The New Hungarian Quarterly

The Interaction of Economics and Politics — *Imre Pozsgay*

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László Mednyánszky — A Hungarian "peintre maudit" — *Ildikó Nagy*

Fiction and Poetry — *Zsigmond Móricz, József Balázs, Ágnes Nemes Nagy, Sándor Rákos, Dezső Tandori*

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This issue went to press on August 2, 1979

INTERACTIONS

Gentle reader, you are not seeing double, nor has the compositor intruded a line a second time in the table of contents: two contributors to this issue are called József Balázs. One is a young writer, the other a senior student of international affairs who heads a section of the Hungarian Institute of Foreign Affairs.

József Balázs, the writer, had not published anything before his novel *Magyarok* (Hungarians), which turned out to be an immediate critical success and bestseller in 1975. In the third year of the Second World War landless peasants were recruited for agricultural work in Germany. Men who grew up on outback isolated homesteads see the sea for the first time but also come up against the world of concentration camps. "Receding White Carriages," the short story we publish in the present issue, shows the confrontation of a lone artist and characters from a Dostoevskian underworld, surviving fossils of a world that thrived on concentration camps.

József Balázs, the student of foreign affairs, discussing the meaning of détente, forces us to face a question which is not of merely historical or scholarly interest, but one of the burning issues of the day, and the morrow. Articles, speeches and books on détente published in recent years could fill libraries, and do fill sizable bibliographies. József Balázs's contribution transcends the political importance of the process, examining the logic and semantics of the subject. He shows that armament, the negative automatism of the present system of international relations, goes on unabated. Conflict situations cannot in any way be completely eliminated while two major systems exist in this world. As long as there are two major systems no kind of détente model can completely eliminate conflict situations which survive as a necessary operative cause. What is important is to establish the concrete foundations of cooperative coexistence between countries belonging to different socio-economic systems. This can be done

through a systematic policy of détente. Four conditions must be fulfilled to ensure the creation and ongoing functioning of such a process of détente. What they are is detailed in the article which, I hope, readers will now turn to.

The Hungarian body politic and public opinion as well, puts its trust in the functioning of the process of détente, and labours in its interests. Economic planning as well, for that very reason, presumes détente as a long term prospect, but détente in a world which is necessarily pregnant with conflict situations. Imre Pozsgay looks at interactions between political activity and the economy, and Béla Csikós-Nagy outlines the development plans of the Hungarian economy for the years ahead. The two articles are only apparently unconnected. The July 23rd 1979 rise in consumer prices in Hungary aroused a certain interest abroad towards the end of summer, and it is therefore likely that readers will turn to the piece by Béla Csikós-Nagy. I hope nevertheless that they will take my advice and read Imre Pozsgay's article first. True enough, there is not a word in it about price fixing, or price rises, but it thoroughly illuminates the political and social background which made it necessary to deal with consumer prices in 1979, and producers' prices in 1980. Those should read Imre Pozsgay's article with particular care who imagine that the realization of socialism is some sort of automatic process. They believe, and proclaim again and again that, once the means of production are taken into public ownership, socialism will automatically ensue. The truth is that as a result of nationalisation private property in the means of production, the biggest obstacle in the way of social planning, is removed, but this does not in itself mean mastery over all elemental powers that affect production. Special and group interests continue unabated, and may well become more powerful under the new relations of production.

Pozsgay's article also puts those who misinterpret planning in their place. The fact is that one cannot plan every condition of the process of production, some are always outside the province of decision-making. The international fuel crisis, or changes in demographic conditions are examples he gives.

Béla Csikós-Nagy sums up long term development plans concerning the Hungarian price-system. The most important points are: 1. Cost-adjusted consumer prices; 2. An organic relationship between domestic and foreign trade prices; 3. A more flexible price mechanism.

The article is really a summing up of extremely thorough work, practical and theoretical, extending over many years, and it would be unfair to both the author and readers if I were to try and describe this or that detail, thus upsetting the balance of the whole.

*

Hungarians tend to look on the celebration of anniversaries as a specifically national distemper; there is something in this, though it is the kind of fever that is part of the healing process. Anniversaries are an opportunity for re-reading, both the set texts that bored us at school, and also works that are a living part of the literary heritage which cannot be re-read too often. This year sees the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Zsigmond Móricz, and Miklós Radnóti would be seventy if the fascists had not murdered him when he was only thirty-five. At first sight it would be difficult to find two writers who are less like one another. Móricz is the Hungarian master of realist fiction, the continuator of traditions that have stood the test of time, while everyone thinks of Radnóti as one of the best of modern Hungarian poets, and that is what he was. Anniversary re-readings and revaluations can also help to refresh vested notions. Péter Nagy asks, in an article which for technical reasons has had to be held over to the next issue, how modern a writer Móricz was. He was born in the year Dostoevsky wrote "The Brothers Karamazov," and Henry James published "Daisy Miller." When he died Alexei Tolstoy was working on "Ivan the Terrible," and William Faulkner on "Go Down, Moses." This makes Móricz the contemporary of Thomas Mann, James Joyce and Franz Kafka. But was he that in a sense that goes beyond living at the same time? Péter Nagy, writing for Hungarian readers, and for NHQ, examines each of Móricz's major works in turn, pointing out what is traditional in them, and what is modern. We are, in this issue, publishing one of Móricz's short stories, "Tragedy," which presents tragic aspects of pre-war Hungarian peasant life in a manner that is tragic in the literary sense of the term as well.

Readers of NHQ should be familiar with Radnóti the poet. Much of his verse has been translated into English, this journal as well has printed poems by him on a number of occasions (NHQ 36, 45). In this issue we print a prose work, "Under the Sign of Gemini," in Kenneth and Zita MacRobbie's translation. It is an autobiography dealing with the poet's childhood, and a monument in words to the poet's mother who died giving birth to him.

A survey of the current, third, Anglo–Hungarian Round Table could not have caught the press-date of this issue since deliberations were still in progress in Cambridge at the time. That will have to wait for NHQ 77. I here quote from a brief piece written by János Hajdu, one of the participants, and published by *Népszabadság* on July 22nd, just to give some idea of the atmosphere. "I set out without entertaining any particular expectations. Just as well, as a result the surprise was pleasant in any event. It turned out that not only we, but also those on the other side who had done their homework and knew a thing or two, were aware they had something to lose.

Europe is, after all, the first continent where peaceful coexistence can not only look back to some experience, but where there are norms which govern it.

"One thing I do not know, and that causes me—and not only me—a certain anxiety, is the team of sober men of goodwill ready—with the experiences of the Anglo–Hungarian Round Table behind them—to stand up to be counted, declaring that it is not only possible to seek a dialogue with the socialist half of Europe, but that this is both necessary and worthwhile?"

In this issue we publish another conversation, one that took place in writing, and not *viva voce*. We asked Sir Roy Shaw, the General Secretary of the Arts Council of Great Britain, to tell us in what way the British Government supports literature and the arts. The response by Ferenc Molnár, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Culture, is more indirect. He presents Hungarian cultural policy through a concrete example, the "Discovery of Hungary," a series of books exemplifying an approach to sociology which is typically Hungarian.

Another Anglo–Hungarian conversation in this issue took place in Hungarian. Tamás Bácskai talked to Lord Balogh. In other words Thomas Balogh, the noted economist, adviser to the Labour Party in and out of office, and member of a number of Labour administrations, talked to Tamás Bácskai, the Managing Director of the Hungarian National Bank. They discussed the British and the Hungarian economy, and the most burning questions of international economics. Writing these lines I recalled the first of many meetings with Thomas Balogh. It must have been 1945, or perhaps early 1946. Thomas Balogh, wearing an UNRRA uniform, came to Budapest helping to organize UNRRA relief. He addressed the Hungarian Foreign Affairs Association in one of the rooms of the Parliament building. Again and again he kept on referring to 'our small country.' More than a quarter of an hour passed before the audience realized that he was talking about Great Britain, and not Hungary.

*

1979 is not only a year of anniversaries, but also of losses. Some of the most prominent personalities of the Hungarian intellectual scene are no longer with us, some of their names may be familiar to NHQ readers as well: Gábor Thurzó, the writer, Zoltán Várkonyi, the actor-manager and director of plays and films, György Rónay, the poet and novelist, died this year, and lately, all in the month of June, László Passuth, the novelist, István Bibó, the sociologist, and István Örkény, the author and playwright. Passuth's memory will be honoured in a future number, by a chapter from his autobiography, his last work. The translation of a section of a major paper by István Bibó,

published soon after the war, will be included in NHQ 77, the words spoken by his friend Gyula Illyés at his graveside appear in this issue.

As chance, or fate, would have it, István Örkény died the very day the printers delivered NHQ 74 which contained some of his one-minute short stories. Stories, parts of plays, and even complete plays by Örkény have frequently appeared in the pages of this journal. May I take the opportunity to remind readers, that the text of the the English (though not of the American) performances of his *Catsplay* was based on a translation by Mari Kuttna, first published in NHQ. What is more, Vercors' wife who reads English, drew his attention to the NHQ version, backing her opinion by an *ad hoc* translation of a few lines. Vercors liked it so much that he produced a French version—based on it and a literal translation from the Hungarian—which was then produced in Brussels and in other francophone theatres. An essay on István Örkény is being prepared for a future issue of NHQ.

Translation is of course the daily bread of NHQ's daily grind. In this issue Bruce Berlind, a poet from America, writes about the problems, and tricks of the trade of translation. He is speaking from experience. He spent some years translating a fair few poems by Ágnes Nemes Nagy. He searches for harmony between empathy in art and scholarly precision, pointing to secrets every word conceals, that often set tender traps for translators. The harder a text, that is the harder the translator's job turns out to be, the greater the intellectual adventure finally bringing about—and this is no paradox—the birth of a new work under a new name. Some fruits of the poetic cooperation between Ágnes Nemes Nagy and Bruce Berlind are here offered as evidence. There are two other fine translations. The long and oddly titled "The cleaning of a lost property" by Dezső Tandori is the work of Tony Connor; Jascha Kessler rendess Sándor Rákos's "Three Dostoievskian Masks" into an English worthy of the original.

I would be happy to write about the reception of NHQ 75 but today, on August 1st, I can still merely report on plans. Receptions will be arranged in Budapest, London, Washington and New York where the editors, and contributors to the issue, will meet the representatives of the Hungarian and the international press, those in other words who, I imagine, read us most closely and, through them, the wider public as well.

THE EDITOR

THE MEANING OF DÉTENTE

by

JÓZSEF BALÁZS

The major social processes of our age could be summed up as the transition from capitalism to socialism and the struggle of capitalism and socialism which pervades, directly or indirectly, all international relations. The political, diplomatic, military, economic, ideological and cultural aspects of this world-wide confrontation are closely interrelated. Increasingly highlighted within this interrelation—especially in recent years—has been the Marxist interpretation and practice of peaceful coexistence, together with judgements of the connection between the socialist foreign policy principle of peaceful coexistence and the social status quo, or rather social progress, as well as Western, bourgeois notions of détente. In this central issue as well Marxist and bourgeois ideas, ultra-Left, pseudo-democratic and pacifist views conflict. At present both the ideas and the concrete political actions of the forces which endorse the policy of détente are confronted with those opposed to it. From the early seventies on, and especially since the Carter administration came to office, lively debates have been initiated in the West on the interpretation of the policy of détente and of détente as such.[1] Examining the progress made by peaceful coexistence as a trend, Marxist writers on foreign affairs and the statements made by governments of socialist countries usually deal with global and special questions of international détente, particularly in relation to the struggle for détente. In this paper I do not wish to discuss the concrete daily objectives, successes and contradictions of the policy of détente. I will only attempt to outline the presumably optimal meaning of international détente as it has been—or continues to be—reified, setting out from the relationship of the two antagonistic social systems. Since I do not consider the criticism of bourgeois ideas to be my job, I shall only make indirect comments on the debates on interpretation taking place in the West concerning détente and its differing models.

[1] László J. Kiss: *Az enybülés nyugati felfogásairól* (Western notions of détente). *Külpolitika*, 1978, No. 4.

In recent years détente, as one of the concrete forms of peaceful coexistence and as an international process that bears the character of a trend, has shown itself to be a polysemiotic concept. On the one hand, it is used to denote that which has replaced the Cold War period, in which political, military and ideological tensions between the two social systems were so great that there was a constant possibility of large scale military confrontation. On the other hand, détente serves to denote the international policy aimed at strengthening and promoting the process of détente, a policy whose substance—or function, if one wishes—is to establish a new system based on equal rights of international relations, that is a system of international security and lasting peace. The word détente is used by contemporary mainstream Marxists to denote the struggle waged for the relaxation of tension, and for the laying down of the foundations of coexistence based on cooperation. On the other hand, the term is also used to describe the product of the fluctuating evolution of the already reified, established process of détente. Thus the policy of détente, the struggle for détente aimed at developing the process of détente and the model of détente, which is relatively securely constructed, combine semantically and together appear as détente proper. This also gives expression to the dialectics of détente as the simultaneous reflection and movement of contradictory objective international relations. The policy aimed at international détente is dialectically interrelated with the already established process of détente, since this process does not remain stationary but gives new impulses to the policy of détente. This is why even Marxist authors sometimes postulate the policy of détente consistently pursued by socialist countries as détente itself. Thus foreign policy aims, the means, the method and content—concretization and reification—are not sufficiently differentiated.

Détente is not simply the relaxation of tension—of course it is that, too—but the gradual replacement of tension by regulated coexistence based on cooperation; it partly changes the earlier system of international relations where tension dominated relations between states. Tension is a situation in the relationship of states of the two world wide systems, a situation in which the direct (and theoretically total) confrontation of antagonistic (and non-antagonistic) interests appears as the pure essence of the relationship. (Tension exists in the relations between capitalist countries as well). The most concrete and most dangerous form of this tension is military tension but it is also present in foreign policy, economic and commercial, scientific and cultural activities, as well as in the areas of ideology and propaganda. Military tension is really a consequence of a direct collision in the political, economic and ideological spheres but it develops certain autonomous laws

of its own as well: the lack or imagined lack of military security, or the excess weight of armaments, their location and quality, also generate tension. Besides, tension in relations between states is not only an inevitable consequence of class conflict but also appears as a method or a combination of methods. As such, its substance is rejection of the reconciliation of interests, the use or threat of force, the fomentation of distrust, and the creation of an atmosphere in which the possibility of devising mutually acceptable norms as means of settling controversial issues is out of the question.

What we are experiencing today is not so much the functioning of an established common model of détente as the quite contradictory outward forms of the struggle—of the policy of détente—to build up this "model". On May 29, 1972, at the time of the Soviet-US summit meeting in Moscow, the two parties signed an agreement on basic principles governing their relations. From the point of view of our subject it is important to recall certain fundamental ideas contained in that agreement: "The United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics... will proceed from the common determination that in the nuclear age there is no alternative to conducting their mutual relations on the basis of peaceful coexistence." Furthermore: "They will always exercise restraint in their mutual relations, and will be prepared to negotiate and settle differences by peaceful means." These provisions of the agreement contain normative elements which can be defined as substantial criteria of détente. The same applies to the following: "The prerequisites for maintaining and strengthening peaceful relations between the USA and the Soviet Union are the recognition of the security interests of the Parties based on the principle of equality and the renunciation of the use or threat of force."[2]

This is not the time and place to describe post-1972 Soviet-US relations. From the aspect of sketching a model of détente, a glance at G. Arbatov's appraisal of the motivations of the other party's notion of détente is very enlightening: "For a recognition of the mere idea of détente, and of the necessary revision of the post-war policy of tight-rope walking on the edge of the abyss of war, the United States had a hard road to travel through crises and shocks, of which the history of that country had an abundant share over the last decade. Although détente expresses the objective substance of the deep-going processes of world development and the absolute realities of the nuclear age, there is every sign that in the United States détente is understood to be something that has been im-

[2] Agreement on basic principles of relations between the United States of America and the Union Of Soviet Socialist Republics. *International Legal Materials*, Vol. XI (1972), pp. 757–758.

posed upon them by the extraordinary circumstances of the shocks they had to undergo, and for this reason they look on it as something transient."[3]

This allows one to conclude that the policy of détente, the struggle for détente, and détente as a system of international relations in the process of being reified, as a concretized process that can be characterized by norms and normative rules, should be handled in a differentiated manner. The fact is, on the one hand, that the socialist countries want to persuade the other side to consistently pursue the policy of détente and to jointly build the common structure of détente. On the other hand, by emphasizing common interests, they try to ensure that the relatively new elements (negotiated settlements, etc.) established in the system of international relations are strengthened and made general so as practically to preclude the possibility of returning to the Cold War.

K. M. Georgiev sums up the meaning and functions of détente under seven points:[4]

1. Détente means relaxation of tension in international relations taken in the broader sense of the word, something more than the movement expressible by the word détente.

2. The elimination of tension mainly concerns the countries that are part of the two opposed global systems but is not confined to them. Tension makes its effect felt in the international situation as a whole.

3. The easing of tension is a process which leads to the prevention of war and strengthens peace and international security.

4. The expression of goodwill is not enough to ease tension. It has to materialize through concrete actions above all through multilateral cooperation.

5. The participants in the process of détente preserve their respective ideological identities. None of the parties can be expected to change its social system in keeping with the other party's will.

6. Détente cannot presuppose the maintenance of the social and political status quo. Détente does and cannot mean the freezing of the objective processes of historical development.

7. Concerning the interrelation between détente and peaceful coexistence, there is nothing to support the view that détente is anything more than peaceful coexistence, but there is no reason to consider it less than that, either.

[3] G. Arbatov: "On the Present Situation of Soviet–US Relations". *Pravda*, Aug. 3, 1977 (in Russian).

[4] K. M. Georgiev: "The Formula and Process of Détente: Questions of Détente in Soviet–American Relations". *SShA* (USA), 1976, No. 8 (in Russian).

These concepts are different. While peaceful coexistence is applied to defining the desirability of relations between states with different social systems, détente is used to describe the improvement of relations existing between them.[5] In support of his argument Georgiev quotes Andrei Gromyko: "The easing of tension in the world and the deepening of détente are of vital importance to the development, on the basis of the principles of peaceful coexistence and equality, of cooperation between states with different social systems."[6] That is détente and peaceful coexistence are dependent on each other, and within this dependence peaceful coexistence is a broader concept than the conditions governing the possibility of relations between the two worldwide systems, and a precondition, form and stage of the practical realization of détente.

Thus détente first appears as a concrete international policy and relationship deriving from the principle of peaceful coexistence. Its decisive field of action is the connection between the two worldwide systems, with the dialectics of confrontation and cooperation dominating. In the period of détente the emphasis is on the establishment and optimal functioning of the normative system of coexistence based on cooperation. In this respect détente is also a method for the ongoing solution of conflicts between objective interests by peaceful means, within a system of international relations based on an equality of rights. Thus détente first made its appearance as a policy in international affairs. The underlying cause was the shift in international power relations, and the growth of positive tendencies in the shift taking place in the atomic age, when the coexistence of states standing for opposed social systems is necessary and possible, although the antagonism of the social systems remains historically inevitable.[7] This also requires, in addition to a positive shift in international power relations, that the parties concerned should become subjectively conscious of the necessity to continue a policy of détente. This complicated process of reflection and action has been initiated deliberately by the Soviet Union and the countries of the socialist community, while opponents up to now a majority have only joined in with bad grace and for tactical reasons. Therefore the continuation and extension of the policy of détente is a decisive issue in the interest of creating genuine détente.

Looked at from the angle of the norms of relations between states, détente means first of all that the norms of communication dominant in the Cold War period are totally eliminated from relations between the

5 *Ibid.*
6 *Pravda*, June 4, 1976.
7 The Conference of European Communist and Workers' Parties, Berlin, June 21 to 30, 1976.

two worldwide systems, but with an effect on the world as a whole, being gradually replaced by new norms of communication which adequately reflect new international power relations. This is no easy political task, but without achieving it the achievements of the policy of détente will only be haphazard. The attitude of the present administration of the United States towards the perspectives of the evolution of East-West relations is a regrettably good example. In certain respects it is extremely difficult to remove the vestiges of the Cold War period. Here I wish to mention only the two difficulties which are most evident to me. One concerns the real or supposed interests of the Western, chiefly the American, military-industrial complex.[8] The other is the propaganda directed against the socialist countries and the poisoning of the international atmosphere.[9] One of the most negative vestiges of the Cold War period is precisely the repeated outburst of mutual distrust. An intensive process of détente and attempts to revive the Cold War attempts ultimately exclude each other, but today, unfortunately, they are still both present in the system of international relations. At the same time the definitive prevention of a total thermonuclear world war, together with an end to local wars, is the most important question of our age. It is difficult, in an atmosphere of mutual distrust, for the parties to agree not only on disarmament but also on a reduction of armaments. The armament spiral rises parallel to negotiations, because the parties feel mutually threatened. The negative automatism of the present system of international relations, the arms drive, invariably has a strong effect. The Soviet Union and the socialist countries merely react, and they are forced to do so. It is equally important to remove the political and economic tensions and the permanent dangers of military confrontation. My second remark relates to the source of tensions and thus to their resurgence. As long as the two worldwide systems coexist, no kind of détente "model" can entirely eliminate the conflict situations from their relations and from world politics in general. The conflicts that necessarily arise, however, need not lead to military or other crises. With a view to an ongoing state of tolerance leading to solutions there is need for a flexible structure of détente. In this way renewing conflicts can be solved in terms of their circumscribed nature and not at a level where they involve social systems as a whole. We are still a long way from such a state of affairs. But the facts indicate that it is not only necessary but also possible to settle the conflicts and conflict situations between the two social systems by peaceful means.

[8] Cf. Gabriel Kolko: *Hatalom és külpolitika* (Power and foreign policy). Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1972, pp. 48–51.

[9] Cf. "L. I. Brezhnev's speech at Baku". *Népszabadság*, Sept. 23, 1978 (in Hungarian).

A European system of security and cooperation has not yet been established, but the existence and controversial implementation of the Helsinki Final Act as well as the experience of the observance of the SALT-I agreement lead one to the conclusion that the agreed solution of acute conflicts is possible, at the very least a state of affairs exists where they can be tolerated. Concrete possibilities of solution appear when and if the interested parties make efforts with an eye to this end.

