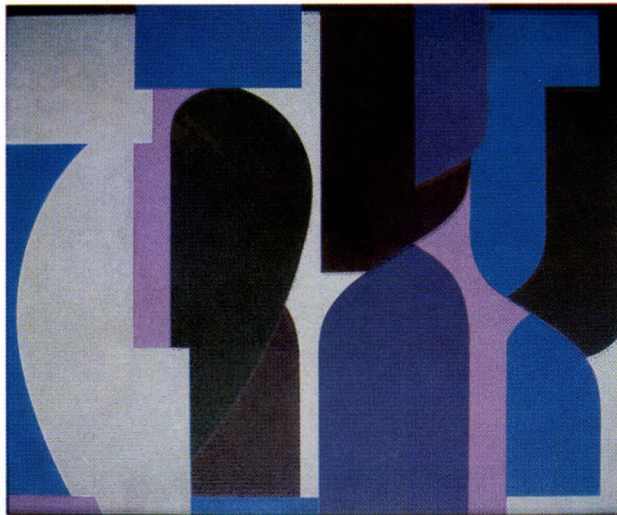


ANDRÁS KERTÉSZ: DOVES IN  
THE CONCRETE JUNGLE,  
1962. 24 × 18 CM. PHOTO



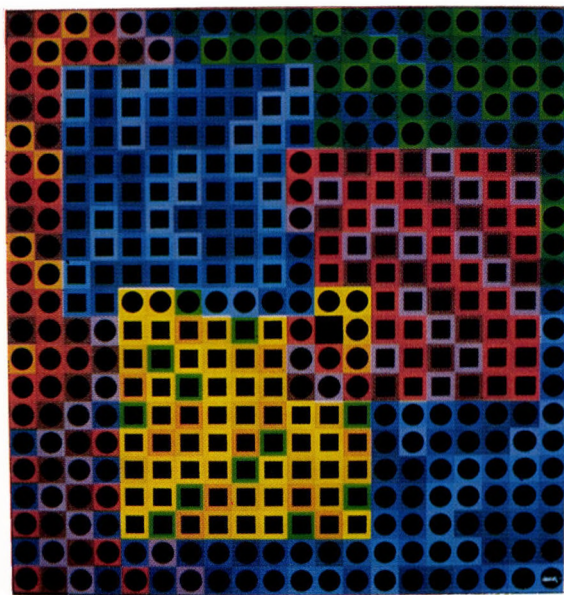


VICTOR VASARELY: THE HUMAN BEING. OIL, 1943



VICTOR VASARELY: AMIR. OIL, 1953

*Károly Kékesy*



VICTOR VASARELY:  
ORION NOIR. OIL, 1970



VICTOR VASARELY: SEXTANS. OIL. 1979





Lajos Gulácsy: THE BAR IN GIGI.  
PAPER, PENCIL. 126 × 76 MM



Lajos Gulácsy: HOUR OF DALLIANCE.  
PAPER, PENCIL, 166 × 120 MM

*István Petráš  
Courtesy Akos Vörösváry*

Lajos Gulácsy: ROMAN MOTHER AND  
DAUGHTER. PAPER, PENCIL, 198 × 138 MM

Lajos Gulácsy: VENETIAN GIRL. COLOUR  
PENCIL. 310 × 200 MM. 1915







LAJOS GULÁCSY: FLANEURS IN NA'CONXYPAN.  
PAPER, WATERCOLOUR AND INK. 112 × 92 CM

*Imre Jubbász*

◀ LAJOS GULÁCSY: ENGAGED COUPLE IN NA'CONXYPAN.  
PAPER, COLOUR PENCIL. 1903. 302 × 225 MM



finger's, features in every modern history of architecture. A meritorious master of post-modern trend in Switzerland is the architect Ferenc Füzesi, and among the architects should also be mentioned György Kepes, also known as a painter and aesthete. His better known works have also been published in Hungarian, a few decades after their American editions. Alexandre Trauner, an Oscar winner for his sets for many famous French and American films, also figures here.

Most of the photographers belong to the older generation, but are still fresh and active. This generation is well represented by Lucian Aigner, who lives in America, Pál Almásy from Paris, Juan Gyenes from Madrid, Ferenc Haár living in Honolulu, Lucien Hervé from Paris, the photographer of the third world, Ata Kando, André Kertész, a master of Paris and New York, and István Rácz, who can boast some 70 art albums, and who is said to have discovered with his photographs the art of Finland. (How much he has remained a Hungarian is borne out by his translation of *Kalevala*, the Finnish national epic into Hungarian—just by the way.) Of the younger generation and the newer technique of video, there is István Z. Gubás, who lives in Stockholm and photographs Japanese fencers.

A great many names have been passed over in this list: Zoltán Borberekí Kovács, who has moved to South Africa, made his name in Hungary, but he has become a truly good sculptor abroad, experimenting with new forms and materials. Marinka Dallos is a naïve artist living in Rome; some of the best of her work is in Hungarian museums. The world of the fairy-tale would not seem her fate, a cultivated lady and a noted literary translator as well; yet it springs from the depths of her being. Tibor Gáyor in Vienna, is to my knowledge, one of the wittiest Hungarian advocates of Minimal and Concept art. The aging Paris master, Sigismund Kolosvary, is a delicate, lyrical abstract painter, as is Árpád Szenes. Endre Nemes is in evidence among Sweden's significant

painters, while Lajos Szalay is considered an authority in American graphic art. The exhibits include a picture by Ákos Szabó, who cultivates a singular line of hyperrealism in Paris, and a spatial construction by János Megyik from Vienna, whose experiments are followed with close attention by young Hungarian artists. A dynamic painting using graffiti is the work of József Pecsenke, who with this suburban theme has in a certain sense remained faithful to his youth: he was a leading figure among the students of the School of Art and also among the rockers of the squares of Budapest.

We have not much to say here about Vasarely and Schoeffler, perhaps the two best-known Paris artists of Hungarian extraction. Both consider a region of Hungarian folk art as one of the important roots of their work—they are famous enough as they are and they have been the subjects of detailed analyses recently in these pages. The same holds for Amerigo Tot, who lives in Rome.

A list of absentees could be compiled at any exhibition of this type. The sculptor Étienne Beöthy and the painters Simon Hantai and Tibor Csernus—all three in Paris—for instance, were not represented. The absence of the great photographer Brassai may perhaps be explained by his recent ill health and seclusion. A young and gifted painter from Amsterdam, Zsóka Rektenwald, on the other hand, only featured in the catalogue. No wall could be found adequate to her large, expressive painting, and she preferred to withdraw it.

One of Amerigo Tot's new sculptures, *Homage to the Native Land*, provided the title for the exhibition. It presents those wooden grave-posts which in certain Hungarian regions act as the cross on a grave. I might be interpreting the work much too loosely, but it seems to me that it is also a homage on the part of Hungarians abroad to those who, despite their uncomprehending provincialism, have remained the citizens of a small and not exactly rich country.

ANDRÁS SZÉKELY



## VASARELY AT THE BUDAPEST MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

It has been almost fifteen years since Vasarely's works were first exhibited in Hungary. That 1969 retrospective by the Pécs-born artist was a great success. The interest aroused was not only due to the return of a world-renowned Hungarian artist, it centred on the abstract geometric compositions the like of which had rarely been seen before in the country's premier exhibition hall.

The situation has since radically changed. Op-art now belongs to the past, it has run its course. Non-representational paintings of all qualities and manners have proliferated in Hungarian exhibitions.

Vasarely is now known to at least as many Hungarians as Picasso is, books about him are published and sell out quickly. In Pécs itself a Vasarely Museum was founded in 1975. Yet, his reception is just as warm in 1982, his success the same. Thousands of people queued before the Museum of Fine Arts to see the collection which the artist, in a noble gesture, recently presented to the museum of his name to be established in the capital and which were being shown by the Museum of Fine Arts.

What lies behind this popularity?

An answer to this can only be found in Vasarely's art.

First of all let us make it clear that his secret is not vulgarity or commercialism. Vasarely does attach an immense role to the public: he has produced large runs of reproductions thereby making them relatively inexpensive, of quite a few of his works; he also says that painting must be freed from the closed space of the room and that his goal is a monumental art for the exterior of buildings. But he has never compromised on quality for the sake of profit or popularity. He does attach a great importance to promotion, without however mistaking it for creative work. Vasarely's name has become well-known through his works.

Nor did the show at the Museum of Fine Arts gain its distinction through externals. It was a very professional undertaking. Professional and spectacular are of course not opposites; those who have been to Aix-en-Provence and have seen the Vasarely Museum will know. There in the modern crystal building, among Vasarely's wall paintings and carpets several stories high, room has been made for documentation, for the presentation of the stages of his career. The viewer is given both a fascinating artistic experience and thorough knowledge.

The Budapest Museum of Fine Arts show was set up with similar goals in mind. One could hardly expect a miracle of these rather archaic rooms, but the decision to place the larger pictures in the spacious entry hall of the museum proved to be fortunate. The early works and the later experiments were on view in the small rooms, so after seeing them the visitor could survey the major works in a spectacular setting as the consummation of the *œuvre*.

Győző Vásárhelyi came to Budapest after he finished his secondary schooling. He worked as a clerk and in the evenings attended the private art school run by Artur Podolini-Volkmann. The handsome sketches—nude drawings—of this period show that the aspiring artist in his twenties had acquired excellent draughtsmanship. In 1928 he became a student at the art school run by the painter Sándor Bortnyik. A few years earlier Bortnyik had been to the Bauhaus and he organized the "Műhely" (literally Workshop) based on what he had seen there, and trained mainly graphic artists in the spirit of constructivist aesthetics.

Győző Vásárhelyi left Hungary in 1930. Like many who did so at the time, he was induced to leave by the misery of the international economic crisis and the oppressive intellectual atmosphere in Hungary of the



time. Soon he was in Paris, and to judge by his commercial advertisement artwork, he had profited from his studies with Bortnyik. The young artist, after only minimal training, comes up with imaginative and striking posters.

Yet he continued to consider himself a painter. Commercial artwork did not satisfy him, he did a lot of drawing and painting, primarily still lifes and landscapes. Here he was not guided by any kind of reminiscence, there is no question of Vasarely retreating and turning to the past as a reaction to the increasing problems of modern art. Even though the European avant-garde had come to an end around 1930, giving way to a kind of conservatism, Vasarely did not turn conservative. His works show an experimenting a searching man, one whose experiments were not as yet successful in the inauspicious intellectual climate.

However the op-artist already makes his appearance in these compositions of the thirties. The black-and-white squares of his checkerboard and the stripes of his zebra are not simply to faithfully record reality but are optical elements introducing playfulness and rhythm into the works. Vasarely was quite close to the solution, but did not realize that simply by freeing his compositions from naturalistic reference he would find the attractive kaleidoscope of pure geometry in front of him.

So he started again. He feels, as the pictures of the forties bear witness, that he needs a plainer language, purer elements, but he does not, nor cannot, find them after the close of classical constructivism. So he turns to natural shapes, to rocks principally, and out of these "pebbles" he creates increasingly simple and ethereal compositions. The way he fashions the contour of the pebbles, the way he unfolds them from their background makes it more and more obvious that each shape functions as a sign whose meaning can be brought out through confrontation with similar or differing formations.

We are now no more than a step away

from the mature Vasarely: the dazzling flashes of circles, squares, and triangles. The artist first created op-art in black and white. Only later did he introduce colours—the fiery reds, blues, greens, yellows. Where the constructivists created order out of simple geometrical shapes and prime colours, Vasarely created a system from delicate shades and the multiplicity of variations. This is his.

The most authoritative source is Vasarely himself. No one has more exactly described the character of his art, the relationship of this rational creative mechanism based on geometry to the natural world: "Once some university students visited my workshop, and their instructor found my pictures cold, mechanical. He considered my plastic units completely arbitrary. Then I asked him to follow me to the garden and I showed him the trees, the many kinds of leaves, and the statistical regularity of their position on the branches. I didn't need much time to convince him that there are series in nature, that it too plays with infinite combinations. My plastic units, the circles, squares multi-coloured diamond-shapes are on final analysis stars, atoms, cells, molecules, or if you like, grains of sand, pebbles, leaves, and flowers. I'm much closer to nature than the artist who paints a landscape, because I am inside it, penetrating to the level of its organization, its elemental structure."

At the Museum of Fine Arts show we can trace the emergence of circles and squares out of the amorphous shapes of the fifties, and the transformation of the delicate colour shades into compositions in which the colour values receive emphasis through contrasts and conversely their tints are made sensible through variations. A whole range of pictures produce the effect of cell plasma or even stars. More than that, we can sense Vasarely's intention to enrich the urban environment, through his decoration ideas and the chess-set designs.

The latter indicate the natural limits of Vasarely's undertaking. Not too many build-



ings were needed to prove that an entire city so decorated becomes unbearable. It produces kaleidoscopic vibrations which are impossible to live with. Nature has a calming, regenerative effect, whereas this world creates tension, it urges constant struggle.

Consequently we primarily value Vasa-

rely as a painter. He shows us the universe, which in our limited existence we cannot comprehend; as mortal earthlings we can at the most understand its laws, when the artist magically presents them before us.

JÓZSEF VADAS

## PENCIL-DRAWING ON PALM-SIZE CARDS

### *Lajos Gulácsy Centenary Exhibition at the Fészek Gallery*

Gyula Juhász, one of the most sensitive of the poets working around the turn of the century, and from 1909 a close friend of Lajos Gulácsy's, years later recalled the painter when he was in the mental hospital at Lipótmező: "When he was sitting in a coffee-house in the company of writers, artists, merchants, and bankers, he always had a polite smile, but didn't pay much attention to what was being said. His soul, imagination, desire were always wandering elsewhere, so they thought he couldn't hear very well, when in fact he was just very far from the world as it bustled by. . ."

Today, one hundred years after his birth and fifty after his death, the distance does not seem to have diminished between Gulácsy and the world which occasionally turned toward him. The eccentric painter dwelling in a "holy languishment" remains the same mysterious, ineffable figure as he was in his own time. Only the roles have been reversed: it is no longer the world displaying itself in front of the deaf Gulácsy, but rather Gulácsy's career and art offering itself to a deaf world. If and when it is given a chance. It only happens on rare occasions: in the post-war period there have been Gulácsy exhibitions in 1947, 1966, and 1973, and none of them can claim that through it or after it his art became an integral part of Hungarian artistic consciousness.

The exhibition at the Fészek Gallery in

Budapest is no more than a modest attempt—barely more than a gesture—to make up for this. Especially since a more puritanical presentation can hardly be imagined. The material exhibited (which comes from a private collection) is entirely composed of drawings, and thus inherently lacks the visionary use of colour in Gulácsy's paintings. In other words, what is missing is exactly that special ability the painter had to transpose his desires, moods, memories, and dreams into the dazzle of crimson walkers, blue-silver waves, the sway of rustling cypresses of golden shades, "the crumpled, apple-green silken carpet of the sky," the rain-coaked piles of fallen leaves in autumn gardens, the obscurity of monasteries with their crumbling, decaying red walls. In compensation, the drawings reveal a lot about the master of line, who in turn relied for expressive effect on the power of characterization of the single curve, on the sensitivity of hachure-shaded black-and-white transitions, on the poetry of line networks refined to a mere veil, on the gesture-like marks whirled on at a dizzy rate.

These time-defying, fine pencil drawings on palm-size cards, including the yellowed leaves of his Paduan notebook or the backs of contemporary postcards, look out at us with that mixture of tenderness and sovereignty Gulácsy found in Japanese drawings: "...we are faced with something so in-



finitely graceful and ethereal, which completely conceals the technique, leaving us to delight in a silken-thread-like vision hovering before our eyes!"

Looking at these masterpieces and at the contemporary photographs showing Gulácsy together with his mother, father, his fellow-students at the School of Design, his friends, or just him alone, the question we ask again, one asked so many times over the past decades, is who was Lajos Gulácsy after all, the painter played with by fate, almost totally misrepresented by the distortion of legend and the occasional misjudgment of connoisseurs?

His career, which unfolded at the turn of the century and followed an ascending course up to the First World War, broken only by his illness (he spent almost fifteen years up to his death in a mental institute), was unusual even for the age. He wanted to go to Italy rather than to Paris, the leading artistic centre, and found inspiration in the works of Giotto, Botticelli and Magnasco at a time when others were discovering West African sculpture. He also enthused over Watteau and the Pre-Raphaelites, dressed up as Saint Louis, improvised dramatic performances, played the piano in Renaissance costume and day-dreamed in Hamlet's had himself photographed in all of these guises, handing down these shattering documents of his longing for the past. His poetic imagination created a nowhere-land, Na'Conxypan, endowing its bizarre inhabitants with irregularities which often made him look comical to sober eyes. He did not join any artistic school or trend and was decidedly apart from the plein-air naturalism which was dominant in Hungary at the time. He was not interested in a formal or stylistic problem *per se*; his visionary pictures, featuring lovers, graveyards, Italian cityscapes, diaphanous women, figures in Rococo costumes, clowns, coffee-house interiors and always himself (often in the guise of a pierrot or abbot) refuse to fall into any kind of stylistic classification.

He drew his first artistic inspiration from

the work of the Pre-Raphaelites: their sentimentality, their cult of the Middle Ages, love for the romantic-neurotic dream-world evoked a strong response from him. He painted several variations on his favourite theme, the pale, meditative female figure who originates with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and also figured as a characteristic iconographic type in Art Nouveau painting. But he later divested this ethereal and demonic woman of her emblematic unambiguity, in order to have her multiply into the thousands of shades of "reminiscences, songs, visions, memories, vibrations," and open the way to investigating the inner life instead of the theatrical enigmas. Another unusual element was that the pierrot to him is not a role, but his very existence, since all his works depicting a clown or a fool are self-portraits. The guise, the costume, the mask do not conceal, but expose, as expressed by Oscar Wilde: "Man is least himself, when speaking in his own person. Give him a mask, and he'll tell the truth."

In his work, which is hard to divide into periods, he progressively freed himself of all influence. Towards the end of his creative career, tormented by his illness, he cut up and repainted several of his earlier paintings, and here in his tremendous visions even touched upon Surrealism. With certain restrictions we can speak of Pre-Raphaelite, Rococo, Surrealist periods, but they did not succeed each other in any logical consistency or clearly marked time-sequence. His manner of painting, subjects, vision followed the changes or fluctuations in the contents and intensity of his life experiences. He would paint Impressionistic woods and decorative, stylized garden scenes, or harmonious feminine figures and anxiety-producing, demonic visions at the same time. The absurd quality of the Surrealist outlook haunts his Rococo pictures, and in turn his Surrealistic paintings preserved memories of the playful delight of the Rococo world. This multiplicity was however organized around a conscious and consistent artistic outlook. This outlook



—obviously related to the painting of Gustave Moreau, Puvis de Chavannes, Gustav Klimt, or Odilon Redon, even the aesthetic ideas of Oscar Wilde—regarded the products of the imagination as a more substantial reality than the empirical, the common, the mere spectacle. In other words, Gulácsy—just like Oscar Wilde—recognized the art of the *dazzle*, the *illusion*, the *lie* as the only authentic one: “I have always considered my darlings more colourful and valuable than reality. I have been spoiled by the artistic vision. It has dazzled me, as a magician does his audience. It has done more than that, it has hypnotized me, I could have become Don Quixote had I been completely narcotized.—But I only experience the world in a half-dream. . . . With one eye I gaze upon the dazzle of sweet, lying visions, with the other I observe reality. . . . The Lie is often pale and false.—The artistic lie is colourful, meaningful, polished like the precious metals, like pure unalloyed gold.—The beautiful holy lies are great noble dreams which give value to reality, to life. . . .”

As regards the creed and the *œuvre* conceived out of it, the Gulácsy exhibition at the Fészek Gallery is complete and authentic. For the drawings encompass the whole area of Gulácsy's imagination from the “small detachment” of *Na'Conxypan*, that is the naïve, magical and droll manifestations of the fairy-tale and the fantastic to the dazzle

to the vision created with Surrealistic associations. From unambiguously to polyvalence. From existence caricatured and interpreted to the delights brought to life by his imagination, intensely present in their magnetic suggestivity. We do not however need to feel any sharp boundaries between them. For in this spacious world, the characters of the different realms walk freely in and out. The presence of the *Fiancées of Na'Conxypan* or the *Mayor of Na'Conxypan* is just as intimately natural here as that of the magically beautiful and enigmatic *Hortensia*, the *Roman Mother and Her Daughter*, the almost disembodied female figure of *Bar Gigi*, or the embracing figures in *Rendezvous*, welded together in raw sensuality. “The range of Gulácsy's inner impressions stretches infinitely,” and they take shape in his pictures as the heaving surges of refinement, of excitement and agitation. As he so suggestively put it himself: “reminiscences, songs, dazzles, memories, vibrations, which are sometimes completely removed from any lifelike state, at other times gain life from their purity, only to then flare up into the strongest sensuality, they hover in the abstract sphere of spacelessness only to fall into the voluptuous warmth of sensuality, penetrated by some satyric scream and a laughter from overfed lips.”

JUDIT SZABADI

## THE PRECISE SURREALISM OF ALBERT KOVÁTS

Albert Kováts first attracted attention with his paintings about twenty years ago; at that time he emphasized his attachment to the surrealist pictorial tradition as represented by Lajos Vajda.<sup>1</sup> His work evoked both Vajda's characteristic style in sensitive tracing and his forms and motifs. This in-

involved not only discipleship but a homage to, and a devoted study of, his chosen master. Through these paintings Kováts was well before art critics and historians in demonstrating that Vajda was very much alive and that there existed an almost untouched heritage in Hungarian art on which artists could, and should, draw.

Lajos Vajda and his friend and direct

<sup>1</sup> *NHQ* 73



successor, Endre Bálint,<sup>2</sup> have created a type of surrealism in Hungarian painting which is basically related to French surrealist art; however its motifs and system of reference are characteristically Hungarian. Their starting-point is also psychical reality, they too walk in the realm of dreams and fantasies, in an interior landscape. However, instead of the lightness and buoyancy, the impertinent and playful atmosphere of *épater le bourgeois* which characterized French surrealism, the Hungarian versions are filled with anguished visions, historical and national cataclysms, and folklore motifs transformed into symbols.

While Western European surrealism rose to the rarefied air of the higher strata and there managed to play freely and easily, surrealism in Eastern Europe is characterized by a high atmospheric pressure and an almost stifling density.