As a result of the consistent pursuance of the policy of détente it is necessary to lay down the concrete foundations of coexistence based on cooperation of countries belonging to the two opposed global systems in accordance with the principle of peaceful coexistence and the real interests of all concerned. Coexistence based on cooperation is not directed against anybody. Its meaning is not contrary to national identity, and its formal framework, which in time will form an international political structure, is sufficiently flexible and does not endanger the sovereignty of states taking part in cooperation. If it materializes, this requirement of détente governed by its autonomous laws will reduce international tension, although its materialization cannot be exempt from conflicts. East-West economic cooperation, for example, is not only advantageous to the socialist countries (transfer of modern technologies, capital investments, etc.) but, in consequence of the capitalist economic crises, it has, or may have, a conflict-generating effect. Capitalist societies may also have real or imaginary problems owing to economic cooperation with socialist countries. Nevertheless, coexistence based on cooperation, i.e. multilateral cooperation based on reciprocal advantages, is the only way in relations between countries with different social systems.[10] The flowering of coexistence based on cooperation creates a chain of interdependences—in the favourable sense of the term—between states, which not only reduces the dangers of military conflict and increases mutual confidence but brings with it greater stability in the politics of détente within the general international situation. It thus becomes increasingly difficult to effect any sudden and arbitrary change of direction in foreign policy, worsening relations, or playing off one party (or a third party) against another.

States which together maintain a policy of détente have no right to demand forcible changes in the other party's social system, or a halt to changes intimated by processes that are part of the normal development of a particular society. The antagonism of differently structured social systems must be accepted a permanent factor. In the case of the two global

[10] Cf. János Kádár's statement in Helsinki on the occasion of the signing of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

systems cooperation between states reckons with this, implying a state of toleration. Social movements, however, such as revolutions, are usually initiated by causes that lie within the character of a particular society. Such social changes occasioned exclusively by internal causes cannot shake the structure of détente; this is why, as part of the respect due to the right to self-determination[11], such changes should not be hindered or prevented by an outside force. Attempts at such interference by outside powers jeopardize the stability of the process of détente. Social change within a society must not depend on considerations that properly belong to international relations. Of course, the most essential aspect of the current international situation is not a conceptual clarification of the meaning of détente (though this is of far from minor importance when one wishes to define the aim of the policy of détente), but for détente to continue in spite of temporary setbacks, since an international equilibrium has taken shape which makes this possible. To deal with problems that undoubtedly exist, a *modus vivendi* has to be found, and a controlled process of détente can come about as part of the system of international relations.[12]

The coexistence of conflicting interests, as a *modus vivendi*, is a possibility even when there is no reconciliation of interests as yet, and the influence of conflicting interests, thanks to reciprocal self-restraint, does not lead to a tension-creating confrontation. Conflicting interests exist side by side, their reconciliation not yet being possible, but direct clashes do not occur. In the first case reconciliation would lead to coexistence, based on cooperation, and in the second to mere coexistence in the dictionary sense of the term. But this is also a sound international fact when one bears in mind the possibility of total or partial political, military, economic, etc. confrontation.

Allow me to point out four important prerequisities for the establishment and continuous functioning of a controlled process of détente. One: recognition and respect for the balance of power in international affairs. Without this it is impossible to build up in common a system of international relations based on an equality of rights. Two: the formulation of new norms and normative rules, in keeping with the essence of détente, to govern international contacts, and their consistent application in the reconciliation of differing interests. A concrete manifestation of this point is the conclusion of, and compliance with, bilateral and multilateral agreements operative on a regional (or perhaps continent-wide) basis, agreements which keep mutual interests in view and which are not directed

[11] Cf. the Helsinki Final Act. Chapter 1, principle VIII.

[12] Cf. "Frigyes Puja's press conference in Oslo". *Népszabadság*, Sept. 20, 1978 (in Hungarian).

against any state or group of states. They have to be flexible enough for the joint settlement of possible conflict situations, permitting corrections, with the aim of establishing a system of coexistence based on cooperation. Three: détente in regional including continent wide relations has to create institutionalized forms and elements which combine into a system and through which the movement of international processes can be controlled by all the states or groups of states which participate in the system.

Four: An atmosphere of mutual confidence is a prerequisite of a controlled process of détente. Without it there is no enduring and reified international détente. An acceptable international atmosphere cannot simply be regarded as a subjective factor in international affairs. The controlled process of détente will not only improve relations between the states concerned but also implies the active participation of ordinary people in international relations and primarily in creating and strengthening an in-international atmosphere that promotes détente.

All the elements of détente, whether they already exist or are now taking shape, are objectively conflict-oriented. This fact has its origin in the essence of the two worldwide systems and cannot be evaded by any kind of political consensus. It does not, however, relativize the possibility of détente. On the contrary: it makes it clear that détente can only be born and function in contest. Conflicts that arise again and again must be solved again and again without the use of force. Détente is not a final condition in the relations between the two world systems but a stage adequate to the balance of forces in the realization of peaceful coexistence.

THE INTERACTION OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICS

by

IMRE POZSGAY

The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party defines new development objectives and creates the conditions for their attainment. It is not merely an instrument for the fixing of organizational ends and means but formulates the national programme of socialist construction for the benefit of the whole people. This function enables it, in close cooperation with the leading Marxist–Leninist forces of the international working-class movement, to be the inspiration and the leading factor behind social progress in Hungary.

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The party and its various organs are not the only institutions that take initiatives. But it is surrounded by a social medium composed of conscious and spontaneous forces that give rise to the theories and actions related to common aims. The policy of alliance and socialist national unity is based on this. In view of today's problems it is reasonable to expect that this be remembered even in more difficult periods. In carrying out our great social objectives and resolutions an important role is played by the experience of the masses, by their intelligence, by their will to act, and by the ties of direct collaboration which the party has developed with the intelligentsia in the preparation of policy decisions. Of equal importance is the attention it has devoted to appreciating and winning over the broad spectrum of public opinion, influenced as it is by a variety of interests. Future tasks require an even more consistent and efficient application of this method.

The party can best bring out the potential of the nation as a whole if its members and leaders do not stay cooped up in organizational mechanisms but rather regard these as a means of contact with the masses; if they bear in mind that the party's leading bodies are not mirror images of that fleeting

moment on election day, of the state their electors and they themselves happened to be in on that day; if they understand the everyday problems of the people and the current mood of the masses.

Elected bodies and the executive have to base their guiding functions on this experience so that they can detect phenomena which differ only slightly from those of previous periods. It is essential to recognize the necessity of moving forward even when the general situation still very much resembles earlier ones. It is largely a function of this recognition that new situations do not come as a surprise and that policies fulfil explorative and directional functions. This is the most important methodological requirement in the guiding of society.

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The complexity involved in this broad overview and great circumspection may best be demonstrated by the contradictory relationship between economics and politics, a relationship that sometime entails friction and errors.

The events and processes of economic life not only affect organization and activity in the production and service industries but more or less directly determine the entire movement and advancement of society. Of course, economic activity is also considerably influenced by the events and changes that take place in the structure of society, politics, and cultural life. It follows from this interaction and from the fact that economics has extra-economic, general human objectives that economic development is a matter of public concern. In the relationship between economics and politics it is the business of economics to put the question whether or not the economy is capable of creating the material basis for the satisfaction of human needs and thus of improving human conditions in organizations devoted to the production of material goods. Politics will get the right answer if it realizes that the economy can only meet these requirements according to its own laws. The fact is that extra-economic means cannot continually force production into promoting this aim. The interaction between the economy and society as a whole only works in such a manner that each part of the whole accepts and treats the effects according to its own laws. Politics, likewise according to its own laws, has to move within this complicated system of relations. Movements of the economy and of society have to be examined in the light of this conception.

While requirements are inevitably growing with regard to production and services, they must be satisfied in the face of increasingly difficult international conditions. Neither are the internal conditions effecting Hungary's national economy free of tensions. In this situation great importance is at-

tached to the question to what extent and by what means society as a whole appreciates the achievements and problems of the economy and also to the related question of whether producers and consumers have developed or are now developing attitudes appropriate to economic requirements. Finally, there is the question whether the party and state apparatus are improving to a sufficient degree their capability for detecting achievements, contradictions, and mistakes. This is also a very essential question from the point of view of whether the party and government are able, under the impact of changing circumstances, to come to terms politically with certain new facts and phenomena. Since they have hitherto succeeded, there is every reason to suppose that this will continue to be the case in the future. Because the party, continuing the policy it has pursued thus far and applying its methods of guidance, will analyse the experience accumulated. The facts which are drawn on below have been disclosed by the Central Committee, thus it is possible for the entire party and for the whole of society to come to grips with them.

Hungarian society acknowledges with satisfaction the achievements in production, but in many respects it fails to respond appropriately to the problems of the economy. This is also reflected in certain attitudes which do not accord with the requirements of the situation according to whether people exhibit them in their capacity as producers or consumers. Of course, there is no insurmountable barrier separating the world of production from that of consumption, but their relative isolation makes it possible to separate the two functions and related attitudes.

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For the most part people exercise their function as producers in enterprises which are production or service organizations. Enterprise managers today are aware of the, largely unfavourable, developments taking place in the world economy. But many of them try to protect themselves in isolation against these phenomena. In an effort to insure themselves against hard times, enterprises put aside both the community's means (e.g. state subsidies) and their own means (e.g. residual profits, means of production, labour force, stocks, etc.). With this self-insurance, a logical though illusory consequence of prevailing conditions, they damage the economy and ultimately imperil their own security as well. This habit does not originate in malicious designs of any sort but is primarily the result of spontaneous effects or defects in socio-economic relations and coordination, which have caused group interests to come into temporary conflict with the interests of the national econ-

omy. True, producers have heard of the problems being experienced by capitalist economies and are aware that the socialist state came to their aid in the interests of social stability. In many places, however, they have made use of this help to overinsure themselves, because they did not actually feel any international economic pressure and were pushed towards the afore-said forms of self-insurance by the way interests shaped up.

The economic facts of life in capitalist societies call the producers' attention to the changed economic situation and thus dictate the appropriate behaviour to them—this often has destructive consequences. Socialism reduces the effects of this elemental, blind force by means of economic planning. Planning on the basis of social ownership is possible on a social scale. And the fulfilment of plans can be served by the application of a system of consciously devised economic, political, and legal regulators.

Why is it, after all, that the negative tendencies of economic life, the spontaneous processes that cannot be foreseen but only comprehended once they have already happened, cannot be eliminated in socialism? Why is the socialist economy unable to provide full protection against such effects?

This phenomenon has its objective and subjective causes alike.

Socialism has placed the means of production under public ownership and has thereby removed the greatest obstacle to planning on a social scale: the private ownership of the means of production. But this does not mean that it has completely succeeded in mastering the elemental forces at play in the production field. It is inevitable that material goods are manufactured by producers brought together in relatively independent, isolated organizations in socialism as well. Productive units produce independently, but they produce to meet the needs of others by satisfying these needs for commodities. The intermediary between demand and the production that satisfies it is therefore a commodity in socialism as well, and this fact continues to have spontaneous effect in the relationship between society and the economy. The relatively independent, isolated productive units are breeding-grounds of special or group interests, irrespective of the form of property they build their activity upon.

The intermediate sphere that exhibits these spontaneous effects and processes as well, partly belongs to the realm of necessity, and this can, by means of appropriate regulations, promote economic and consequently social progress; otherwise it can be the cause of an enormous waste of productive forces. Historical experience shows that this waste mainly occurs when the existence of special interests, the inevitable results of their separate and intermediary character, is called in doubt. In this way they apparently help the conscious will to prevail against blind forces; in reality, however, they

surrender themselves to these forces, since they are allowed to slip into an uncontrollable area that cannot be influenced either politically or economically. The most typical manifestation of this can be seen in the consequences scarcity has upon accumulation and consumption.

It is also an objective fact that not all conditions pertaining to the production process can be planned because certain conditions are outside our decision-making scope or can only be influenced to a small extent by social decisions. For example, in recent years we have been able to experience the role of the geographical environment in the oil crisis or of the economic and political impact of demographic conditions. They almost make themselves felt as a law of nature.

Another important fact must be mentioned here, namely that, as a necessary consequence of the situation of the Hungarian national economy, an exceptional role is played by foreign trade in the production of national income, including trade carried out with capitalist countries. It is this that gives rise to the above-mentioned spontaneous processes.

Amongst all these objective factors the capitalist market breeds most of our troubles. We can plan on a social and nationwide scale, but in international economic relations we can only respond to events, not control them. A small country like Hungary, with its small domestic market, cannot stop the negative effects by withdrawing from the world markets. Its principal partners in foreign trade are invariably the CMEA countries, but the capitalist markets are also of vital importance. Therefore a method of flexible response has to be enforced as a matter of internal and external necessity.

The subjective causes involved in the contradictions exhibited in economic behaviour are closely connected with the objective circumstances discussed above.

Producers work in independent organizations and can satisfy their own needs through the redistribution of the national product. All this means that the quantity of declared needs always exceeds the quantity of distributable goods. The less the satisfaction of the needs of, for example, an enterprise or an economic sector has to rely on its own output, the more insatiable it can afford to be in formulating its demands.

Among the subjective causes influencing economic attitudes is the tendency to ignore the objective factors that produce spontaneous phenomena and that are necessarily present in the economic conditions under socialism. Those who do not realize or are unwilling to realize that these objective spontaneous effects exist can easily arrive at the subjectivistic-voluntaristic position which denies the determining role of economic laws. This kind of subjectivism can lead to a revival of the opposite phenomenon, the ideology

of economism, which exaggerates the importance of spontaneous processes. The advocates of economism, in response to voluntarism, would then bypass all socio-political means in the regulation of the economy.

How do people behave in their capacity as consumers when satisfying their individual needs? Here we will only examine this question from the viewpoint of whether members of society, in their personal consumption, are aware of the negative effects that act upon the economy.

On the basis of productive forces being managed by the community at large we have established existential security. Unemployment does not exist, it is even unknown to those under forty years of age. One of our political principles says that socialism has to be developed while at the same time living standards are raised and the conditions of life are improved. But even in socialism the question is warranted as to whether, independently of the attitudes displayed in the course of production and labour, security and continuously improving living conditions have to be ensured to all. Does the living standards policy have to mean that everybody, irrespective of performances, enjoys guaranteed prosperity? It is also in the interests of the masses that not everybody should receive such a guarantee.

The interests of society demand that both in production and in consumption the effects influencing economic life should prevail in a regulated form so as not to entail a future general worsening of living conditions. Otherwise an enormous waste of productive forces would ensue, because there would not be a sufficient incentive to tap socio-economic reserves.

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By means of the above depiction of the relationship between economics and politics I have attempted to show that it is basically a question not of new tension-creating phenomena but of permanent, spontaneous objective and subjective factors (these latter also being objectified in the economy), the effects of which have become intensified in the very difficult world economic situation. They are factors which have in the past been taken into consideration by Hungarian economic policy and its system of management.

We do not have to radically change our economic world view to overcome these unfavourable phenomena, but we have to implement party and government policy consistently. In the conditions prevailing nowadays the role of subjective factors, especially of politics and political organizations, has grown tremendously in economic affairs. Politics can rely upon the masses, upon two very important virtues which have matured in the masses over more than two decades: confidence and the will to act.

It would be political pusillanimity to fail to take long overdue economic decisions. We retain our full respect for those who are aware of the long-term interests of the whole of society, are prepared to accept temporary tensions in the process and are seeking to create a balanced economic structure which will lay secure foundations for the raising of living standards. A social attitude at odds with the real economic situation might be costing the country more than some temporary setback calling for immediate and appropriate economic measures. The political unity and moral reserves of our society, built as it is upon the community of fundamental interests, represent a force which can be activated in the interests of social progress and by the application of appropriate political and economic methods.

The question of what measures are needed to bring economic attitudes into line with the economic situation can be answered by a concrete analysis of the concrete situation. The point of analysis is to find out where and when to enforce the economic regulators or to apply direct political and, occasionally, administrative methods. It is essential that the methods applied should not contradict each other and not be mutually detrimental, because this would lead to indecisiveness in the economic sphere and prevent us from achieving the desired aim. The confidence residing in the consistency of law and order, in the synthesis of economic rules and political will would disappear. Indifference to the law and to regulations would become a widespread practice. A half-way course between legal security and legal insecurity would inevitably result in the slackening of moral standards and the consequences would be impossible to predict.

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Through the interaction of economics and politics I have tried to demonstrate, if only sketchily, that, as the owner of the means of political knowledge and guidance, the party cannot predict each and every economic and social fact and process that ensues from its decision. Its leading role is based on the power of the working class, on its planning capability, on the theory needed to this end, on the certainty of attaining the aims formulated in the plan and on the conviction that it is in the interests of the whole of society that they be attained. All this makes it possible to tackle the ensuing facts but not to predict them.

A common characteristic of the political methods applied by the HSWP is foresight in respect of the ends and flexible manœuvring in the selection of the ways and means leading to the ends, this latter with a view to the unpredictability of events beyond our control. Our entire policy would be-

come a pragmatic and merely practical exercise if we lost sight of social aims, and it would be dogmatism and sectarianism if we left out of account the realities for the sake of the aims we so much desire. All this is a reminder that even a party in power has limited elbow room and is subject to unbending objective laws. Politics, since we are talking of a man-made institution where the human will is very much involved, may for a time go beyond the permissible terms of reference and assume the functions of other social processes (law, morals, economics, etc.). But, albeit at a high price, history will sooner or later force it back into its allotted role. Good politics means to be aware of its limitations and capable of acting: it does what it has to do.

Attention has to be called to this aspect of politics because new styles of living and attitudes of mind are constantly being reproduced which we condemn on the basis of our principals. These styles of living, attitudes of mind, and economic-social deviations also provoke protests and at the same time create the illusion that the political guiding force, the party, could put an end to them "if it wanted to and really tried."

This is a dangerous illusion. Unfortunately we have no space here to talk about its historical roots. It is dangerous because it supposes that the satisfaction of certain needs and the transformation of certain facts is only a matter of making a decision. The leaders and the members of the party have to be aware of the limits of what is possible, lest they should, in the hope of scoring a political success, promptly attempt to satisfy these illusory ambitions. In politics, where decisions are made between different interests, decisions that satisfy everybody do not and cannot be made, except in those questions concerning the common interests of society and its institutions.

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In order to act in accordance with the objective laws, it is necessary to have a thorough knowledge of social and economic reality. It should be remembered that incorrect proposals and mistaken aspirations proliferate in harder times. In such cases one should do one's utmost to recall the experiences made in similar situations and to refrain from repeatedly using methods once proved to be erroneous or only applicable in different historical circumstances.

At a time when contradictions and tensions are accumulating there is an almost automatic temptation in political life to strengthen centralization. But centralization in itself is neither right nor wrong. It is right when the central power is only entrusted with decision-making powers in areas where complete centralization is both possible and reasonable. It is wrong when it

oversteps these limits and obtains in areas where decision-making from "above" is unnecessary and impracticable. For this is not only likely to hinder local initiative and the utilization of resources but also to cut down the energy expendable on matters of real central concern and thus reduce social efficiency.

Experience demonstrates that whenever decisions were centralized, without due consideration and qualification, with the intention of curbing undesired social developments, low-efficiency senior bureaucracy began to grow and its ability to master the situation diminished; in proportion to this, spontaneity gained ground in all fields of life. The by-passing of institutions and resolutions and the concomitant hypocrisy spread because those who bypassed these institutions or resolutions demanded that everybody else should obey them.

But if centralization, abstracted from the concrete situation, is not the proper remedy for our troubles, what is the realistic alternative?

It is what we have had hitherto: the exploration of interest relations, the integration of interests along with the expansion of the institutions serving these interests, with a view to the further development of socialist democracy and the deepening of democratization. In the meantime it is only to be expected that in times of difficulties scepticism towards democracy is growing as fast as the faith in excessive centralization. The old arguments about the low efficiency, of democratic decision-making and management, about people's indifference and inaptitude are revived. By the usual logic the functional disorders of democratic institutions are identified with democracy itself.

Democracy and centralization are not mutually exclusive concepts. The strength of the central will largely depends on the proper selection of central means and ends, and on whether or not society endorses these means and ends, whether or not it makes the necessary efforts to carry out central social tasks. That is, whether both central tasks and local tasks are consistently carried out by those who are convinced of their correctness. Efficient central guidance therefore presupposes efficient local autonomy and that this latter should not be gagged in times of difficulties. The energy latent in it is needed for society's future development and is needed if every member of society is to feel he is a responsible citizen.

A consistent system of social discipline is not alien to democracy and to the needs of the masses. What is alien is inconsistency and the excessive number of arbitrary or accidental elements in social processes, which make expectant inertia and inaction the proper attitude to be adopted. Well-organized and undemagogic democratic publicity would ensure that the question

of who has to work hard for his living and for the attainment of his goals, and who does not is not a matter of pure accident.

With the aid of socialist democracy it is necessary to achieve a public attitude which esteems work for the community the highest and which will help create conditions where personal ambition can only serve the public good. For if we wish to overcome the difficulties facing us, bureaucratic management, which is in many places based upon cheap energy, has to be replaced by management functioning on more expensive but very high-efficiency energy. This more expensive but more precious and very high-efficiency energy is available in profusion. It is no less than the ability for independent thought and decision-making, an ability made more precious still if it is coupled with honesty and a sense of responsibility.

THE HUNGARIAN PRICE REFORM

by

BÉLA CSIKÓS-NAGY

(1) Due to the explosion of oil prices which occurred on the world market in 1973 the conditions for an expansion of production in Hungary's foreign trade-sensitive economy while at the same time maintaining the balance of payments became more difficult. This is why for some time the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party has been devoting greater than usual attention to economic questions. In October 1977 the Central Committee passed a resolution on long-term external economic strategy and on the development of the production structure. In February 1978 the Central Committee discussed the development of agriculture and the food industry. In April 1978 the Central Committee emphasized, among other things, the necessity of improving the price system in a way which ensures it is in accord with the objectives of economic policy.

The guidelines of the long-term evolution of the price system can be summed up as follows.

—Introduction of a value-oriented consumer price system. The aim is that consumer prices should be in harmony with rational producer prices (expressing social inputs and the market's assessment of value). In this case consumer prices are linked to producer prices by a uniform and universal sales tax (resp. a few tax rates). In a value-oriented price system consumer prices may only diverge from producer prices by means of a differentiated sales tax and possibly of consumer price supports (negative sales taxes) in so far as it is justified by social considerations. However, at present price deviations are rather numerous; the consumer price system reinforces irrational features of consumption.

—An organic link between domestic and foreign trade prices. This is a natural consequence of the fact that in a trade-sensitive economy efficiency can only be measured by international competitiveness. The supposition

The first stage of the price reform intimated in this article took place in July 1979, before this article went to press. *[Ed.]*

here is that the "domestication" of foreign trade prices exerts pressure on the at times very high domestic production costs; it might assist the faster than average development of efficient production and the efficient transformation of the economy's production structure.

At present the dominant form is a price formation based on production costs norms. In this price system profit rates come about "arbitrarily"; the relative profit rates of the various sectors do not indicate relative efficiency. In conditions of regular overdemand this price formation also presents the problem that, due to the possibility of passing on costs, increased prices of materials do not compel economic efficiency. On the contrary, in branches of production where the introduction of new products, changes in fashion, and other factors lead to a rapid replacement of products, there is a positive interest in the utilization of more expensive materials, because then the normative price formation system leads in a hidden form to additional profits.

—Restoration of the two-tier price system. In a two-tier price system the producer price level is considerably lower than the consumer price level. Thus a considerable part of net social income is realized in the form of a sales tax on consumer goods situated between producer and consumer price levels.

The two-tier price system ceased in 1975–76 with the abolition of price subsidies for imported fuels and raw materials. Price supports had to be introduced in 1974 because of OPEC's decision in 1973 to greatly increase the world market price of crude oil. The partial abolition of import price subsidies considerably raised domestic production price levels. Only a small part of this was reflected in consumer prices, as a result of which producer price levels rose above consumer price levels. A "negative" two-tier system has emerged.

The restoration of the two-tier arrangement makes the price system more rational. It may also smooth the way for a monetary reform based on a policy of uniform exchange rates. At present the difference between the commercial and the non-commercial exchange rate is too great, and this is due precisely to the negative two-tier price system.

—Increase in the flexibility of the price mechanism. It must be considered a fundamental requirement that the function of prices as a guide-line in the making of rational economic decisions should not be restricted to the day of the reform alone, but should be in continuous operation; prices should not become "obsolescent"; the movement of prices should properly express changes in inputs, in foreign trade prices, and in the evaluations of the domestic market.

The present price mechanism cannot fully satisfy these requirements by means of the simultaneous application of fixed and free prices.

(2) In the course of the elaboration of the Sixth Five-Year Plan covering the period 1981–1985 the system of economic regulation is being revised. It will be changed considerably in 1980. The aim of the change is to stimulate the transformation of the production structure in such a way as to ensure a considerable expansion of the proportion of products that can be sold anywhere (convertible products) and of related exports. Accordingly the economic mechanism will be changed so that

—international competitiveness becomes the main criterion of economic efficiency, and

—prices are a more consistent guide in economic decision-making.

This also demands that, where possible, the approved long-term guidelines of the price system be implemented in the near future.

(3) The change-over to value-oriented consumer prices was first indicated as a requirement by the economic reform of 1968. It was formulated then as: everybody should pay what the product costs. This was, of course, never interpreted as a mathematical model. We wish to maintain low price level (relative to inputs) of products and services serving fundamental cultural, health, and social objectives. The same applies to prices formed by higher than average taxation, the aim of which is to ensure state revenue or to restrict the growth in consumption. This includes price deviations in connection with the consumption of alcoholic beverages and tobacco products, and recently with limiting the too rapid growth in motorization.

We have put the price preferences which are to be abolished into two groups. The first includes those prices which only affect Hungarian citizens, e.g. rent or travel allowances, as well as other tertiary services. The second group includes prices which are linked more organically to foreign trade, or to invisible exports, such as e.g. tourism. Here energy, fuel, chemicals, and food products are of greater importance. The view has spread that, within the framework of a price reform, price preferences where there is a strong link with foreign trade have to be abolished (at least in part). On the other hand, it is possible to put off the adjustment of prices which only affect Hungarian citizens.

(4) The main features of the new price system which will be completed by 1980 are:

—in the domestic evaluation of natural resources (fuels and raw materials) it makes the adjustment to prevailing prices of imports from non-rouble areas universal;

—in the domestic evaluation of finished products produced by compet-

itive industries adjustment is to be made to the prices of exports to non-rouble areas.

Within the range of natural resources placing economic costing on the basis of world market prices means the application of the principle of the most expensive import sources. In the case of rising world market prices purchases from capitalist countries are the more expensive source for Hungary, because within the CMEA contract prices follow the price movements on the world market taking the average over the preceding five years. This in fact means pricing energy and raw materials over the actual (average) input, which should play a role in introducing a more rational management of energy and raw materials than has hitherto been the case.

In the domestic evaluation of natural resources (fuels and raw materials) adjustment to the prices of imports from non-rouble areas will have general validity in economic costing and consequently in the formation of domestic prices. On the other hand, we wish to exploit the lower transport costs involved in importing crude oil and soft timber from the Soviet Union as against purchases from more distant sources. Furthermore the preferential price of industrial products used as a means of production in agriculture (crop-protecting materials, fertilizers, etc.) will be maintained provisionally.

The foundations for the adjustment to non-rouble export prices in the evaluation of finished products produced by competitive industries are to be laid by making use of the export efficiency index. Since the economic reform of 1968 there have been on-going investigations in all branches of production and all enterprises interested in exports, into how many forints it costs to produce one unit of foreign exchange. A simple mathematical formula is applied: the input calculated in domestic currency in the numerator and the export price calculated in foreign exchange in the denominator. On this basis changing producer price levels can be determined and be controlled. The idea is that producer price levels would be regulated in the enterprises by export price levels, but the price ratios of individual products by domestic supply and demand.

In the competitive industries the adjustment of producer price levels to export price levels is a precondition of the industries' (enterprises') profits (or losses) and reflects their real position in international competition; i.e. the profit rates should reflect efficiency. It is in this way that a producer price system, an indispensable element in a rational production policy, can be created. At the same time the producer price system must lay the foundation for a consumer prices policy which ensures equilibrium, i.e. takes domestic supply and demand into consideration. This is why the relative price of products must be adjusted to the conditions of domestic supply and demand.

It could be argued that not export but import prices should regulate the price level, since in numerous cases development policy established enterprises and industries with the aim of saving imports. However, in conditions where there are considerable differences between what we are ready to pay for an imported product and what we are satisfied with in the case of exports, it is in principle important that the export price should be the universal price level regulator. The new price system must be based primarily on a structural policy which expands export potential. The negative features of Hungary's export price policy must be eliminated as soon as possible. It is also necessary to develop production processes and marketing procedures which make rational export prices possible.

(5) The differentiation between the competitive and uncompetitive sectors of social production refers to whether they produce or do not produce products, carry out or do not carry out services which can be traded (exports or imports). When we use such a classification in production, we only think of visible trade (foreign trade), i.e. we disregard invisible trade (e.g. tourism). Invisible trade makes this differentiation redundant since on such occasions foreigners face the entire domestic range of products; they are not excluded from anything, only from social allocations which are available to Hungarian citizens.

In such conditions, within the framework of reforming the price system, great emphasis is given to the examination of how the tendency of price formation to stimulate waste of energy and materials can be abolished or at least reduced in uncompetitive industries. It was for this reason that a price formation based on related prices—where this is possible—has been decided on. This is the principle of observing a relation between goods that are like each other or can substitute for each other. This method has been applied until now too. This is universally characteristic of consumer price formation, since in respect of related articles domestic trade cannot disregard what extra price the consumer is prepared to pay for a new product, some qualities of which differ from products which are otherwise identical and are already being sold. Related price formation occurs in producer prices too. Some branches of transport could be substituted for each other, i.e. they compete against each other. It has therefore never been possible in determining transport prices to disregard considerations of transportation policy, viz. to what extent users of transport will make use of the various means of transport according to their particular interests.

In the utilization of production goods it can also be assumed that if there is a possibility of choice, demand will prefer (in accordance with the prin-

ciple of minimalizing costs) the means of production whose relative price is favourable. However, due to producer domination, the interest of the consumer cannot be asserted in the case of overdemand. This is why the producer price formation of three price groups has been evolved in respect of finished products: the principle of competitive, the relative, and normative costs.

(6) From the point of view of international competitiveness there is at present a considerable difference between industry and agriculture. With the exception of some branches of production, competitive price formation can be introduced in industry, but not in agriculture.

In agriculture there is a real possibility of specific crop averages approaching those of West European countries within 4–5 years. But the input levels will nevertheless still be approximately 30 per cent higher than world market prices for agricultural products. This is mainly due to the peculiar conditions attaching to the intensive development of agriculture in Europe. This explains why in Western Europe the Common Market introduced an agricultural policy in which prices are applied relative to input. However, the European regional world market price only applies within the Common Market's internal trade. The CMEA has no common agricultural policy. In the CMEA, every country stimulates the intensive development of agricultural production by means of internal price preferences, while in internal trade they apply the principle of world market prices. In such circumstances it is, for the time being, not possible to apply competitive price formation in the agricultural sector.

(7) Studies have shown that in industries accounting for 70–75 per cent of production competitive price formation can be introduced. This does not mean that the conditions are already ripe in industry for competitive price formation on a broad front, only that this price formation can be made the foundation of normative financial regulation. From this aspect, normative financial regulation may be interpreted as the competitive price being the norm, the exception being provisional and calculated. This means that there are industries (enterprises) where the adjustment of producer price levels to export price levels will be carried out in 1980, while in other industries and enterprises price preferences will ensure a time for adjustment, i.e. dispreference would be a limiting factor. In the price reform of 1980 this correction will be achieved in such a way that the upper limit of the achievable average industrial profit rate, e.g. in metallurgy and the engineering industry, will be 15 per cent, and in industries which would otherwise become loss-making

the lower limit of the provisionally tolerated profit rate, e.g. in light industries, will be 2 per cent. The price mechanism must operate in such a way that these dispreferences and preferences will gradually disappear.

The method of adjusting to export prices will be applied in the industries included in the list of competitive industries, irrespective of whether an enterprise exports to non-rouble areas. In the case of enterprises where there are no exports, the average foreign exchange production index of the industry will be ascertained centrally and the price level controlled on this basis.

In connection with this system of adjusting to export prices a debate is taking place concerning the method of gradually eliminating price preferences and dispreferences. One possible method is to prescribe improved efficiency. Another possible method is one that does not entail an obligation of this sort, but is based on the profit interests of the enterprises, and divides the improvement in efficiency between the reduction of the price preference and the improvement of the profit rate, e.g. in a ratio of 80 : 20. The argument against the latter is that in time industries where the price level begins with a price preference have an advantage over those which do not require such a preference at the start. The view has gained dominance that it is useful to apply differentiated treatment from industry to industry, setting out from the fact that the chances of following price trends on the world market or of eliminating price losses differ from product group to product group.

The close link being brought about between export efficiency to non-rouble countries and the average profit rate of the industry put the question of uneconomical exports, and the general question of the volume of exports, into a new light.

We face the complicated problem that on the one hand we have an interest in putting an end to uneconomical exports, but that on the other, the production of a certain volume of foreign exchange is needed to finance imports. The price which we intend to introduce exerts great pressure in favour of the elimination of uneconomical exports, because export efficiency is improved thereby and the producer price level can be increased. But the aim is that the improvement in export efficiency should be attained with regularly increasing exports. It is still being studied how the export volume requirement should be built into the price preferences, or where there are no price preferences, into the system of raising the price level based on the automatism of efficiency improvement.

(8) The price reforms of 1959 and 1968 considerably raised the producer price level. The new feature of the price reform of 1980 in this respect is that it counts on an approximately 2 per cent reduction in the producer price

level, including a roughly 4 per cent reduction in the industrial producer price level. The difference between then two is caused by the fact that the procurement price level of agricultural products is to be raised by 10 per cent, transport and communication rates by 5 per cent, and price levels in the construction industry are to remain unchanged.

In the reduction of producer (especially industrial) price levels a role is played by the fact that the capital tax of 5 per cent is to be abolished, and the pay-roll tax (including social contribution) is to be reduced from 35 per cent to 17 per cent. The loss of tax is to be compensated by the increase of sales tax revenue and the reduction of price subsidies.

The change in the tax system alters the relative prices of the factors of production. Due to the abolition of the capital tax, the price of machinery will become cheaper by approximately 30 per cent as compared to wages. This revaluation will occur in spite of the pay-roll tax being reduced too, since this reduces the input in all branches of production, including the engineering industry. Through this we shall make considerable progress in solving the problem characterized by the slogan "cheap labour and expensive new technology."

The moderation of the enterprises' profit rates plays a role in the reduction of the producer price level. In the present price system profit amounts to approximately 15 per cent of the net capital. At the start of the new price system this will be about 6 per cent. This reduction is necessary because it is the only way of creating harmony between the enterprise's self-financing ability and conditions of the expansion of production which have become more difficult for us.

The 4 per cent reduction in industrial producer price levels will be realized in such a way that producer price levels of industrial products will be reduced by an average 8 per cent, while the price level of materials will be increased by 15 per cent, including 30 per cent for fuels. This transformation of relative prices, taking the partial price reforms of 1975–1976 and 1978 into account, corresponds to the price trends which have become dominant in the world market in the period 1974–1980.

In production branches where competitive price formation is to be introduced, this unequivocally necessitates increased economy on energy and materials. Attention is now being centred on how wastage can be avoided on the broad front of social production where normative cost price formation remains in force, where the increase of the relative price of materials and especially of energy should increase rather than eliminate waste. These investigations are of special importance in the building industry.

The characteristic of the years 1978 and 1979 was that the consumer

price level rose to a greater extent than the producer price level. It can be assumed that the rise in the consumer price level will be more vigorous in the coming years as well. Since the price reform reduces the producer price level, the two-tier price system is restored.

(9) The price reform is taking place with the application of the imported energy and material prices which were valid for non-rouble areas in 1977 and at an exchange rate of 38 forint/dollar. There is as yet no decision as to what exchange rate is to be fixed when the new price system is introduced. One of the determinant factors here is the change in export-import price levels in respect of non-rouble areas during the period 1977–1980.

The active exchange rate policy became effective in 1975, as did the regulating principle according to which, if the rise of the price level exceeds a tolerable degree on the world market, the importing of inflation must be stopped through the periodic revaluation of the forint.

When a country adjusts the price of natural resources which are the basis of costing to world market prices, it has a certain freedom in determining the currency's exchange rate, since in this case the exchange rate is one of the important regulators of price levels, perhaps the most important one. And if we remember that it would be desirable to abolish the dual exchange rate (commercial and non-commercial), then it seems that more benefits can be derived from the revaluation of the domestic currency than from its devaluation. The low price elasticity of our non-rouble foreign trade also suggests that we should put the exchange rate policy primarily in the service of price stability and not of export stimulation.

(10) We naturally wish to maintain the stability of prices in future as well. But if prices have to guide economic decisions in constantly changing conditions of supply and demand, and in regularly changing conditions concerning the international division of labour, price stability can only be interpreted as relative. At such times price stability cannot mean an unchanged price level, and especially not a freezing of prices. This we discovered in the sixties. This is how the change-over from the central (listed) price system to the mixed price mechanism became an essential element of the economic reform of 1968. It was then that we put an end to price fixing by authorities covering all products and services. Since then we have been trying to reconcile the price movement dictated by supply and demand with the requirements of relative price stability through the simultaneous application of the different forms of prices set by authorities and of free market prices.

Relying on the experience of ten years it can be claimed that the simultaneous application of the different price forms together with the stabilizing mechanisms built into the price mechanism are able to ensure that price movement should occur within the limits which are considered possible by standard of living policies from the point of view of both the planned evolution of real wages and the income ratios between the different social strata.

In the new price system too it will be necessary to adjust continuously to changes in foreign and domestic markets through the simultaneous assertion of flexibility and stability. This requires a complex system of instruments. The principal ones are the following:

—The enterprise price differential reserve account, operating in respect of basic materials, as well as the basic material rent connected with the price formation of basic materials.

—Prescribing the making of prices relative to export prices in competitive industries.

—The joint application of prices set by authorities and free market prices.

—The obligation to register price increases in respect of basic materials and basic semi-finished products included in the bracket of free prices.

—Obligation of costing.

—Placing the regulations concerning dishonest profit on a new foundation, in harmony with the requirements of the new price system.

—Increasing the efficiency of price controls.

—Introducing the institution of price commissioners.

With some exceptions, these instruments have been applied since 1968. Our studies so far have led to the following conclusions:

In respect of free prices, the obligation of prior registration of the intention to raise prices can be kept in its present form. There is agreement that in respect of basic materials and basic semi-finished products, which are in the free price category, the chairman of the National Price Office should be entitled to excercise a right of veto for a maximum period of three months.

No change is necessary in respect of the obligation of costing.

In respect of price control it is useful to stress that here a greater role will be played by an assessment of a price policy nature (adjustment of foreign trade prices, requirement of relative prices, etc.). Consequently, the staff which mainly relies on chartered accountants is to be strengthened by experts in foreign trade who have adequate knowledge of economic and price policy.

The sanctions applied in the course of price control must be continued.

The institution of price commissioner must be kept, although it has not been put into practice up to now.

At the same time, some substantial modifications or innovations are necessary in certain respects concerning the instruments to be applied.

(11) Should import prices rise, the central pricing of fuel makes it possible for the domestic price to be changed after adequate preparation and in an organized way. Raw materials will have free prices, but it would be useful to separate the evolution of production costs from the actual contract prices. With the abolition of the central pricing of raw materials it is desirable to apply enterprise price differential reserve accounts in respect of a relatively large number of import materials. The function of the account is to create the possibility of an autonomous enterprise price policy, the moderation of cyclical and seasonal import price fluctuations (but not of price explosions). The account is an instrument for the equalization of import price fluctuations and the moderation of cyclical price movements.

It has been proposed that obligatory price funds should be operated in respect of large-volume raw materials which are input sensitive. This requires further examination. The establishment of enterprise price differential reserve accounts can be initiated by the enterprises, it is not going to be made obligatory. The general principles of their establishment, operation, and discontinuation are to be laid down by statute.

The establishment of a price differential account is generally justified in the case of an enterprise using basic material (the first domestic owner of the imported material), but we do not exclude foreign trade or capital goods supply companies either, if they trade on their own account.

The source of the enterprise price differential accounts is the positive difference between the prevailing domestic basic material price (the calculated price) and the actual import contract price. It operates without any direct link to the state budget.

The enterprise decides itself whether it considers the modification of the forint import purchase price as provisional and covers it on the account, or as a lasting change which requires its domestic selling price to be modified. After the amount on the account has been "exhausted," the price loss directly affects the profit shown in the enterprise's annual balance sheet.

The enterprise price differential account is (from the point of view of the profit and loss account) a non-normative instrument, the balance of which directly affects the profit and loss account. The positive balance of the account reduces the profit on the balance sheet, while the utilization of means accumulated in previous years increases it.

If, in the given year, more money from the fund should be devoted to supplement the profit or loss than the means available on the account, then the correction of the profit or loss is only possible up to the amount available on the account. If for this reason the profit of the enterprise drops to a level where it is possible to call on the general reserve fund, then the general rules concerning the reserve fund must be applied, including the stipulation that the bank makes credit available to cover the deficit in the reserve fund. (As can be seen, this is not a bank credit which would be directly connected to the price differential account.)

The account must be treated separately, the balance may be transferred from one year to another, since its function of moderating price changes affecting the enterprise's income can be only asserted over several years (including a business cycle). The state budget does not draw off the annual balance.

(12) Since the price of fuels and basic materials will be adjusted to imports from capitalist countries, there is a rent in the case of domestic production or imports from socialist countries. The fixing of the rent and the mechanism for changing it differ according to whether they are linked to materials whose prices are fixed centrally or to materials with free market prices.

In the case of the fuels, which have centrally fixed prices, the rent on both domestic production and imports from socialist countries is siphoned off by the state budget in accordance with a rate announced beforehand. The fixing of the extent of the rent and changing it in accordance with the domestic price or the price of socialist imports is carried out centrally.

a. The domestic basic material rent (in exceptional cases a negative allowance) is, initially, the difference between the domestic starting price and the cost level plus justified profit level in the case of individual fuels which must be accounted for when the exctractor (e.g. mine) sells them, and so the users buy the material in question at a price which already includes the rent (this price equalling the domestic starting price). It is expedient to fix the amount of rent as a percentage of the extractor's selling price.

b. The rent on imports from socialist countries is fixed for fuels (crude oil, natural gas, etc.) item by item, as with the domestic rent. The import rent is the difference between the prevailing domestic central price and the import price from socialist countries, and consequently it is only changed when one of these two elements is modified.

Due to the capitalist market price basis, the price of basic materials which have a free price also contains a rent when they are imported from

socialist countries, or, if produced domestically, within a narrower range. Rent is drawn off exclusively in respect of basic materials, but it is not a requirement that this should apply to all basic materials.

a. It is recommended that the siphoning-off of the rent for domestic production should be in the same form and should use the same method as for fuels which have a centrally fixed price. The amount of rent determined as a percentage of the basic material producers' selling price (also including the rent) should be considered as unchanged in so far as this it not corrected by a central measure.

b. The rent on imports from socialist countries is initially the difference between the domestic price based on the price of imports from capitalist countries and the forint price of imports from socialist countries for free price materials as well. In operating the mechanism this rent is altered by two-factors: modifications in the price of imports from socialist countries (a change in the rate of exchange of the rouble has the same effect) and the change in domestic basic material prices due to the decision of the producing enterprise.

(13) The functioning of product prices as equilibrium prices and the adjustment of price ratios within the product groups to supply and demand require greater elasticity of the price mechanism than is at present the case. There is agreement concerning the following:

a. In respect of centrally controlled prices maximum prices must be made dominant. It still has to be ascertained whether the change-over from a fixed price to a maximum price is possible in the case of loss-making products, i.e. where the state budget pays a subsidy.

b. At present 55 per cent of the population's consumption is of products or services which have a centrally fixed price. There is agreement that in 1980 and the following 2–3 years the share of central price trade should be reduced from 55 to 40 per cent. This means that it is to be maintained permanently with products and services where the application of price prefences (dispreferences) is justified in the long run.

c. Considering that in most of industry competitive prices are to be introduced, the central restriction of prices is only justified in respect of basic fuels and of electric power. This is a substantial change from the present price mechanism.

d. There is no decision concerning the price mechanism in the building industry. At present prices for repair and maintenance work are uncontrolled. Investment activity covering 90 per cent of building production is transacted at restricted prices. This price mechanism will remain in force

in 1980, but it will be necessary to return to the question later as and when overdemand for investments is terminated. It should be expedient within a few years to apply the 1968 system of building industry price mechanism, which meant free price formation in 60 per cent of building production; this should cover all construction work where the investment is not carried out with freely allocated means but must be returned.

e. There has been agreement that it is expedient to maintain the present price mechanism in respect of transport and communication as well as in respect of agriculture.