The most recent works of Albert Kováts were exhibited in October in the Helikon Gallery. From a few steps away his collages radiate an orderliness which is almost pedantic; if we step nearer we are struck by the peculiar character of this order as in some poems of Eliot where one feels both the civil servant's discipline and impishness lying underneath. The elements inside the frame are placed along the structural lines of another invisible frame: sometimes these lines are marked, sometimes only suggested. But despite this clear division in the composition, there are gaps that open here and there along the disciplined borders: we are on the edge of an abyss where our only handholds are the after-images of an imagined order. The forms in that organized and structured space are sometimes jagged, sometimes pedantically contoured, sometimes baroque: they come together into a composition through the straight line, the naked carrier of reason.

Space is lighter and airier in Kováts's collages than it is in the montages of Vajda or

Bálint. But the pressure remains high: neither the themes nor the technique allow for lightness and playfulness. One can try to view these collages as brilliant variations of form, something like the pictorial equivalents of musical études. But the works resist this way of seeing them: an example is the series *Walls* where one can follow exactly how the initially almost concrete wall-motif becomes a disjointed composition accelerating into a jabbering and increasingly ominous and frightening sight: *Walls 8X* is practically Kafkaesque. In this series Kováts shows also how one can make accurate and nuanced notes on a state of mind through pictorial elements which, at the same time, have also an autonomous formal value and a connection with memories of concrete objects.

As for the themes of these collages, this exhibition is mainly a show of the Ubu-mythology as recreated by Kováts. The Ubupictures do not only open into the terrible emptiness of the outside world but also, and chiefly, into the bottomless, and despite all psychological education, still unexplored reserves of darkness within man. The Ubupictures of Kováts are the meeting-place of the anguish of Kafka and the grin of the dadaist. Père Ubu has replaced Vajda's iconheads: a brutally and serenely stupid, infantile murderer steps before us from somewhere "behind the lines"; clown and murderer *en gros*. This is also an answer to the question about the future of a culture as symbolized by Vajda's icons. The *Ubu Self-Portrait* is, without doubt, the key work of the series: it is a psychoanalytical self-portrait where all layers are stripped until the emergence of naked death. Yet there is also a pipe-tobacco label: this Schwitters emblem is a counter-pole to courage facing the ultimate, a petty counter-point and mockery of the pathetic gesture, a self-ironic symbol of life's pleasures in slippers. This work is also a form of serious self-accusation since it accepts psychical kinship with the figure of Ubu.

There is a kind of theatricality which is

<sup>2</sup> NHQ 87



part of the essence of the collage. The materials utilized lend their own nature to the work in which they become the elements. So this deliberate change of this role, this usage of them in a way running counter to their "physique" or original meaning, allows another turn in the interpretation of the work and can give it a new dimension. Kováts utilizes this possibility in the *Ubu Self-Portrait* where a plant motif represents a skull and eye sockets, thus mingling life and death. Incidentally, Kováts takes engravings from books, black-and-white figurative motifs as did Max Ernst. But whereas Ernst used a particular engraving as a basis and inserted details from other engravings so as to shift the picture just a little from its original world, Kováts puts each motif separately into the picture-space and, like Vajda and Bálint, creates not only a system of re-

ference from those motifs but also an independent world. The special mood conveyed by his collages stems from his frequent use of biological motifs; the cells which appear again and again within different forms and shapes express concretely the anxiety which emanates from the Ubu-figure.

Some works in the exhibition, such as the *White Ubu* and *Ubu My Love*, seem to signal the future direction of the artist's work. His collages are becoming increasingly plastic and so the formal and plastic value of his motifs are becoming more important. But even these collages which are gradually turning into reliefs are characterized by their severe and disciplined composition. Starting from the tradition created by Vajda, Kováts has created an organized and precise surrealism of his own.

ÉVA FORGÁCS

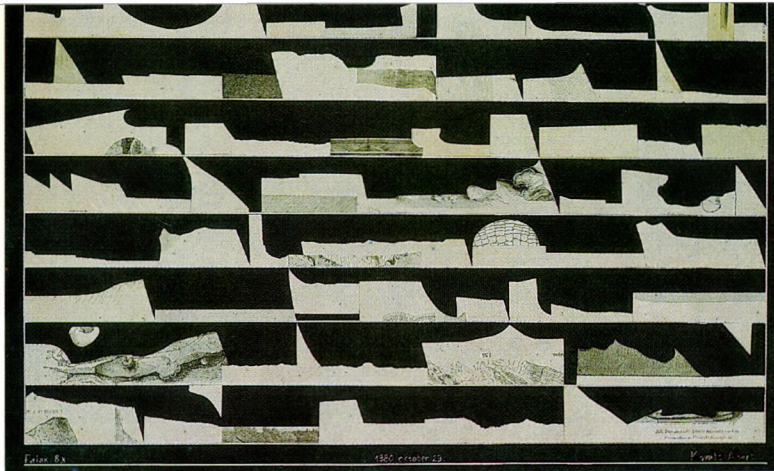
## FROM THE LAST SUPPER TO MR WATT'S MACHINE

*György Kemény, Gábor Pásztor, Tamás Fekete*

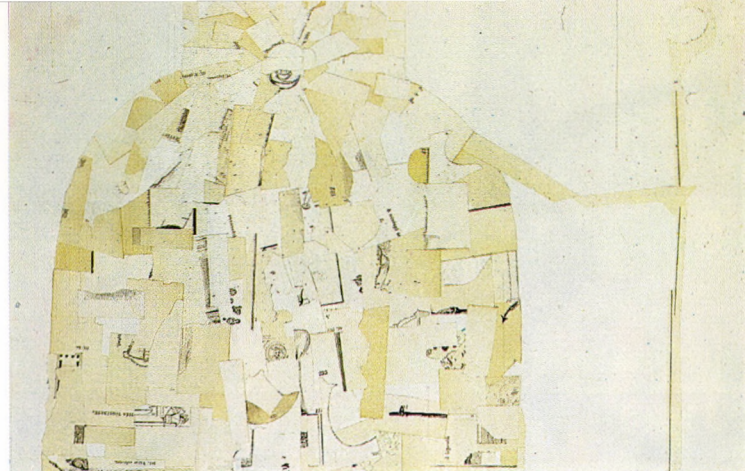
The visitors to György Kemény's exhibition, "The Last Supper," in the Small Dorottya utca Gallery are well manipulated in advance. In his catalogue the artist gives a detailed outline of the show's complicated plan and thus makes his reviewer's task easier. "The interior space is circularly enclosed by a black tableau; on top is a black quadratic lath-grid; various lamps and other electrical appliances are placed on this so as to convey something of the idea of a film—or rather tv-studio. On the far side of the hall stands a wooden table covered with white linen on which the Last Supper is laid out: white plates and cutlery, all thirteen places in a single row, with a large loaf of uncut bread in the centre. Thirteen wooden chairs are placed behind. The portraits, with the

exception of the one in the centre, are hung at head height to the people sitting at the table; the drawings are of twelve of my friends whose family or Christian names are identical to the names of the Apostles." This is how Kemény explains the intentions of his exhibition or, rather, Passion Play. The intentions have been achieved, indeed more than achieved. In the centre, in Christ's place, a tv-set has been set in line with the portraits of the Apostles; on the screen is sometimes a full view of the hall and sometimes the tv-programme being broadcast at the moment. However, if, in the middle of the hall we stand on a particular spot, the image is switched and suddenly our own image appears in Christ's place. If we walk away, the image disappears



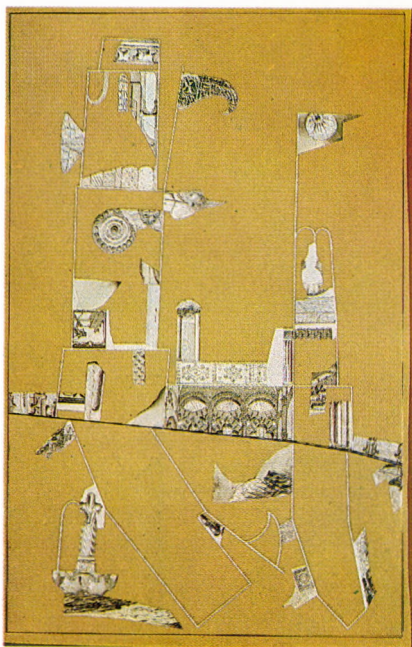


ALBERT KOVÁTS: WALLS x8. OCTOBER 29, 1980.  
30 × 40 CM



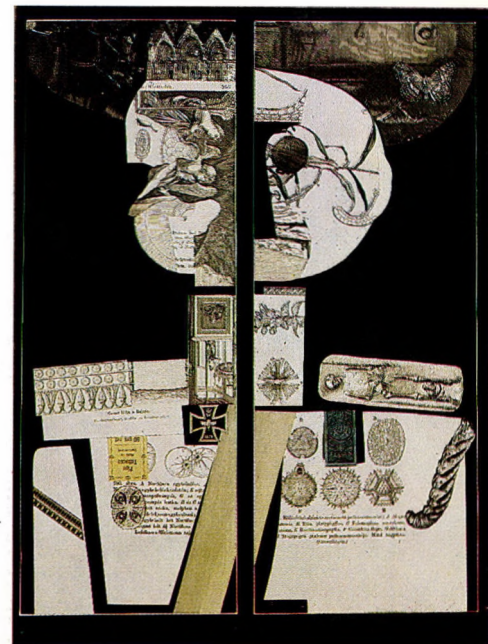
▲  
ALBERT KOVÁTS: THE WHITE UBU. JUNE 6, 1981.  
COLLAGE, 40 × 30 CM

*Ferenc Kovács*



ALBERT KOVÁTS: THE PALACE  
ONE FEBRUARY MORNING  
1981. COLLAGE. 48 × 31 CM

ALBERT KOVÁTS: UBU'S SELFPORTRAIT.  
JANUARY 1. 1981. COLLAGE, 40 × 30 CM ▶



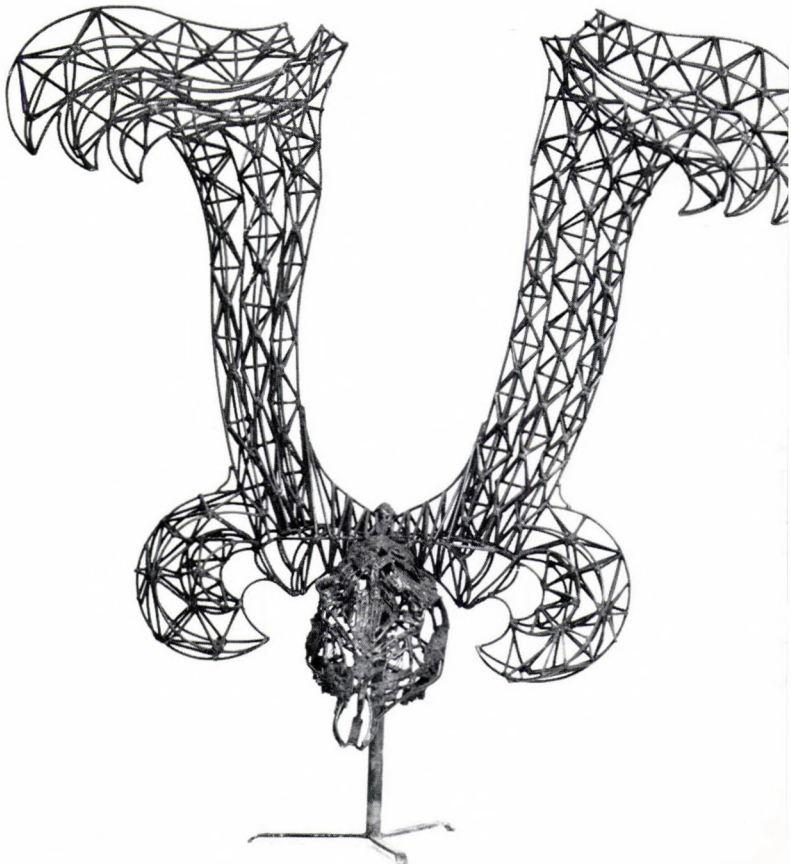




TAMÁS FEKETE: ISAAK BABEL.  
BRONZE. 35 CM. 1974.  
Courtesy Petőfi Literary Museum



TAMÁS FEKETE: OLD TRADE SIGN OF A GUNSMITH  
WOOD, BRONZE, RED COPPER,  
ACHAT 52 × 50 × 39 CM. 1982





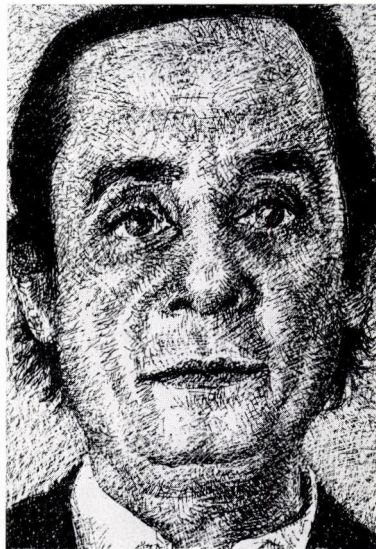
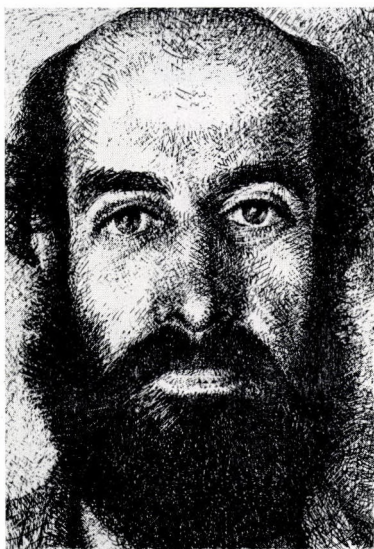
# AZ UTOLSO VACSORA



GYÖRGY KEMÉNY:  
THE LAST SUPPER.  
1982

*Imre Jubász*

THOMAS, JOHN,  
SIMON, MATTHEW,  
PHOTOGRAPHS  
OF PEN DRAWINGS

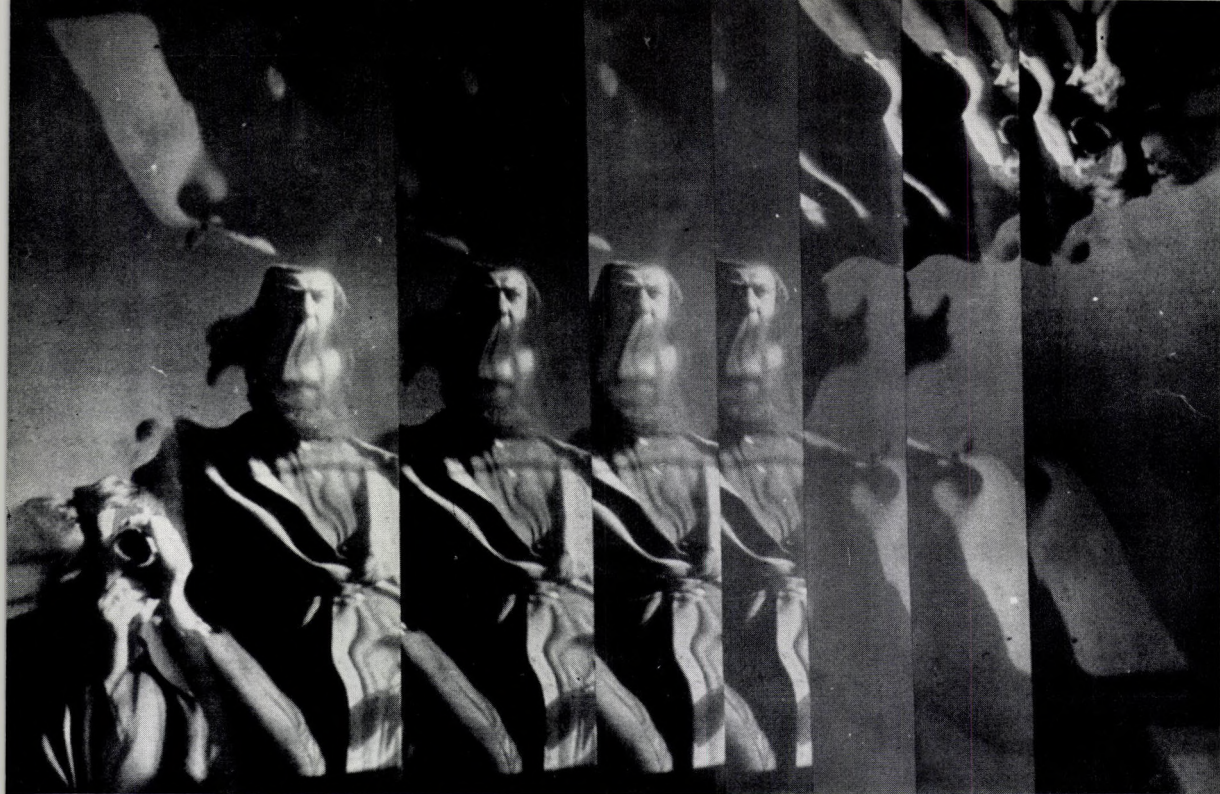


TAMÁS FEKETE: TROPHY.  
STEEL, 140 × 130 × 37 CM.  
1976

TAMÁS FEKETE: CRUCIFIX.  
WOOD, STEEL.  
160 × 60 × 47 CM. 1975







GÁBOR PÁSZTOR: VARIATION. MONTAGE, 55 × 75 CM. 1981

*Ferenc Kovács*

GÁBOR PÁSZTOR: STUDIO III. SERIGRAPHY,  
58 × 40 CM. 1981



GÁBOR PÁSZTOR: ILLUSTRATION FOR THE  
FAIRY TALE JEROME THE HERMIT CRAB  
BY ÁGNES NEMES NAGY. LITHOGRAPHY.  
44.5 × 32 CM. 1981





and an electronic show continues: blue and red light floods the hall, a white lamp flashes and music starts to play. Many other "requisites" are scattered here and there in the hall: "environment" ensembles, the actual accessories of meals, lunch and dinner, leftovers, potatoes, a food-vending machine with pretzels, cocoa-powder, sweets, and so.

In his self-designed catalogue the artist pampers us with information; his "Curriculum vitae" also provides his motives for this exhibition: childhood memories, "the festive family dinners at Easter, 'Pesach,' the celebration of the Seder"; he also recalls his school and collage years, his study tours as an adult and the unique personal impression made on him by Leonardo's *The Last Supper*.

This is more or less a summary of the artist's explanation: he tells us what he is exhibiting. But he still leaves something to critics and spectators since, although we can tick off the "what," we can still think about the "how?"

The table of "The Last Supper" is laid with the cover and table-ware used in third-class restaurants of Budapest: portraits of the twelve Apostles have been hung in a row above the settings: they are photo-enlargements of the identically sized original pen-and-ink drawings. I know that Kemény's draughtsmanship was legendary even in secondary school. For a long time now he has felt entitled to use this craftsmanship. In recent years he has evolved the pen-and-ink technique which has become virtually his trade-mark; indeed he has now even achieved the status of having followers. He favours the figure and the group compositions but he is also an excellent portraitist. His tracing, cross hatching, and shades, the thickening and thinning of his line are all perfect examples of pen-and-ink drawing yet there is not even a trace of the archaic in this. The portraits of the Apostles are pen-and-ink drawings all drawn in full face with a somewhat Byzantine and rigid frontality. Every Apostle is represented by a man

with an identical name; however the criterion for these figures was not only their name: their physiognomy, character, and age had to be suitable too. Kemény's preparations must have been rather like that of a casting film director when selecting the most suitable individual for this or that role. When he picked his twelve protagonists Kemény had to find individuals of totally different appearance and character to avoid monotony. (Incidentally, he has had the luck that beards are fashionable today.)

Kemény had invited the models for his apostles to varnishing-day: an impressive effect though, unfortunately, unrepeatable occurred when the living models were walking up and down in the exhibition hall.

"The Last Supper" is more than a graphic exhibition; it is also the building and positioning of the environments and the inscription over the heads of the Apostles. An excellent Leonardo reproduction bears the same inscription: "L'ultima cena." And on the illuminated window of a rather shabby food-vending machine Kemény has placed his own: "How Many Suppers?" Kemény has always been playful, even frivolous with everything. Many people will probably accuse him of making fun of one of the most tragic and majestic legends in Christianity. From another point of view, he could be accused of creating an anachronism in our enlightened age. Neither of these accusations merits our concern, the only thing that counts is Kemény's work, "The Last Supper." The artist sparkles, not only metaphorically but, because of his electronical devices, in the real sense of the word. We are submerged in the flood of ideas this exhibition contains and yet we come to realize even better that the idea, the joke, is nothing in itself, it is only a servant to the deep and deadly serious content of this openly allegorical *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

\*

The golden age of Hungarian reproductive graphics began some two decades ago



and has been linked in general to a single artist, Béla Kondor, who died young. Gábor Pásztor belongs to the second generation of this group: he is a master of the progresses of reproduction and a teacher in the Budapest Secondary School for Fine Arts. Graphic art is his life and mode of existence in the true sense of the word.

At his mini-exhibition in the Helikon Gallery there are lithographs, tint-drawings, and even paintings made with a very individual technique but his serigraphies created through photographic processes dominate the show. Experts and some fellow artists in the hall were asking why somebody who has such superb drawing skills has switched to photography? The answer seems to be simply—because.

His themes are his close environment, the studio and the graphic print workshop and a single figure which always keeps recurring: the artist himself. His method of work can be read clearly in the pictures themselves. There is nothing accidental, there is no room for contingencies in his work, all are strictly composed. In his self-portraits he has set the camera and asked somebody to shoot. His reproduction processes are untraceable. He inserts a film-thin copper plate, the way of handling the page makes it resemble a screen-plate. The object of the picture is usually the interior of a room with, eventually, a figure in it but by manipulating the copper plate he achieves an effect of melting away and spilling as if we would see the room, the figure through running water. The photo becomes more or less a vision, a delirious vision even, but even where the vision swamps everything we are aware of the sureness of composition which is one of Pásztor's main virtues. One would believe that such pages emerge with the contingency of monotypes but in this serigraphs nothing is accidental, countless copies could be made of them which would all be identical in value, drawing, and effect. Pásztor has allowed himself freedom only in colouring: indeed, as in the printing indu-

stry, the colours are added to the print with every "placing into the press." The English painter, Francis Bacon, comes to mind: but he has achieved this "flowing-off" effect with the traditional tools of painting whereas Pásztor uses a camera and a polygraph.