(14) The recommended price mechanism considers the increase in the efficiency of production to be the chief price stabilizer. This makes it possible for the joint movement of producer and consumer prices to be linked by a normative sales tax system. The changes which occur in producer prices must be followed in consumer prices too, since only then will consumption react to production. It follows from the system's structure that the rise in consumer price levels presents a problem if in producer prices the increase in efficiency lags behind and therefore an unforeseen inflationary price rise occurs.

With the new producer price mechanism, the joint movement of producer and the consumer prices may cause frequent price fluctuations up and down. It must be emphasized that if this price movement is justified from the point of view of the producer price, then it can be passed on to the consumer.

The system contains several phases of price level stabilizing elements. In producer prices, this is served, for instance, by price formation based on export prices, since it puts a barrier on the autarkic passing on of costs, or by the active exchange rate policy, according to which a smaller portion of the price rise on foreign markets can be set against revaluing the forint.

In consumer prices (not separated from producer prices) the approximately 40 per cent share of the centrally fixed price also means protection of the price level. Centrally fixed consumer prices restrict producer prices to a certain extent even if the latter are free prices.

It has not yet been fully ascertained to what extent annual changes in the consumer price level can be induced by the new system. It is probable that in the new price mechanism it will only be possible to plan price level rises in the price plan within maximum and minimum limits.

TRAGEDY

(Short story)

by

ZSIGMOND MÓRICZ

Everybody was talking about the Sarudy girl's wedding the next day. The harvest-hands lay down after lunch under the stooks or makeshift tents made out of pitchforks and rakes with the odd skirt draped over to give their faces some protection from the sun. The main thing was to avoid sunstroke.

Like cheerful, restless ants they bustled about in the great yellow field, finding pleasure as they went about their inhuman labour, which seemed both endless and limitless, in moving their arms and chattering. And the young men and girls were having such a good time joking about and fooling around with each other you would have thought this was the very stuff of life.

János Kis ate the apple stew brought out by the freckle-faced, stupid-looking son who bore him such an uncanny resemblance. Then he looked around him but was too lazy to go over to a stook and instead lay down where he was, in the stubble. He put his hat over his face and immediately fell asleep. He just had time to hear that Pál Sarudy had slaughtered a calf for the wedding.

With that he fell asleep.

Nobody bothered about him, not even his son. The latter picked up the glazed earthenware pot and peered into it to see whether his father had left any scraps for him. Of course he hadn't. It was as empty as if the dog had already licked it clean. He kicked the pot over and, following the dog, went off to look for hazel-nuts.

When János Kis awoke the first thing he did was to smack his lips. In this dream he had been at a wedding feast and had really eaten his fill. Reluctantly, he realized he had forgotten everything, including where it had been and what he had had to eat. He would rather not have woken up.

But since he had been accustomed all his life to being denied everything he did not grieve for long. He turned onto his other side and tried to go

back to sleep. But he could not. Beneath his dirt-stained straw hat his face had turned as red as a boiled lobster. He threw it off, and the sensation of the breeze on his skin had a cooling and pleasant effect.

"To hell with that old bugger Sarudy," he thought. "I've done enough work for him in my time. He can darn well invite me to his daughter's wedding. Give me a decent meal for once."

He held up his thumb:

"There'll be chicken broth. A good yellow, rich chicken broth. That'll be good. I'll have a bowl of that."

In his mind he was already tucking in, sucking up the thick little spirals of yellow noodle and gulping them down by the dozen.

"Everybody back to work," someone shouted.

János Kis did not move. He remembered once being at some wedding feast when he was a young boy. He had even been related to the family, but all he got out of it was chicken feet.

He was gripped by an impotent fury, a wild rage. He clenched his fist and suddenly felt himself capable of striking a blow that would smite everything to dust and ashes.

But his thumb was still held rigid and reminded him of what he had been thinking.

"And then stuffed cabbage rolls. I'd eat sixty, but damned if I won't manage fifty."

"Back to work," the command was repeated.

He too struggled to his feet. He felt hungry. He looked over at the black earthenware pot. Empty. What would it have contained in any way but some thin slops?

In a fury he kicked the pot contemptuously away. The side caved in. It was already held together by some wire and a piece stuck to his sandal.

"Devil take it," János Kis cursed and kicked it off his foot. "As long as I live I'll have this poverty to put up with. That old villain won't ask me to come."

He was bad tempered all day. No one paid any attention to him. János Kis was the kind of invisible person nobody even saw. This was how he had been all his life; he had never for a single minute been an interesting person. Neither weak nor strong, large nor small, he neither fawned nor strutted. What was there to distinguish him from anybody else? He was like a human being: he had two eyes and a nose. He had a moustache as well. And he never thought about anything. If it was morning he got up. In the evening he went to bed. When the time came he got married. That was the last time he had had a proper meal, and even then he was ill afterwards. He had never

been in the army, he had not left the village more than ten times, and then only to go to market. In all his life he had only had one really good laugh, and that was when his father tried to hit him for eating up all the dumplings on the plate. As he was taking a swing the momentum threw him off balance, he stumbled and struck his head against the wall. It killed him.

One thing still interested him: food. He would beat his wife because of it, and if he ever thought about anything then it was about what he would like to eat. But his powers of imagination were limited. He simply lacked experience.

In the evening, when they went back and told the farmer what they had done—in their village they were all day-labourers who had to provide their own food—old Sarudy said:

"Men and women, everybody can come to my daughter's wedding tomorrow. You can eat as much as you can manage."

János Kis felt dizzy. He was almost scared. He was afraid he would be unable to meet the challenge. The others cheered and shouted, but he was silent. He stood there at the back; it was getting dark and nobody bothered about him. Then, with the others, he trudged off home.

At home he ate his supper of gruel calmly, without a word. He kicked away the cat which was rubbing itself against the side of his leg and miaowing. He wasn't thinking about anything. But he felt very strange. As if a great, great task awaited him, the greatest of his life. He was not clear why, but the thought of tomorrow's feast filled him with foreboding.

All night long he could not sleep. He woke often and tossed about in his bed, but when he started to think of what the morrow would bring he was seized by a feeling of great unease.

He held up his thumb:

"First there'll be chicken broth. I'll have a bucket of that."

He smiled. He thought that if all the potato soup, caraway-seed soup, sour cherry, fruit gruels, together with all those stirred slops he had eaten in his entire life were poured into a tub, there would not be a tub in the whole wide world big enough, not even one of those barrels in the Archbishop of Eger's winecellar. And if after that all the good food he had ever eaten were poured together it would probably not even fill that rubbishy old pot he had kicked around in the field today.

It suddenly seemed to him that the sandal was still on his foot and he could feel it getting entangled with the wired pot. He kicked out. If he had been lying on a proper bed it would have collapsed on the spot, but for his straw bunk capers of this sort were a small matter. But János Kis gave a mighty kick. He was kicking away his poverty.

Next morning he awoke in surly mood. As he was rubbing the bad dream out of his eyes he had a distinct feeling of constriction in his chest. It felt as if it were being squeezed together by clamps.

"To hell with old Sarudy, today I'll eat him out of house and home. I've done enough hoeing for him in my time."

He did not dare eat anything for breakfast. Nor did he touch his food at lunchtime. He was afraid of having no appetite in the evening.

At other times, if he had quarrelled with his wife, perhaps, and went the whole day without a thing to eat, he never even noticed it. But now his insides were quaking through and through and he was dizzy with hunger.

He clenched his teeth, his large, heavy-boned jowl set, and his grey eyes stared fixedly ahead. He wrestled with himself with the stubborn rage of a wild animal. But he did not eat, he stood firm.

"Fifty stuffed cabbage rolls," he repeated to himself, and went on cutting swathes with his scythe with iron resolution. Rhythmically, like a harvesting machine.

The world about him ceased to exist. He did not see the huge wheat-field, nor the people working around him, he knew nobody, he knew nothing, he had no past, no future, his whole being had narrowed down to one single mighty purpose. He approached it as if it were some superhuman task. And he felt that his stomach, his whole insides, had been transformed and were capable of incredible work. As he gazed out at the world through ravished eyes he felt himself capable of stuffing down the sheaves of wheat like someone feeding them into a threshing machine.

At last dusk fell. They all went home. There the feast had been ready since noon. There was no time to prepare himself. He had to sit straight down at the table which was alreay laid.

János Kis found himself in a corner. All the better. He could put his back to the wall and let the enemy come. With just such a blind, wild resolve as this some ancestor of his might have faced the Turkish hordes.

The soup was brought.

János Kis found it neither too much nor too little. He got a good deep earthenware bowl which the cook filled to the brim. The yellow fat floated half an inch thick on the surface—it did not form into rings but ran together.

János Kis took his wooden spoon and with quiet concentration set to work. His innards were quivering and he could hardly control his greed.

At the tenth spoonful he made a shocking, appalling discovery.

He felt he had had enough.

He went pale. He felt he had undertaken an enormous task. He felt his

human inadequacy. Like a chill draught the thought flashed through his mind that he would not be able to carry out what he had set himself.

He screwed up his eyebrows, his low forehead wrinkled by vertical lines. His great iron jaws clacked and he resumed the battle.

Mechanically, just as he swung his scythe in a sweeping motion from right to left, so now he raised the spoon to his lips, rhythmically, until the bowl was empty.

Then he had a sensation of dizziness and a repulsive feeling of having had enough. The food was too greasy for his weak stomach, shrunken as it was and used only to thin and watery slops.

Curd noodles followed, appetizingly served up with sour cream, bacon crackling and fat. His plate was filled.

And János Kis took out his fork with the broken yellow bone handle and, bit by bit, put this away with the same calm as the previous course. He did not taste the food itself. He felt pressure in his belly and would have liked to go out into the fresh air. Or at least relieve his feelings with a loud, bitter curse. With infinite pain and envy he looked at the people around him. Everybody was cheerful. They were laughing and tucking in heartily. And he already knew it was the end. Today he had already eaten as much as he had ever done at a single sitting in his whole life. But he ground his teeth and held out his plate for the third course. It was lentils with spare-ribs. Outside, where the farm-hands and workers were sitting, they were not keeping to the customary order stipulated by the best man in the address he was reciting to the main body of guests. They were being offered what lay closest to hand. Some took this, others that, János Kis took everything.

Thus it went on for two hours, without a break, without respite.

Then came the stuffed cabbage.

"Fifty," he said to himself. His eyes glazed over.

In amongst the stuffed cabbage there were large lumps of meat put in as an extra bonus. János Kis had already disposed of three huge cabbage rolls and was attempting to put down one of these tough, undercooked and unchewed pieces of meat when he suddenly stood up in terror. His eyes bulged, almost popped out beneath his eyebrows, the veins on his neck swelled to the size of a rope.

With what good sense remained to him he rushed outside.

He was rid of his problem by the time he had reached the mulberry tree. The lump that had lodged in his throat, almost choking him, slipped back into his mouth.

Tears came into his eyes and he clenched his jaws together so tightly that a wedge could not have driven them apart.

With the intoxication of passion he said to himself:

"Perish, dog!"

Again he swallowed the meat.

But he still couldn't do it. It got stuck in his throat and would go neither up nor down.

The man clawed at the air with his hands. His long, lean body twisted and he collapsed on his back.

He writhed silently on the ground in terrible convulsions until, at length, he grew quiet.

Nobody noticed his absence, as they had not noticed his presence, or the fact that he had ever lived.

1909

Translated by Jerry Payne

FROM OUR NEXT ISSUES

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CULTURAL POLICIES

I.
ARTS SUPPORT IN GREAT BRITAIN

by

ROY SHAW

The Arts Council of Great Britain has its origins in adult education and the Second World War.

Before the Second World War, the British Institute of Adult Education put on a series of art exhibitions in small provincial centres under the title of "Art for the People." The pictures were borrowed from a variety of sources, and the exhibitions went to places which did not normally have art exhibitions. They were accompanied by lectures and interpretative material.

Shortly after the war began, the government realized the importance of the arts in maintaining public morale and set up a Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA). This soon led to a great flourishing of the arts in provincial Britain. The capital itself had less than usual, because it was under air attack. "Art for the People" was taken over and expanded by CEMA and so was the man behind it.

At the end of the war, the government decided to continue the principle of support for arts activities and established the Arts Council. It has two main tasks: to make the arts more generally accessible throughout the United Kingdom, and to improve the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts. In achieving these aims it is required to cooperate with departments of government and other appropriate organizations.

The Council has twenty members, who are chosen for their individual qualities and not as representatives of any particular organization or interest. They are advised by a network of panels composed of voluntary experts in each of the art forms dealt with by the Council. The five main divisions of the Council deal with visual arts, drama, music, literature, and touring. The last one is a department established specifically to grant aid and administer the touring of theatre, opera, and ballet. It is particularly concerned to see that the best productions of the major national companies, like

the Royal Opera House, the National Theatre, and the Royal Shakespeare Company, are seen in the regions.

There is also an important Regional Committee charged to implement the Council's avowed policy of decentralizing and encouraging the growth of regional arts activity. This is done mainly by the fifteen Regional Arts Associations which cover most of England and Wales. They are locally based bodies and are independent of the Arts Council, although they receive about 70 per cent of their money from it. They have many local government representatives on their executive boards and have close links with amateur organizations. The national Arts Council does not help amateurs except indirectly by making funds available for amateur music societies, for example, to hire professional singers or for amateur choruses to hire professional conductors. This policy is not due to any prejudice against amateur arts, but is simply an acknowledgement of the fact that funds are limited and that we have a prior obligation to fund the professional artist.

The relation between the national Arts Council and the Regional Arts Associations with national and local government is important. There is an old English proverb which says that "He who pays the piper calls the tune." The arrangements for arts subsidy in Great Britain are carefully contrived so that he who pays the piper does *not* call the tune. That is, the government provides funds for the Arts Council of Great Britain, but leaves it entirely to this independent body to determine the distribution of those funds among over 1,200 clients. The purpose of this system, which works extremely well, is to keep the politician and the artist at arm's length. That is, perhaps, the most important feature of public patronage of the arts in Great Britain. Individual politicians may sometimes have an itch to influence arts policy, but they are invariably rebuffed. The government itself, which has a Minister for the Arts as a junior minister in the Department of Education, scrupulously avoids any attempt to interfere with the decision-making in the Arts Council. A civil servant from the Ministry attends Arts Council meetings, but is a nonvoting member who does not participate in the decision-making.

One important development in the arts in Britain in the last few years has been the growth of what is variously called fringe theatre, alternative theatre or, perhaps most accurately, small-scale touring theatre. These sometimes have a permanent headquarters, but more often than not live a nomadic existence travelling from place to place performing in any building which is available and very rarely in a normal theatre. They are the "strolling players" of modern Britain, and it is part of their purpose to reach audiences which are alienated by the "plush and gilt" of the normal theatre. They

usually perform plays to the interests of ordinary working people which are contrived to be specially relevant and often perform to trade union groups or to working men's clubs. Last year, for example, the groups performed in mining areas special plays recalling the General Strike of fifty years ago —in which the miners played a key role.

Most of these groups tend to be leftwing, and this has sometimes occasioned adverse comment. Until recently no one, however, had ever challenged the right of left-wing theatre groups to receive government subsidy. In the last few months this record has been blotted by the local government of the city of Manchester where a small group of right-wing councillors have opposed the making of a grant to a left-wing theatre group. They are being vigorously resisted by the Regional Arts Association and by the Arts Council of Great Britain. This underlines the fact that the freedom of the artist can only be maintained by eternal vigilance and resistance to the attempts of those who wish to control it.

A development of the last three years has been the growth of what is called "community arts." This term refers to the activity of artists in various art forms who work in a particular community by involving the participation of members of that community. A recent review of this new development came to the conclusion that by involving the public in the creative process community artists recognize a widespread need for creative expression in society and seek to remove the feeling that art is something remote and irrelevant to the ordinary process of life.

Both the government and the Arts Council are anxious to see the expansion of community arts work, but this is so far limited by the lack of adequate new funds for this new growth. Nevertheless, the Council has committed slightly increased funds to the development of the work. Community arts can raise problems when some of the enthusiasts for it repudiate what they describe variously as traditional, heritage or, worse still, élitist or bourgeois arts. Some of the wiser enthusiasts for community arts, however, acknowledge that there is room for both traditional arts and community arts in a complete arts provision for all levels of education and sophistication in the community.

A further theoretical division arises from the emphasis on practical art activity versus what is often called "passive" appreciation. This was most sharply represented by a community artist who said that anyone could hang a picture in an art gallery and invite people to come in and see it, but that he as a community artist was involved in something much more difficult: evoking the creative activity of people themselves. Once again the opposing of these two activities seems to be unwise. It is valuable to evoke the creative

potential of people in the community. It is also valuable for them to be able to enjoy the best works in their own cultural heritage. To opt for one or the other alone is surely a mistake. Moreover, the suggestion that being a spectator of the arts is to be purely passive is absurd, as anyone who knows what is really involved in responding to a great novel or painting or a late Beethoven string quartet would agree. The retort could be that much activity in "do-it-yourself" art may be mindless and of small value. Doubtless people enjoy great works of art better when they have some experience of what is involved in the creative process, and equally people's own creative work benefits from their exposure to the best examples by great artists.

The foregoing discussion raises the question of the relationship between education and the arts. It has to be admitted that the Arts Council of Great Britain has devoted more attention to making the arts more widely available than it has to encouraging knowledge and understanding of the arts. In fact, there has from the beginning been contention between those who see arts and education as inseparably linked and those who feel that the arts should speak for themselves to all men. In the early days of CEMA the Chairman of the organization objected to the provision of guide-lecturers at the "Art for the People" exhibitions of pictures. He claimed that people should be able to interpret pictures for themselves and did not need another interpreter. This has been a mistake made by many people who are themselves highly educated and assume that everyone has their own highly cultivated taste and judgement. This is not the case in Great Britain any more than it is in any other country in the world. Those who take this view are rather like rich people who say that money is not really important.

It is also an unhappy fact that some people in the arts world feel that education is the enemy of enjoyment, that it represents an analytical approach to the arts which destroys enjoyment. The answer to that can be drawn from my own experience in university adult education, where a colleague would spend twelve weeks on a detailed study of, say, Shakespeare's *King Lear* in a way which by no means destroyed the enjoyment of that work, but opened the door to far greater enjoyment than anyone could have had hitherto. So it is with all the art forms, and we need education to supplement the work of the arts at all stages, from earliest school years to adult education for mature people. Last year an important report was published in Britain on support for the arts which impressed everyone by saying: "We must reject the long-established fallacy that 'arts support' and 'education' are two separate things. More positively, we must insist that those responsible for them are natural allies and see to it that they collaborate at national, regional, and local levels."

In the spirit of that splendid assertion, I arranged last autumn a conference of adult educators and arts support workers. The hundred places at the conference were overapplied for and the applications came almost equally from people working in the arts and those working in adult education. They discussed common problems and the possibilities for cooperative ventures. It was recognized that in the past arts activities, like art galleries or theatres, had, say, arranged school visits or adult lectures, and that conversely, adult education organizations had moved into the organization of art exhibitions, concerts, or the performance of plays. The message of the conference was that while such venturing into the others' territory had been useful in the past, the time had now come when educators and arts support workers should collaborate, so that each did best what it was most experienced in doing.

Already there are examples of new cooperation throughout the country and it is proposed this year to organize a conference between people working in schools and arts supporters. This seemed less urgent, because curiously most people working in the arts field, when they thought of any educational activity, thought immediately of children in schools. For example, we have a well-developed system called Theatre in Education, but this means theatre in schools: small groups of professional actors go and work in the schools putting on performances and working with the children in exercises in drama. The idea that education is lifelong has not permeated all levels of English society, although it is generally accepted by all educators.

Finally, I would say that the principle of government support of the arts is completely accepted by both Labour and Conservative parties in Great Britain, and fortunately the main activity of opposition politicians is usually to complain that the government is not doing enough for the arts. At present the grant from the government is £ 42,000,000 which is about double in real terms the amount given ten years ago. It is still not enough, but with it the Arts Council manages to support the Royal Opera House which is an opera and ballet house of world standing, the new National Theatre with its three auditoria, the Royal Shakespeare Company with its two main theatres in Stratford-on-Avon and in London together with sixty regional theatres in almost every sizable town throughout the country, an equal number of small-scale travelling theatres, about fifteen orchestras in London and the regions, two main art galleries in London, and travelling exhibitions to art galleries throughout the country. Although music, drama, and art take up the lion's share of the Arts Council's money, we also aid literature by funding small magazines for critical and creative writing, and by making grants to writers in residence at universities and colleges, to sponsor-

ing the visits of writers to schools to read and talk about their work. We also grant aid to publication of new novels by contemporary writers and the provision of bookshops in areas which would otherwise be without a bookshop.

Money given to the arts is never enough, if only because the arts expand and grow continually, but in the thirty-five years or so of government sponsorship of the arts in Britain we have enormously increased the availability of the arts in Great Britain. We have also increased the diversity of arts provision so that arts experience is now available to working people who were not attracted by the traditional art forms. Further, through education at all levels we are beginning to remove the barriers that exclude so many working people from the enjoyment of the common cultural heritage of mankind.

II.

THE ARTS AND THE STATE IN HUNGARY

by

FERENC MOLNÁR

The series of sociographical works which describe present reality has perhaps been one of the most popular series of books in Hungary. The authors present a general situation report, a social, economic, and political analysis, and indeed, sometimes—unusual as this may seem to some—propose ways to rectify mistakes and organize more efficient work. In its title—"The Discovery of Hungary"—the series refers to the fact that present writers are carrying on a tradition—that of one of the most courageous undertakings of twentieth-century Hungarian intellectual life that depicted the semi-feudal conditions of the 'thirties, drawing attention to brutal reality and mobilizing in the interest of improvement. The literary sociography of that time was hallmarked by works which are now reckoned amongst the classics, such as Gyula Illyés's *People of the Puszta*, Géza Féja's *Viharsarok* (Stormy Corner), or Zoltán Szabó's two famous volumes, *A tardi helyzet* (The Situation at Tard) and *Cifra nyomorúság* (Fancy Misery). It was a natural reaction on the part of the Horthy regime to prosecute some of the authors, banning some of the books. Briefly, sociography emerged as a typical form of opposition.

Why then is it necessary to carry on this literary form? Today the authors of sociographical works are given financial support by the socialist state,

by the cultural authorities, and indeed—within the framework of the regular state subsidies for book publishing—they publish their volumes, which have a wide circulation, also with state support. Bulcsu Bertha's volume of reportage published in the series, draws attention to the dark side of the management of Lake Balaton, Hungary's most highly valued national resource. It pulls no punches and more than once criticizes the government committee whose task it is to direct the development of the Balaton region. Many of Bertha's suggestions have been listened to, others have been rejected—as one would expect. After all, neither the author nor the members of the government committee are infallible.