The three-part series Studio V/A, V/B, V/C may seem informal but the softening of the picture is entirely due to the distortion of the process. The three variations have three colours ranging from the green-toned page to the red. Variation is a series of multiple self-portraits set beside one another in longitudinally stretched vertical strips. Perhaps the best piece of the exhibition is the cycle Studio I-II-III which is built up step by step from the completely broken and flown-off page into a still informal but "readable" composition. The artist himself stands in the centre of the room, arms outstretched. The spectrum of this triptych ranges from warm to cold colours, from red to orange to green to blue in logical sequence.

\*

"The age of workshops containing a box of clay is a thing of the past"—said Tamás Fekete in an earlier interview. "A 8500 r.p.m. grinding machine is as important nowadays as the modelling tool was 50 years ago. The sculptor should have a workshop well equipped with machines and tools, he should have gas- and arc-welding apparatus, the slide-rule and pocket calculator should be his everyday instruments. The sculptor has to be a technical expert for producing works which are not just huddled together but technically perfect." This manifesto would hardly be interesting today were it not for the fact that Fekete—perhaps to compensate for being self-taught—is also a master of classical drawing, traditional modelling and even wood carving. He has never been and never will be an artist who wants to produce the new at any cost nor is he ever enigmatic. He follows objective truth with the utmost



accuracy, even pedantry in the manner of the Pop Art groups although he is more post-Pop or even a Pop-parodist. For one thing, he makes everything from noble materials. I could also call him a form-breaker of hyper-realism; this makes his pieces wry and even, hiddenly, grotesque. His appetite for modelling metals has increased: sometimes he works on a large scale, sometimes with the scrupulous care for detail that goldsmiths practice. I knew him and his problems at the beginning of his career: he started out as a painter and, if I remember correctly switched over to sculpture upon my advice. He has achieved the most difficult thing of all: to find himself. He has a passion for the world of technics: the requirements of the new sculpture happened to coincide with what he has been doing: so being up-to-date has come to him easily.

The collection of Fekete's recent work has been exhibited in the Cellar Gallery of Óbuda arranged in the eighteenth-century castle of the Zichy family. Metals dominate his material but he uses other materials too. Some of his works seem to me rather like genre paintings, resigned, sad, and gently ironical small plastic narratives. The *Picture in Frame* (1975) is a conventional still life, three-dimensional, in steel. The vertical, ornate, and empty picture frame encloses a horizontally turned dish, a plate with left-overs, a fork, a beer jug, cigarettes, matches, a bunch of keys. The trunk and branches of *The Boulevard Tree* (1972) are of copper, the four sides of its old-fashioned protective railing are covered in posters. Its twin is the copperplate *Wardrobe* (1972), a piece of petty-bourgeois furniture in which the end of a skirt is jammed in a closed wardrobe door. The *Signboard of a Gunsmith* (1982) displays an ornate wooden gun-stock and the other paraphernalia of a flintlock. I was

unable to guess whether they had been arranged from *objets trouvés* or made by the artist. Fekete assured me that he had made all the parts. *The Machine of Mr Watt* (1982) produces a pierced and filigree effect: it is a primitive steam engine fabricated from copper and wood. *The Small Lock* (1982), with its careful, precise execution and riveting, could well be a maquette in a technical museum. *To the Memory of Professor Bartók* (1981) could be an emblem of the composer's research into folk music at the beginning of the century: it is a copper version of Bartók's favourite instrument, the phonograph with wax cylinder.

Any of these can be enlarged; the possibility of raising their scale is inherent in them. The next two are a transition towards large sculpture: *Trophy* (1976) in the transposition of the vestiges of living beings into an abstract structure. The material is ordinary round iron; the wind almost blows through the transparent light-weight structure: it is ironic in its black, white, and grey colour effect. A similar light-weight framework surrounds the *Crucifix* (1979). This work is a paraphrase of the provincial Hungarian Baroque roadside crosses as the closing arc on top indicates; the corpus itself is in the quadratically cross-sectioned lattice system. The figure of Christ is traditional, carved from hard lime-wood: its presentation is not even expressive. The wood-carving represents also a counter-point shut into the prison of the modern, protected with iron bars.

The exhibition also gives us the works of Tamás Fekete as a classical sculptor through portraits of two writers, of István Örkény (1979) and István Vas (1972). Both are busts more in the tradition of verism than of Pop.

JÁNOS FRANK



# MUSICAL LIFE

ERNŐ LENDVAI

## KODÁLY METHOD—KODÁLY CONCEPTION

I have frequently discussed the question of whether relative solmization is a method or a conception? Is it suited to lead us *beyond* its educational purpose? If not, then its symbols proclaim their own emptiness. What is it that transforms the symbol into living material, the letter into explanation? Are we entitled to believe that a mere play with solmizing letters can be used to describe structure systems which traditional theory cannot cope with?

In discussing the musical "theory of relativity" we are almost compelled to refer to the theory of relativity in physics. The difference between the old and new concepts is described by Eddington, the astronomer, through an anecdote from *Through the Looking Glass*.

"Well, in *our* country—said Alice, still panting a little—you'd generally get to somewhere else—if you ran very fast for a long time, as we've been doing."

"A slow sort of country!—said the Red Queen. Now, *here*, you see, it takes all the running *you* can do, to keep in the same place."

If this is translated into musical terms: whereas classical harmony is bound to 7-degree diatony, the harmonic world of romantic music moves within the *closed* sphere of 12-degree chromaticism; accordingly the former reflects a static way of thinking, while the meaning of the latter is determined by the *relationship* of harmonies to one another. For within the closed sphere of the fifth-circle it is as impossible to speak of fixed points of support or "progress," as it is nonsensical to call the distance covered on a sphere (or a circle) progress. For this reason the late works of Verdi or Wagner have proved to be an

impregnable fortress to traditional theory: they stoutly resist all attempts at analysis.

Is it not characteristic that, on surveying analyses of Wagner's *Tristan*, the *simplest* solution to the theme of fatal love is one which supposes five (!) changes of key within the first eight melody-notes—and this without the fundamental keys themselves appearing?

A classical melody is easily described with the devices of the figured bass (that is, using degree-numbers and figures to indicate the arrangement of the chords). The use of the figured bass is derived from the diatonic system and is thus a completely unsuitable tool for the analysis of romantic music. The most typical romantic melodies exert their influence in quite a different manner! The sensory process undergone in our consciousness can be described in the following way. For each successive chord we instinctively seek an answer to the question: *which* is the chord that would follow according to the *natural* logic of music—and this we compare with the chord that in fact replaces it. The meaning of the chord will be determined by the *d i f f e r e n c e i n t e n s i o n* between the two.

The essence of this music is *relativity*: the system of potential differences between the tonal elements, which we may with total justification call the system of modal tensions. Various pedagogical disasters have led me to recognize that romantic harmony will remain the terra incognita of music theory unless it is approached through the devices of relativity. In Kodály's educational method of relative solmization a single note-symbol (the *ma* sign) is sufficient to make comprehensible the nature of the melody in question: see Ex. 12.



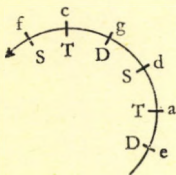
The symbol *ma*—and this is the essence of the method—carries a musical CHARACTER in itself. (If the reader is unfamiliar with the principles of the Kodály system, he is recommended to turn straight to the Appendix of this essay).

Kodály offers us a technique which covers all that one could wish an ideal theory to cover:

- (a) it is easily accessible to everyone—a grounding in musicology is not required,
- (b) it coincides with live experience: its codes are directly perceptible,
- (c) it is suitable for examining (and understanding) phenomena *comprehensively*, one may without exaggeration say that it opens up a whole musical universe,
- (d) and above all, it gives a true image not only of structure, but also of the *content* of music itself.

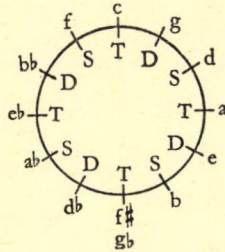
7-Degree system—12-degree system

In classical music, if we take C as the tonic, then the upper fifth-degree (G) represents the *dominant*, and the lower fifth-degree (F) the *subdominant*. As we know, the tonic C can be substituted by the relative sixth-degree (A); and in the same way, dominant G may be replaced by the third-degree (E), and subdominant F by the relative second-degree (D). Thus, in the fifth-sequence E—A—D—G—C—F a periodic repetition of the dominant—tonic—subdominant can be observed:



If we extend this periodicity over the entire circle of fifths, the outline of Bartók's

and Kodály's tonal system can be clearly seen:



I have called this system the **AXIS SYSTEM** because the most fundamental relationship is represented by the "pole—counterpole" relation: for example C and F#—facing each other in the fifth-circle. E.g. the theme of Bartók's *Allegro Barbaro* is the combination of the F# minor and C major chords.

Major triad—Minor triad

An analysis is justified only if it leads closer to the *content* of music and its authentic *interpretation*.

The symbols of relative solmization each designate a musical CHARACTER, and if we recognize which sign represents light or darkness, which is accompanied by a rise or a descent, which embodies a materialistic and which a spiritual experience, why the content of one is expressionistic and the other impressionistic; if, in other words, through the help of signs, we can differentiate between cold and warm colours, between positive and negative tension, if we know for example that the *fi* lifts high and the *ma* hides a painful feature—if we understand all of this then, with no more signs than is necessary to cover the tones of the chromatic scale, we shall have conquered something of the realm concealed behind the notes.



I suppose it was Verdi's *Otello* which made me realize that the basic concepts of our music theory (and even the elementary particles and atoms of classical harmony, such as the images of major and minor chords fixed in our minds) called for a reappraisal, a better approach, a new interpretation.

Let us set out from the D<sup>b</sup> major (C<sup>#</sup> in fact) triad which crowns the first act of *Otello*. Can we manage to apprehend the essence of the phenomenon if this chord is interpreted, on the basis of our classical knowledge, as a "major chord of degree I" (Ex. 1)?

Example 1 is a piano accompaniment for the phrase "Vien... Ve-ne-re splende etc." It is marked with a circled '1' and a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a harmonic accompaniment. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody begins with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more complex rhythmic pattern in the left hand.

In this case precisely the most important experience would be lost: the description of the unique *elevation* which causes the stars to light up at the end of the act ("Vien... Venere splende") and which raises the lovers into heaven.

menon, through simple means, a musician untrained in theory.

The relative solmization method can even initiate into the secret of this pheno-

The principal idea of the work, the *kiss theme*, into which the end of the act flows, leaves no doubt about the basic tonality. It takes place within the compass of the 4<sup>#</sup> E major and C<sup>#</sup> minor; then after a definitive cadence—with a few linking notes—it opens out in the C<sup>#</sup> major chord (Ex. 2.)!

Example 2 is a piano accompaniment for the phrase "Vien... Ve-ne-re splende etc." It is marked with a circled '2'. The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a harmonic accompaniment. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody begins with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more complex rhythmic pattern in the left hand. Solmization labels "do" and "di" are placed above the treble staff, with arrows pointing to the notes G4 and A4 respectively. A chord diagram is shown below the score, consisting of a treble clef staff with three chords: E major, C# minor, and C# major.



If the tonic E major is regarded as a *do-mi-so* chord and the C# minor as a *la-do-mi* chord, the C# major harmony will then necessitate a *la-di-mi* interpretation! The relative solmization makes a tangible distinction between the two kinds of *major* triad, the E and C#. The *do-mi-so* and *la-di-mi* triads represent quite dissimilar tonal qualities, different musical "characters."

Both are "major" chords but because of the *di* degree, the *la-di-mi* harmony is much brighter and more exalted than the simple major triad. This is what makes the stars vibrate, and arouses the feeling of emotional fulfilment.

The explosive impact of Otello's entry—the jubilant "Esultate"—also results from the fact that it expands the E major tonal sphere into C# major: a *la-di-mi* chord at the moment of the entrance!

In the course of the drama the *do*—→*di* change: E—→E# step will be the attendant symptom of Otello's excitement and agitation (I would venture to say: his "hyper-tony").

The difference of 3 key-signatures between E major and C# major denotes the same relation that has been called "axis tension" in the music of Bartók and Kodály.<sup>1</sup>

The famous "light-chord" in Haydn's *Creation* oratorio blazes up with the same *do*—→*di* rise! The meaning of

E♭ major is *do - mi - so*,  
 C minor is *la - do - mi*,  
 C major is *la - di - mi!*

(Ex. 3), what is more, Haydn doubles the

③

E♭ major

C minor

pp

ff

Light!

ff

C major

④

C → A

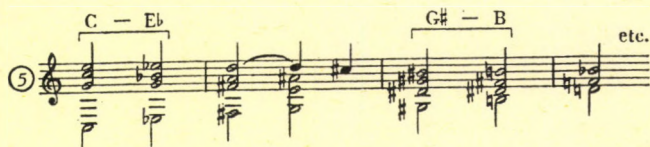
<sup>1</sup> See the diagram of the axis system: the poles of the individual axes show a difference of 3 (or 3 + 3 = 6) key-signatures.

effect, by another 3 sharp elevation swinging over from C major to A major (Ex. 4).



The question suggests itself: what happens in the case of a descent of 3-flat key-

signatures? For example, when C major is exchanged by E $\flat$  major (Ex. 5).

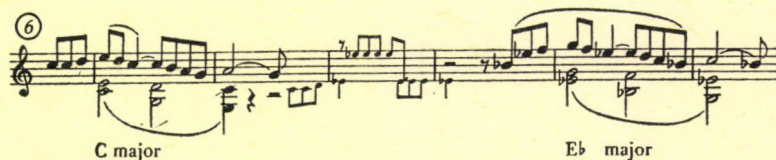


In this case *do* major is transformed into *ma* major (C major into E $\flat$  major). The character of the E $\flat$  major chord is determined by the *ma*-degree; thus the cited melody became the leitmotif of "dream" in Wagner's *Valkyrie*. (In bar 3 a similar change is

enacted.)

Also in Verdi's opera: in the Gilda-Rigoletto duet, the heart-rending effect of the melody is due to the *ma* major chord:

first C major = *do-mi-so*,  
then E $\flat$  major = *ma-so-ta*



(Ex. 6). The difference of 3 key-signatures between C major and E $\flat$  major expresses once more an "axis tension."

the hired assassin (in *Rigoletto*), is "pitch-black" because the F major tonality is eclipsed by A $\flat$  — *ma* major—at the entry of his refrain melody (Ex. 7).

The melody accompanying Sparafucile,



Or let us take a *minor* triad, for example, an E minor chord, and replace it by the key lying 3 signatures lower, that is, by G minor. If we consider E minor as a *la-do-mi* chord, the G minor will have a *do-ma-so* meaning, and its character will be determin-

ed by the sombre-sounding *ma* degree.

In Verdi's Requiem, the recapitulation of the "Dies irae" (in bar 573) makes a cruel impression because it leads, not into the expected E minor, but into G minor: *do-ma-so* chords (Ex. 8).





From all this we can draw the following:

If a triad (either major or minor triad) is placed a minor third degree lower, the *do* rises to *di*—and the sound becomes “brighter”. When the transposition is carried out in the opposite direction, the tone “darkens”, because the *mi* sinks to *ma* (for example in the case of a C major—E $\flat$  major change, or A minor—C minor change, the E note is modified to E $\flat$ ). The *do* → *di* change implies a rise of 3 sharps, the *mi* → *ma* change a descent of 3 flats.

An organic part of the cheerful atmosphere in the following episode from Kodály's *Dances of Marosszéki* is that the theme, recurring four times, moves by minor-third steps downwards (that is, in each case it rises by 3 key-signatures)—so that, in passing around the whole C $\sharp$ (D $\flat$ )—B $\flat$ —G—E axis, it becomes brighter and brighter (Ex. 9).

Example 9 consists of four measures of music. The first measure is labeled with a circled 9 and the key signature C $\sharp$ =D $\flat$ . The second measure is labeled with the key signature B $\flat$ . The third measure is labeled with the key signature G. The fourth measure is labeled with the key signature E. The notation shows a melodic line in the upper voice and a bass line in the lower voice, with various chords and intervals.

In the third act of *Falstaff*, at the end of the opening scene, Verdi uses the *do*—*di* effect to expand space into infinity. In every second chord the *do* of the previous chord is, as it were, transubstantiated into *di*. Thus

the E note of the first chord becomes E $\sharp$  in the second, the B note of the third chord becomes B $\sharp$  in the fourth, and so on (Ex. 10).

Example 10 shows a sequence of chords in a single melodic line. The chords are labeled as follows: E $7$  — C $\sharp 7$  — B $7$  — G $\sharp 7$  — F $\sharp 7$  — E $\flat 7$  — D $\flat 7$  — B $\flat 7$  — A $\flat 7$  — F $7$ . The notation shows a melodic line with various intervals and a bass line with chords.



Let us recall the fountain-scene from Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*. The love duet reaches its climax with an  $E\flat - C - A - F\sharp - E\flat$  harmonic progression; thus on every subsequent step the earlier *do* rises to *di*:

the *do* note of  $E\flat$  major becomes *di* ( $E$ ) in the second chord; the *do* of  $C$  major is followed by *di* ( $C\sharp$ ) in the next harmony, and so on (Ex. 11).

Example 11: Musical notation showing a piano accompaniment. The bass staff features a melodic line with notes  $E\flat$ ,  $C$ ,  $A$ ,  $F\sharp$ ,  $E\flat$ . Above the bass staff, chords are indicated:  $E\flat$ ,  $C^7$ , and  $A^7$ . The treble staff contains a complex melodic line with many sixteenth notes.

Example 12: Musical notation showing a piano accompaniment. The bass staff features a melodic line with notes  $G\flat$ ,  $E\flat$ . Above the bass staff, chords are indicated:  $G\flat 7$  and  $E\flat$ . The treble staff contains a complex melodic line with many sixteenth notes.

As opposed to this, the dark and disquieting effect of sequences moving upwards on a minor third ladder, was already well-known to the Romantic masters. The call to death tone at the beginning of the *Tristan*-prelude would certainly dissolve without this minor-third rise (4-4 bar sequence). In the "Liebestod" theme this process is only accelerated: the melody moves upwards through minor-third degrees — so that, in passing around the whole  $A\flat - B - D - F$  axis, it becomes darker and darker (Ex. 12).

Example 13: Musical notation showing a piano accompaniment. The bass staff features a melodic line with notes  $A\flat$ ,  $B$ ,  $D$ ,  $F$ ,  $A\flat$ . Above the bass staff, chords are indicated:  $A\flat$ ,  $B$ ,  $D$ ,  $F$ ,  $A\flat$ . Below the bass staff, there are labels:  $A\flat = do$ ,  $mi$ ,  $ma$ ,  $ma\ major$  ( $C\flat$ ), and  $ma\ major$  ( $C\flat$ ).

Major triads alone can also express mourning—provided the major chords rise by minor-third degrees, as in the peal of bells in Liszt's funeral music *R. Wagner, Venezia*:

$B\flat$  major— $D\flat$  major— $E$  major. (Ex. 13.) Thus in each succeeding harmony the place of the previous *mi* degree is taken over by the darker *ma*.



Example 13 is a piano accompaniment piece. It consists of two systems of music. The first system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The melody in the right hand features several triplet figures. The bass line also contains triplet patterns. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is present. The second system continues the piece, with a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking in the right hand. The key signature changes to two flats (Db) and then to one flat (E). The piece concludes with the word "etc." in the right hand.

The direct opposition of the two kinds of sequence is particularly effective, as in the case of Kodály's *Dances of Marosszéki*. The refrain-melody acquires a fervently passionate or a triumphant character according to which

colouring element gains the upper hand: the triad a minor third higher (on the first appearance of the theme), or a minor third lower (on the last appearance of the theme) (Ex. 14).

Example 14 illustrates the concept of triad colouring. It features a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (bass clef). The vocal line has a melodic motif that is repeated. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and rhythmic patterns. Dynamic markings include *f* and *ff*. Chord diagrams are provided below the piano part, showing the progression from B-d to C# and from b to G#.

Or let us turn to Verdi, the master of jokes. In the ironic play of the Falstaff-Alice duet, "You will be my Lady and I will be your Lord!", the word *Lady* is accompanied by a descent of 3 key-signatures (G ma-

ior—Bb major change: *mi* → *ma* effect), the word *Lord* by a rise of 3 key-signatures (F major—D major change: *do* → *di* effect) (Ex. 15).



mia Lady                      tuo Lord!

G                      B<sup>b</sup>                      F<sup>7</sup>                      D<sup>7</sup>

*Polar chords (di+ma tension)*

On an elementary level, then, two keywords govern romantic harmony: *di* and *ma*. However, the most characteristic axis tension is realized through *polarity*, in the relation of the farthest keys: in the distance of 3 + 3, that is, 6 key-signatures (e.g. in the connection of A major and E<sup>b</sup> major – or A major and C minor).

It follows from the above that a polar tension-character can be brought about by modifying *do* to *di* and, *simultaneously*, *mi* to *ma*.

Let us take the simplest relation: C major and its relative A minor (Ex. 16).

(16)

C major    A minor

If we replace *mi* by *ma* in the C major chord, and *do* by *di* in the A minor chord, the result will be a *do-ma-so* and a *la-di-mi* triad (Ex. 17).

do-ma-so    la-di-mi

(17)

C minor    A major

The difference between the 3 flats of C minor and the 3 sharps of A major is 6 key-signatures.

Tristan's death-motif is, in fact, a realisation of this polar idea:

half-close: A major = *la-di-mi*  
full-close: C minor = *do-ma-so* (Ex. 18).

(18)

A major                                      C minor

In Bach's *St. John Passion*, the contrast between the soldiers and the Virgin Mary is depicted by D minor and B major harmonies: dark *do-ma-so* and bright *la-di-mi* chords.

As B major appears the scene is suffused by an almost celestial light: "and at the cross of Jesus stood his mother . . ." (Ex. 19).



19 ... die Kriegesknechte. Es stund aber ...

D minor B major!

At the moment of Otello's suicide, this order is reversed: the *la-di-mi* appears first, then, with a sudden fall of 6 key-signatures, the *do-ma-so* chord (D major and F minor)

20 trb.

D major F minor

But let us return to the relative C major and A minor keys (Ex. 21),

21

C a

and modify *do* to *di* and *mi* to *ma*! The chord thus created condenses the  $A^7$  and  $E\flat^7$  chords polarly: tritonic relationship<sup>2</sup> (Ex. 22).