Although not forming part of the above series, György Moldova's book on the life and conditions of railwaysmen* is also worthy of attention. Having been virtually commissioned and authorized by the Director General of the State Railways, Moldova begins by expressing extraordinarily sharp criticism of the present state of the Hungarian State Railways. And what was the reaction? Not only was the volume received with high critical appreciation, and published in a large edition, but György Moldova has also been appointed an "honorary railwayman," thus acknowledging the justification of his criticism.

But does this popularity and support mean that Hungarian cultural policy gives preference to critical works alone? This is obviously not the case, after all, none of the works in the series can be described as purely critical. The writers aim at objectivity because they feel the country and the work of the people to be their own. While registering achievements they also speak about what has to be rectified, and what it is that arouses indignation. Cultural policy on the other hand supports this objective depiction both intellectually and financially.

This support is justified by the role culture plays in a socialist society. Culture in Hungary is not a luxury nor is it a monopoly. A few facts and figures to bear this out: in a country with a population of ten million, 8,556 books were published in 1978, in over 93 million copies, and retail trade book turnover exceeded 2,000 million forints. Culture is one of the most important means of building a socialist society, being of equal importance with economic, political, and other factors. The meaning of our work must be given by the creation of a new type of man, and a new model for communities. To develop this model power and economic strength are needed, but the force of culture and of the intellect are just as indispensable.

A brief historical survey is not really a digression here. After the overthrow of the Horthy regime and the Arrowcross mob rule that lasted a few

* NHQ 74.

months, the intellectual scene in Hungary was left with huge debts. Debts which in other countries, that had developed under happier historical circumstances, had been paid off in the last century, in the wake of the bourgeois democratic revolutions. This includes the separation of Church and State, and with that, on the basis of religious freedom and the liberty of conscience, the liquidation of certain cultural monopolies of the Church. An equally important task was putting an end to an 8 per cent illiteracy rate and the setting up of a uniform and compulsory eight-grade school system. All this did not yet form part of the foundations for a socialist culture, but was prompted by the necessity to catch up.

Laying the foundations of socialist culture actually also included the state taking on the role and responsibility of a patron of arts. I would like to underline the organic interdependence between these two functions, mainly to counter those who are inclined to see in the socialist state's guidance of culture only prohibitive functions, restricting the role of the state to no more than that. Hungarian cultural policy has made use of, and will continue to make use of, its right to ban certain works. To give another historical example: in a country which in the first half of the twentieth century was deliberately and regularly poisoned by Fascist ideology and its products masked as culture, it necessarily had to be the first gesture of the new democratic state order to ban works inciting to race hatred, disseminating Fascist ideology and serving war propaganda. This prohibition has remained valid to the present day, and I think that a socialist state, and indeed, any progressive society, cannot tolerate such ideologies in the future either. The same holds true for the products affecting man's base instincts in a cultural disguise, but having no value whatever.

Of course the question might and should indeed be raised what guarantee there is for state guidance not to abuse its rights to prohibit—that the prohibitors do not give the green light to a commercial, empty, retrograde art, while rejecting what is original and unusual. The decade after the country's liberation created misunderstandings and errors in this field as well. On the one hand, certain works were unjustly excluded, by a narrow interpretation of the principle of usefulness, and on the other, in this way support could also be given to poor-quality vulgarized works that paid lip-service to socialist realism whose worthlessness had to be recognized later. One should not here speak in generalities. The self-criticism was also done by us, Hungarian Communists. That kind of intolerance towards works of the intellect in the past formed part of the growing pains of social development. But the socialist state had to reach the stage of surveying the state of this harmony, or the lack of it, between principle and practice.

This revision again can be attributed to the function played by art within the state. Every state, including the socialist state, supports works that help its own goals. But what should support imply? This is the key issue. The illustration and propagation of current regulations? Should we only expect the arts to mobilize people? Or should they provide an objective and authentic depiction of social processes? Obviously we must aim for the latter, and give it responsible backing. After all, the social function of art, in the strict sense of the term, perhaps oversimplifying the issue, is no more than the description of those processes which cannot be covered by other, objective means of social research (statistics, sociology, history, etc.). In other words, it is the development of the human soul, the slow transformation of consciousness which art—beyond and besides what is specifically aesthetic—can offer to society or to the leadership of the state. False artistic depiction can be just as dangerous as distorted statistics, the difference at most being that incorrect facts and figures elicit a direct economic reaction, while a deceitful overall social picture which might be the result of bad artistic political practice, makes itself felt only indirectly.

It goes without saying that objectivity and social commitment are connected. Lenin once wrote that for the building of a socialist society Communists need all the facts and figures, regardless of whether they are convenient or inconvenient. This principle is also valid for culture, and thus state guidance also has to count with it. If we were only to recognize the function of art in providing entertainment and producing delight we might possibly make things easier for ourselves. After all, a poem written according to the principles of *l'art pour l'art* is neutral in its direct effect, both socially and politically, while objective facts—also in their direct effect—might perhaps be inconvenient, since they throw light not only on achievements but on mistakes as well, calling attention to personal responsibilities and demanding that something be done. However, in its long-range effect, the social commitment that wants to serve socialist society cannot do without objectivity. This is why state cultural guidance supports this kind of art both financially and morally, something which, however, does not exclude the publication of many *l'art pour l'art* works.

I started by speaking about the "The Discovery of Hungary" series and the influence literary sociography exerts today. Now I would like to demonstrate with a concrete example how the Ministry of Culture supports this kind of attitude. More than a decade ago a young writer, Antal Végh, wrote about the grave problems of a village in north-eastern Hungary, in a relatively backward area. His piece, printed by the Budapest monthly *Valóság*, stirred up a storm all over the country, and if possible, an even

greater one among local bosses. Some people felt that Végh had criticized socialist society. József Darvas, the eminent writer, at that time chairman of the Hungarian Writers' Association, took up the matter. He went to the village, surveyed the situation, and—apart from a few details—took Végh's side. Then *Népszabadság*, the central daily of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, organized a conference on the problem, which was attended also by writers and the politicians concerned. To avoid any misunderstanding, here the support did not consist of protection. Support meant that the writer could feel and know that he was not left on his own. The problems he had raised led to a nation-wide reaction, and they examined together with the responsible politicians what could be done to remedy the situation. This was moral support for the arts, if you like, since he could also feel the prestige socialist society can give in such cases.

The act of reception constitutes an equally real and great factor—that is how the public, the consumer, evaluates and accepts a work. In Hungary it is a question of principle that neither the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party nor the Ministry of Culture express opinions on particular works. They qualify and evaluate artistic trends, they help and support processes, but there is nothing like an obligatory opinion concerning a given work. Here cultural policy looks to the help of Marxist criticism which, with its evaluating, analysing function, supports processes and trends of development. In the Hungarian view criticism, that is Marxist criticism, in addition to analysing the immanent values of a given work of art, also collates reality and the image in art. That is, it takes stock not only of the quality of the depiction but its truth content as well. Naturally no one dictates to the critic what he should write. The same is expected of criticism as of creative artists, that is an objective picture of reality. This objective picture on the one hand enables the creation of a firm system of values, and on the other, as a consequence of its own laws, exercises an effect on artistic life.

It is also of primary importance that state guidance employs the best critics as experts. The various art forms have separate councils which operate as advisory bodies. The artists themselves take part in the work of these councils, and thus serious debates can arise about various works. The situation is similar in the associations which play the role of making proposals and expressing their opinions before state decisions are taken.

It cannot be my aim here and now to describe the organization of the cultural guiding apparatus of the Hungarian People's Republic. My aim was to show the factors of the harmony between art and reality that are being taken into consideration in planning cultural policy.

I have written about the comparison of principles and practice, it being

my firm belief that a politician, if he happens to work in the cultural scene, is obliged to do this job. Because, taken in themselves, neither the correct principles nor practice can ensure the equilibrium of a cultural situation which—in harmony with the whole of society—has set up realistic goals as its objective. Realistic goals can be fought and worked for only using realistic means.

The task of state cultural guidance and support is the service of socialist culture. Making this explicit statement, I should, at the same time also like to raise an objection: obeying its orders does not form part of this task. To serve and to obey orders are not identical concepts. On the contrary, those who serve, know what they want and why they plan to do it. The Hungarian Ministry of Culture acts in keeping with this conviction.

RECEDING WHITE CARRIAGES

Short story

by

JÓZSEF BALÁZS

He had been waiting for years to see this part of the country. He also wanted to find out whether it would be worth going back there. Really, did it make sense for him to go anywhere? In the old days—it might have been twenty years now, but in Henrik Hamala's memory it seemed centuries ago—he would have lingered hereabouts. He felt, more than likely grossly misunderstanding his own senses, that in the space of one day he lived years, and he always buried himself in the light of the repetitive dawns and the strengthening brightness of the mornings, as if he were expecting to get to know the important and insignificant parts of his existence. And yet it was he who found it most natural that the dawns and the mornings should only pass so that one day would be over as soon as possible for the next one to come. What annoyed him most was the fact that this repetitive monotony suggested to the world that something was always happening, fresh events, historical and natural. Whereas it meant nothing more than monotony; the changes, the passing of time only hid the fact that immobility was the beginning and end of everything. Since he was convinced of that—he had gained his experience over the years—he felt justified in raising the question of whether it was worth him—or anyone else—going to newer and newer places or—as he was now—going back to the scenes of childhood. In any case the world around him became increasingly constricted: not only did he see his room, the garden, the backyard—he had just gone home to his parents' place—shrink, but it was as if the sky too would gradually reach down lower and lower over his head. He hadn't sensed that in the past. When, for instance, together with his decorator friend, he had undertaken to do the plastering work at weekend cottages, he remembered clearly that the sky had seemed wide—sometimes he even started out of his sleep because he was afraid of it, he was afraid its width would occupy his imagination to such a degree that he would be unable to take notice of anything else. (Of course he and the decorator could not have abandoned plastering; they had to do something to live.) And he clearly remembered that he gave up painting around that time. So he had to make up his mind to spend his excess energy and time on pulling himself together and start painting again.

For instance right now.

He carried his small easel under his arm, picked up his paint box and pocketed his brushes. He had been waiting for this moment for a long time. He wanted to decide what to do. If he started to paint and it turned out that he could finish the job the way he wanted to—there was no more he could ask for, he had never asked for more. Even when he gave up painting systematically it was for that reason; he started to work and could not finish...

He wanted to decide what to do... He would either paint, or he too would go off on the white train he had seen that morning... He was a bit scared. Not too much of course, but as he slipped out of bed and walked over to the window—well, there was a moment, just as long as it takes the light of a torch to flash on and go out again with a single click—in that brief moment he thought he was dead. Impossible, of course it was impossible, he thought as he pressed his head against the window. He listened. He was still thinking of the rattling of the receding white train on which—apparently—he too would travel. With those—there were many of them—whom he knew, whose faces he somehow remembered, but who had all died many years ago or perhaps just last month.

And he too was sitting with them.

That is why he thought he too had died, that they had been together again for a long time—he almost felt the smell of their bodies in his nostrils, the softness of their clothes; they had been reserved and pleasant, and looked on him as if he had been one of them for a long time.

Still standing at the window, he heard someone turn on a radio, and the sound of a clattering waltz played as if on a barrel organ blared out. Then someone turned off the radio, but the emptiness of the room was different from what it had been a moment ago; it was now part of the mortal world, and it was as if the wall beside the bed all of a sudden became lighter. In that instant he knew what to do—if he could get out to the meadow, to the water, there would be a long afternoon to decide (he would keep a check on himself) what he should do. Would he get into the white carriages which—he could still remember—you could only see out of on one side? Unknown men and women were watching the passing train. They stood like soldiers who had been ordered to stare at one point only. The white carriages either faded into the distance or came nearer, and it seemed as if the train were going round and round in circles. Of course, it was not only in life that everything was motionless—he was as happy as a small boy when he made this discovery—but in death as well. Incidentally, what a ridiculous and dirty trick: we are dragged into life, given a kick, come on now!—then we realize there's no way out. We have got onto some sort of roundabout and one will probably be deceived for ever because we are always waiting for something to happen. But nothing happens, it turns out that the roundabout is just a disguise for immobility—everything stays the same: people are born and die. Then the whole thing starts from the beginning again and again. Perhaps that is the worst of it, that we can think in the past, the present and the future. It would be better if one could think only about the past. Of course, he decided as he looked around him, by and large everything that's outside man's range, that has nothing to do with man, is perfect.

Carnations were blooming the whole length of the road before him. It was not a road any longer; at one time carts had used it, now, however, a furrow could be seen beneath the flowering carnations. Nobody comes this way nowadays, he thought as he studied the meadow and the wide occasional way leading to the river. Near him ash trees and poplars took over from the line of acacias, while on the other bank of the river a poplar grove swayed in the wind. A little further on there were poppies among the carnations, and larkspur and tall purple flowers. He almost thought about setting up his easel. Beyond the poplar grove he saw two church steeples: as the clouds passed across the sky, the light strengthened and faded on the steeples. He knew the villages on the far side of the river, he had often gone that way—just as he had come here—as a boy, and he could easily imagine the churches too. Nothing special: Central European churches, like towers, like walls, really poor and dull constructions. And yet how naturally they blended into the countryside: the steeples soared to the sky, their presence was at the same time man's yearning to rise higher and higher so he could understand himself better. That is all it is, that's what it's all about, thought Hamala. And the more he thought about the whole thing, the more strongly he felt the pointlessness of the sight, of the shining white towers, and of all those things which the sight evoked for him. His enthusiasm faded as quickly as it had come. It had happened to him before that, stopping somewhere, he found something worth painting. Then he would have second thoughts: he was afraid that nature might deceive him. As she had deceived his mother, for instance. As soon as he got home—it was evening by then—his mother stopped in the door of the hall and said, "How good that you're home, you can see wonderful nights in our yard..." That may be so, he thought quickly, but he did not answer. He was looking for his father. He knew from his mother's reticence that he would find him having a drink.

His father had not been mislead by the sight of the yard at night: there he sat near the door—he always sat with his back to the entrance—drinking wine and staring at the tablecloth. He always drank alone; if someone said hello he just nodded, and when his glass was empty he just had to look towards the bar for them to bring him the next. He almost thought of asking his father whether he had anything to say about what—in his opinion—the world beyond the bar walls was like. Then he decided against it, feeling the question to be intricate, that his father might misunderstand it. And in any case—he was perhaps surest of all about that—every type of question was in itself a misunderstanding. He held his father's shoulder. The old man slowly looked up at him and, as if he could sense what his son wanted to know, he said,

"Nothing wrong... I'm drinking Riesling..."

He sat there beside his father, fingering the glass. They sat in silence. But the whole place was quiet; two short peasants stood at the bar. The barman lit a cigarette, the light of the street lamp came in through the window.

"Don't brood so much," his father said quietly. "You're not... The less you think, the less they put one over you. That should guide you."

"Guide?" Hamala repeated.

He had reached the river bank and he knew that if he were really not to paint any more, if he were to disappear for good, so that no one would ever find him again, his father would more than likely mourn him least. His two or three glasses of wine a day, the table near the bar door would still be waiting for him; he would somehow manage to fill in time till he died. Earlier he might have pondered on his father's behaviour; where, when and why had his father realized that what mattered most was to enjoy the privilege to secure the table next to the door in the bar? Who could be to blame? Hungary? It was too large and intangible to be held responsible... But his father was not to blame either. And he would list the arguments in favour of his father, his family and, if he were cornered, in favour of himself as well... He would tell what he had been thinking about ever since he had arrived home. Since no one would ever ask him, he could only debate with himself and could only put questions to himself. To tell the truth, he reckoned this was the best way, the only struggle worthy of man—or rather himself. Besides, though Hamala was quite aware of his loneliness—he considered it natural and the only supportable state to be in—it was not because of loneliness that he disputed these questions with himself. He knew he could not talk about them to anyone anyway—because everyone has their own views. Just as he could not tell anyone that he might disappear, break away from here so that—really—no one would ever find him. They would think he would turn up some time, they would wait for a while, then they would give him up for lost.

He went down to the water. A moment before fighters on a training flight had drawn stripes across the sky, flashing to and fro above his head with their angry and merciless din. Now that he was about a meter from the river, the planes grew distant, and from a long way away, from beyond the church steeples—even the poplars along the river were unable to muffle the noise—it was as if somebody were clashing giant cymbals under the ground. The river bank resounded. Hamala wondered for a long time whether men were responsible or whether the noise was coming towards him from some special machines of a kind he had never seen. But it could be that it was still the sound of the planes in the distance; that was the extent to which the earth, the water, the trees had been able to tame the roar of the fighters.

Suddenly a strong wind got up: opposite the leafy crowns of the poplars leant towards each other and circled round and round above their trunks. He put his easel down on the ground and went closer to the river. He crouched and let his hand dangle in the water.

He heard footsteps, and the branch of a bush snapped a few paces away from him.

Crossing the meadow and going down to the river he had not met or seen anybody. Now, all of a sudden, a stranger stood beside him. The man did not speak, he put his hands in his pockets and waited. He had short, thinning hair brushed back. As he stood and stared at Hamala he picked his nose, then shoved his hands back into his pockets.

"Peeping, are we?" the stranger said.

Hamala gestured that he was not peeping.

The stranger did not answer straight away. He thought for a moment, then glanced behind him. Hamala followed his glance. He saw a young girl and another man beside the bush.

"So you were not peeping?" the stranger asked again. "How can you prove it? Now, come on..."

Hamala thought they must be joking. That they only wanted to give him a scare.

"Prove it? What can one prove on this earth?"

Hamala laughed.

Ever since morning—when he had gone over to the window, he remembered distinctly—some sort of mist had obscured his senses. Maybe because of his dream, maybe because of that absurd plan to make himself disappear, not to go back to the house, that he would not be going back down this road either. His thoughts had not linked up as they usually did and he considered things important which he should not even have noticed. Since he spent the greater part of his time occupied with himself—that was why he liked working with the decorator, for instance, because they could plaster weekend cottages for hours without saying a word to each other—he was severe with himself: where possible he avoided trifles and repetitions of the imagination and logic which came to a dead end.

Now however—as if someone had swept out and revived his brain with some sort of device—he could sense everything clearly and plainly. The situation and the route that he had taken across the meadow to the river...

"You won't get away with this," the stranger came even closer to Hamala and threw his easel into the river.

Hamala did not understand a thing. The water swept the easel under a bush.

The other man came closer too. He was skinny, with a small and round head, and his neck was so thin that Hamala drew back in surprise. The Roundhead held a short stick.

They waited.

Hamala looked at the girl, but she did not move from beside the bush. The Roundhead suddenly pressed the stick to his face. Hamala could see too that the man had wrapped a rag around his hand.

"Give us a thousand and then you can beat it." The Roundhead was cool, he still did not take the stick away from his face.

"You can have something for it..." the Roundhead looked at the girl. "Her," and now he took the stick away from Hamala's face and pointed to some place behind the girl. "There's the hut, you can go there... The money can wait until you've finished..."

"I haven't any money," Hamala said.

While the Roundhead was talking he thought he would make a dash for it. If he could get up onto the embankment without them catching up with him, they were quite likely not to follow him across the meadow, or along the road. But the two men must have counted on that too, because they stood between him and the embankment, blocking the only path away from the river.

"If you've no money, you've no money. We'll take everything off you... and then you'll pay..."

Hamala started to laugh, and the Roundhead—as if he'd got a fright—put down his stick. Hamala was certain that if he were to resist them, the two men would beat him to death. A bit of resistance, that's all it would take, and then he too would be travelling on the white train... One dreams, one dreams in advance about what is going to happen. If only he had the courage to go for one of them—let's say, to hit the Roundhead, he seemed the more aggressive... His brain had gone dull again, he could not even think of running away: "let them do what they like with me." However, much he considered it, he did not have the strength to hit the Roundhead. He waited for them to make the first move. The Roundhead had that thick stick, he would only feel the first blow, and then no more.

The Roundhead suddenly grabbed him by the collar of his coat and gave him a shove.

Hamala could not remember how he got into the hut. It was a simple makeshift thing covered with branches and great burdock leaves. There was nothing inside, they lay on the bare ground. The girl pulled down her blue, worn and muddy tracksuit trousers.

"Quick, because they'll be here any moment... They're like animals..."

Hamala looked out of the side of the hut—the girl was now lying beside him. She helped him get his things off, tugging at his trousers. She put her hand in under his shirt at the waist.

"Leave me alone," Hamala said.

The two men were waiting side by side outside the hut. It looked to Hamala as if they were clasping something in their hands.

"What do you want? They'll beat you to death," the girl whispered.

Hamala noticed that a briefcase was hidden away by his feet. He reached for it and took something hard out of the case. It clanked in his hand. It was a bunch of keys—all sizes—tied together with string. He quickly undid them, picked out two big rusty ones and put the rest down on the ground. He saw that the girl was looking out of the hut and searching for the two men. He quickly put his hand over her mouth and the key too stuck to her lips. At first she scratched him, then she lay beside him as if she had breathed her last.

Hamala had faith in the keys. He would hold them between his fingers and fight. He wouldn't give in to them. It'd be good if his father were there, or the decorator; together they would not be frightened... Suddenly his stomach contracted, the air in his chest was compressed; he felt he lacked the strength even to crawl out of the hut and get to his feet.

He took his hand away from the girl's mouth, he held the keys between his fingers and waited.

All of a sudden there was a snapping of branches and he could hear voices coming from the far side of the river: Hamala looked out of the hut and he could no longer see the two men.

"They are looking for them," said the girl softly. "They've realized that we're here..."

The girl reached for her tracksuit and pulled it on. Then she had second thoughts.

"Here I am if you want me... It won't cost you a thing," and once again she pulled her trousers down.

"Aren't they looking for you too?" asked Hamala.

"They are... But it's all the same to me... If they catch me so what, if they don't, they don't... I don't give a damn either way: I've wanted to do it so many times..." and she pointed in the direction of the water.

"Do what?"

"Drown myself," answered the girl.

Hamala swallowed. He crawled out of the hut and got to his feet with great difficulty. The rusty keys were sticking to his sweaty palms.

"I'll come with you if you want," said the girl.

"Go to hell," said Hamala shrugging her off.

"If you leave me here I won't survive till the evening... Not me..." sulked the girl, and she noticed that Hamala was taking a good look at her for the first time.

"Why do you want to do it?... What's the matter?" Hamala said after a while.

"I dreamt last night that the fish were mauling my hands," the girl said.

What she said began to interest Hamala.

"Where are you from?"

"Nowhere," the girl answered and sat down. She started to cry in such a way, so suddenly, that Hamala shuddered. He went over to her.