22

di ma

$A^7 - E\flat^7$

Our next example is the appearance of *Parsifal* in the flower-garden scene. The basic tonality is represented by C major and the relative A minor (C-E-G and A-C-E). If we replace *do* by *di* and *mi* by *ma*, the continuation of the theme: the  $A-E\flat-G-C\sharp$  polar formula will then automatically spring from the  $C \rightarrow C\sharp$  (*do - di*) and  $E \rightarrow E\flat$  (*mi - ma*) steps (Ex. 23), again combining  $A^7$  ( $A-C\sharp-G$ ) with  $E\flat^7$  ( $E\flat-G-C\sharp=D\flat$ ).

This polar character is demonstrated with an almost sensuous force by Ex. 24. At the beginning of Act III, Desdemona and Otello greet each other: Desdemona is still unsuspecting, but Otello is already tormented by the thorn of jealousy. In

23

do-di mi-ma

<sup>2</sup> The extreme points of the fifth-circle: see diagram of the axis system.



keeping with this, Desdemona stays harmoniously within the sphere of the tonic E major—C# minor, while the same

melody suffers a polar distortion by Otello: he deforms the *do* to *di* and the *mi* to *ma* (E → E# and G# → G turn) (Ex. 24).

DESDEMONA

OTELLO

do → di

mi → ma

Not only Otello, Jago also has his “Esultate”—in an exposed passage of the Credo. If Otello were to sing the Credo, a C major

tonic would follow after the dominant G seventh (Ex. 25).

(25)

G<sup>7</sup> C

Jago, however, produces *di* and *ma* (C# and E $\flat$ ) instead of *do* and *mi*—consequently we hear the “E $\flat$  seventh chord” instead of the expected C major (Ex. 26).

The polar effect is intensified by the fact that *di* and *ma* appear in the extreme (the lowest and the highest) parts. Bartók uses it in the same manner!

(26)

ma

di

E $\flat$ 7

It was actually two “F minor” examples which set off the train of thought in this study. I was at a loss for a long time as to why Verdi noted the 12 bell-strokes in the night-scene of *Falstaff* with 4 flat signs,

that is, in F minor key. To our great surprise, there is not a single F minor chord to be found: the recurring tonic is represented by *F major* chords! The mode of writing makes it perceptible that Verdi



had in mind not the usual *do-mi-so* major triad, but a "sharper" variant of this: the *la-di-mi* formula.

In the Credo of *Otello* the author makes use of a double "twist". The episode is embedded in F major (the powerful F

major cadence and the harmonization of the theme also indeed suggest an F major tonality), and the infernal impulses hidden in the episode are revealed precisely through the polar charge of the theme: through degrees *di* and *ma* (Ex. 27)!

Example 27: Musical notation for piano accompaniment. The first measure is labeled 'do-di' and the second measure is labeled 'ma'. The notation shows complex chordal structures with various accidentals and dynamics.

Without precedents of this sort it would be hard to understand how the combined use of *do-di* and *mi-ma* became regular in Bartók's and Kodály's music—as we can see for instance from the *Marcia* theme of Bartók's Sixth String Quartet (Ex. 28).

Example 28: Musical notation for piano accompaniment. The first measure is labeled 'mi ma' and the second measure is labeled 'di do'. The notation shows a melodic line with a double bar line and a fermata.

And finally, we must mention the "reciprocal" case of the polar *di+ma* tension. Let us take a D major and F<sup>7</sup> chord as an example. The meeting of the two

results in a polar effect—as the *do-mi* (D—F<sup>#</sup>) notes of the first chord become *di-ma* (D<sup>#</sup> = E $\flat$  and F) notes in the second chord (Ex. 29).

Example 29: Musical notation for a single melodic line. The notes are labeled 'do', 'di', and 'ma'. The notation shows a chromatic shift from D to D# and then to E-flat.

A reverse effect can be created when the two chords are interchanged: in this case the chord bearing polar tension is followed by a sudden *resolution*. In the revolution scene of Verdi's *Don Carlos*, the distorted situation is solved by an F<sup>7</sup> → D major turn: the forbidding figure of the Grand Inquisitor towers above the crowd and with a single gesture forces the rebels to their knees. The effect speaks for itself (Ex. 30).

Example 30: Musical notation for piano accompaniment. The first measure is labeled 'di ma'. The notation includes dynamic markings 'ff' and 'pp' and a fermata.

This motif recurs time and again in the tonal dramatic structure of *Falstaff*, especially when something which was so far

veiled in mist comes suddenly to light! Beethoven also favoured this effect, as in the Seventh Symphony (Ex. 30/a).



30a  
 ff  
 G<sup>7</sup>      di      do  
 ma      mi      E

## Function

These relations are also valid for the other two functions: the *dominant* and the *subdominant*.

What is the role of *di* and *ma* (C<sup>#</sup> and E $\flat$ ) as compared to the tonic C major? It is the role of notes G<sup>#</sup> and B $\flat$  as compared to the dominant G major (applying relative solmization itself in a relative way, the "di" and "ma" of G major).

The tonality of the episode cited from *Otello* is G major: Verdi makes this the goal of the form (see end of Ex. 31). The *dominant preparation* of this chord plays an ambiguous role in the drama—thus the dominant itself becomes ambiguous. The *D major* dominant seventh changes its meaning according to whether its basic note (D) is raised to D<sup>#</sup> on the model of *do* → *di* step, or its major third (F<sup>#</sup>) is lowered to F on the model of *mi* → *ma* step. (Ex. 31).

31      etc.  
 ff  
 F major      ma      d minor      F major      b subminor      di      D beta      B<sup>7</sup>  
 TONIC  
 [d<sup>#</sup> = e $\flat$ ]  
 pp con eleganza  
 D<sup>7</sup>      D      G

The same rule applies to the subdominant function as well. The 12 bell-strokes from the night-scene of Verdi's *Falstaff* serves as a model example. By subjecting the subdominant IV degree (B $\flat$ -D-F) to a similar modification, that is, raising its basic note and lowering its major third,

the B $\flat$  becomes B, and  
 the D becomes D $\flat$ .

Therefore, if in the subdominant IV and II degree chords (B $\flat$  major + G minor) the

B $\flat$  is changed to B, we will get G major seventh harmony; if note D is changed to D $\flat$ , then G subminor,<sup>3</sup> B $\flat$  minor or D $\flat$  major harmonies arise. All the permutations are exhausted by Verdi<sup>4</sup> (Ex. 32).

It appears from the diagram of the axis system (p. 163) that—in the case of C

<sup>3</sup> Subminor: diminished triad with minor seventh (G - B flat - D flat - F).

<sup>4</sup> As the F note of the bell remains unchanged in each chord, only tonic and subdominant harmonies are to be found—because the dominant of F does not contain the F note.



tonality—a DOMINANT—→ TONIC cadence can assume the following forms:

DOMINANT	TONIC
G <sup>7</sup> —————→	C
B $\flat$ <sup>7</sup> —————→	C
E <sup>7</sup> —————→	C
D $\flat$ <sup>7</sup> —————→	C

(1) The fourth step upwards corresponds to the classical V—I cadence (G<sup>7</sup>—→ C).

(2) The major second step upwards (B $\flat$ <sup>7</sup>—→ C) is a typical *modal* dominant cadence (it is, in reality, a characteristic of the Mixolydian mode and quite familiar in folk-music).

(3) The III. degree dominant (E<sup>7</sup>—→ C) became current among the romantics.

(4) The minor second step downwards (D $\flat$ <sup>7</sup>—→ C)—by its peculiar colouring—is

called the *Phrygian* dominant (because of the frequency of its occurrence in Kodály's music, it might also be called the "Kodály dominant").

Theoretically, the four forms of resolution can readily be traced back to the structure of the axis system. The clue to the *individual* character of each form of resolution again lies, however, in Kodály's relative solmization method.

Let us begin with the "modal" dominant:

$$B\flat^7 \longrightarrow C$$

After the dominant B $\flat$  major seventh we would expect an E $\flat$  major tonic—and if (instead of E $\flat$ ) C major surprisingly emerges, this means that the place of the expected *do* basic note (E $\flat$ ) has been occupied by *di* (note E)! The tonic has accordingly become sharpened and more elevated (Ex. 33).

In Act I of *Otello*, the Jago-Roderigo dialogue becomes more and more tense due to the use of *modal dominants*. Not only is the C major introduced with B $\flat$  major, but the B $\flat$  major is also prepared for by its modal

dominant (A $\flat$  major)—and the same happens to A $\flat$  major, its modal dominant being G $\flat$  major (Fig. 34). Thus in each subsequent chord, instead of *do*, *di* comes; this is in perfect harmony with the text,



which speaks of ranks (of the difference between the envied captaincy and the subaltern rank of ensign); it is as though Jago

were standing on tiptoe, the words "mio!" are amplified by the *di* degrees (Ex. 34).

34

capi - ta - no u - sur - pa il grado mio, il gra - do mio!

G<sup>b</sup> → A<sup>7</sup> → B<sup>b</sup>7 → C<sup>7</sup>

The final stanza of Falstaff's love-letter is activated by a similar sequence: the effusions of the knight take wing through

a modal dominant—tonic sequence (E → F# → G#): "Sic itur ad astra!" (Ex. 35).

35 *dolciss.*

con 8.

E → F# → G#

The inverse procedure of the modal dominant is the III. degree dominant (major third step downwards):

the dominant E seventh chord is succeeded not by the usual A major (*do-mi-so*), but by C major: *ma* major chord (Ex. 36).

E<sup>7</sup> → C

36

replaced by

E<sup>7</sup> → A

E<sup>7</sup> → C

ma

At the deepest point of *Otello*, the end of Act III, the impact of the *E major—C major* close is the more shocking since the place

of the expected *mi* degree is taken by *ma*: C note (Ex. 37).

37

ff

[cb = b]  
[ab = g#]

c Ab c Ab c C<sup>7</sup> C E C



This is the reason why the III—I cadence is so heavily laden with death-symbolism. In *Il Trovatore* for example, it appears when Leonora admits she is ready to die (III. degree G major followed by E $\flat$  tonic) (Ex. 38),

38 Andante

G → E $\flat$

and in *Traviata* when Violetta is seized by a presentiment of death (Ex. 39).

39 pppp

D $\flat$  → A

Isolde's death is accompanied by a whole chain of III—I cadences<sup>5</sup>:

- G<sup>7</sup> → E $\flat$
- B $\flat$ <sup>7</sup> → F $\sharp$
- C $\sharp$ <sup>7</sup> → A
- E<sup>7</sup> → C

40 (outline)

C<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> → E $\flat$  B $\flat$  7 → F $\sharp$  C $\sharp$  7 → A

C $\sharp$  7 → A E<sup>7</sup> → C

When Wotan in Act II of *The Valkyrie* prophesies the twilight of the gods, the words "Das Ende! Das Ende!" are accompanied by a III—I cadence (E<sup>7</sup> → C)

<sup>5</sup> The keys follow each other in axis order: E flat — F sharp — A — C.



Das En - - - de! Das En - - - de!

E major → C minor

Falstaff's monologue on honour presents the same effect from an absurd and anomalous side: his big bluff is accompanied by a

III—I cadence: B dominant seventh followed by G major tonic (Ex. 42).

42 *Bel costrutto!*

B7 → G

The III—I cadence may also figure as an onomatopoeic "colouring" element. At the start of the second scene in Act II, Mistress Quickly attempts to imitate: to parody Falstaff's deep, full-throated voice. The

change of tone occurs through a III—I cadence: E<sup>7</sup>—C. Thus instead of the expected A major (*do-mi-so*) tonic, the "tubby" *ma* major (C major) tonic is heard (Ex. 43).

43

E<sup>7</sup> → C

In Haydn's *Creation* oratorio, the III—I cadence colours "height" and "depth":

*D* major — "With flying mane and fiery look springs the noble steed!"  
*A* major — "The cattle in herds seeks his food on fields and meadow's green."

Besides death-symbolism, the III—I cadence has acquired a peculiar spiritual content, too. In Verdi's *Aida*, for example, it accompanies the sacrificial actions, the ritual (non-human) ceremonies of the priests (Ex. 44).

44

C# major → A major etc.



In short, the modal dominant—tonic cadence has a *positive* meaning, while the III—I cadence gives a *negative* impression.

From the above it follows that a contrary effect can be attained if the *same* key has been prepared for, by the lower major second degree (modal dominant), or the upper major third degree. Two B $\flat$  major themes from Verdi's *Masked Ball* suggest

themselves here—the first introduced by an A $\flat$  major, the other by a D major dominant. Renato's first aria is the manifestation of a friend's love and devotion. But the very same B $\flat$  major key, following right after the dramatic turn: at the exposure of Amelia in the second act, has an infernal impact and expresses scathing sarcasm (Ex. 45).

45

Andante

Renato

Andante mosso

Ab —————> Bb

D —————> Bb

di

ma

moglie, sua mo-glie! A-me-lia!

In the first case, instead of a D $\flat$  major tonic (D $\flat$  = do) a B $\flat$  major tonic appears—that is, a *la-di-mi* tonality (Ex. 46). In the second case, instead of the expected

G major tonic (G = do) a B $\flat$  major tonic is introduced, that is, a *ma-so-ta* chord (Ex. 47).

46

do

is replaced by

di

Ab<sup>7</sup> —————> Bb<sup>7</sup>

47

is replaced by

ma

D<sup>7</sup> —————> Bb<sup>7</sup>

The modal dominant carries a "positive"—and the III. degree dominant a "negative" meaning only if the dominant chord is followed by a tonic resolution.

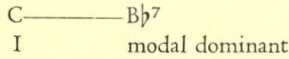
If the dominant and tonic chords are exchanged their meaning will also be reversed! In the case of the I—III turn:

C —————> E<sup>7</sup>  
I III

the E<sup>7</sup> will be related to the A major key—which lies 3 sharps higher than C major. Thus the III. degree will produce the effect of ascent (a "light" effect—*chiaro*).



On the other hand, in the case of the modal dominant following upon the tonic I. degree:



the B $\flat$ 7 will be related to the E $\flat$  major

key—which lies 3 flats lower than C major. The modal dominant will thus produce the effect of descent (a “shadow” effect—*oscuro*).

Here are some examples for both. The lofty effect of the *Aida* theme is due to the fact that the tonic is succeeded by a III. degree dominant (Ex. 48).

tonality: D major

In contrast to this, the dramatic turning point in *Rigoletto*, the blast of “La sua figlia!”, is evoked by a modal dominant,

subsequent to the tonic: F tonic and then E $\flat$  major dominant (Ex. 49).

tonality: F major

F ——— E $\flat$

Generally, the tonic—modal dominant change indicates a *passionate* turning-point

in the form (Ex. 50).

50

tonic                    modal dominant

It is no mere chance that the tonic—modal dominant turn becomes the leitmotif for consternation (stupefaction and recoiling) in Verdi’s *Falstaff*.

We still owe the interpretation of the Phrygian dominant (minor-second step downwards), for example D $\flat$ 7 ———> C.

In the “Phrygian dominant” (i.e. downward-moving minor second step), just as in the classical V $\flat$ —I cadence, the “leading”

role is played by the so-called sensitive notes *ti* and *fa*: the leading note *ti* pulls towards the root (*do*), and the *fa* towards the *mi* (Ex. 51).

51

D $\flat$ 7 —> C



These sensitive notes *ti* and *fa*, as we know, halve the octave; therefore they are interchangeable—without any change in their relationship; degrees *ti* and *fa* are common notes in both the V. degree domi-

nant and in the Phrygian dominant. In Kodály's *Háry János*, an interesting combination of the traditional dominant (G<sup>7</sup>) and the Phrygian dominant (D<sup>b</sup>7) can be observed (Ex. 52).

Example 52 shows a piano score with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The chords are G<sup>7</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>7, G<sup>7</sup>, and D<sup>b</sup>7. A diagram below the score shows the interchangeability of G<sup>7</sup> and D<sup>b</sup>7 chords, with the notes [b=cb] indicated.

It should be noted that the difference between the Neapolitan chord and the Phrygian dominant is that the latter appears as a seventh chord with leading note attrac-

tions.

Verdi ends the Phrygian dominant with exotic colouring, as in the temple scene of *Aida* (Ex. 53).

Example 53 shows a piano score with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The chords are E<sup>b</sup>, F<sup>b</sup>7, E<sup>b</sup>, F<sup>b</sup>7, E<sup>b</sup>, F<sup>b</sup>7, E<sup>b</sup>. A diagram to the right shows the interchangeability of F<sup>b</sup>7 and E<sup>b</sup> chords.

At other times using it to express mysterious, rare or exceptional states of mind. The Phrygian dominant—tonic relation often gives the semblance of spinning some kind of invisible web around the chords: the listener is almost entrapped! The explanation for this effect is that every note of the Phrygian dominant is a leading note. The *ti* and *fa* (B and F) notes operate in the same way as the two sensitive notes of the V<sup>7</sup> chord. The tonic root is bound on both sides by a leading-note step (D<sup>b</sup> → C and B → C). The A<sup>b</sup> → G step ensures a similar attraction (Ex. 54)!

Example 54 shows a diagram of the leading-note step from D<sup>b</sup>7 to C, with the notes A<sup>#</sup> and B indicated.

Since we are on the leading notes we must point out that a specifically archaic impression may be achieved by omitting the sensitive notes (*ti* and *fa*) from the dominant—tonic cadence. In *Psalmus Hungaricus*, Kodály almost “tears out” the cited episode from the “present” by not applying the *ti* and *fa* leading notes (E<sup>#</sup> and B) between the dominant and tonic (Ex. 55).







Classical harmony treats the six-four chord as a hard dissonance which requires a resolution. In the case of the six-four type folk melodies this is also valid inversely. The six-four construction of the theme produces just as complete and accomplished an impression as the fifth-consonance of Western classical music. However incredible, in this ancient style of expression it is precisely the

perfect fifth which represents the most vigorous dissonance!

The opening theme of Kodály's *Háry János* rests upon the C-mi pentatonic scale (C-Eb-F-Ab)—in which the perfect fifth marks the point of highest tension, and this C-G dissonance calls for a resolution. (As in classical harmony, the fifth-dissonance is also to be treated *heavily*: the accentuated G note occurs in a strong metrical position) (Ex. 57).



It is again the relative solmization that throws light on the phenomenon: in the *mi-pentatonic* scale, the perfect fifth is equal to the tense *ti* degree!

In classical major melodies, *do* represents the most static point of the system; in the six-four type melodies *mi* takes over the same role. The question here is why *do* and *mi* are the most stable points of the two tonal systems?

This is the *pentatonic* scale—arranged in a fifth-order:

*do-so-re-la-mi*

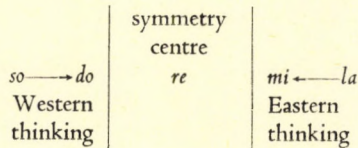
It is easy to see that the *symmetry centre* of the scale is constituted by the *re*. Earlier we found that the basic step of the pentatonic six-four system is the plagal

*la* → *mi* cadence,

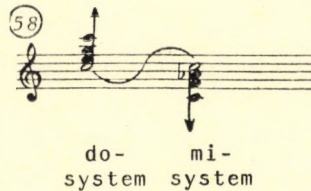
while the basic step of classical harmony is the V-I dominant—tonic

*so* → *do* cadence.

Perhaps nothing demonstrates better the relationship of Western and Eastern ways of thinking than the fact that—in relation to the *re* symmetry centre—the *so* → *do* cadence of classical music and the pentatonic *la* → *mi* cadence, are precise *mirror images* of each other:



The *do* and its reflection, the *mi* can alike serve as the tonic fundamental note (Ex. 58).





A distinctive feature of melodies on *mi* as keynote is that the root is frequently reinforced with a "leading note step": the

Phrygian *fa* → *mi* turn. (NB, the Phrygian scale is a *mi* scale!) (Ex. 59.)

59 Boris Godunov

la mi

fa-mi

la mi

fa — mi — fa fa — mi

fa-mi

As in classical harmony the *ti* → *do* leading-note step affirms the tonic *do* keynote, so in this style of expression, the *fa* → *mi* step reinforces the *mi* tonal keynote. In relation to the *re* symmetry centre, the *ti* → *do* and *fa* → *mi* leading-note steps occupy a symmetrical position—and they move symmetrically as well:

*ti* → *do* | *re* | *mi* ← *fa*  
 └────────── "leading notes" ─────────┘

The basic tonal idea of *Cantata Profana* had already been realized by Liszt in his *Via Crucis*—its form built on the "reflecting" relationship of the *do* and *mi* systems. The beginning and end of the work are alike rooted in the *D* keynote. But while the former develops from *mi*-pentatony (*D-F-G-B*) theme of six-four character—the latter shows its exact inversion, thus closing the work with a *do* scale (Ex. 60).

60 Beginning of the work

End of the work

A - - - ve crux!

Beginning

MIRROR

End



In Bartók's *Cantata Profana*, too, *D* represents the tonal centre. The beginning scale and closing scale of the work are each other's mirror images—note for note (Ex.

(61) Beginning

End

61). The opening of the work rises out of *mi*-pentatony (D-F-G-B $\flat$ -C framework), while the framework of the closing theme is *do*-pentatony (D-E-F $\sharp$ -A-B)—and both scales are coloured by degrees *fi* and *ta*. The closing scale will therefore take the shape

of an *acoustic* scale (*do-re-mi-fi-so-la-ta-do*), whereas in the opening theme we find a diminished fifth—*ta*—instead of a perfect fifth (Ex. 62). In his Harvard lectures Bartók himself made reference to the *mi*-scale in question.

(62)

*mi* pentatony ← mi so la do re mi

*do* pentatony ← do re mi so la do

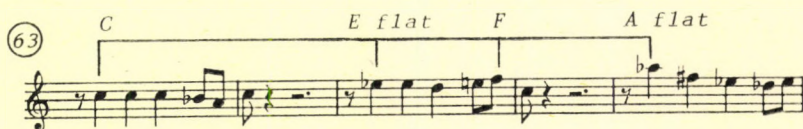
fi ta

fi ta

Bartók's *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* reflects a similar structure: the principal theme of Movement I fills out the *mi*-pentatonic frame C-E $\flat$ -F-A $\flat$  (Ex. 63),

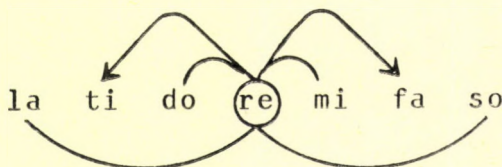
while the principal theme of the final movement gains a firm *do* character (C major chord!)—being at the same time a perfect *acoustic* (overtone) scale: see Ex. 64.





Degree *re* constitutes the symmetry centre not only of the pentatonic scale, but of the major and minor scales as well (where up-

wards and downwards from the *re* symmetry centre, each interval has its exact mirror image):



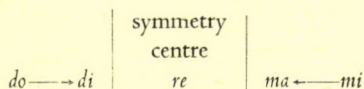
But what is much more interesting here is the structure of the so-called *acoustic* scale: the natural overtone sequence—a scale of major character with *fi* and *ta* degrees:

*do-re-mi-fi-so-la-ta-do*

From this it becomes clear that the notes of the acoustic scale are also symmetrically arranged around the *re* symmetry-axis (the mirror-image of *fi* being *ta*). The acoustic scale is the most characteristic form of Bartók's "diatonic" system (Ex. 64).



Let us bring also degrees *di* and *ma* into the above relationship, creating a polar tension. The symmetrical position of the *do*→*di* and *mi*→*ma* steps—in comparison to *re*—is again evident:



It is pertinent that degrees *di* and *ma* appear as expressive "tensional" elements—while degrees *fi* and *ta* as impressionistic "colour" elements. The former taking on a dynamic, the latter a static character.

We cannot help asking how Verdi or Liszt arrived at the six-four type melodies so familiar in Eastern European folk music. The answer is obvious—via the Gregorian Chant.

Also in the *Háry János* prelude, Kodály opposes the *mi* scale to the *do* scale: the *C-mi* pentatonic theme of the exposition returns with *do*-character (*C* major)—accompanied by acoustic harmonies (*ta* and *fi* notes) in the recapitulation (Ex. 65).



65

EXPOSITION

RECAPITULATION

The question has already arisen: why are *do* and *mi* the most static points of the two tonal systems? Tonality can only be established through the *asymmetrical* division of the tonal system, because with a symmetrical division (e.g. C-F#, or C-E-G#) we would be unable to determine the root.

If the tones of pentatony are arranged in a fifth-order (*do-so-re-la-mi*), the most perfect *asymmetry* is realized in the *outer* degrees: in *do* and *mi*.

The individuality of *do*-pentatony is decided by the fact that it can be exclusively built up of perfect fifths (in reality from a single tower of fifths). The character of the

*do*-pentatony is therefore of the most "materialistic." On the other hand, that of *mi*-pentatony proves to be the most incorporeal and disembodied, as not a single perfect fifth can be built on the *mi* root. Consequently, the *do* scale is "material," while the *mi* scale is "spiritual" (abstract) in character.

This difference in character was already recognized by Verdi, in his *Otello*. Desdemona's inaccessible, ethereal figure is painted with *mi*-centred pentatony; Jago's down-to-earth materialism is depicted with *do*-based pentatony (Ex 66); it is remarkable that the notes of the two scales are identical.

66

JAGO

DESDEMONA



On the other hand, degree *re*—as symmetry centre—proves to be the most unstable point in the scale; symbolically speaking, within the pentatonic scale the *re* represents the point of “atonality,” which is why it has such a floating effect. (In Bartók’s Mikrokosmos piece *Melody in Mist*, for example, the “mist” is visualized by *re*-pentatonic harmonies.)

One single pentatonic harmony (the opening curtain-chord of the opera) is enough for Verdi to set the *storm music* of *Otello* whirling; the secret of the effect is that the chord is founded on *re* (Ex. 67). The *re*-character is further emphasized by the *la-do-mi-so* meaning of the G-B $\flat$ -D-F notes.

67

*ff*

so.  
mi  
do  
la

re

In our 12-degree system (and this is well shown by the external look of „white” and “black” keys on our keyboard instruments, or by our system of musical notation), besides degree *re* there is to be found one more symmetry centre—and this is the tritone of *re*: the *si* (in case of C tonality, the G $\sharp$  = A $\flat$  note).

The basic tonality of *Otello* is E major (i.e. E = *do*). Leafing through the score one cannot overlook that chords based on degrees *re* and *si*—that is, F $\sharp$  and C—are almost ostentatiously associated with negative, irrational, “demonic” ideas!

Finally, the question to consider is where the *minor* scale derives from. Minor tonality is none other as the assimilation of the *mi-la-do* six-four structure to the *overtone* system (= *la-do-mi*). This agrees with the classical definition, according to which the *major* triad consists of the 3 closest overtones of a basic note, while the *minor* triad is made up of the 3 closest basic tones of a common overtone (which is confirmed by the fact that

the fifth: *mi*-note mostly plays a central role in traditional *minor* themes and almost constitutes the “navel” of the melody). The relative major and minor keys therefore show an inverted relation to each other, as compared to the *re* (see the relationship of C major and A minor in our next example).

#### Substitute Chords

The harmonies of “Grand Romanticism” frequently obtain some sort of “background” meaning—a secondary, transposed sense—and this takes place whenever a *major triad* is replaced by the *minor triad* lying a major-third higher (e.g. C major substituted by the E minor)—or, contrariwise, a *minor triad* is replaced by the *major triad* lying a major-third lower (e.g. A minor substituted by the F major) (Ex. 68), that is: the *do-mi-so* major triad is substituted by *mi-so-ti*, or the *la-do-mi* minor triad by *fa-la-do*.



(68)

C major  
e minor  
mi-so-ti

F major  
a minor  
fa-la-do

re

Detailed description: Example 68 shows two staves of chords. The top staff has a C major chord (C-E-G) and an e minor chord (E-G-B). The bottom staff has an F major chord (F-A-C) and an a minor chord (A-C-E). To the right, a box contains the lyrics 'mi-so-ti' and another box contains 'fa-la-do'. Further right, a single note 're' is shown on a treble clef staff.

In the forest scene from *Falstaff*, Nanetta becomes a fairy-queen by entering— instead of the expected D major—in the substitute key: F# minor (Ex. 69).

(69)

pp

f# minor  
instead of D major

Detailed description: Example 69 shows a melodic line on a treble clef staff. It begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The melody starts in D major and then shifts to F# minor. The key change is indicated by the text 'f# minor instead of D major'.

Aida's *F major* aria in the Nile scene is introduced by *A minor*—i.e. the substitute chord of F major: this is the source of its elusive, vibrating, ethereal character. tute chord (E minor replacing C major) reflects Gilda's spiritual purity: the substitute chord invests the melody with a "sublime" emotional content (Ex. 70).

In the Rigoletto-Gilda duet, the substi-

(70)

Gilda

Rigoletto

C major ————— e minor

Detailed description: Example 70 shows a duet between Rigoletto and Gilda. Rigoletto's part is in the bass clef and Gilda's part is in the treble clef. The key signature changes from C major to e minor, as indicated by the text 'C major ————— e minor'.

Such a duality is common in Wagner, *Parsifal* (Ex. 71): from here the "elevated" too; let me remind you of the beginning of immaterial tone of the C minor stems:

(71)

C

A $\flat$

Detailed description: Example 71 shows a melodic line on a treble clef staff. It begins in C minor (indicated by two flats) and then shifts to C major (indicated by a natural sign over the C). The key change is indicated by the text 'C' and 'A flat'.



*mi-so-ti* is the transfigured, unearthly element of late Romanticism.

At the beginning of the bariton solo in Bartók's *Cantata Profana* ("Oh, my dearest loved ones"), the *C* minor tonality is not made unsteady by the fact that the melody

is embedded in  $A\flat$  major harmony (the *C* minor key is also reinforced by a "tonal answer") (Ex. 72). The  $A\flat$  major chord lends the melody some sort of emotional "depth"—without veiling or overshadowing the *C* minor tonality. Likewise at the be-

(72)

É - des sze - ret - te - im Ked - ves

ginning of *Psalmus Hungaricus*, Kodály inserts the melody of *A* minor origin into an *F* major harmony (lying a major-third lower), without obscuring thus the *A* minor tonality: the tragic weight, baleful atmosphere of the work arises right from the *F* major substitute chord: as though a painful wound were ripped open!

Owing to the upward-pointing *ti* degree,

the tonal quality of the *mi-so-ti* substitute chord is "positive"—while that of the *fa-la-do* substitute chord is "negative" owing to the downward-pointing *fa* degree.

When Falstaff enters the night forest and the trees are rattling in the wind, the  $D\flat$  minor theme undergoes a similar change: the "negative" substitute chord ( $B\flat$  major) fills Falstaff with fear (Ex. 73).

(73)

mi - la - mi

*ff* *pp*

$A\flat$  six-four  $B\flat$  major

mi — fa — mi

The ominous atmosphere of the introduction to the last act of *Otello* originates in the

"negative" substitute chord (*A* major chord in  $C\sharp$  minor tonality) (Ex. 74). The "dream

(74)

mi —> fa

*ff*



narration" moving on the verge of reality and unreality, is founded upon the ambivalence of E minor and C major: the C

major chord opens up the gate of dream, the sluice of the "subconscious," by coming immediately after the tonic E minor cadence

(Ex. 75). The jubilant, sparkling impact of the "fire-dance," on the other hand, cannot be disengaged from the fact that it bursts

out all of a sudden in E minor after a C major cadence (moreover, after a G dominant seventh chord: instead of C major) (Ex. 76).

In this respect, the most beautiful examples are to be found in Verdi's *Requiem*. The beginning of the work is laden with oppressive "death-symbolism." But the very same

A minor theme at the recapitulation receives a transcendental character—since it appears as the "positive" substitute chord of F major: now it makes visual the perpetual light (Ex.

77). The *Requiem eternam* theme of Movement VI, in B $\flat$  minor, is introduced as a mournful funeral music—but it expresses solace at the recapitulation (and leads to the *lux eterna* theme), when it emerges as the

"positive" substitute chord of G $\flat$  major (Ex. 78). After the tumble of "Confutatis," the *Oro supplex* bass-aria becomes so elevated through the A major—C $\sharp$  minor change (Ex. 79).



(78) G $\flat$  major — B $\flat$  minor

Req - ui - em - ae - ter - nam

pp

(79) A major — C $\sharp$  minor

O - ro - supp -

A major — C $\sharp$  minor

It is enough to glance at Ex. 68 to see that the two kinds of substitution (*ti-so-mi* and *fa-la-do*) are again each other's reflections—precise mirror images—in relation to the *re* symmetry centre. The poetic content of these substitute chords is largely influenced by the fact that the colouring role is taken by the very two degrees regarded as “sensitive notes” in classical harmony: the upward-pointing *ti* and the downward-pointing *fa*.

The most peculiar feature of the relevant examples is that contrary to the classical experience

the meaning of the *minor* substitute chord is “positive”, the meaning of the *major* substitute chord is “negative.”

In this way the Romantic masters succeeded in creating a harmonic world which is diametrically opposed to the customary usage of *major* and *minor* triads.

Judging from the analysis of Verdi's *Otello*, *Requiem* and *Falstaff*, one might speak of the surprising frequency, one might even

say preponderance of substitute chords, which (taking into account the ambiguity inherent in the substitute chords) reveals something characteristic of Verdi's chord usage: his “double-spirited” harmonies.

#### Tonality, Atonality, Modality

I am inclined to think that it was two linguistic elements which made possible the development of the dialectic system of Western music: the discovery of the tension system of *tonality*—*atonality*, and the discovery of *polymodal* tensions.

Bach is credited with sowing the seeds which determined the evolution of music for two subsequent centuries. The very first sentences of *St John Passion* can give proof of this. When the “divine” element is set against the “devilish”, what does Bach do but oppose the idea of *tonality* to that of *atonality*: Jesus is represented by the nearest natural overtone, i.e. the perfect fifth, whereas Judas's symbol is the diminished fifth—an interval expressing the distance principle



in the most direct way, because it symmetrically halves the tonal system (as well as the diminished seventh, which quarters the fifth-circle) (Ex. 80).

(80)

Je - sus ging mit sei-nen Jün-ger-n  
 Ju - das a - ber, der ihn ver - rieth,

The characteristic "tension—resolution" system of Western music could scarcely have evolved without the antagonism of the *tonal* and the *distance* principles; moreover, this opposition—an age-old struggle between

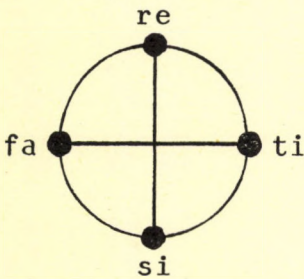
tonal asymmetrical and atonal symmetrical elements—became a seminal impulse in the development of European music.

The characteristic "tensional" chord of Baroque music (Ex. 81) is represented pre-

(81)

Bach: Toccata and fugue

cisely by that diminished seventh harmony which divides symmetrically the fifth-circle round the *re* symmetry centre (and the *re—si* symmetry axis) of our diatonic system:



thus creating the "sensitive notes" (and in a wider sense, the leading notes) of the

system: in the major key *fa—ti*, in the minor key *re—si*. This means that in relation to *re*, the *ti* and *fa* leading notes also occupy a symmetrical position.

The idea of consonance and dissonance is only one structural element of this tonal world. The other element is that tension-principle which is made possible by *poly-modal* thinking. In *St John Passion*, at the first words of Jesus, we feel as though the very air has changed—since Bach renders the miracle tangible by replacing the F major harmony with the 3<sup>#</sup> higher D major: the same *do* → *di* elevation arises here that caused the sound to "brighten" in our first Verdi example (Ex. 82).



82

JESUS

Wen su - cher ihr?

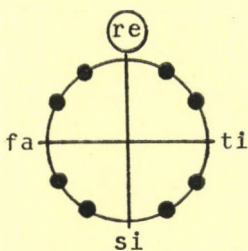
F D

Summary

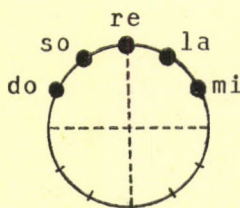
We have established: asymmetry is coupled with *tonal*, symmetry with *atonal* relations. The symmetry-centre of our tonal system is constituted by the *re*-degree. If we divide the fifth-circle symmetrically

around the *re* central note (by way of halving) we will obtain *re—si* and *fa—ti* tritones (see the first sketch below). It is not by chance that the role of the dissonant “sensitive notes” is filled by the tritone *ti—fa* in the major key, and by the tritone *si—re* in the minor key. This is how the *leading notes* came into existence.

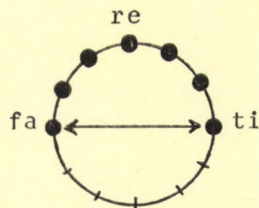
PENTATONY in this system is represented by the five upper notes (second sketch below). From the 5-note system we arrive at the 7-note system by expanding pentatony by one degree upwards and one downwards: the extreme points—*fa* and *ti*—thus enter into a tritonic relationship with each other (third sketch below), originating the *tensest* points of the scale. Thus, the major scale (compared to the *re*-centre) fills in the upper arc of the circle of fifths.<sup>8</sup>



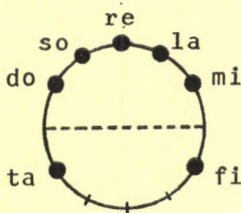
LEADING NOTES  
(MODEL 1:2)



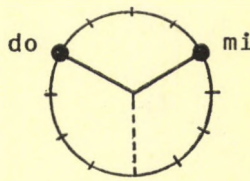
PENTATONY



MAJOR SCALE



ACOUSTIC SCALE



DO- AND MI-SYSTEM

<sup>8</sup> The missing notes result in pentatony. Thus the pentatonic and seven-note scales mutually complement each other.



The ACOUSTIC scale (harmony) became a static "colour" chord because it lacks the two sensitive notes that characterize the major key: *ti* and *fa* (fourth sketch above). In this sense, the major scale can be considered a tensional scale.

If we omit the "atonal" degrees of our first sketch from the 12-degree system, *model 1:2* is created: the basic scale of Bartók's chromaticism (*do-di-ma-mi-fi-so-la-ta* eight-note scale).

The two most static points of our tonal system: *do* and *mi* coincide with the "asymmetry" points of the system (fifth sketch above). *Do* and *mi* reflect a *major third* relationship. In connection with a musical

game, Lajos Bárdos called my attention to the fact that the 12 degrees of the fifth-circle can be completely covered with six identical tone-pairs, chosen from *any* interval—excepting the major third! The major third does not allow the symmetry of the "even" numbers.<sup>9</sup>

Let us summarize the fundamental phenomena of POLYMODAL CHROMATICISM,<sup>10</sup> on the basis of the *position* the 12 degrees occupy in the system. If we group the 12 notes of the chromatic scale into symmetrical pairs (in relation to the *re* centre-note), the meaning of the individual degrees will be as follows:

<i>di</i> and <i>ma</i>	— dynamic active-elements ("major" and "minor" tension),
<i>fi</i> and <i>ta</i>	— static colour-elements (cf. acoustic scale). In turn: <i>di</i> and <i>fi</i> rouses a feeling of ascent, <i>ma</i> and <i>ta</i> rouses a feeling of descent.
<i>re</i> and <i>si</i>	— the symmetry centres of the system: <i>atonal</i> poles.
<i>ti</i> and <i>fa</i>	— the tension-points of the scale: sensitive <i>leading</i> notes.
<i>do</i> and <i>mi</i>	— the most <i>tonal</i> pillars of our tonal system: the roots of the "do" and "mi" system. As a result of the mirror-relation, the <i>do-mi</i> third is impressionistic in character, <i>mi-do</i> sixth is expressionistic in character.
<i>so</i> and <i>la</i>	— their meaning is determined by the fact that the <i>so</i> → <i>do</i> step is the basic cadence of the "do" system, <i>la</i> → <i>mi</i> step is the basic cadence of the "mi" system.

Among the modal keys, the

*so*-scale represents the most elevated mode (hymnic),

while the emotional depth characteristic of the minor key is reflected by the *la*-scale.

Once more we may add that

compared to *do*: *la* is an impressive "pastoral" sixth,

compared to *mi*: *so* is an expressive "pentatonic" third (the *so-mi* motif is the most elementary manifestation of pentatonic tension).

<sup>9</sup> The explanation lies in the fact that of all the equidistant scales (tritone, fourth- and fifth-circle, augmented triad, diminished seventh, whole-tone scale, chromatic scale) the augmented triad is the only one in which the number of

notes cannot be divided by two. The augmented triad is a scale composed of *major third* + *major third*.

<sup>10</sup> This is how Bartók himself termed his own style.



This study has attempted at defining the place of relative solmization in musicology. As far as I am concerned, I believe this method to be the missing link which might connect abstract theoretical research with living music.

According to Eddington, the theoretical mathematician working with symbols of his own creation never knows *what* he is doing. It is the duty of the practical physicist to recognize that playing around with letters might reflect or describe such structure systems that could yield him knowledge about the existing physical world: armed with the abstract plan of structure he penetrates external reality once deemed unfatho-

mable—the function and nature of which would, with traditional means, be beyond his grasp and comprehension.

With the seemingly primitive symbols of relative solmization, I have attempted to draw the map of a musical world that manifests itself elementarily in these symbols—provided we know what the operations concern. I consider Kodály's concept (the method of relative solmization) to be a clue which enables us to pull down that boundary which separates theory from everyday experience and leads us directly to the structure *and* contents of music; and at the same time, it is also suited to the historical analysis of the musical material.

#### APPENDIX

According to Kodály's relative solmization method, each *major* scale has a *do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-do* — and each *minor* scale a *la-ti-do-re-mi-fa-so-la* meaning.

For instance, in the E major or C $\sharp$  minor key

E	=	<i>do</i>
F $\sharp$	=	<i>re</i>
G $\sharp$	=	<i>mi</i>
A	=	<i>fa</i>
B	=	<i>so</i>
C $\sharp$	=	<i>la</i>
D $\sharp$	=	<i>ti</i>

By the raising of the *do*, degree *di*

by the raising of the *fa*, degree *fi*

by the raising of the *so*, degree *si*, etc. is obtained.

By the lowering of the *mi*, degree *ma*

by the lowering of the *ti*, degree *ta*, etc. is obtained.

In E major, for example, E $\sharp$  = *di*, and G = *ma*.

The *pentatonic* scale is constructed of *do, re, mi, so, la* degrees. For instance, in the *mi-pentatonic* scale based on C as key-note:

C	=	<i>mi</i>
E $\flat$	=	<i>so</i>
F	=	<i>la</i>
A $\flat$	=	<i>do</i>
B $\flat$	=	<i>re</i>



## TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF HUNGARIAN MUSIC

In recent years a growing number of books have appeared in the English language on the subject of twentieth-century music, or, even merely of music since the Second World War. While many of these deal in greater or lesser detail with music in Western Europe and North America, they have paid, on the whole, scant attention to developments in Central and Eastern Europe. This omission may be attributed to a misguided notion that nothing of any interest has happened in these countries, or, if any interesting work is being produced, it is less worthy of consideration because it has not proved influential in the development of music as a whole. However the omission is serious considering the importance both of post-war Polish composers, notably Lutosławski, and also the Hungarian born György Ligeti in the history of recent music. Besides, although it is interesting to trace an influence through the evolution of a musical style, composers should be judged on their own merits and not merely as direction-posts along a historical path.

A number of interesting composers live and work in Hungary today, and certainly the diversity of musical styles which confronts the visitor there is as great as that to be found in any country and merits far closer examination. This study is an outsider's impression of the situation. It is literally impossible to mention all the composers or to enter into any detail in a study of this length, but I hope to be able to give some idea of the variety to be found in modern Hungarian music.

The history of recent Hungarian music dates back only to the late fifties. Little of any interest had emerged during the restrictive regime of the early fifties when the country found itself virtually isolated from what was happening elsewhere. The problem for composers was compounded by the natural difficulty they had in asserting their own

personalities over the dominating influence of Bartók and Kodály. From 1957 the situation altered dramatically. Hungarian composers and other musicians now had the opportunity of studying with leading teachers abroad, and restrictions on the performance of music by avant-garde composers such as Webern, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky, were raised. One of the best innovations at this time was the setting up of the Budapest Music Weeks in 1959, and then the Festival of New Music in 1974 during which about nine days are devoted to contemporary music. Here Hungarian composers have the chance to present their own works, but composers from abroad are also invited each year. Nono, Xenakis, Lutosławski, Ligeti, and Berio are among those who have attended on past occasions.