"I want to be with you," moaned the girl, wiping her face on her tracksuit. "I'll do anything you ask me to... I don't want to die..."

Hamala straightened himself up—the best thing would be to take her hand and get away from here!

The girl looked at him: on her face at her neck the tears had washed off the grime. She can't be twenty yet, he decided.

He had to make up his mind right away: was he going to make a dash for it alone or with the girl? If the girl came with him his problems would be doubled. It would be more difficult to escape, and slower, and then how would he shake her off, where would he take her, what would he do with her?

He ought to help her, of course he ought to help her, but Hamala knew already, he had already made his decision: he would go alone, he would leave the girl there. The girl too understood from his silence: he was not going to help her... She stopped crying and went down to the water to wash her face. Hamala saw that she still could not control herself. She crouched under a bush, her head pressed between her knees, that was how she sobbed. She was talking incoherently but Hamala understood that she wanted to go away with him because if she were to start off on her own, the two men would catch up with her, and the whole thing would start all over again.

"I'm going to die like a beast," the girl said, and came out from under the bush.

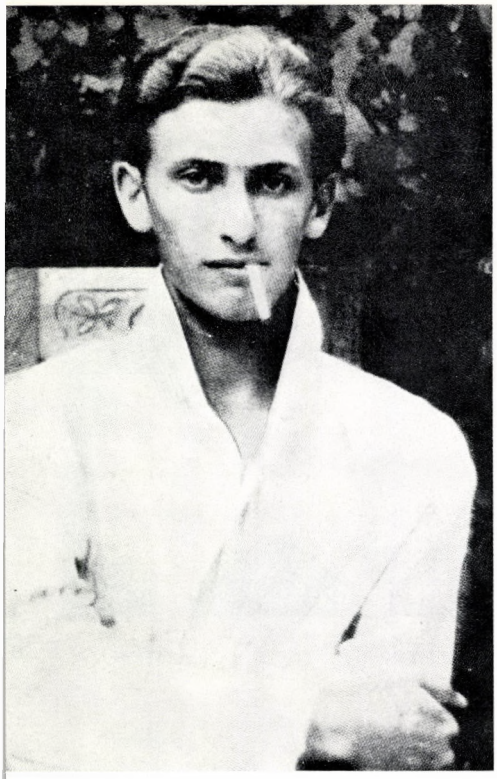
Alfred Schiller, Corvina Press

József Rippl-Rónai: Zsigmond Móricz (chalk, on paper, 52×41 cm, 1923)

The Zsigmond Móricz Memorial House at Tiszacsécse. The writer spent his childhood there

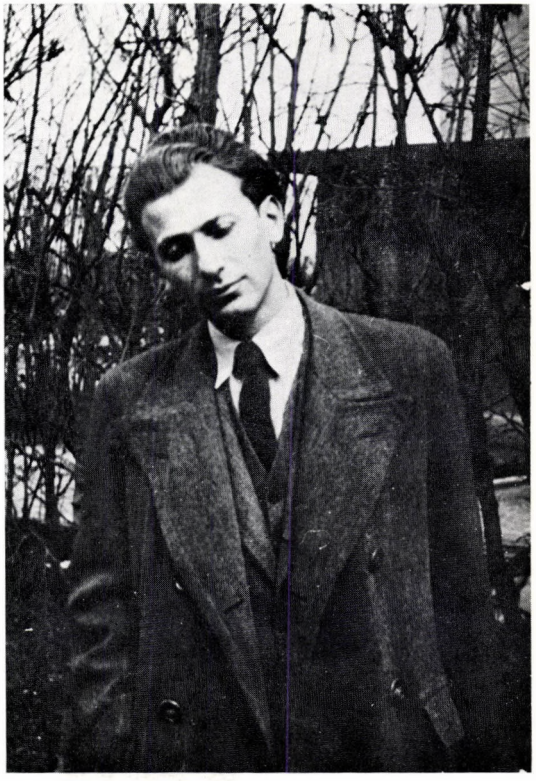
Albert Kozák, MTI

MIKLÓS RADNÓTI



around 1930

at the age of five



the last surviving snapshot, 1941

Miklós Radnóti, his foster mother and her daughter, the poet's "twin."

In Paris in the thirties. From left to right: Mr and Mrs Károly Koffán (standing), Mr and Mrs Gyula Ortutay, Mr and Mrs Miklós Radnóti (seated)

Courtesy Petőfi Literary Museum

She turned to face Hamala. "What a common face," he thought—and he was about to say something when they heard footsteps coming from both sides of the river.

Two men were hurrying on the far side. Other steps were sounding close to the hut, and the Roundhead approached among the bushes, the stick still in his hand.

Hamala dragged on his coat and, clinging to the branches, he clambered up onto the embankment. The earth slipped under his feet, he broke off boughs and jerked branches in his effort to get up.

Then he started to run. He felt all the time as if someone were trotting behind him, that they were after him, that several of them, strangers, carrying weapons and sticks, might appear beside him at any moment. He did not dare look back, though for a moment he thought he heard the girl's voice.

He stopped outside the house, in the gateway. Only now did he dare look back down the road, only then he did not see anyone; the road dust flitted over the ditches.

Translated by Elizabeth Szász

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THREE DOSTOIEVSKIAN MASKS

from Raskolnikov's diary

freedom won't be sweet for him without us he can't exist
iced-in a frosted globe inside everywhere me at its core
suspicion (just and unjust) packs space about me
bars represses even me in the frore globe frosted over inside
here I belong in existence inexistent following geometry's eternal law
Raskolnikov hunted Raskolnikov I'm Raskolnikov

compared to me you're midgets all snoring shacked up with women and life stil
superior midge
nicknames you give things buddies with monday and tuesday coming with
Kid Jes
though nothing comes along you're thinking about what might turn you a prof
I look elsewhere which sets me apart which is why I murdered
antisocial, you think just included you out another angle another bearing
another wa
had we promptly clarified it you'd have understood as it is merely contempt
I despise and envy you you despise and envy me but Porfiry appreciates me

mih rof teews eb tnow modeerf tsixe tnac eh su tuohtiw

reversed speech the hunted, delirious one hunting himself for the hypocrite
hunt
he's sniggering I'm sniggering along I cut it out even his reflexes he forces
on m
rubberball Porfiry with his orbital rationale surrounding me everywhere
bouncing, caroming off my wal
playing fresh mocking me how long shall I take it a conceited shit's what
I a

mih rof teews eb tnow modeerf tsixe tnac eh su tuohtiw

nps in its catch isnt locked they're rattling it hook's hopping out
I'm behind the door up against the wall hiding flattened
y tongue by words like the latch by two intruders jaw slackens
I'm behind the door hiding my ideas
aid it they got just the secondary, tertiary senses I'm free for now
ey'll discover anyway I was pure even after *that* and won't forgive me for it
I'm sweatsoaked now

nia appears before me backing up the stairs just ahead of me
n blocked in by the place a dog's howling a woman heaves a rollingpin at him
l like to get a hold on something the wall showes me away on, on
to confront Lieutenant Gunpowder Give yourself up
cant fireplace flues sucking you to hell Clear out of this, Sonia pointless,
our sacrifice
d again Porfiry drops by on the tip of his tongue he's already got my
innocence
aving a sigh relieved sigh this is what's really awful now I've grown
into it
ke I wanted to molt my hide I cant just walk away from the hunt
the heat's finally off when Rodion Romanovich you're the killer

freedom won't be sweet for him without us he can't exist

the stairs one flight from myself heading away towards myself
erything's identical door beside door smoky kitchen stink garbage
eggshells
lfsurrender on the stairs spiralling up round an unseen axis on the landing
yway my clothes got up in human guise shit not being able to do without
that yet
ominable bringing me to this I won't go outside I crash right on in with it
pay attention see this and freeze

from Svidrigailov's diary

ch a modest killer you I beg your pardon in your ruthless virginity
lieve you me sooner or later morals need protection from virtuousness
ere'd be fewer murders my dear Raskolnikov many more surprising joys

hands over his face 5,000 year's experience fuckers and him peeking throug
his finge
just the way the Let's Make Believe con gets off rotten trick with greasy cards
as though you as though I as though we all weren't the products of lovemaking
phony you'd love subverting succession you've no right despising the inception
nor can you preach virtue unless you were conceived in soil through one
of the familiar wa

you suspect me you go on repeating it what's my reply I suspect you too
you protest too much you're well aware of what you despise in me
ascetic the sensualist's alter ego perverts in reverse snapping your whips ove
everybo

I could say I chose fornication on epistemological grounds
why cheat myself and the other I stick to the palpable
you believe eternity's an idea you're quite certain
the senses can't comprehend it vastly huge vast and if it's purely opposite
a laundry think of it like that utterly sooty utterly cobwebbed
utterly filthy a tight little junkroom its corners lost in obscurity
it turns out maybe it's all there is your famous forever and ever
we're passing everything up merely for that cockroaches scuttling through it

he meditated at length while he murdered the crone and her niece
from the outset I spat at divine, helpful grace to be taken for your good
citizen your heroic patriot? not n
from opposing directions we both crossed the line made it out into
the endlessness of no man's lan
take your pick Rodion Romanovich a bullet or Siberia
for your third option the *voyage* in all its ambiguous strangeness
it could mean escape adventuring lots of other things too
but the *voyage* let's look at it objectively doesn't match up to the bloodied
axhandle or Porfiry's hypocris

my one and only skin's too precious to risk for anything
okay I like this case not one bit still, I don't care
why shouldn't the strong torture the weak just leave me out of it

from Porfiry's diary

galloping in place you whip it Svidrigailov

whines under you until it foams you beat it towards the line
:otum tightening jockey with streaming nipples tough-thighed horseman
got a whiff of it it disgusted me yes I bet the better mount
ivates stuck together before a greedy mirror

posing you're depraved that's what what clothing conceals
unwrap the idea (the soul, socalled) from its garment of flesh bone word
and silence
:eveal the brain like genitalia I touch I finger it
:orce an entry I conquer I copulate with it
preme delight continously orgasm enduring months
'o brains in intercourse coming with an idea instead of semen
instrels caterwauling to the moon at full outside locked gates
ey'll gibber anything piercing rod scalpel
eaking it down to its parts searching its source love's
r a demented surgeon blindman's buff anatomy panting away
ly those whom logic blinds pursuers and pursued dare play it out to the end

'idrigailov you keyholing hero never all at once
iffing around vulturine beaked dropping from ambush
like us a wild game's obsessed ones possessed ones
demon will act blindfolded even while pondering
m too the proud one I'm simply hugging to death
)ble heart a grand soul this starving student
served sensitive chaste could even be a girl too
bronco saddled breaking such a pride he kicks, bites
let him buck froth gushing from him till he collapses
d calms down rearing at the halter Raskolnikov

'ay from me dashing in useless rings running from me thinks he
me we're acquainted with this harmless selfdeception he's run towards me
from way back when
)m fire or to fire nocturnal beetle circling the flame
und me always round me he can't even breathe without me

urder like a cashbox in the market-stall anyone can break into it
)w many different needs drive that one loitering nearby
s guilt if he's got some isn't the blow of the axe
s downstroke follows inevitably
killed the weaker from weakness a weak arm

which is why he's trembling hiding from me towards me

don't take up arms against arms the son of the carpenter commanded
even your persecutors even them shall you love
not many defended so definitively the transgressor who always needs defending
with their Christ's own word we weave not joy for the brows of the weak but
a crown of thor

such a hypocrite you are Svidrigailov pretending you're indignant
you'd rather not know lust for power drives you in your obscene dramas
you want to possess drool over put your brand on
so why are you turning aside like a blushing maiden
when Violence with its sophisticated tools is committing rape under your
very ey

Translated by Jascha Kess

FROM OUR NEXT ISSUES

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UNDER THE SIGN OF GEMINI

A Diary about Childhood

by

MIKLÓS RADNÓTI

Translated by Kenneth and Zita McRobbie

This is the full text of the poet Miklós Radnóti's autobiographical piece about his early years. He was born seventy years ago, on May 5 1909, and was murdered by Nazi troops in October 1944 as member of a forced labour battalion. His last poems were found on his body in a mass grave after the war. Corvina Press, Budapest, will soon publish Kenneth and Zita McRobbie's translation.—The Editor.

These days I'm thinking especially much about my little sister, Ági. I haven't seen her for years now. It's been a long time since she went to stay in a small town at the foot of a great black mountain, and now she's living with her husband in the far-off capital of a strange country. We love each other very much, and therefore hardly ever write letters. So strong this love needing no proof through letters; over the year I'll write once or twice, she'll write in a year five or six times. But we often think about each other, many times each is listening for the other. Each of us so knows the other, though we lived together only seven or eight years at the outset of our lives, she being eight and I twelve years old when we parted. An exciting childhood it was; the war went its way, and around us revolutions danced.

We were living beside a big barracks, where the soldiers were continually being changed, where trumpet-calls continually resounded. And ever new calls were being sounded. We lived near the great palace on whose steps, at every hour of the day in rain and in shine, people were cheering, idling around, waiting, bowing, or else authority was pronouncing judgement. We were hanging around in history: among thick-lettered news-headlines we played games on the square in front of the palace.

These days I'm thinking especially much about Ági, and when she comes to mind I hear

Ikrek hava. Napló a gyerekkorról. (Magyar Helikon, Budapest, 1973. First published in 1940.)

the cadence of a sentence, an excited little girl's voice uttering the sentence, and that's what sets me off. When I hear that voice, always it is evening and the lamp is lit. When I hear the voice, father is sitting at the table, shirt shining whitely beneath his unbuttoned faded military tunic.

The cadence of the sentence haunts me as I strive to make out the words. I bow my head, listening.

"And then they cut off his head and put it in a chest!"—that's the sentence and it's Ági speaking. She's lying with such enthusiasm, large brown eyes excitedly aflame above the white serviette tied round her neck. She is sitting up the highest, raised on two cushions above her plate. We glance at one another.

"In short, they shot him dead and then actually cut off his head, did they?" father asked smiling, after a thoughful silence. "Yes," Ági insists, "with such a long curved knife!" She is sitting with arms outstretched, looking as if she would ascend from her cushions; the lie lifts her, she is almost flying, glowing: in one hand she clasps the spoon, in the other a long thick pencil. The spoon drips milk-rice.

"She's lying! She's lying again!"—now suddenly I burst out roughly, recovering from my astonishment. Ági's stories always filled me with wonder, wonder that often kept the fury repressed within me; but now I burst out with it. For here was the lie taking shape before my eyes, a growing giant; I was witnessing not only the exciting continuation of its development, but the reality of artistic creation; the experience we had shared had almost disappeared, and this was what provoked me. Now I felt there was no truth to any part of the whole thing. Ági had made it up. Ági had made the whole thing up; it's still not yet even afternoon, and this is not dinner we're having but only lunch. The afternoon had shattered me, and precisely for that reason was already lurking in the depths of consciousness. It was the past, or rather not even the past any more; it was living in dream-timelessness deep down among other hidden memories, from where it will slowly come to the surface, composed of all those tiny flashes, flavours, fragrances, movements, and also of sounds, sounds without end, truly and forever. Of course, I did not know this at the time; I was just all of a sudden taking Ági's exaggeration very much to heart.

After lunch, father had a headache and went to lie down. I wanted to go up to the third floor to play with buttons, but mother put me in charge of Ági. "Go on off to the square." She shooed us out, and shut the door on us.

"Lali!" I shouted bitterly. Lali appeared above me, his close-cropped head shone whitely as he leaned expectantly over the balustrade. "I've got to go out now," I called up. Not waiting for his reply, I clattered furiously down the stairs two at a time. The buttons rattled in my pocket. Holding fast to the bannisters, Ági clambered down panting after me. In the gateway she took my hand, blinking up at me happily, knowing that I have to stay with her, have to hold her hand, and that we have to go out to the square. A little maliciously, triumphantly glad, she was making the most of the situation.

As we set out for the square I gave her a shove towards the edge of the sidewalk, then one from the sidewalk down into the road. Ági clambered back up, struggled hard, fought back, and after a few steps more was down in the road again beside the sidewalk. She treated it as a silly little tiresome game, but I was getting my revenge and by the time we reached the square I had already calmed down. "Now, since we're here, let's play something," I thought to myself, sensibly. Ági played happily. We collected flat pebbles which we arranged to spell out letters on one of the benches; we caught insects. The square was empty. We went across it to the palace nearby, and with a sharp stone made scratches on the steps.

The after-lunch hour silence suddenly hardened with approaching rhythmical sounds. Armed soldiers appeared on the square, marching in step, a tired bearded soldier in their midst; in dirty uniform without a belt, carrying no arms, he kept in step hemmed in among them.

A cloud swam in front of the sun, and now it's become even warmer. We got to our feet and watched them. Ági stood a little behind me and held onto me. People came hurrying in our direction from the streets giving onto the square; a crowd gathered, standing in front of us, standing all around us; we couldn't see a thing.

I stood there, sweating. Something horrible was happening, I felt it. Heat poured from the clothes of the people around us. I looked up; the sky was grey.

And then Ági lets go of me and begins to wriggle, worming her way between legs. I shout after her, but she vanishes. She'd been entrusted to me; now she'd disappeared. "Always hold her hand, you're bigger than she is; you're a boy, take care of your little sister," a warm familiar voice began to say inside me. I hurl myself after her, terrified, stepping on somebody's foot; someone strikes me on the head; murmuring, they pull at me from behind. At last, exhausted, I get to stand behind Ági and grasp her elbow.

The soldiers form up in close-order in a short line at the foot of the broad stairs, their backs all looking alike; they are pressing their guns in against their shoulders. The soldier with the beard is standing a little further up, his eyes blindfolded with a wide black scarf. There's a shout, detonations, white smoke eddying up. The man with the blindfold is still standing; then he falls to one knee, slumps forward, rolls down two stairs and remains lying there. There's more shouting. A man in striped brown coat and black leather trousers steps in front of us. Ági wants to see. She grabs at him, trying this way to push him to one side. "Off with you all!" someone growls, and people begin pressing back.

We find ourselves on the fringe of the crowd, dishevelled and sweating. Ági glances excitedly up at me.

I take hold of her wrist, and we trudge back towards the square. We sit down on a bench. "Probably he was a Gypsy who made off with children," whispers Ági, the story already taking shape within her. I don't reply; the sun is shining once more. A small cabbage-white-butterfly alights on Ági's skirt; she catches it, its wings sticking to her little sweaty fingers.

Later on it got cloudy in earnest; and we made our way home, subdued. I raced up to Lali's, and we played with buttons till evening.

Now the afternoon was swishing across the evening dinner-table once more. There were

a thousand soldiers, red uniformed, sounding their trumpets; on the stairway stood the child-stealing Gypsy; blood gushed all the way down to the benches. The lamp was swinging.

"She's lying! She's lying again!" I screamed, my scream rising shrilly this time.

"Be quiet! Eat up now, and let's have an end to it! Ági, you've been a little pig, the tablecloth!" mother's voice snaps. Ági hunches her shoulders, rapidly spoons up the milk-rice, clambers down from her chair, and goes to sit in the corner. She is dressing her doll, but meanwhile her eyes flash angrily at me. We eat. Suddenly Ági looks at me again and begins to shout, only her voice is a shriek: "You are the liar! Not I! Liar, liar, liar!" Father gives a start. "If we don't have quiet there this instant! . . . If you dare answer her!"

I say thank you for the dinner, and curl up in a corner of the sofa. For weeks I've been reading a book of war stories. The cover depicts seven soldiers standing around a wooden cross shrouded in snow, bare-headed, with snow on their shoulders. They are weeping; but the book has some cheerful stories too, and these are the ones I like, the others scare me. Soldiers mistaking the full moon as it rises for an airship, and shooting at it—that's what one of the stories is about. And there's another tale of comic misunderstanding. A bear has stuck his head out from some bushes while licking honey; they take him for a fur-capped Cossack and surround the place, and when they find out their mistake collapse laughing on the grass. Meanwhile, the bear makes off. Now once more I am going carefully through this account, yet am unable to concentrate. I leaf nervously past the more gory ones; for a moment I think about my Petőfi, but don't bother to get it. I just sit there, and something is restless within me, some undefined anguish.

By now the table is bare; from out in the kitchen there's a clattering of plates as mother washes up. This is the only sound heard, with father now and again turning a page of the paper, and Ági whimpering over her dolls. And I seem to hear the current running through the wire along the wall, seem to hear the light buzzing in its bulb. That's what I'm listening to.

Mother comes in from the kitchen, glances at father, takes off her apron and begins arranging things for the evening. I have to help make up the bed. I fold up the dust-smelling lace coverlet, and together with mother lay out the cool bedding. The room's aspect changes. Ági is hanging around me, but doesn't look my way. She shows she's angry with me; she's waiting for us to make up. We get ready for bed without uttering a sound. No throwing the little pillow, no splashing about during the evening wash.

I am lying down in the dusk; one of the street lamps is shining in just a bit. I'm playing with the fringe on the sofa, as I always do before falling asleep. It's because of the curtains that I don't look in the direction of the windows. Not that I'm scared any more; but all the same, I don't look at them.

This is the hour when the street and the inner courtyard step into our room with their sounds. A tram is turning by the distillery on the corner, ringing its bell; the door of the tavern opposite us opens, with strident sounds of singing and music; then with a sudden scream everything falls silent, like when a needle slurs into the middle of a record while it's playing. Footsteps echo, a car squeals. In the courtyard there's clopping of slippers,

jingling of keys, the gate opening, gate closing, people walking, walking on the staircase and in the passageway. The sounds are rocking me; now here, now there they pluck at me, lift me up, envelop me. Sleep overtakes me.

"Are you sleeping?" Now I hear Ági's voice; right after it a warm breath touches me, and I feel a moistness behind my ear. Ági's kiss.

"Come and play!" she whispers, and I sit up. She is standing beside the sofa in her little blue chemise; in the dusk her head is disproportionately large. I cannot see her eyes, but I feel that she is smiling as she asks.

"What shall we play?" I lean towards her.

"Whatever you like", she breathes, anxious to oblige.

Most of the light falls in the middle of the room beside the table. We sit facing each other on the floor, and begin taking out the pebbles we had collected that afternoon. Ági lays down a line, I another. I get out my carefully hoarded buttons as well.

"Let's make every fifth one a button," I whisper, and Ági prattles contentedly on.

"Four pebbles, one button," she counts happily, feeling greatly honoured that she may touch the buttons. The lines grow longer as we crawl along the floor. Behind Ági stands a chair with father's coat hanging over the back. She seats herself a little further back, knocks against the chair, and the chair tips over. At its fall the bed in the other room creaks in alarm, and the lamp comes on over the bed.