Any catching up which Hungarian composers had to do with developments elsewhere was accomplished in an astonishingly short time. The first evidence of this was manifested in the music of two composers: Endre Szervánszky (1911-1977)<sup>1</sup> and György Kurtág (b. 1926). Szervánszky was until his death a professor of composition at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest. His early works, such as the *Serenade for Clarinet and Orchestra* (1950) and the choral work *A kutyák dala* (Song of dogs; 1954) are written heavily under the influence of Kodály. They are pleasant enough but show no great individual personality. In the late fifties Szervánszky started moving further and further away from traditional tonality, drawing his inspiration from the music of Anton Webern. In 1959 his *Six Orchestral Pieces* was performed, one of the first Hungarian works to use the serial techniques of the Second Viennese School. An even more unusual feature was that the first movement was scored for percussion alone. This

<sup>1</sup> NHQ 19



work was given its première in 1960. Nothing like it had been heard from the pen of a Hungarian composer, and it caused a considerable stir at its first performance. But any adverse criticism was short-lived and Szervánszky had set the precedent for avant-garde music. Later, he went on to evolve a freer dodecaphonic style as shown in his *Variations for Orchestra* (1964) and his *Clarinet Concerto* (1965).

However, important though Szervánszky was, the first really influential new work to be produced was György Kurtág's *String Quartet, op. 1* (1959). True, Szervánszky's *Orchestral Pieces* had paved the way for more adventurous styles, but they were felt to be less effective than anything by Kurtág who is a far stronger musical personality. Perhaps Szervánszky was the composer most damaged by Hungary's comparative isolation during the early fifties. Kurtág on the other hand was a late developer as a composer and it was not until after a year of study in Paris in 1957 with Marianne Stein, Messiaen, and Milhaud, that he found a really successful personal style. It is significant that he has disowned the works written before this visit, and designated his *String Quartet of 1959* as his opus 1. Kurtág was clearly attracted to the music of Anton Webern in which, he says, not a note is superfluous. He had managed to study one or two scores by this composer in Budapest, but it was not until he reached Paris that he was able to hear most of Webern's music and study all the scores, hence the fruition of his style at this time. Kurtág's music has many of the external features of Webern, especially early Webern. He writes short, aphoristic pieces which are in a free dodecaphonic style and which avoid superfluous repetition and they are usually for small chamber ensembles. But he is no slavish imitator. There are also strong Eastern European characteristics in his work, especially in the very complex, but vital, rhythms which permeate many of his works and

which are an extension of rhythms found in Bartók and Stravinsky, whose music, too, has been influential for him. But in Kurtág's work, the Bartókian traits are well and truly assimilated. His pitch organization is far removed from Bartók's sound-world. Here is a dissonant style, full of energy unlike that of Szervánszky, and this is what has helped to make Kurtág the most influential and original composer in Hungary today.

But Kurtág is not merely important for his historical position in the development of Hungarian music. He is an excellent composer in his own right. He deserves to be better known abroad, but he is only slowly gaining recognition outside Hungary. This relative obscurity can be attributed to a number of factors. His output is small; he is a meticulous composer who works extremely slowly and self-critically. Many of his works are very difficult to play and therefore are accessible only to the best performers. Moreover to date he has not written an orchestral work which would bring him to the attention of a wider concert-going public abroad. This is unfortunate, because Kurtág's music reaches beyond the usual contemporary music audience. He combines a high level of intellectual organization with an external aural attractiveness which comes from his ability to exploit the sound-world of whatever instruments he has chosen and, in his vocal works, from the clear musical symbols with which he underpins the text. There are, too, many witty touches in these aspects of his work. His early opuses are extremely expressionistic in style, full of sudden changes of dynamic, timbre, and register and they find their culmination in the massive concerto for soprano and piano *Bornemisza Péter mondásai* (The sayings of Péter Bornemisza; 1963-68)<sup>2</sup>. This is Kurtág's longest work to date, lasting almost forty minutes and is unusual in the output of a composer whose works generally last no more than ten minutes. Since the Concerto there

<sup>2</sup> NHQ 62



seems to have been a gradual mellowing, a greater restraint and simplification in Kurtág's works. The lyrical beauty which was present in traces in his earlier compositions has now come to the fore, especially in the *Hommage à Mibály András* (12 Microludes for String Quartet; 1977-78), the choral work *Omaggio a Luigi Nono* (1979), and especially in the song cycle for soprano and chamber ensemble *Poslaniya pokoynoy R. V. Trusovoy* (Messages of the late R. V. Trusova; 1979-80).<sup>3</sup> In these latest works there have been moments of almost traditional consonance but used in a novel way. The title "microlude" deserves some explanation. It refers to a minuscule prelude based not on an entire key, but merely on one pitch, one microlude for each of the twelve degrees of the chromatic scale.

Kurtág has proved influential in another way too. He was asked to write a set of duos for violin and cimbalom, that most Hungarian of instruments, and the resulting piece, his *Eight Duos* (1961), was highly successful. His was the first use of the cimbalom in a more atonal style in post-war music, and the range of colours which he draws from it made such an impression that practically every other Hungarian composer has incorporated it into some composition. On the other hand it can be a seriously limiting factor in the performance of Hungarian music abroad, especially if the piece calls for not one, but two, cimbaloms, as does Kurtág's *Négy dal Pilinszky János verseire* (Four songs to poems by János Pilinszky; 1975).

Kurtág has also made an important contribution to the literature of piano music for children. At the instigation of a Budapest piano teacher Marianne Teőke, he has produced a large collection of pieces called *Játékok* (Plays and Games; 1973-76). These are literally pianistic games designed to help

the young child find its way around the keyboard and to show that playing the piano can be immense fun. Compositionally Kurtág regards these pieces as "scraps of litter," but they do provide clues to procedures in his larger-scale works. They are an illustration of a most pleasing feature of Hungarian musical life, where the best composers have written children's music of a high quality, thus carrying on the tradition started by Bartók in works like *Mikrokosmos*. Apart from being directly influential through his own music, Kurtág is also an admired professor of chamber music at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, and, I understand, also invites groups of younger musicians to his home to analyse tapes and scores of works by other contemporary composers.

Another composer of this generation who has sought out a more individual style is András Szöllősy (b. 1921). Szöllősy was a pupil of Kodály but was able to study abroad in the late forties with Goffredo Petrassi in Rome from 1947-48 which must have helped him assimilate the Kodály influence. In 1950 he became a professor of theory and history at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music. The impression his music gives is of an immense energy, but one which, unfortunately, often seems undirected. He is fond of dense, busy textures and the bulk of his output is for orchestra, including five orchestral concerti (1957-75) and an attractive Concerto for Harpsichord and Strings (1978).

Szöllősy has also edited and published several writings of Bartók and Kodály.

The generation of composers which immediately succeeded Kurtág has produced a number of personalities who are interesting, but not really outstanding. If earlier generations had problems escaping from the shadow of Bartók and Kodály, then this generation seems to have had equal difficulty in surmounting the influence of the post-war Polish composers, especially Penderecki. Perhaps the best-known abroad are Zsolt



Durkó (b. 1934)<sup>4</sup> and Sándor Balassa (b. 1935). Both are well-represented by orchestral and choral works, which in general reach a wider concert-going public. In both composers there are echoes of Bartók in the solo vocal writing with its florid, oscillating figures, akin to folk-music, recalling in particular the *Cantata Profana*. This feature is especially marked in Balassa's recent opera for Hungarian Television *Az ajtón kívül* (Outside the door; 1973-77).<sup>5</sup> But it is the influence of the Polish school which can be perceived in the gestural effects employed in the large-scale orchestral and choral works.

Durkó was a pupil of Ferenc Farkas and also studied for two years with Petrassi in Rome from 1961 to 63. He has a number of prize-winning works to his name. Perhaps the most impressive of these is an oratorio composed between 1969 and 1972 to the words of the first source of written Hungarian, *Halotti Beszéd*, (Funeral Oration), dating from about A.D. 1200. The musical style is highly pictorial showing the influence of the Polish school. The Oratorio was awarded the title of best composition at the 1975 Unesco International Rostrum of Composers. Another attractive early Durkó work is his Hungarian-style *Una Rapsodia Ungherese* for two clarinets and orchestra (1964-65) which was awarded an Erkel Prize in Budapest in 1968. But, on the whole, Durkó's best music has been written for smaller ensembles, for instance *Fire Music* for flute, clarinet, piano, and string trio (1971), composed for Peter Maxwell Davies's group the Fires of London, hence the title (Davies and Durkó were fellow-students in Rome); the *Iconography*, no. 1 for two cellos and harpsichord (1970); *Iconography*, no. 2 for solo horn and chamber ensemble (1971), and *Turner Illusztrációk* (Turner illustrations; 1976) for violin and fourteen instruments. The visual arts have often proved inspiratio-

nal to Durkó as can be seen from his choice of titles.

Balassa started to study music comparatively late, at the age of seventeen, and he has never really achieved Durkó's degree of originality. He studied composition under Endre Szervánszky at the Liszt Ferenc Academy, working at the same time as an engine fitter (surely the only composer ever to have had this interesting second occupation!). He is now a producer in the Music Department at Hungarian Radio. The early promise of *Iris* (1971) for symphony orchestra has, unfortunately, not been fulfilled in his later orchestral works such as *Lupercalia* (1972) scored for wind and brass and *Glarusi Ének* (Chant of Glarus; 1977) for full orchestra, both of which have some aurally unsatisfying moments. His *Requiem Kassák Lajosért* (Requiem for Lajos Kassák; 1968-69)<sup>6</sup> is a more successful work for large-scale forces. It was awarded the first prize in the International Rostrum of Composers, Paris, 1972. With its quiet, deep start and the almost cluster-like texture of the choral writing, its opening perhaps owes something to the beginning of Ligeti's Requiem (1963-65), although the work in general seems to have more in common with Penderecki's choral music. Like Durkó, Balassa reveals a more individual personality in chamber works. The early trio *Antinomia* (1968) for soprano, clarinet, and cello is most attractive, as is his nonet *Xénia* (1970), and the score of his *Quartetto per percussioni* (1969) also looks interesting.

Arguably one of the most imaginative of this generation is a less well-known composer, László Kalmár (b. 1931). Kalmár studied composition with Ervin Major, and later, privately, with Ferenc Farkas. Since 1957 he has been editor at Editio Musica Budapest. His output is small and consists mainly of aphoristic chamber works, which may account for the fact that he is less-known abroad. He organizes pitch and

<sup>4</sup> NHQ 30, 64

<sup>5</sup> NHQ 71

<sup>6</sup> NHQ 50



rhythm on strict mathematical principles, but this does not mean that his music is dull or arid, for he has a keen aural imagination too. He exploits extremely well the sonorities of the instruments for which he is writing. He chooses sometimes unusual groups of instruments. His works include a witty Trio for flute, marimba, and guitar (1968), *Sotto Voce* (1973) for electronic organ or harmonium, vibraphone, and harp. In this latter piece the sustained organ writing, based on a quotation from the Baroque composer Frescobaldi, is punctuated by comments from vibraphone and harp. His elegiac *Ének* (Song; 1969, rev. 1972) for two contraltos, clarinet, cello, and harp, contains imitative writing, which at times becomes so close that it sounds almost like a tape-delay effect. Kalmár has also written some choral works, of which the *Senecae Sententiae* (1959-65) won the award of the London Kodály Foundation in 1967. He has, therefore, achieved some recognition outside Hungary, but he is undoubtedly a composer worthy of more attention.

Another composer who deserves to be better-known is József Soproni (b. 1930). He studied with János Viski at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, and has been a professor there since 1963. Among his more successful compositions are his fourth String Quartet, a large-scale orchestral piece, his Second Symphony (the Seasons), and a series of piano pieces in four volumes called *Jegyzetlapok* (Note-pages; 1974-78), which form a *gradus ad parnassum* from the simplest to the most virtuoso techniques, and make another welcome addition to contemporary literature for the pianoforte.

Other composers of this generation are Sándor Szokolay (b. 1931) and Emil Petrovics (b. 1930). They have both written operas which have had some success initially, although perhaps less so in recent years. Szokolay's opera *Vérnász* (Blood wedding;

1962-64) based on Lorca's play, has been performed internationally. It is a colourful, if odd, mixture of Hungarian and Spanish elements. Petrovics's operas include the one-acter *C'est la guerre* (1961), which ushered in a new era of modern Hungarian opera, and *Bűn és bünbődés*<sup>8</sup> (Crime and punishment; 1969). István Láng (b. 1933) has produced a beautiful, lyrical concerto for violin and small ensemble (1976-77), but in the rest of his output he seems to have struggled to find his own personality.

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It is in the following generation that we find the next most interesting developments after Kurtág. We can perceive two trends. To the first belong Attila Bozay (b. 1939) and László Dubrovay (b. 1943). Much of Bozay's and Dubrovay's work has been concerned with extending the conventional range of instruments, and, in the case of Dubrovay, using electronic techniques as well. Dubrovay attended not only the Academy in Budapest, but also spent four years studying with Stockhausen, and is Hungary's most able composer of electronic music. He is now on the teaching staff at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music. The largest electronic studio in Hungary is at Hungarian Radio, but it is limited by old-fashioned equipment. Dubrovay has his own little studio at home using only a small AKS synthesizer with sequencer linked to an electronic organ. Even with this restricted equipment he has been able to achieve some imaginative effects. His first compositions were for electronics alone, but then he extended into using live instruments with some sort of electronic modification, and this latter genre of composition includes the series entitled *Oscillations*, number one is for electronic organ and synthesizer, number two for electronic organ, cello, cimbalom, and synthesizer, and number three for piano and synthe-

<sup>7</sup> NHQ 18

<sup>8</sup> NHQ 39



sizer. The sound-world of these works is clearly the product of a pupil of Stockhausen. Recently Dubrovay has turned from electronics to traditional instruments, in particular the flute. Hungary is fortunate in having one of the world's leading flute virtuosos, István Matuz, who has developed many special playing techniques including microtonal divisions of the scale, flute chords and, continuous breathing (breathing alternately through nose and mouth). He has inspired many of the younger generation of composers to write for him. In Dubrovay's case this has resulted in the five *Matuzjada* (1975-77): five studies which exploit several aspects of Matuz's technique. To date these compositions may not be musically so interesting, but the sounds achieved offer many possibilities in their own right, and it is to be hoped that Dubrovay will develop these further in later works.

Attila Bozay<sup>9</sup> was another pupil of Ferenc Farkas at the Liszt Academy, and he also obtained a Unesco scholarship to Paris in 1967. He too is now on the staff at the Academy. He is an excellent recorder player, and has experimented with recorder harmonics, chords, simultaneous playing, and singing or speaking, so extending the range of the recorder in the way that Matuz did with the flute. These techniques are combined into two compositions: *Solo* for recorders (1978) and *Improvisations*, no. 2 (1976) for recorders and string trio. Both these works involve use of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass recorders. *Improvisations* no. 2 manages more successfully to integrate the various recorder techniques, and overall it is an attractive work. Bozay has also taught himself to play a kind of Hungarian folk-zither, the harp-zither. He has adapted the original tuning so that it contains all twelve notes of the chromatic scale, but otherwise there is no further alteration to the instrument. Bozay draws a considerable range of colouristic effects by means of different

types of plectra, and he also achieves a type of glissando by using the tuning-key whilst playing. These techniques are demonstrated in *Improvisations* no. 1 for zither solo (1971-72). The instrument has come to be known as the Bozay zither, and other composers, including Kurtág, have used it in some of their works. This imposes yet a further problem on the performance of such works outside Hungary. Perhaps the title "Improvisations" deserves a word of explanation. Bozay uses two approaches to composition: one a predetermined method where the compositional procedures are worked out mathematically, and the other is a type of controlled aleatory in which the performer is allowed to choose between different motifs in a movement, and can also determine the order of appearance of certain motifs, giving an improvisational feel. Bozay has also written chamber music for more conventional forces, and is at present engaged on an opera based on the romantic poet's, Mihály Vörösmarty's verse play *Csongor és Tünde*.

The second main compositional trend found in this generation is in the work of the New Music Studio of the Central Artists' Ensemble of the Young Communist League.<sup>10</sup> This group was founded in 1970 by three composers: László Sáy (b. 1940), Zoltán Jeney (b. 1943), and László Vidovszky (b. 1944), and they were later joined by a musicologist, András Wilhelm. Their express intention was to create a musical workshop allying composition to performance, and training young musicians to play more experimental types of music, since such training was lacking elsewhere. They have been greatly influenced by the work of the American John Cage, and possibly also by the American repetitive composers such as Steve Reich. Much of Jeney's output in particular has been mainly minimal, or repetitive music, similar to that of Reich. This is music in which changes occur extremely gradually so that the listener can perceive

<sup>9</sup> NHQ 88

<sup>10</sup> NHQ 88



the compositional process as the music sounds. It is a reaction against the complexity of much Western music and possibly also against the empty gestural effects of some of the Polish school, and has been particularly influenced by Asian and African music.

Many of Jeney's works are written using motifs which can be passed through a number of mathematically derived permutations, thus providing the type of gradual change for which Steve Reich was aiming. In Jeney's case, however, the changes are usually even more minimal than in Reich, and often lack the variety of the American's music. To my mind Jeney's most successful piece is his *Apollónhoz* (To Apollo; 1978) for choir, electronic organ, cor anglais, and twelve crotales. The energetic and intricate rhythms make it a compelling piece. The pitch organization is based on scales derived from the Dorian and Ionian modes, whilst the rhythm is derived from 28 ancient Greek rhythms. Not all Jeney's music is of a repetitive type, however. His orchestral piece *Alef* (1972) is a homage to Schoenberg and develops further Schoenberg's technique in the third piece of the *Five Orchestral Pieces*. *Alef* is based on a single all-interval chord. There is little rhythmic or melodic interest, so that the listener's attention is focussed on the timbral and dynamic changes. Jeney has also written a piece of *musique concrète* (taped, natural sounds): *Üvegekre és fémekekre* (For glass and metal; 1979). Its title comes from the fact that it is built up of sounds recorded in a glass works and an iron-foundry. Jeney chose from his recordings processes with a great deal of rhythmic interest, and has fitted them together into an extended tape without further electronic processing.

The oldest member of the Studio, Sály, started composing in a complex, post-serial vein. This can be seen in works like *Catacoustics* for two pianos (1967). But from the formation of the New Music Studio onwards, a gradual simplification can be seen in his style. One of the most attractive

pieces dating from this time is *Sounds for cimbalom* (1972), in which the cimbalom's strings are prepared to make it sound like eastern gongs. Rhythmic interest is almost totally lacking leaving the listener to concentrate on the pitches and timbres created. Some of Sály's later pieces use small motifs which are constantly varied though there is no question of gradual permutational change, as in Jeney. *Cseppre-csepp* (Drop by drop; 1974) for any four instruments of similar timbre, *Kotyogó kő egy korsóban* (Pebble rattling in a pot; 1978) for prepared piano or percussion and *Ötfokú gyakorlat* (Pentatonic study; 1979), are immediately attractive works owing to their lively rhythms and simple melodic ideas. More extended compositions using continuous variation of a small motif are *Socrates utolsó tanácsa* (Socrates' last teaching; 1980) and *Variációk 14 hang fölött* (Variations on 14 pitches; 1975) both for soprano and piano. These works create a delicate sound, but tend to lose the attention owing to their length.

The youngest composer, Vidovszky, is probably the most talented of the group. Indeed, he is possibly the most talented of the younger composers in Hungary today. Yet he has only two published scores to his name: *Kettős* (Double; 1969-72) for two prepared pianos, and *Schroeder halála* (Schroeder's death; 1975) for piano and three assistants, and one recording, of *Kettős*. The problem lies in the fact that many of his works contain visual, theatrical elements, which makes preparation of a printed score difficult, and production of an audio recording of little use. To appreciate a Vidovszky work, it is necessary to attend a live performance, and it is worth doing so, because he manages to provide for the layman and trained musician alike. I shall be writing at greater length on Vidovszky in a separate article, so I shall not go into further detail here.

This brings the survey up-to-date with the latest established composers. The youngest generation has not, as yet, produced any



outstanding figures, although I have heard interesting work by Gyula Csapó, Zsolt Serei, Barnabás Dukay, Gábor Kósa, and Balázs Szunyogh, and I understand that a new group has just been formed to perform minimal music, the 180 Csoport (Group

180). The situation certainly looks healthy enough, and there are enough young composers on the way up to hope that there might be another Ligeti or Kurtág amongst them.

MARGARET P. MCLAY

## MUSIC OF OUR AGE FESTIVAL, 1982

The ninth Music of our Age festival was held in Budapest in October 1982. Since its inception in 1974, this festival of new music has presented a selection of new Hungarian works to the public and international critics. The main aims have been to offer first performances of major works, to devote full concerts to individual composers—Zsolt Durkó in 1974, György Kurtág in 1975 and 1981, Rudolf Maros in 1977—and also to provide a wider view of the contemporary international scene. Thus to make up for the neglects and rejections of Hungarian music policy in the fifties, the festival has tried to embrace works which are by now standard in the international repertory. The emphasis however has largely been on the mainstream with retrospectives of Penderecki, Lutoslawski, Ligeti, Nono, Xenakis, Berio. For these occasions a series of new interviews with the composers themselves are published by Editio Musica. The presence of composers, sometimes as contributors, adds to the appeal. As with most festivals of modern music, there are evenings built around virtuoso performers (Cathy Berberian, the percussionist Sylvio Gualda, the flautist István Matuz, the cimbalom player Márta Fábíán).

The 1982 festival had ten concerts, and opened with an evening devoted to Lutoslawski. The composer himself conducted the Hungarian State Symphony Orchestra in the Hungarian première of both his *Novelette* (1979) and his *Double Concerto* (1980), the latter with the same soloists of

the Lucerne world première, Heinz and Ursula Holliger. Neither work evoked such a deep emotional response as did the *Mi-parti* première in the autumn of 1978. But the sparkling theatricality of *Novelette* added new features, while the closing movement, the soul of the work, carried the familiar sense of Lutoslawski's lyricism. The *Double Concerto*, superbly played by the Holligers, a wealth of elegant and witty ideas, excelled with its *dolente* middle movement. There the unusual colours were given substance, the *cantilena* of the oboe was consummated in a memorable, modern lament.

The retrospective concerts had much to offer both in their programmes and in the standard of the interpretations. Through the good offices of the Kontarsky brothers (electronics: Hans Peter Haller) Stockhausen's *Mantra*, a gigantic work composed in 1970, rightly held by many to be a milestone of modern music, was heard for the first time in a public concert in Hungary. It was a display of incredible intellectual and auditory control over every bar, and hence over the organization of the work, and imaginative in the subtleties of colour and characterization. The Kontarskys presented the work at an extraordinarily high standard. I am not an enthusiast of philosophical titles, but in this instance the ideological mist dissipated within moments and for an hour the audience could witness the invention, sensitive musicality, and the power of intellect behind the work.



Geoffrey Douglas Madge's recital was recreation in the historic sense spiritually, musically and technically alike. (The venue for this concert and for the Strasbourg percussionists was the concert hall of the Vigadó and not the Academy of Music.) Under the title "Russian Piano Music of the 1920s," Madge revived six interesting works, prophetic in character, and in more than one instance by composers considered avant-garde in their time. The composers ranged through the significant, the talented, to just possibly eccentric composers; the Hungarian public was only familiar with the name of Shostakovich (Sonata No. 1). These stimulating, sensitive interpretations by the Australian pianist convincingly demonstrated the liveliness and wide horizons of Soviet composers just embarking on their careers at that time. Roslavets, Lourié, Mosolov, Alexandrov, and Obukhov are all worthy of retrospective attention. Their work reveals that for most of his Russian contemporaries Scriabin was the great fermenter; it is also clear how informed and receptive to all European music the Lunacharsky era was.

After somewhat outmoded and rather enervated works by Kabeláč and Serocki (*Eight Inventions, Continuum*) the Strasbourg percussionists played two movements of *Pléiades* by Xenakis, also a Hungarian première. Concentration and discipline was combined in their performance with a joyful spontaneity which conveyed this message from 1979 with total commitment. Both movements reveal the inner, one might say melodic life of a single variety of colour, serving one or two basic principles with a very intensive exploitation of rhythm and sound. The succession of repetitions and variants, the mutual transitions into each other of orderly development and elements of unpredictable distortion, the never flaunted but always fearsome display of strength, the obstinacy of the intellect and the release of the imagination—these are all the shaping, organizing, stimulating though not defini-

tive elements of this elemental music which draws on two roots, the conjunction of the barbarian and Greek spiritual worlds.

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Hungarian music was presented at the festival in several varieties. The "Group 180," formed two years ago, is influenced by Frederic Rzewski, is strongly committed to rhythm, has a talent for improvisation, and its performances have the liveliness of those by pop-singers. Indeed, the Budapest Technical University generally provides a venue for its performances in a student club type environment. Its festival presentation provided an insight into the workshops of three composers. László Melis in one composition created a montage from the text of a short story by Péter Hajnóczy and from musical material associating the sound of a simple church organ (*The Ritual*); in the *Étude for Three Mirrors* he seemed to follow the somewhat aggressive tone of the repetitive school. András Soós in a short piece (*Play on Tone Colour*) omitting the gestures of both start and conclusion used various instruments and combinations of instruments to create incessantly changing separate tone colours. The piece I found most interesting was *Water Miracle* by Tibor Szemző for flute which begins with repetitions of a single tone, and with the help of feed-back, something like a rolling snowball, builds up into a medley of several voices.

One of the most original of young Hungarian composers, who for the first time had an evening devoted to his work, is István Mártha. It was he who was the leading light in the creation of "Group of 180" though he has subsequently parted with them. The highlights in his concert came from a few evocative excerpts from an opera in preparation (Alexander Blok: *Play-acting*) and especially from *Christmas Day*. This latter piece, conceived for piano and six optional instruments (possibly



electronic), was included in the list of recommended works from composers under thirty at the Paris Rostrum of Composers in 1982. We heard it again in a new version. The musical material, which flirts with folk melopoeia, medieval-Renaissance musical sound, and jazz, dresses itself in a different orchestration at every performance: it is the first successful piece in Hungary of what is known as the neo-simplicity trend. The electronic piece *Sounds of the Museum* indicated Mártha's interest in the modern *stile rappresentativo*.

The New Music Studio ensemble of Budapest also gave a separate concert at the festival. This group of composers, who were influenced primarily by the work and musical ideas of John Cage, non-expressive aesthetics, and some international figures in minimalist art, have been stubbornly going their own road for nearly ten years and are ignoring the new trends which have emerged on the musical horizon since then. Strong introspection continues to characterize them; the meditative or ritualistic rather than concert quality marks their compositions and performances. The basic material is usually simple, few in number and is marked by constant change and frequent permutation. The individual parts may not be technically difficult to perform, but the total sound is complex and organized in a communicative articulation, very often at an unchanging and low, monotonous dynamic level. These works sometimes resemble experiments, sometimes hypnosis, sometimes even have an *étude* character; but by no means are they concert hall pieces. The Studio's programme this year again, as it generally does, offered premières of works by foreign composers of related disposition which were unfamiliar in Hungary (Cage: *Winter Music*, Steve Reich: *Six Pianos*, a work from each of the founding and regular members of the Studio: Zoltán Jeney, László Sály, László Vidovszky, and Barnabás Dukay). Among these, only László Sály's piece *Pebble Rattling in a Jug* in a two-

piano version was something new. In style it is typical of Sály and is characterized by the constantly changing order of a few notes. Another work by Sály was also heard in the programme of the festival, in a performance by the Budapest Philharmonic Society's orchestra, conducted by András Ligeti. This work, *Music for 24 String and 24 Wind Instruments*, is a tribute to the composer's teacher, Endre Szervánszky, who died a few years ago. The work is based on a 12-tone row, which is heard in two forms (in the strings with a melodic, in the winds harmonic character). At this same concert a former pupil of Stockhausen's, László Dubrovay, had his Concerto No. 2 for flute and 40 strings performed; Dubrovay writes for the most part in a microchromatic-acoustical sound system. A leading performer of modern music in Hungary, István Matuz, played the solo part, brilliantly.

But the real event of this festival was the concert at which works were heard from two members of the 50-year-old generation. László Kalmár's title *Readings* (1981) indicates that these pieces, beautifully scored and exploiting fully the historical and technical possibility in linear polyphony, are merely notations in principle of a musical conception: for a real presentation by flesh and blood musicians they have to be worked out each time. For this concert the composer gave four of the fourteen readings the colours of the flute, the clarinet, the bassoon, the horn, the trumpet, the trombone, the cello, the double bass, and the piano; by inserting variation movements he turned the four pieces into a six-movement cycle. This performance demonstrated the piece's architecture; it also showed us the appealing shy lyricism of the composer and his artistry of expression.

The second part of the concert was devoted to the confessional world of György Kurtág.\* The twenty song miniatures

\* *NHQ* 62, 85.



written for poetic fragments of Attila József were sung twice by Adrienne Csengery, to whom the cycle was dedicated. Between the two performances the composer and his wife alternately or together played fifteen miniatures on the piano—laments, capriccios, and pieces of *hommage*, extracts from the fifth volume of *Games* now at press. Kurtág does not consider this work, intended originally for teaching purposes, but like Bartók's *Mikrokosmos*, developed into a compositional album, as closed. The two performances of the songs this time were a repetition making possible a more precise and better understanding and at the same time a display of two versions of the work. The significance of the cycle in Kurtág's oeuvre is threefold. Primarily it documents the first time his encounter with a major poet who has exerted the greatest influence on present-day Hungarian poetry. Secondly it was written for a single solo voice, without any accompaniment whatever. After seven hundred years of European polyphony, to return, even if temporarily, to monody is a significant undertaking and speaks of the presence of a melodic invention *par excellence*. The echantment of this new monody to the Hungarian ear consists in the fact that it takes the individual, subjective tone of the *Lied* to that communal medium which for centuries had carried the Hungarian peasant song and the Gregorian chant. The third noteworthy feature of the cycle is that in the case of most songs, it offers possible variants on the basic versions, and more than once verse settings composed in two different ways, alternatives between the adorned or the plain, the embellished or the simple; in fact there is even a song which gives the performer the possibility of several kinds of combinations of these four basic versions. To these should be added the variants of expression, the extreme possibilities of which are recommended by the composer. The songs, with one exception, are the set-

ting to music of the complete poetic text of the Attila József fragments. The principal attraction for Kurtág was obviously an aphoristic poetic formulation of a feeling or a thought, and a text that in only two instances extends to four short lines; after all he has always been a composer of miniature. All of the songs date from between May and October 1981. For me the setting of the words "The water turns mushy, the ice forms and our sins congeal as death," revealed most hauntingly Kurtág's drive to the tragic in the soul. Familiar was the tone, the frightening laughter of "They were many and surrounded me," his diabolic scherzo, of his virtuoso capriccios, the coloraturas of "Time yields on the run," the ease, lightness of touch, and the freedom of shape in the echoes of "For seven—I ask myself—do you give six," and the jigsaw pattern of "I am amazed, that I expire." Kurtág's most individual voice is heard in the "I have nothing to do with anyone," the welding of the slow *csárdás* with the *perpetuum mobile* character, in the song "There will be soft flesh," where the folk-song like, plainsong-like beginning is gradually mistuned, or in the contrast between the colourless non-legatos versus the pianissimo legatissimos of the song entitled: "My Garden." However, if I endeavour to survey this major work, which Adrienne Csengery gave a totally committed interpretation of, then I must emphasize two facts. One is this unmistakable, triumphant rebirth of melody—but not neo-romanticism—in new music, and the other concerns Kurtág as a composer who seems to possess now a brilliant oeuvre, and one which deserves an important place in today's music. The Attila József song cycle added to this world, not so much to its breadth, but to its depth and intensity.

A festival of contemporary music can surely not do more than present us a work of this quality.

GYÖRGY KROÓ



## INTERPRETATIONS

*New records by Zoltán Kocsis, Dezső Ránki, Miklós Perényi, and the Éder Quartet*

If Zoltán Kocsis and Dezső Ránki dominate the Hungarian concert scene to the extent that they seem lately to have dominated its recording studios, they must be extremely busy young pianists. Luckily their musical personalities are very different, to judge anyway from their recorded performances. To use Nietzschean terminology, Ránki seems an Apollonian, Kocsis a Dionysian. Ránki's style and repertory suggest classical leanings. Kocsis's whole idiom is more turbulent, his repertory large and his enthusiasms restless and wide-ranging. He has studied and edited Bartók, he has made Lisztian piano transcriptions of bleeding chunks of Wagner, Berlioz and no doubt others, he has worked with the New Music Studio, and he has composed music of his own. All these activities except the last are represented on records made in the last four years or so, and Kocsis survives the scrutiny amazingly well.

Kocsis's most important recordings are of solo piano music by Bartók, and although these are not his most recent (or at least not so far as I know), readers will forgive me if I deal with them first since they convey the virtues of a temperament like Kocsis's better than anything else. In the late seventies Kocsis worked with Somfai on editing Bartók's own recordings for the big centenary Hungaroton albums (which I reviewed in *NHQ* 86), and it seems to have been at least partly through this extended contact with the composer's playing that he perfected a Bartók style which is, to my mind, as true to the music as anything to be heard today. When Kocsis's recording for Philips of the *Improvisations* and *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, among other works, came out about 18 months ago (9500 876) it coincided with a recording by Murray Perahia of the *Improvisations*, *Sonata*, *Suite* and *Out of Doors*, and one could immediately

see that, despite Perahia's superb pianism, there was an element of feeling in Kocsis's playing which was completely missing from his rival's. This feeling expresses itself as a freedom, but only within tightly held limits—perhaps fluidity would be a better word, though even that doesn't quite hit off the muscular character of the endeavour. It's the same when one tries to describe Bartók's playing; the control and physical strength are there, but they are bodily, not mechanical, functions. Kocsis has learnt from the composer how to make the music breathe.

Whether, at the editorial level, he takes this empathy too far is a moot question. In his Hungaroton recording (SLPX 12068, made in 1978) he already adopts textual variants taken from Bartók's recordings, which is obviously a dangerous principle, even though we know that Bartók himself varied many details of the music in performance. After all it was his music, and in any case he must have played it so often (especially the popular shorter works like the *Rumanian Folk Dances*) that he might well start slipping in variants without necessarily meaning them to be taken as holy writ forever after. Kocsis also follows Bartók in excerpting the *15 Hungarian Peasant Songs*, playing nos. 7–15 only (Bartók, in his recordings, plays this group but omits nos. 11 and 13). Bartók obviously did this because he had to come up with a version of the work that would fit on one side of a 78 record, so it seems a pity for Kocsis to do it (without, of course, the minor excisions) on an LP side which is far from full at some 23 minutes. Why on earth didn't he simply play the whole work?

However, the essential point I am trying to make is that Kocsis's whole approach reveals a certain love of experimentation which is exactly what makes him such an



interesting all-round musician. Only through a willingness to break out of a simple, pedantic allegiance to the printed text could he ever achieve the variety of touch and phrasing which miraculously turns the *Suite*, op. 14, the *Sonata*, and the *Allegro barbaro* from music which grinds into music which dances. It may be that we have yet to reap full advantages of this quality in music not by Bartók (again I stress that I'm only talking about gramophone records). There are many wonderful touches, it's true, in the miscellany of performances reissued under the catch-all title 'Zoltán Kocsis in Concert' (SLPX 12239): some coruscating Liszt ('Venezia e Napoli'), richly eloquent and committed Rachmaninov, fine early performances of Chopin's G minor Ballade and the *Three Studies* of Bartók; but the recordings are for the most part fairly murky, there is audience noise, and the programme is too messy to give settled enjoyment. On the other hand Kocsis's admirable playing (SLPD 12434) of Wagner transcriptions (his own and Liszt's) cannot quite chase away a natural preference for hearing the music, as most of us can now fairly readily do, in its correct vocal-orchestral dress. I know that some musicians and critics would like to see a revival of the 19th century operatic paraphrase. But to me this is blind worship of history devoid of any sense of history. Liszt wrote his transcriptions for a public which often had to wait years to hear a new work and then years more to hear it again (Schumann actually reviewed Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* from Liszt's arrangement, and though he made a very fine job of it he would hardly get away with that today). Today our problem is more likely to be that we hear some works too often rather than too seldom, and it hardly seems that hearing them transcribed will solve that.

Ránki's latest records apparently reveal a more singleminded, less restless personality, and in some respects also a more reserved style. His performance of the Chopin

Preludes (SLPX 13216) is recognisably the work of the same pianist who, some years before, recorded the *Studies* of op. 10 in a manner devoid of ostentatious *rubato* (give and take in rhythm) and with a restrained use of the sustaining pedal presumably designed to bring out that finger articulation which is such a dazzling feature of Ránki's pianism. In the preludes too the pointing of phrases is extremely subtle and never at all demonstrative. At its best, in say the D flat, the approach yields a fine simplicity of line and feeling. But it can also seem wilfully hygienic and inexpressive. To take a simple example which anyone can check against his own feeling, and even perhaps playing, listen to the twelfth bar of the E minor Prelude (no. 4.), a simple, cadenza-like figure which seems to cry out for a momentary break in the crotchet pulse but which Ránki plays in nearly strict tempo. This cannot however be due to a distaste for *rubato* as such, but is more probably due to a distaste for the obvious. Ránki does make a hold at this bar, but on the upbeat to it rather than in the bar itself. It's an interesting idea which alters the conventional focus of the music, since what Chopin wrote seems to have been designed to delay the resolution of the dissonance of the first beat of bar 13, whereas Ránki delays the arrival of the dissonance but allows it to resolve in normal time. He thereby suggests the following thought: in Chopin's time, perhaps, the dominant minor thirteenth chord in bar 12 was a sufficiently tense discord for there to be an expressive value in delaying its resolution, teasing the listener's expectations; but now this discord has lost its bite, is itself predictable, and so the most expressive thing to do with the phrase is to delay the dissonance itself. I should perhaps add that the slight hold on this upbeat A (in bar 11) is in keeping with Ránki's playing of the whole prelude, as he leans almost imperceptibly on the final crotchet of each bar.

Although Chopin himself was famous as



a fastidious artist, I think he would have been suprised to hear his music played so straight. He almost certainly cultivated more right-hand *rubato* than most modern pianists can quite bring themselves to affect (though amateur pianists probably have fewer inhibitions in this respect). But it seems likely that the puritanical modern professional approach to romantic piano music (and no doubt other music as well) will soon begin to break down in the face of historical studies of performance practice similar to those which, since the last war, have progressively changed attitudes towards the performance of baroque music. It will be interesting to see how leading pianists like Ránki respond if and when this happens.

I had just listened to Ránki's beautiful performance of the F major Ballade on the old studies record (LPX 11555) when I turned to his more recent Stravinsky album (SLPX 12424) and put on the curiously misnamed *Serenade*. It was Casella who first drew attention to the resemblance between Stravinsky's opening theme and a phrase in the opening passage of the Ballade (even the key is the same, if one takes the Stravinsky out of its total context). But nobody has ever suggested any expressive similarity between the two figures, of course, and Ránki plays the *Serenade* opening with suitable rhetorical boldness, a candid unrestrained energy. Although Stravinsky's piano music may not match up to his very best work (or perhaps precisely because of this) it raises few problems of interpretation. The main disagreements are over tempo, a question on which one might innocently expect Stravinsky to have been precise, but where his scores are curiously even now full of mistakes. For example, when he made his rearrangement of the 'Danse sacrale' from *The Rite of Spring* for separate publication in the USA in 1943 he changed the basic time unit from a semiquaver to a quaver; but, incredibly, the edition was published with the metronome unit unal-

tered at *quaver* 126. To come back to the case in point, the *Serenade* was originally published with the marking crotchet 58, though in the MS it is given as *dotted* crotchet 58—a more understandable discrepancy but one which of course radically affects the way the first movement is played. It may explain the great difference in tempo between Ránki's performance and the recently issued one by Michel Beroff (a record which offers an identical programme of works). But Ránki, with his faster tempo, is surely in the right here, though I'm not so sure about his much slower tempo for the *Tango*, which produces something like a parody of that sleazy but surely quite mobile dance.

Taken as a whole this is a delightful record, which adds brilliant performances of the *Three Movements from Petruska*, the *Sonata* (1924) and the *Piano Rag Music* while bringing out the wit of the *Tango* and the intriguing thrown stresses of the *Sonata* and *Serenade*. The recording is also bright and helpful, where in the *Preludes* record it was a shade too resonant, and in the *Studies* too lacking in immediacy. Incidentally none of these recordings is digital, except for the Kocsis Wagner transcriptions.

Both these young pianists, have also proved themselves on record as first-rate chamber musicians. Kocsis is Miklós Perényi's partner in an exuberant recording of the Brahms cello sonatas (SLPX 12123), and Ránki has also partnered Perényi in a fine complete set of the Beethoven sonatas (SLPX 11928-30). But Perényi's own most notable recent achievement is his complete recording of the Bach suites for unaccompanied cello (SLPX 12270-72). Perényi's playing was unknown to me before I heard these various recordings. But the Bach set, in particular, shows that he is a cellist of formidable technical control, a big, vibrant tone, and a quick musical sensibility. The Bach he plays, as one would hope, with a good deal less vibrato than he brings to Beethoven and Brahms, though without



eschewing that resource completely, in the manner of Harnoncourt. His C minor Suite has a brooding intensity which almost looks forward to Mozart's feeling for that key. But there is nothing of the Tortelier theatrical flourish about Perényi's style, which flows smoothly through these essentially linear pieces, indulging in rhetoric only at obvious or inevitable places like the multiple-stopped chords of the D major Suite, written for a five-stringed instrument. His tuning is immaculate, and he plays all the repeats.

Another useful Stravinsky record brings together two more excellent Hungarian pianists, Ádám Fellegi and Klára Körmendi, in the relatively little played but very powerful Concerto for two pianos, which Stravinsky wrote for himself to play with his son Soulima. Good recordings of this work are like gold-dust, so the present version should have a good market outside Hungary as well as inside despite a few untidinesses of ensemble which suggest that, in course of time, these two musicians would probably be able to produce an even finer performance. The coupling is enterprising, but perhaps less cleverly angled towards the overseas market. Szabolcs Esztényi's Concertino for two pianos (in which the composer joins Miss Körmendi) though a colourful and even rather exciting work, is not likely to attract buyers who have not heard of this Warsaw-based composer, while Vidovszky's *Double* for pre-

pared pianos is a fairly unremarkable exploitation of a medium which to initiates is hardly a novelty in itself, and to non-initiates merely suggests a modish avantgarderie. However, both works stimulate excellent pianism and are for that reason alone well worth investigating.

Two new issues from the Éder Quartet confirm the excellent impression this young ensemble has made in its London concerts. Their stylish and musicianly playing of Mozart's D major and B flat 'Prussian' quartets (K. 575 and 589, on SLPX 12128) is matched by a warm, well-balanced recording. They have also recently recorded, for the West German company Telefunken (6.35552 FK), the six quartets of Bartók. Their playing here is masterly, rich both in expressive colour and in wit (listen, for example, to their magical and so far as I know quite original handling of the *sul ponticello* embellishments at figure 4 in the *Prima parte* of the Third Quartet), but also intellectually mature as their superb delivery of the opening movements of the Fourth and Fifth Quartets conclusively demonstrates. Slight errors of balance—in the First Quartet the leader is too far back even allowing for a certain deliberate perspective in Bartók's dynamic markings—are probably due to the recording, since there is no sign of this defect in the Mozart record. In any case it's a most enjoyable and absorbing issue.

STEPHEN WALSH



# THEATRE AND FILM

## A THEATRE OF DEBATE

Gyula Illyés: *Tiszták* (The Pure); *Kegyenc* (The Favourite); János Székely: *Vak Béla király* (King Béla the Blind); Ferenc Karinthy: *Négykezes* (For Four Hands); Ferenc Molnár: *Olympia*; Irén Kiss: *Csontváry*; Chekhov premières

Gyula Hernádi, one of the most prolific contemporary Hungarian playwrights and the script-writer for Miklós Jancsó's films, has launched a controversy in the weekly *Élet és Irodalom*. He argues that the dramatist was defenceless in the face of the despotism of theatres and the terror of directors; furthermore, he was not even decently rewarded for his ordeal since writing a play is the least profitable undertaking available to a Hungarian writer today. There was a rush to pick up the gauntlet and now we find a full-scale debate on the theatre in full spate. Hernádi, an immaculately elegant joker, was able to add to the debate an overtone of cultural policy. Soon after his article appeared, he took part in a professional conference on new Hungarian drama where he laid into two directors, Gábor Székely and Gábor Zsámbéki, who had just left the National and had begun to work free-lance with the Katona József Theatre. (I have already written in these pages about their remarkable work and about some of its doubtful aspects.) Hernádi said that "Anyone who doesn't consider the new Hungarian national drama a key question wouldn't get a dog-house from me, much less a theatre." Some of those at the conference thought the phrase "pig-pen" rather than dog-house was used. What is clear is that the dispute over contemporary Hungarian drama is rampant while there is nothing remarkable or worthy of attention happening on the stage itself. There are also full-blooded arguments going on over

the function of the National Theatre. While this institute is trying to find a new course under its new direction, its former „masters” are staging one excellent production after the other in the Katona József Theatre. This, of course, is no justification for their utmost exclusive dependence on world literature; however, and especially among students and the young intelligentsia, this theatre now deservedly enjoys the greatest popularity in Budapest.