"It was he knocked it over!" Ági screams in fear, not looking but only pointing at me. We stand annihilated in the trickle of light, big white circles growing ever bigger revolve before my eyes. Mother is also growing bigger, her black eyes pierce us. Filling the doorway's lighted rectangle, in her heavy white nightdress she is like an angry statue.

"Off with you to the firewood box." For a short space mother's glance rests on me. "As for you, go to bed; I don't want to hear another murmur! We'll go into it all in the morning!" Ági doesn't budge; large pearls slowly form in her eyes.

I tuck the quilt and the pillow under my arm and go out to the kitchen. This is the worst of the summertime punishments. To sleep on the big hard woodbox in the food-smelling kitchen, where the water-tap all the time gives frightening gurgles, and there are cockroaches too. It happens only rarely, and in the mornings I always wake up inside on the sofa; when I've fallen asleep, mother or father carries me in. But it's frightening all the same.

I clamber up onto the box, wrap myself in the eiderdown quilt, and turn towards the wall. I reach out to touch a spot, fearfully, to see whether it will run away. I am more frightened than angry.

"Off to bed with you!" mother shouts from within.

"No!" Ági's protest chokes off in a cry. The door opens, and I roll over onto my back. Ági trots in through the half-opened doorway with bare feet, head held high, dragging her quilt and pillow along the floor behind her. Whimpering, she climbs up onto the box beside me; with tiny moans she crumples the pillow under her head, her little moist nose presses against my side. I can feel the warmth of her body.

Inside they turn off the light.

"The rascals stick together," half-asleep I can hear how touched the voice is.

"Yes, together." I seem to hear the low answer after a long pause, but perhaps I only dream it.

Thursday. Four days ago mother arrived from N., where she has been living now for fifteen years. Her arrival was unexpected; she had come into some money. I go to meet her at the railway station; and when she appears at the door of the carriage, I am moved to admit to myself that she is beautiful still. I have not seen her for five years, and she hasn't aged a bit. "She must be forty-seven, forty-eight," flashes through my mind. We kiss. Behind her a man gets off; he sets down mother's hand-luggage, clicks his heels, and kisses her hand.

"Here's my son." Mother holds me at arm's length before her, and smiles at the man through her tears.

"I can't believe it", her travelling companion says, raising his hat to me. I nod sullenly; I'm jealous just like when I was a child.

"You know, you wouldn't believe what lies this man was telling me, all the way from N. to Pest," mother confides laughingly to me in the tram.

"You shouldn't talk to strangers," I say with mock severity. "But please, teacher"—with a tiny movement she inclines forward, tucking one leg behind the other, bending her knees—"don't be angry," and she looks askance. I laugh. We arrive at the other railway station, for mother is going further on. To her brother Eduárd's, at V. "I shall come down there this week," I shout after the train as it pulls out.

And now I am on my way to V., with two books and a notebook in my briefcase, a hat and raincoat. I'm travelling. It almost counts as a journey, and I'm even taking along a notebook: childish dream of journeying. I take out one of the books from my case, stow various things up on the buggage rack, and settle down by the window.

I have come this far through alarming newspaper headlines; today Europe's fate will be decided again. I live in a state of excitement and solemnity too, but I'm beginning to get used to it. And I've been thinking, more and more often, that the miraculous is among my life's realities.

I open the volume of French poetry at random, and begin to read.

Terre Terre Eaux Océans Ciel.
*J'ai de mal du pays.**

Here's Cendrars howling in the autumn of 1919, that wild European who once collected into a volume the magical songs and stories of Negro tribes.

* Earth Earth Waters Oceans Sky.
Homesick am I.

Je voudrais être la cinquième roue du char
Orage
Midi à quatorze heures
Rien et partout. *

My ears are ringing somewhat from it, but I catch the voice. There's a jolt, and a voice roars out: Soroksár! as if howling from out of the poem. It's all the same, I smile to myself, war is on its way, just one day off?—two years? To be free is what I want!

It was after the war that the poet had set out on this journey. Is there really an "after the war"? He went on his travels with all the eagerness of a soul once condemned for four whole years to death by shooting, with joy, and with that nerve-racking awareness that the frontiers could close around him at any moment, and he'd be a prisoner once again.

I turn a few pages of the book. Here's Larbaud:

Je chante l'Europe, ses chemins de fer et ses théâtres . . .

I sing Europe, its railways and its theatres, . . .
the siting of its cities, while
I bring to birth a new world in my poems: . . .

Beautiful, that "new world," I murmur; then begin to smile. Such a long time since I translated this poem, and still don't know who that Ilanero is! "I conquered you and I am for the taking, Oh Ilanero!" Ilanero . . . beautiful name. "C'est l'exotisme"—I play the pedant. Certainly, after the war—why then? Not now too? "Europe is the unknown jungle, abode of man-eaters, head-hunters, snakes whistling under the bushes"; how romantic the journey born of restlessness. Not London, Paris, Berlin; it was Budapest, Belgrade, Kharkov, Bucharest caught their interest. And what did they care about "couleur locale"! It's not scenery they need but consciousness, consciuosness of journeying, more precisely, consciousness of being free. In foreign parts they worked just as if they were at home among their books, and at home as if in the very depths of the densest jungle. I pronounce the soul's reality—correction, *they* pronounce—which is already independent of all other realities. And was it a slip of the pen a moment ago? I could speak of myself too. Have twenty years passed in the meantime? Since then, it has been continually the same! Or has it now begun anew? Oh happy ancestors, noble Jack London and inoffensive Pierre Loti, this journey, this craving for freedom is no mere adventure; no adventure, no hunger for knowledge, renewal, or escape—no, it is more: it is psychosis.

Walls are going up all around me, towns and countries disappear. The wall is rising,

* I'd like to be the vehicle's fifth wheel
Storm Noon at 2 p.m.
Nothing and everywhere.

cutting me off from whole peoples. I'm a prisoner. And if sometimes someone cries out "Europe!" it's as if he were shouting "Africa!"

"How pathetic of me," I think listlessly. I shut the book. Really, all I'd like to find out is whether the last train for Nogent still leaves Paris from Bastille at one twenty past midnight.

"Ilanero," I repeat; and "Taksony!" someone calls out from down below.

"Taksony," I murmur too. I get out, and stand in the flying dust in front of the station. There's a wait for the bus. "Does it run to Bugyi on weekdays too?" I ask a little girl. "Yes, but it doesn't go often," she smiles through the dust.

"Ilanero." I look at the little girl. "You have fair hair, you can't be Ilanero. Ilanero is dark. Raven-black hair."

Taksony, I am looking at the station, its seven letters, seven... Tass, Töhötöm, Huba, Kond, and old Álmos, Előd, the damned Ond.* If the old leaders press on forward the rest will follow after... I'm doing scansion, almost unconsciously; dactyls assemble.

Eduárd is a trifle disappointed, as he meets me.

"So you have come down after all? Couldn't you find anything better to do?" It turns out later that his prediction had been wrong, that's why he's downcast. "He won't be coming down to see you, not before next week," he'd assured mother. "Poets and their promises... he never so much as writes you a letter."

On the veranda we shake hands.

"Ilka," he calls out in the direction of the kitchen garden, "your son's come down!" Mother hastens out, in a red apron, her face sun-tanned; guffawing behind her capers Kormos the sheepdog; he's the first to reach me; paws up against my chest, he licks my face; mother can hardly get near me because of him.

"The welcome they give you, it's as though you loved them," Eduárd blinks from an armchair.

"He does love us," mother throws her arms around me, "we all love each other, Eddie."

"That's as it should be," Eduárd smiles archly, as he always does when he has succeeded in getting someone worked up. "Memory of Childhood," a short poem from my latest book, is about him:

That here they might offer—never expect they would.
"Ask for yourself, the kitchen's to the right,"
a relative gives me heart, good old Eduárd.
And I ask, I wheedle, then holding a wheel-
shaped slice of bread dipped in dripping-fat
I walk around, and my swallowing aloud
makes the hearts of the kitchen-girls grow soft.

* These are the names of the seven leaders of the seven tribes of the Magyars at the time of the migrations. *(Trans.)*

"You know, everyone will think that it's just for the sake of the rhyme that the name's brought in here like this," Fanni said anxiously, when I showed her the poem one evening. "But why, it really is his name," I smiled; "still, let's add something... now, wait a bit":

Not Eddie,
Not Eddie,
Eduárd!
Who, in
his youth,
in Ameri-
ca lived hard.

"Oh," she laughed, "don't add a thing; I'd much rather believe it, and others will believe too."

And indeed, out of the whole family it's only mother who calls uncle Eduárd Eddie. Ever since he came back home he has signed himself Eduárd, and everyone addresses him this way and loves him this way.

We sit facing each other on the veranda; our drinking glasses are down beside our armchairs, and between us stands a bottle of light dry wine. We keep it there on the freshly sprinkled bricks because it stays colder that way, and because Eduárd likes to put his feet up on the table, the garden table which is slightly lame and can easily tip over.

"And so let's talk a little about literature, too; family matters are a bore." Eduárd strokes his short beard. "How true are the rhymes cutting, young fellow? Are they cutting true now? Really cutting?"

"Cutting true, of course!" I murmur docilely, continuing to scratch Kormos's head.

"You'll end up full of fleas from that hound, for your information!" he says jealously. As if he understood what was behind the sentence, the dog gets to his feet sluggishly, goes across to Eduárd, and leans his head upon his knees. The two of them blink at me. Mother takes up position between us, watching closely, ready momentarily to jump in to play the peace-maker.

"Don't be always teasing him; he's not only a poet, you know, but a teacher too! At least you'll grant that this is a profession, won't you? It's not his fault, poor thing, that he hasn't secured a position!"

"How many years has he been without one? Time enough to become a master cabinetmaker! Now, in the Yu-Es-Eh,* already for a long time. ... But I'm always squabbling with you, aren't I?" he laughs at me suddenly with sparkling, kind eyes.

"Do you remember?" mother asks in the garden, "you didn't like spinach. How you hated it! And from one day to the next you began to eat it, you didn't have to be lectured, argued into it anymore! There it was! Then after lunch once we noticed how fat and puffed out your

* He attempts the English, rather than the Hungarian, pronunciation of USA. *(Trans.)*

face was. You had stowed away the spinach in both your cheeks, holding it in all through lunch; how you could chew on anything else is a mystery to me to this day. How we laughed, with your poor father! For a while after that, you used to have to stand in front of us and open your mouth, while we were bursting as we looked inside."

"I don't remember," I smile, "but what's this?"

Infernal clashing sounded from the house.

"That's the gong!" Mother bows ceremoniously, "Eddie's new toy, announcing lunch."

In a boy-scout shirt and an enormous fraying brimmed straw-hat, Eduárd stands on the stairs up to the veranda, whacking a sheet-iron lid with a wooden spoon. His short prickly fringe of beard glistens with merriment.

"The soup awaits within", says he bowing towards us.

He's always up to something. Now however only the sorts of things which don't cost anything. It's twenty years since he returned form America and bought this small property, at quite a price, legend has it. The house was designed by Lechner; Eduárd took a liking to it and bought it. Besides, it happens to suit him ideally. The overgrown garden he left as it was, wouldn't let anyone touch it; only the fountain he had put in working order. In one of the sheds he'd come across the fountain's old ornament, a little boy urinating, fashioned in stone, and this he'd had brought out. Guests are the only ones now who at times go into the garden. Eduárd gets about very little; his knees hurt. "When I was living over there, I used to travel ninety-six hours at a stretch; and the train's jolting put the cartilage out in my knees," he says, not the least bit interested in doctors. "And all for the sake of that cursed monarchy!" he adds mysteriously. "I brought off deals in heavy industry; they have a lot to thank me for." There's his little kitchen garden with two rows of red currant bushes and five peach trees at the end of the lawn. He has two horses, two milch cows, four pigs and a whole army of poultry; these are the proceeds. He had a tank built for collecting rain, so that he could have running tap-water. The whole thing is a drain on him, and he can hardly afford guests and tobacco. But the driver of the Taksony bus had greeted me with the following: "Is it the castle you're wanting? I'll be stopping there!" It was home-sickness brought Eduárd back, and this question makes him happy. Perhaps because of this, he keeps in addition two peacocks. He knows each of his birds personally, and keeps an eye on all of them; each one has a name. He suffered a heart-attack once, and often speaks about it: "It was as if my heart had suddenly been put in a vice, even my ribs cracked. I was just looking down in front of me. Beautiful large fat globules were swimming in the golden coloured soup, and I had just taken hold of Lidi's thigh. . ." At this, guests who are not in the picture exchange glances, and we burst out laughing. I even knew this Lidi, a dark-brown noisy hen, one of Eduárd's favourites. To this day he guesses at a secret link between the hen's "transformation" and the heart attack.

We continue eating in reverential silence, except for Kormos who gives a snarl when finishing one bone and demanding another.

Eduárd bolts down a large bit of beef stewed with horseradish on to which he ladles yet

more horseradish, brushes away the tears with his fist, throws his fork down onto the table, and shouts at me:

"And I'm quite forgetting the most important thing of all! How is Fülöp?"

Startled by this sudden question, I take a sip of the wine and soda smoking ice-cold in front of me, and come out with it casually:

"He was elected to the Academy last week."

"Where?" Eduárd asks wide-eyed.

"To the French Academy," I reply impassively.

Mother clutches the table-napkin to her mouth, but the laughter dances in her eyes.

"I haven't read about it in the papers, although I would have if it were true," Eduárd says in an ominous voice. "You did read it, perhaps?"

"I haven't read it, either," I reply in a weary tone, "because he's a futurist, the papers here didn't carry it, but they wrote to me from the Academy. They elected him to Victor Hugo's seat."

Mother fails to smother a titter. "I'll murder you!" storms Eduárd, lashing out; then he begins to laugh.

Fülöp is known to the entire family. Perhaps some three years ago, one Sunday after lunch I fell asleep in my deckchair in the garden. On the ground beside me lay a book of verse by Philippe Soupault. Eduárd strolled over, picked up the slim volume, and read it through. When I awoke around five o'clock, Eduárd was already giving a reading on the veranda, standing legs apart, the Petit Larousse on the table in front of him, Soupault's book in hand, translating the poems straight off; and around him were Béla, uncle Miklós, the reverend from V., and Ferenc the carter. They were convulsed with laughter.

Docteur Breton va à Gien
par un temps de chien
Il est tombé dans un trou
*on ne sait où.**

He was just reading this in a choking voice when I got there.

"What is Victor Hugo compared to this," he brayed triumphantly, when he laid eyes on me. "This is the stuff to read, not Victor Hugo!"

And since then Soupault has grown into a symbol. He appointed him a futurist and christened him Fülöp. And from time to time I used to receive postcards: once there was one of Notre-Dame in Paris, and on another occasion one of the Exchange in Brussels. "Taksony," the postmark proclaimed proudly. "Quite by accident I happened to read your Sunday poem. It could have been written by Fülöp. Embraces, Eduárd." Or: "I acknowledge receipt

* Doctor Breton goes to Gien
in quite awful weather
Into a hole he did fall
unknown to all.

of your book parcel with thanks; half of the poems reveal Fülöp's profundities. Just keep it up, E."

And by this time Fülöp was known to everyone. Also to uncle Mérges, the joiner from B., who now and again did repairs on the house under Eduárd's personal supervision to the accompaniment of continuous swearing in both English and Hungarian.

But we love each other, and the taunting always ends in great demonstrations of friendship. We savour the wine and I tell him about Paris, and he blinks as he talks of America. And in order to prove our theories, we both make up little stories with a twist to drive home the point. "You really are quite a storyteller, Eddie dear," mother observes more than once, while she does her crochetting beside us. To which Eduárd grunts: "Why not a poet and be done? All I'm telling you is the absolute truth!" Yet I smile to myself as I recognize among the American stories, now and again, one of Mikszáth's anecdotes patched up and decked out in New York colours; but at times like these Eduárd is oblivious to my smile, the *source* having already sunk into his unconscious.

And in the overcast, soot-dark, resounding night he takes his cane, snatches up the coachman's lantern, and with unsteady knees walks ahead of us, swinging the lamp as he conducts us to the bus stop. And when that old ark rolls up, he gives me an affectionate rub with his beard. And they stand in the highway dust, mother and he hand-in-hand looking after me.

I wait for the train in the sooty-darkness of the station, not thinking of anything, and suddenly before me the illumination of a gesture, a gesture of mother's: we are shelling green peas in the garden, and before we start she dons a pair of specs. She had never worn them before. Time rings its bell when the dark little station begins to speak.

I make the journey back from childhood in the jolting, badly-lit carriage. My eyes keep falling shut, and when I look out my bristly face stares back at me from the window through which a few lights flicker.

And from one end of the open day-coach, through the sleep-inducing rattle, I hear a wakening voice, a woman's, persisting in its disbelief in French, on the Taksony–Áporka–Dömsöd line: "Tu crois que c'est pour cela?" And another woman's voice answering, in a somewhat lecturing tone: "Je ne le crois pas, je le sais. Tout de même l'enfance c'est quelque chose!" *

The train halts, and as people begin moving around I'm all ears. A brilliant yellow-knitted coat disappears through the door as I glance up.

They're getting off. I start up, curious about what will come next. I get my things together and jump off. Ferencváros railway station. I hurry towards the exit. The two voices have vanished, and so has the yellow coat.

"Childhood is a great thing," I say the sentence over, tormented by the feeling that I ought to be set thinking of something of great moment to say about it, but nothing comes to mind.

* "Do you think that's the reason?"
"I do not think, I know. All the same, childhood is a great thing."

Of course, it was Jean—suddenly a weight is lifted—Jean had said it years earlier. And yesterday Jean arrived from Paris; we had dinner together, and at home afterwards I began to write about Ági.

"Childhood is a great thing," I smile now as I say it again, nodding and applauding myself.

Saturday. We were not doing anything at the time. Just looking at the books in the Odéon arcades or along the *quais* with bored yet dogged persistence. Casually working our way through them, we rummaged with grave gestures in the boxes, sometimes reading aloud to each other twenty lines of Racine or two or three snippets from the sermons of Bossuet. Sometimes for minutes on end looking at a couple of boring engravings, both our backs beginning to ache at the same time, we both pressed our hands with an identical gesture into the small of the back. We gave a stretch and a groan.

Tired out, dusty hands swinging we set off next for the Luxembourg. Jean Citadin did not utter a word, walking along beside me; he didn't even bother to close his mouth while whistling some children's song. After a while he broke off, and just went on quietly sucking in air between his teeth. I threw him a look, for it was getting on my nerves.

"Well, are you still crazy about Cocteau?" he asked, ready for battle.

Jean Citadin and I had become friends in a country-town back home. He had gone there to visit a friend of his for three days and ended up spending two months—from sheer indolence. With sun-burned face, he paced angrily along beside me. We were striding towards the outskirts of the city between bushy-topped acacias.

"Cocteau's a conjurer," he explained, finger uplifted. Visible on the tip of his forefinger, as if some accented syllable had strayed there, were the bushy acacia crowns. Alongside us, dogs were snapping at the fences, but he didn't even notice.

"Cocteau is a conjurer, and I don't like conjurers. They cheat. Cocteau cheats too. Behind all his show, there's nothing. Poets shouldn't be tricksters; poets should touch my heart. Like Villon, Ronsard, Verlaine!"

"That's the reader's attitude, but you are a poet! And considering that, your aesthetics are rather restricted. Sentimental aesthetics!"

"No, I'm not a poet yet," he protested. "Language is still quite a problem; it throws up roadblocks; it's malicious, obstinate. The poem still has the feel of having been worked on. There's still a great deal of showing off about it, of conjuring, trickery. As I say, I don't care for those who conjure. A poem should convey feeling like a whistle does, an exclamation, or a wino's hiccup. You shouldn't get the impression that it's been assembled out of materials! Do you feel the stones of Strasbourg cathedral?"

It was around noon when we left, and the moon accompanied us home. Cocteau provided an excuse for a dispute and we disputed endlessly.

Now he picked a quarrel. It was a long time since we'd argued, a long time since we had

talked together. Lazily, we sauntered through Paris, idling the day away aimlessly. Neither of us did a thing. Sometimes we slept for days, other times hardly at all for days on end.

We walked around the city, loitering in front of shop-windows, hanging round the *quais* reading the afternoons away at various book boxes, sitting in the squares playing with children and girls: many times the two of us with just one girl, many times too with ten children.

"Well?" he asked.

"I like him" I said, as if to myself, "one day I'm even going to translate some of his poems into Hungarian."

"Keeping to the form!" Jean completed the sentence for me, emphasizing the last word ironically.

"That's right!" I'm raging inside, "but not the way you do, poems in prose! Mallarmé's a great artist in regard to form, isn't he?" Suddenly, I prepare the trap.

"Certainly he is!" Jean walked into it unsuspecting.

"Well, this great artist of form, this professional devotee of the English language translated Poe's 'Raven' into prose. And how do you think he renders the word, the one the raven utters continually, 'Nevermore'? *'Jamais plus'!* That's the meaning, isn't it? I know that; but it's not enough, not by a long chalk! The English has about it a dark, shivering atmosphere; the word suggests something, conveys something of the sound of croaking! Surely that's why it has posed such a great problem for our poets. The greatest of the moderns have translated it faithfully according to the form, taking great pains over this particular word. One of them translated it like this, let your ear be the judge, listen to this word: *"Sohamár"!*

At once Jean's face lit up, and like someone who'd just hit on a solution he whispered: "Tell me now, what does the raven say in your language?"

"*Kár,*" I answered, taken by surprise, "it says *kár*, and from this we get the verb *károg.*"

"Is that what it says?" Jean shook his head.

"That's it," I affirmed.

"Well, you see, that's not what the French raven says. It just says Krrr... Krrr... And do you think the English one says More... More...? So much for this sort of fidelity to form!"

I became angry, and stood confronting him.

"Now, look here. You know Tibullus's 'Detestatio belli', don't you? Book one, tenth elegy? The one which starts with: 'Quis fuit, horrendo primus qui protulit enses'?"

"'Quam ferus et vere ferreus ille fuit!' "* With a laugh, Jean carried on the quotation.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, I'm forgetting you're a Greek and Latin specialist," I said with irony. "Well, I translated it into Hungarian—in distichs, naturally, so as to be faith-ful-to-the-form. Can't imagine it, can you? But this is not what's important; just listen: 'divitis hoc vitium est auri, nec bella fuerunt,' the eighth, or the tenth line, 'faginus astabat cum scyphus ante dapes.'** Now here comes the Hungarian distich!"