What can be seen today in theatres in the capital and the provinces? Primarily stylistic exercises. The very title, in fact, of a recent production in the Katona József Theatre. "Stylistic Exercises" was based on a text by Raymond Queneau, and a young director, László Salamon Suba, a recent graduate of the academy, gave us one of the most amusing evenings to be seen in the theatre for some time. The three young actors "Hungarianized" everything, right down the author's name—on the posters, "Könó"—and thus contributed to the ironic effect. All three of them, János Bán, György Dörner, and Sándor Gáspár, played their series of stage études with the gauche enthusiasm of aspiring actors conditioning for drama college. There is no "message" in this slapstick comedy: the play has simply been given into its rights.

Two further French plays could be considered also stylistic exercises. István Szőke, who continues to work in Miskolc, finally got the opportunity to stage some-



thing for a studio theatre seating sixty; he chose Boris Vian's "military vaudeville", *Mindenkit megnyúzunk* (We Skin Everybody), written in 1946. This fiercely anti-war farce respects no authority, no rules: it is the story of a madcap French family who, at the time of the Normandy landings, continue to engage in their hectic petty-bourgeois life without any concern for history. The father supports his family though horse-skinning, but if any other creature happens to stagger past his workshop, well, the work continues. The father is a man passionate about his work because—it emerges—his weakness as a man does not enable him to love his unbearable wife. In contrast, all the other members of the family jump onto anybody with the utmost ease. It is slapstick pure and simple, without any deeper meaning but as a stylistic exercise it is amusing and funny and evokes memories of silent films.

László Babarczy, Director of the Kaposvár theatre, considered to be the best in Hungary, guested at the Katona József Theatre. He revived a Kaposvár production of some years ago, a parody of Dumas's *The Three Musketeers*, first performed there in 1974. Two barkers, straight out of the circus, narrate the story as a sports event in which horses are replaced by racing-bicycles, the heaving river is represented by a pan of water, and the King, the Queen, and the Duke Buckingham sing an opera parody by virtue of the eternal triangle. The story has neither head nor tail, and the episodes follow one another in lightning succession—they take place on an ever-revolving stage. There is magic in this mad cavalcade and the full-blooded and light-hearted production packs the house every evening.

Apart from stylistic exercises, classics are being performed in various styles: Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Molière, Victor Hugo, and, first and foremost, Chekhov. More of this later. There have also been, of course, Hungarian premières and revivals but it seems that the debate is absorbing

more energy just now that the work itself. Neither of these premières has a claim to eternity.

The late Gyula Illyés celebrated his 80th birthday on November 2. On the occasion the National Theatre put on his tragedy *Tiszták* (The Pure), written ten years ago; the Kaposvár theatre put on his *Kegyenc* (The Favourite), an historical drama set in Rome which he wrote twenty years ago. "The Pure" revolves around one of the ideas running through Illyés's work: it is about the specialness of small ethnic communities (in the play, the problem is the right of the Albigensian Cathari to a free life), and the greater moral responsibility involved in their fate. Illyés is a poet and essayist even when writing dialogue. Unfortunately, the National did not know what to do with Illyés: the play is performed with obsolete pathos and chest-thumping declamation. Good actors are lost in this and struggle with roles which merit a better fate. They are, in fact, victims in the theatre debate: the new directors at the National—well-proven talents—want to perform Hungarian plays at any cost, to counterbalance the new Katona József Theatre. (Székely and Zsám-béki, when in the National Theatre, were indifferent to Hungarian drama and proclaimed that the primary concern of the National Theatre should be to offer excellent plays of any nationality.) Thus "The Pure" is an organic part of the new repertoire but the performance does not rise to the intellectual standard of Illyés and produces the exact opposite of its intended effect. Clumsy scenery, bad costumes, absence of any concept—in short, a flop.

Nor has Kaposvár lived up this time to its good name. Although they came home from BITEF in Belgrade with six first prizes (with János Ács's version of *Marat/Sade* which Hungarian critics also chose as the best performance of 1981–82), their production of Illyés's *Kegyenc* (The Favourite) (based on an 1841 play by László Teleki) was rather jerky. According to the play,



Petronius Maximus, a wise Roman patrician, realizes that the empire is threatened from the outside and reacts by turning the capricious and weak emperor Valentinian into a tyrant with the assumption that only unlimited power and prestige incorporated in one person can save the empire. Illyés is signalling, and sensitively, that tyranny does not emerge spontaneously but is the product of certain conditions and of the "character" of an age and a people. Petronius Maximus realizes the error of his thinking only when he is personally affected by the tyranny of Valentinian: the emperor, in what is almost an experiment to test the limits of obedience, makes Petronius' wife his mistress. The patrician would tolerate even this in the hypothetical interest of the community but when, by a coincidence of circumstances, things come to a head he realizes that despotism can never be a political solution. On his orders, the hangman, ever present on stage, dispatches the emperor. While the people wish to proclaim Maximus and their new ruler, he swallows poison. Pure morality engages in self-criticism after choosing a bad solution and thus prepares a *tabula rasa* for the renewal of Rome. As Illyés has it, a people must extricate themselves from the deepest crisis in the same agony and torment as a mother in childbirth. History commands communities which went wrong to assume the role of both mother and infant and create their new self.

László Babarczy's production does not pay heed to the historical layer of the play. It is not the Romans that he is interested in but rather what is valid today. Among the columns of the set, his actors are dressed for judo and fight on a judo mat. The idea is carried through consistently, unfortunately it does not always sit very well with the text; as such, it often remains an alien, aggressive symbol. The use of sound, however, is fascinating. The play moves to and fro between the extremes of silences stifled to soundlessness and loud scream-like

shouts. Through this the hysterical quality of the figures and the historical situation of utter defencelessness are well demonstrated. It is a pity that the same actors who were so splendid in *Marat/Sade* are unable to enter into the mood of the play.

János Székely, a member of the Hungarian minority in Rumania, writes ethical dramas which probe history. His work consists of theses and parables: this is both their merit and fault. His *Vak Béla király* (King Béla the Blind) draws on medieval Hungarian history for its subject. Béla's uncle had him blinded in childhood to make him unfit to rule and thus not to represent a threat to the throne. However, the blind man—and the symbol is written large over him—sees more sharply and accurately than the heirs apparent to the throne. He becomes king because he is the only one who can ensure the continuity of the dynasty. The two large factions among the nobility, however, do not long put up with Béla's policy of reconciliation of interest and of working for unity. His uncle only had him to be blinded but he as king must approve the mass slaughter of adversaries. Székely's text is weighed by a profound sadness and an historical scepticism. He suggest that mankind is blind, not the king. But there is something missing throughout the play: the thinking in moral categories leaves us one choice, between Bad and Worse. Life and liveliness, the unexpected, cannot find their way into the rigid structure of the theses. László Marton created an austere production in the Pesti Theatre in which all the emphasis is put on the ideas—the huge mobile scenery in the form of a cross acts only as a background and mood-giver to the play. There is nothing of the pictorial history-book in this production; a plain and respectful handling of the text reveals its limits.

The *Játékszín*, which has no company of its own, will, from January 1, 1983 onwards, be exclusively a home for Hungarian plays, classic and modern. As a sort of preview, two plays by Ferenc Karinthy



were staged recently under the title *Négykezes* (For four-hands). Each of these plays has two characters; they are *Bösendorfer* (Steinway Grand) and *Dunakanyar* (Danube Bend). The first is about a man who in his loneliness and boredom phones an old woman who wants to sell her piano and pesters her in the guise of a number of potential buyers. In the second, the lonely waitress of a small bar and the also lonely guest who has dropped in after closing time befriend each other in a witty duel of men and women. The old woman in "Steinway Grand" is played excellently by Margit Makay, herself 92, and the would-be buyer is András Márton who has probably the best vocal technique among younger actors. In "Danube Bend," the waitress is Éva Ruttkai, one of the best Hungarian actresses, and her partner is the popular István Sztankay. These not very profound though elegant plays fully justify the fact that they have stood the test of fifteen years on the stage. They have exactly the same effect that they had in 1956, only the cast has changed.

So much for the new Hungarian drama.

It was quite an event when, after 66 years, Ferenc Molnár, the only Hungarian twentieth-century dramatist who has a world reputation, was finally played at the National Theatre. As part of the new policy this certainly merits appreciation. Miklós Gábor, actor and director, finally broke away from the unfortunate tradition of playing Molnár in Hungary and moved the play *Olympia* not downwards (in the direction of cabaret and comedians) but upwards, towards analytical, psychologically authentic comedies exploring character. The plot is around a lesson given to a young and reserved princess who has been a widow for eleven years. The dashing cavalry officer who is actually in love with her manages to trick this splendid woman—most careful of her reputation—into spending a night with him. Through clever dramatization and splendid dialogue, these figures from the

Austro-Hungarian Monarchy offer themselves for light-hearted laughter. This witty, dazzling play from a writer born 105 years ago proves that Molnár remains perennially young where a production is well thought out and executed.

Irén Kiss, on the other hand, is young and a poet. Her first play, staged on the rehearsal stage of the *Vígyszínház*, is about an episode in the life of Tivadar Csontváry Kosztka, the Hungarian painter whose insane genius fought with his visions. In the play Csontváry converses with the sovereign who ruled from 1848 to 1916, Francis Joseph I, a charcoal drawing of whom is hanging on the wall; in a studio apartment which bears more resemblance to a junkshop, the painter thinks aloud while planning a comprehensive great work. A monologue, it is beautifully written; it is certainly not very dramatic but, as often in such cases, it provides a good opportunity for an actor and the young Sándor Szakácsi avails himself of this chance to the full. In Budapest, so poor in studio and avant garde theatres, we must be glad to have this "undramatic" new play performed.

"Play Chekhov and I will tell what sort of theatre you are!"—this is the new adage in the theatre world. There are three performances of *Uncle Vanya*, one of *The Seagull*, one of *The Wood Demon*, and *Cherry Orchard* is produced in Pécs by guest director Galina Volchek. In addition, the Hungarian company from Újvidék in Yugoslavia put on three Chekhov plays under the direction of György Harag, one of the best Hungarian directors who himself works in Kolozsvár in Rumania. Some critics are already speaking of Chekhov-overdosing; these same critics are involved in the current theatre controversy in which they are voicing sharply contrasting opinions on the contribution these presentations are bringing to our theatre today.

In general (except for the *Uncle Vanya* in the Madách Theatre) all these productions were quite remarkable although not without



flaws. Gábor Zsámbéki's quiet and rhythmical *The Wood Demon* and the dramatically related *Uncle Vanya* in the Szigligeti Theatre of Szolnok were the best. Both have broken away from the sentimental tradition of playing Chekhov (falling leaves, simmering samovars, gentle melancholy, etc.) and bring into relief the tragedy of marginal lives; in so doing, they offer a picture still valid of the delayed realization of a mistaken way of life.

The most enterprising, with a very characteristic formal arrangement, was István Horvai's production of *The Seagull* at the Vigszínház; Horvai has been directing Chekhov for many years and his *Platonov* was a masterpiece. Here Horvai's vision is not of art, talent, or the generation conflict

but—with a courage worthy of Chekhov—about life itself. Life, according to Horvai, passes in a way that is prostrates those who, in this great battlefield, concern themselves only with their own affairs—they are the living dead. Horvai and his designer, the Russian David Borovsky, put a little pond on the stage which exerts a fascinating effect. During the first three acts there is water in the pond, the clumsy even fall into it, and in the fourth act its thick ice symbolizes the ordeal of Nina, the "seagull," and the total failure of the human world from a philosophical standpoint. The performance is fascinating but it has many inconsistencies, too many aesthetic frills and some errors of casting.

TAMÁS TARJÁN

## THE WRITING ON THE PLACARD

Pál Sándor: *Daniel Takes a Train* (*Szerencsés Dániel*); Miklós Szurdi: *Midnight Rehearsal* (*Hatásvadászok*)

It was in the second half of the sixties that Miklós Szurdi first attracted notice as an actor and as the lead (believed to be an amateur) in Pál Sándor's first film "Clown on the Wall" (*Bobóc a falon*). In one scene, which has now become famous, the youthful characters organise a demonstration and the placard on which their slogans, demands and claims should have appeared was in fact blank. It was held up high by Miklós Szurdi himself. The blank placards symbolised a generation's simple but directionless rage to do something, a generation which had been born into a ready-made society.

Since then Miklós Szurdi has also got "older"—he is now thirty-three—and, along with his generation, he has begun to fill the blank placard. In contrast, through a string of very successful films ("Love Emilia," "The Strange Role," "The Solomon and Stick Show"), Pál Sándor has

confirmed the potential recognized in his early work.

Let me begin with Pál Sándor's "Daniel Takes a Train," from a script by Zsuzsa Tóth based on a short story by András Mezei. The story takes place during those critical days of December 1956 when it had become obvious that the October uprising had failed. Yet, in the minds of many people, only the distortions and illegalities of the preceding years lived on—the fear of the Rákosi era, of Stalinism and a return of the personality cult. No-one—or perhaps only a few—had a clear and realistic view of the October events or of the actual nature of the new authorities. More than two hundred thousand people left the country, crossing borders that were more or less still open: smuggling people out was still a profitable business. The flight from the past and from an unknown and dreaded future



was nothing short of an epidemic. Whether to leave or remain (whether to have faith, however sceptical, in the promises and policies of the new government) was the question that presented itself to many families and divided them. It set husbands and wives against one another and, at the time, also parents and children. Since then quite a number of those who fled have returned to Hungary and the overwhelming majority of those who remained abroad have become regular visitors and welcomed guests in their homeland.

Pál Sándor's story of the attempted flight of two adolescents, two friends—the Jewish Daniel Szerencsés and the gentile György Angeli—is free of anachronism or rosy hue in its presentation of the psychological and social atmosphere of the time. It is precisely in this historically accurate, indeed brave description of the period where the value of the film lies. For all Hungarian and foreign film-goers familiar with the situation in Hungary, it demonstrates how many changes of role and how many unfounded suspicions, prejudices and misconceptions had arisen and accumulated as a result of the pressure, humiliations and violations of law during the years of the Rákosi era. This of course also demonstrates the difficulties facing the new government. Consequently, among the enormous range of refugees it was equally possible to find former fascists and the guiltless who had been pursued. There were also the workers, the intelligensia and the peasants, the young and the old, those travelling alone and those with families, the guilty and the innocent—guilt and innocence being present in every human political shade including nazis, those active in the Rákosi repression, and those involved in atrocities during the uprising. Naturally, there were those who had developed a wanderlust for one reason or another—a thirst for adventure, careerism, simple claustrophobia caused by a sense of being shut in (later to be proved unfounded). For the most

part, however, they were simple and honest folk who had lost direction and had become used to the gap between words and deeds and, seeing the past in the future, had become incapable of believing in the new policies declared by the government.

The film excels in its representation of this heterogeneity. Although attention is focused mainly on the two young men, the film does bring to life a credible sense of Hungarian society at the time. Through its visual suggestive strength, it recreates all the tensions and adventures of that exciting and painful *Odyssey* from the capital to the other side of the border. The plot is concentrated around four main points. It begins with the two boys' departure and their touching farewells. The Jewish grandfather recites an ancient Jewish blessing in which he asks for God's mercy and protection on behalf of his grandchild who is about to embark on the great journey, and there is the hesitant anxiety of the two mothers worried about how the great adventure will turn out. It continues with a description of the journey itself, the jostling on the train. Then there are the scenes in Győr, in a crowded hotel on the main road to Vienna, where they wait together; some hysterical, some impatient, all uncertain as to whether the guides they had paid to lead them across would arrive or would be prevented by the new armed guardsmen. Finally, there is the parting of the two boys and the turning back of György Angeli and Daniel Szerencsés. The scenes of the journey and of the night spent in Győr are particularly apt. These are the points where we are given period pictures and where the subtlety of the human drama and the pain of the departure unfolds. The scene on the train, when they bid farewell by singing the national anthem is heart-rending. Moving too is the scene in the hotel in Győr where the elder Angeli persuaded by his son to join in the exodus meets the man responsible for nationalising his business; the latter has



himself just been released from prison, a victim of a show trial. However, it is not only a "victim" (who used to hate him and still does) that he sees amongst his fellow fugitives, but also his former arrestor, whom he now saves from the murderous rage of those who have recognised the political detective. He comes face to face with his own son, György Angeli, who is able to understand neither his father's generosity towards the person who ruined their lives, nor why this confrontation should finally induce the elder Angeli to stay at home.

In this fashion, the national tragedy disintegrates into the tragedy of the fate of individuals; all this is enhanced by the friendship between the two boys. The film's ending seems unfortunately to take a melodramatic turn. The two central characters decide to return to Budapest, a decision which is rather inconvincingly motivated. György Angeli then changes his mind yet again, jumps out of the train window and gets killed. Daniel Szerencsés, whose motivation for the return is unclear, persists in his decision to return home, and after what has become a meaningless adventure, jolts along sadly in the empty train heading towards Budapest. The director's intentions are of course clear—to make the availability of choice clear and to give the story a halfway optimistic ending.

Alternatively, he may simply have wished to make the film more eventful and appealing. However, this ending does not seem to follow naturally from what has gone before and there is a sense of action gratuite here. It throws in question Daniel's original intention without having given any prior indication of a "happy ending" implicit in his decision. For, by abandoning his attempt at emigration Daniel breaks with his girlfriend; he not only declines his mother's ambitious plans for career in America but quits the girl who (when her family left the country) was one—perhaps the only—reason for his wanting to leave.

György Angeli's accidental death has a rather *deus ex machina* feel to it.

All the same, it should be said that all this does not really undermine the values of the film which lie in the dramatic seriousness of its message and in the powerful suggestivity of its form. In "Daniel Takes a Train" the Hungarian cinema continues in its effort to acknowledge the past and does so with a frankness rarely found in the national cinema of many other countries. One might add that the film is also a hand stretched out in friendship towards those who once left their native land in despair but who have since returned—in spirit at least—and have made their peace with the new Hungary.

Pál Sándor uses a large cast and his casting and direction demonstrate his customary care and attention as do his choice of locations, visual sense, and the dramatic rhythm of the scenes. The two leads, Péter Rudolf and Sándor Zsótér (both newly discovered) are as authentic and accurate as the better known actors who have cameo roles, including Tamás Major, Dezső Garas, Teri Földi, András Kern, Gyula Bodrogi, Mari Törőcsik. Even more deserving of special attention is the brilliant camera work of Elemér Ragályi.

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Miklós Szurdi's "Midnight Rehearsal" takes place in our own time. The script was written by the director with Péter Endre Várkonyi and István Verebes. The film is the debut of not only its director but of the script-writers and of András Szalai, the cameraman. It has the characteristic freshness and originality of young people at the beginning of their careers. (Indeed, most of the actors are new to the screen.)

The actual story of the film is very straightforward. An important writer, whose first play is about to be produced by a provincial theatre company, is dying. However,



before rehearsals begin, the production is switched by some local authorities from the large auditorium to the studio theatre where this costume drama involving a large cast, cannot possibly be performed. As an alternative, the company is already rehearsing an operetta, "Three Young Girls," arranged from Schubert's music. At this point the writer—whom they have avoided telling of the switch—arrives from the capital in order to see rehearsals of his play. The trip is a sort of farewell present from the doctor who has been treating him. So the theatre company rehearses the piece for the old man, at first reluctantly and then with an increasing feeling for their humane mission, knowing that it will never be produced. The play is brought to an end only by the writer's death and the actors are free to return to "The Three Young Girls."

Summarized like this, the film may well sound sentimental and melodramatic and the danger of bathos is real. Fortunately, this does not happen. Its virtue lies in the very harshness with which this story of goodness is made human. There is a cathartic experience but no attempt at tear-jerking. In this role-playing community of people, all kinds of characters and emotions come together through argument, doubt and disagreement. All that they have in common is the fact of being actors living in the charm of their roles, whether they would or not, they break through their own barriers in their playacting of human friendship. All in all the film can be

regarded as an important work, one that pays homage to the theatre.

At the same time, it expresses a certain criticism of society and shows the absurdities of our own lives through the life of a theatre. It also bears witness to the fact that the generation which held up high the empty placard in Pál Sándor's earlier film, has found a manifesto to write for itself.

Through the authentic atmosphere underlying the film, one can sense that Miklós Szurdi is using actors from his own company and his own (the Pécs) theatre. The leading actor, Sándor Szakácsi is actually a reincarnation of himself on film. Emotional and not averse to dictatorial absolutism, yet the director still makes of him a figure who is all heart, who is overcome not only by the philanthropic gesture, but also by a love for his vocation and by the pain of having to abandon the play. He throws himself as passionately into these fake rehearsals as if he were creating a play that was actually going into performance. His fanaticism inspires the rest of the actors and the preparations for the phantom performance—the film's sense of humour is distinctly ironical—become the mirrorimage of a human drama with all the battles, frictions and intricacies that involves. The entire cast are excellent, the characters are convincing, and András Szalai's camera indicates that a new and important talent has arrived in the Hungarian cinema.

ERVIN GYERTYÁN



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"The Perils of the Arms Race and the Countervailing Power of Détente," 85.

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TARJÁN, Tamás (b. 1949). Critic, our regular theatre reviewer.

VADAS, József (b. 1946). Art critic. On the staff of Corvina Press. Writes regularly on art for various periodicals. See "Nature, Vision and Creation," *NHQ* 67. "Painting '77," 71, "István Farkas, Painter of Destiny," 74, "Art Nouveau from the 1900 Paris World Exhibition," 77, "An Art Course for Children in Budapest," 82, "Photo Balla," 85 and "Becalmed—Hungarian Art 1982," 88.

WALSH, Stephen (b. 1942). Musicologist. Read music at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. Since 1966 he has been 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, 88.

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