* What man, what devil, first conceived the sword? Shaper of iron, himself an iron heart!

** Actually, the seventh and eighth lines. The Hungarian text reads "adstabat." The available English renderings fail to convey the metre. *(Trans.)*

"Mindez a sárarany átka, sosem volt háboru addig,
*míg kopogó fapohár járta a víg lakomán."**

"Not bad." Jean showed surprise.

"Not bad?" I stormed, "excellent! And the pentameter's even more beautiful than in the Tibullus because it's clean, doesn't drag; this way, it gives greater atmosphere to the line. 'Míg kopogó fapo-hár jár-ta a víg lako-mán!'"

"More beautiful than Tibullus?" Jean expressed amazement.

"Just this particular line," I said modestly, "surely you can hear!"

The line certainly made an impression on Jean. He had me repeat it; he said it after me, and gave a whistle. But then he declared that something like this counts as individual creativity, not as translation, because it is not exact, not true.

"What's important is being faithful to the original," he raised a forefinger, "and that's why it's not possible to translate according to the form. Fidelity to form! Give the line back its spondee, don't make it more beautiful; let it be true, if it's to be done at all... We do things precisely, we don't take liberties with poems in other languages; in French, we tell the truth about them."

"Truth? Without form? How can formless poems be true? The form is basic, old chap. That's what strikes to the heart. No embezzling of even one of the poem's alliterations. What's that? Impossible, you say? But that's what truth is. It's still possible to give back value equal to that of the original. You can make up in a later line what you may have missed in an earlier; then the poem's wholeness won't be any the worse! Will it make the poem any different? What's your difficulty? Some pet theory? Now I am asking you!"

He was mumbling something to himself, and I saw that he was no longer interested in the difficulties of translation. The discussion had interested me, for at that period I'd begun to be acquainted with those secret and intimate pathways of French literature which, virgin to alien promenaders, had quite conquered me. That's why I had to be somewhat disparaging, out of self-protection... Resentful, I held my peace.

Jean was sucking in both cheeks between his back teeth, biting down. This is the way he walked beside me, with out-of-shape face and nodding head. We came to the gardens. We kicked pebbles in front of us. Already golden tones of the flagging afternoon settle among the trees; now the children's noises too form a lower monotonous hum. We sat down beside the fountain. We stuck the toes of our shoes under the rungs of our seats, and we tipped back and forth.

Jean was quiet, a forefinger propping up his nose. I gazed at the fish, and at how much the water-lily had opened since yesterday. I told the time by it. "I'm growing older," I thought, and had a sudden hurrying feeling. As if I were late for an appointment. But I knew I always felt this way when afternoon was oozing into evening, and I stayed where I was.

* Gold taught us to kill our fellows. There were not wars when wooden cups stood at the merry feast.

"Interesting," Jean abruptly set the chair down flat beneath him, "an interesting association."

"What is?" I ask sulkily, pretending to be bored.

"I liked to prop my nose up this way when I was a child too, often got my hand slapped for it."

I went on tipping, expectantly.

"It crossed my mind just now," he drawled on, "as if it were yesterday; I must have been eight or nine at the time. We were living on Vaugirard. Mother was still beautiful in those days; there was a pale blue birthmark just beneath one ear. It looked like a bite. I think men were tempted to bite it. Uncle Jacques came to our place, when father had gone to work at the office . . .

"Uncle Jacques is 'an acquaintance', but father doesn't like him. He often comes at a time when father's at work. In his fifties, tall, white-haired, red-faced. He helps us, I know. I don't know in what way, or why, and I don't much care. But I know we're all grateful to uncle Jacques. I partly love him then, and partly hate him. Hate him, because he loves mother and doesn't like father who doesn't like him either. Love him, because when he comes it always means it's an event. Whenever he left there was always quarrelling, and often my little sister Claire and I got a spanking; but when he came he always brought something. And it's not very often we get things. Poor father. . .

"That was the time I was furiously dashing off masses of sketches. Uncle Jacques always looked at them, and praised my drawing; he didn't alter them with ugly thick lines like my real uncle who's a painter. That's why I liked him. Drawing was very important to me then, because my brother Pierre was only four years older than me and yet he was already living away from home. He'd learned to draw, was living with uncle, having adventures, and bragged to me.

"Well then, on the afternoon I'm talking about, uncle Jacques brought me a sketch-book with a canvas cover. For Claire, there was chocolate. Mother bundled us out into the other room. Claire made a fuss, for she didn't want to go. I made no protest. Inside me stirs a small particle of hate, though repressed by happiness mixed with the gratitude I feel over the sketch-book. Claire sits snuffling on the floor, her tears of anger trickling down; her mouth full, she's cramming the chocolate in noisily, desperately. I'd ask her for some, but I know she won't give me any. I take out a pencil and india-rubber; leaning forward over the table, I begin to draw a landscape with a castle on top of a hill. I'm not satisfied with the drawing; perhaps the sketch-book is too beautiful. I can hear them carefully turning the key in the door. I glance at Claire, to see whether she's heard it. She gives no sign. With drawn face she sits on the floor folding silver paper. I go on sketching for a while. With brutal suddenness, a door opens in there. We jump up. The locked door is open, and we run into the room. Behind the other door, mother and uncle Jacques spring apart."

Jean jerks the chair forward beneath him; his hands have ceased their gesturing. He turns

away from me to watch the water. He feels me looking at him. Then shrugging his shoulders, he goes on in a bored tone:

"Mother was all red and dishevelled; uncle Jacques was his usual red self, but just then he was panting too. I was given a caress, also an 'apricot' pinch on the head. About that pinch, to this day I don't know who receives the pleasure: the one who gets or the one who gives? I didn't get any. I was pretty well-behaved as a child though. Uncle Jacques gave Claire a kiss, but Claire repaid him with a kick on the leg. Mother smacked Claire on the head, uncle Jacques laughed, and Claire started howling..."

"And then?" I turned towards Jean Citadin, who was staring before him, withdrawn into himself.

"What do you mean, then?"

"What happened next?"

"Nothing," he answered, standing up. We made our way towards the gate. We strode along slowly and with deliberation. The spun-out twilight was growing ever more faint.

"But now perhaps I understand," Jean murmured to himself.

"What?" I asked sharply, remembering that I felt hurt.

"Why," he answered with a mollifying gesture, "that before I met you this afternoon, Louise and I had a quarrel."

I was silent.

"I asked her to come up to my place. I'm tired, let's cut the cackle; I'm no Romeo. She didn't come. We had a quarrel. When we shook hands, this is what she said: 'The trouble is, Jean, that my mother never cheated on my father...' Understand?" he turned to me, screwing up his eyes.

"Naturally," I shrugged, "and you believe that..."

"I don't believe, I know. Childhood's a great thing," Jean gave a whistle, and glanced around as if marvelling somewhat. Then he plunged a hand into his pocket, stuck a cigarette languidly in his mouth, and with the smoker's accomplice smile sought a light from an old man gawking around him at the garden's entrance gate.

Thursday. "I can taste childhood on my tongue," Jean said one night in Paris, "I taste its flavours whenever I'm suddenly reminded of it. Often, it comes to mind from certain flavours too. And sometimes," he added shyly, "from the smell some women have."

"With me, it's sounds," I answered, "sometimes only rustlings, melodies too sometimes, then often whole dialogues will start inside me. And if I hear someone... has died... death, always makes me think of it..."

I get up, drink a glass of water, and go out onto the balcony. During the night the wind had half pulled up a white petunia, and I smooth it back into the soil again, wash my hands, escape... but then I sit down at the table again, and listen. And I hear the buzzing of flies, clouds of flies beating the air around me. I concentrate, and the buzzing grows faint; small bare feet go clap-clap on the earth, and I see—though, in reality, at the time I did not—many

tiny flames rise fluttering from the imprinted dust. Dust. Slithering soles beneath the window scuff out a track. I am waving a large piece of branch from a walnut tree, chasing away the flies from father's face; without turning my head, I can feel them peeping through the crack in the curtain. Pista and Feri are waiting for me, wanting to play.

And again I hear the flies.

A voice seeps into the buzzing, no more than a breath: my name. They're calling me. Though I do not move, I'm listening intently. Two flies have settled on father's sweating face; they start to crawl around, and fly off when I move the branch. Again they're calling. I brace my heels on the floor, and stiffen my back. I have to stay here; father's ill, and the flies won't let him sleep. "Always playing, that's all they do!" I fume.

"Go on out... play." Now I hear father's hoarse, tired voice; horrified, I swing the branch towards him. While I'd stopped watching, the flies had awakened him. I keep moving the branch, looking at father laying there with eyes closed. I do not answer.

"Go on out, son," he says quietly, without even opening his eyes.

"I don't want to," I answer quickly in a hurt tone.

"They're calling you out to play, don't you hear?"

"They're not really calling." I point a foot slightly.

Again the voice whispers, more insistently. Father has gone back to sleep. There's a round-headed shadow cast on the curtain, Feri with his close-cropped head. He raises an arm, extends it, presses his head onto his shoulder, clenches his hand into a fist, and goes click with his forefinger: *pakk!* The shadow trembles blackly in front of the window. "They're calling me out to play cops and robbers." It's starting to vex me. I keep moving the branch, without answering, and the shadow suddenly runs away from the window. Right afterwards in a flash there's another thrown on the curtaining, Pista.

I go on waving the branch. Sometimes the flies stick together, buzzing; I snatch at them with my free hand.

Carefully, the door is pushed open, and gives out a long groan. On the threshold stands uncle Miklós, mother's brother-in-law; it's at his place we are living. He mops his brow and leans against the door-jamb, which gives a loud crack.

"Shhh..." I rebuke him, with self-important reproach.

He registers alarm, and jerks his chin in my direction questioningly. I shrug my shoulders. He averts his face and goes on tiptoe again, leaving the door ajar. I slide halfway down in my chair so that I'm balanced on the edge, not knowing what I should do. If I go as far as the door the flies will wake father up; if I leave it open, kitchen sounds will be heard inside and the noise will wake him.

Mother comes in, and aunt Margit. They enter without a sound and, standing at the foot of the bed, stare at father in silence. Quite some time passes like this; then mother beckons to me, and starts towards the door. I follow her, while aunt Margit takes the branch from my hand, settles herself down in the chair, and begins fanning. In the kitchen, mother sits

on a stool and pulls me towards her; pressing me between her knees, she takes hold of my elbows.

"You're not a little child any more; you're eleven years old, a big boy, aren't you?" I nod seriously, in the manner appropriate at such times.

"Your father's very ill. The local doctor doesn't know what the matter is; he says we should take him back home to Pest. To the hospital. What do you think?..."

"Let's take him home," I say, touched by the voice seeking advice.

"Yes, of course, that's what I think; but how can we do it? Uncle Miklós has so much work piling up on him here, aunt Margit's making preserves: I can't leave father and Ági here... You can't take him along either, and we can't put him on the train or in a cart. You know what I thought? You'll make the journey to Pest, and go to uncle Kari's on Hadnagy Street. Then you'll tell them what's happening here, that Kari should arrange for a car, and bring with him a doctor from Pest. Good?"

"Allright, I'll go then." I want to move, but mother presses me hard between her knees.

"Listen to me just a little longer. You can't go now, the noon train has already left, and there isn't another until late evening. There's more I want to tell you about it. You know, the station's an hour and a half from here. You'll go along the highway; you'll leave good and early, no need to run. It'll be evening and dark by then, but you won't be afraid, will you? A Winnetou is never afraid! You know, Juci the sow may have her piglets at any moment, so no-one can go with you. Aren't you tired? Don't you want to go and lie down now for a little while? Or would you rather go and play? Off with you then!"

She gives me a playful pat on the back, and walks towards the room. I take a few steps after her, wanting to say that I won't be afraid on the road, but mother's already opening the door.

"This poor man's going to die, you know." I hear aunt Margit's voice. In a daze, I stagger out into the yard and sit down on the chopping-block stump; between my nails I pluck up tiny splinters of wood lying all around and collect them in my palm. I sit there till evening, when they call me in to dinner.

I'm so tired that my eyelids fall shut, standing in the doorway as it rains outside, while mother pulls the hood of my coat down over my brow, reties my shoe-laces, and buttons the flap of my pocket containing the fare money. Aunt Margit stuffs an apple into my coat. "I don't want it," I say, "it makes a bulge."—"Just take it along, it'll be good on the train," mother says, encouragingly. She turns me around, looking me over once again from all sides. "Well, off you go; give Ági a kiss, then you may leave. She's inside with father."

I tiptoe in; the lamp is smoking, and Ági is sitting in the chair shooing away the flies. When she sets eyes on me, angles form at her mouth like they always do before she cries, and tears collect along her eyelids. She plants a wet kiss on my nose; I kiss her back, stroking her hair like the grown-ups do. I look towards the bed. Father is sleeping; the bones of his face are sharp, his blond beard sticks straight out, and his forehead glistens with perspiration. "Father", I call, quietly. "Don't you see? He's sleeping!" snuffles Ági. I chase a fly off the

blanket, and go out. There's the smell of uncle Miklós's wine-laden breath, of aunt Margit's cooked vegetable dish, and for a long time of mother's nice scented soap lingering. The two of us go hand-in-hand out into the rain; mother comes along the street with me, a shawl over her shoulders.

"Go on back, you're going to get wet," I say; but she accompanies me as far as the crucifix where the highway begins. She clutches me to her; then turning back, she starts to run. The shawl is flapping, it's as if an angel were running; soon only the white shawl is visible, the shawl running alone through the air, a ghost, disembodied. I turn away frightened, and begin to pick my way through the mud. The apple presses into me; I take it out from my pocket, and bite into it. The wind springs up, slashing the rain across my face and into my mouth; my nose too is stuffed with chewed apple and tears, and I feel my heart swelling. I want to throw the apple away, but instead just quietly let it drop in the mud. Taking small steps I walk along the deserted, glistening dark road; I pull myself together, and I'm afraid.

I can hear the murmur of the rain, with the rustling and creaking of the trees. Then I hear footsteps, and begin to run; behind me the steps run too. I stop; no more steps to be heard. I run on, glancing back again and again. A bicycle is coming towards me, its lamp wobbling through the dark; I cower over to the side by the ditch, and stop. "It could be a murderer," I shiver. The bicycle splashes mud to either side; the man on it half-stands as he peddles, swearing and hissing between his teeth. He doesn't notice me. I start off again, my shoes becoming slippery inside with the wet, my shirt plastered to my neck. The trees step out in front of me with frightening stamping motions without a sound, continually blocking my way; I almost have to push them aside in order to go on. Again and again I glance over my shoulder. White shadows flutter behind me like those upon the window at home at night sometimes, thin, swaying, heads bending now to right, now to left. Before the station, a dog rushes out from the Ferenczi farmhouse with a howl and springs at me; then his legs go stiff with fright as he tries to stop, but momentum carries him right up to my shoes. With a low scream I kick out at him; he skids on his tail with a yelp, a snap, and we side-step round each other, petrified. I can make out only his teeth and the whites of his eyes. One shouldn't run, I know; slowly I back away. He follows for a little while with his sharp barking, then with large bounds suddenly disappears.

I put down my pen, heart pounding as if I'd been running, like someone who has escaped from danger. I lay my head on my arms. From my table I hear sighing; a moist wind is blowing through the foliage. Is the wood remembering the time when it was alive? I lean forward across it palms down, and its boards even begin to become rounded!

And I see the station lamp, behind the curtain of rain, disappearing and blinking out again. Is the wind turning it? A new worry nags me. I'll have to buy a ticket. I push open the station door, and water pours down my neck. I knock against a table in the dark, a lamp comes on at the noise, and a voice asks "What is it?" I go towards the light and stop in front of the little window. "What do you want?" A man in shirt-sleeves rubs his fist across his eyes. "A ticket, to Pest." "There's another thirty minutes," he mutters. He struggles to his

feet from a small bench, puts on his coat, sits down in an officious manner at the small table, tears off something, stamps it, and slaps the money down on the table. "Well, sit down then, there'll be a signal when it comes."

I am sitting in the darkness, and it's only now that father comes to mind again. I hear aunt Margit's voice; is he going to die? And I don't really understand. But I pull my stomach in and slump forward. It must be terrible, for them to be sending me to Pest like this, at night, when people are usually asleep, at night and all by myself. And if I die during the journey, or robbers derail the train, what then? And if uncle Kari doesn't get the message? Uncle Miklós wouldn't be as likely to die by some mischance as I might; and if he were travelling, the train wouldn't get derailed either. He really could have come, despite Juci the pig. And all of a sudden sleepiness overtakes me, and suddenly I feel at peace and proud too.

"They've trusted me to do it," I think, and my head falls forward.

The bell rouses me; then with the smell of soaked clothing in my nostrils I fall asleep again. I find myself seated between two huge skirts; heat radiates upon me from two enormous market women; I'm being covered by their wet stiff skirts, slipping down further; darkness falls upon me.

I am sitting in the darkening room, large shadows fly from the shelves, the far away twilight hill looms over my window. On the pharmacy opposite illuminated writing shines up, throwing flickering red onto the ceiling. What else do I reme mber?—with a shiver I loo at the paper glimmering in front of me. I was standing in front of the East Station, still half-asleep, streetcars were gliding through the slow morning twilight and dark veils fluttered in the air. A key sounds in the lock and Fanni returns home, entering quietly. I feel her kiss on my forehead; she moves to and fro in the room with tiny sounds, skirt rustling. She turns on the light above the armchair.

"That was the time father died, you know," I say suddenly. "I know," she breathes gently; she shows no surprise. "Tell me this then, how did I get from the East Station up to Hadnagy Street?" "I don't know, my dear." She sets the table for dinner.

And then I rang the doorbell; it was an old house with a high door, and I had to stretch up to reach the bell. I waited for a while, then rang again. Uncle Kari stood tall in the doorway; clutching his long nightgown close about his neck. Aunt Hilda stood beside him in her nightdress, a Prussian, even taller than my uncle.

"What's happened, for God's sake? How did you get here?" my uncle called down to me.

"Mother sent me to have you arrange for a car and a doctor because father's going to die!"

"Was sagt er?" asked the aunt.

They squatted down at the same time beside me on the threshold.

"And do you know, we weren't even there at the funeral, Ági and I?" I asked during

dinner. "After a few days, mother took me away from uncle Kari's to some aunt, an acquaintance with whom Ági was already staying. Mother slept there too, returning to us in the evenings." "Father's very ill, he can't even have visitors," mother would say, crying when she said it each evening. She wore a white dress, though tears ran down her face. At first when this happened we were quiet; but then somehow we got used to father's being very ill and mother's crying and her seeing us only in the evenings. Besides, at the aunt's we were given masses of cakes, and were getting out-of-hand. And no longer heeding even mother, we went chasing each other around the room, knocking over the chairs, shrieking. And then one evening mother suddenly called us to her; Ági sitting on one knee and I on the other, she looked at us and again burst out sobbing. That's when she told us father had died. Right after they'd brought him to Pest. Ági and I gazed at mother sobbing wildly, suddenly not understanding anything of the whole business but mother sobbing and clutching us to herself. We flung ourselves upon her too, and began to cry.

Next day mother left in the early morning, then returned with a black dress and black veil. She had Ági put a black dress on; she'd also brought two black ribbons, one she tied in Ági's hair, the other she sewed on my right sleeve. We stood there quietly while she spoke to the aunt, then she took us by the hand. And we went out to father in the cemetery.

Friday. All for nothing, oh for nothing!
Father's dead. And in their turn they all have died.
But all those who have lived only with me
live on today too in my heavy heart
and one light vibration is sufficient
if across my hand a butterfly should flutter,
or a branch brush against my shoulder,
they give a sign, whose bodies are by now
an intimate smile, sensation, or a flower
and only their bones lie cramped up underground.

It's been two months since father died.

I'm lying in the aunt's bed, a high darkish-brown old woman's bed; surrounding fleshy-soft bed-linen keeps me imprisoned within its warmth. This bed is like a big old ship, deep and rattling, around which white clouds are swimming; sometimes it's rocking. I've got the jaundice, and they brought me here in a hackney-cab three days ago; when they took me away, Ági cried and mother argued with uncle Lajos. It was about her being quite able to look after me too, the aunt is not needed; she'll make me well, just lend her some money; she even knows a doctor, a real cheap one. And when I sat up on the sofa and bawled out protestingly that I didn't want to go away, that I didn't want it either, then mother started to cry. They still took me away though, because uncle Mihály the guardian wanted it. This distant, mysterious uncle was my guardian, though I didn't understand what a guardian was.

It can't be anything bad, because Ági has mother as guardian. But why isn't she mine too? Why must a brother and sister have two guardians?

For three days, I have been here at the aunt's. I've got jaundice, a beautiful and mysterious illness; no one in the classroom has ever had it, and it doesn't hurt. My aunt possesses Jókai's collected works; she's promised me the sort of cake which is all filling; she's given me the Poets' Album, and says that when I'm big she'll give me the Jókai too. I've got three pencils, and my school-books have stayed home.

It's good being ill this way. It feels good in bed; I tumble around, and I know that something is going on around me. The family is growing: many new relatives come and go, even ones whose names I've never heard before, all bringing small presents, all hiding something. I can smell their indulgence and their astonishment. Somehow I've become important; they tempt me, and everything's more and more mysterious. I make ever newer experiments, experiments that succeed. The Frommer pistol is the only thing I haven't got yet, though I've been demanding it for a long time, having discovered it in a drawer even before coming to live here. The aunt is sewing beside the stove; turning towards her from my lying position, I address her sternly:

"Aunt, give me the Frommer!"

I'd been quiet a long time, and she thought I was asleep. She gives a start and gestures back, No.

"Then I'm going home!" I haven't the slightest intention of going home; I'm enjoying myself, I don't want to go anywhere but I do want to blackmail them. Her feeble protestations madden me. I repeat the syllables louder and louder, then shout out the two sentences; the aunt steadily shakes her head after each demand, thus goading me on to roar out my threat again and again. The aunt's refusal is no longer needed, the two sentences run together with no meaningful pause; by now there is no meaning, for that has long since been obliterated in the senseless repetition; only the sound is important now, the noise I'm making. My howls fill the room, I'm becoming heated, sweating with my straining, driven on by knowledge of my power. While the shouting's going on, the door to the next room opens and uncle Lajos comes in. He halts, and looks at me meditatively. Suddenly I feel tired, and I stop.

Uncle Lajos pulls up a chair to the bedside, and sits down. Aunt goes out. They say not a word to each other, but I can see they've agreed on something; I sense something solemn in the way they move. After the shouting I can actually feel the swish of silence, its fanning coolness over my ears, and I begin sinking downwards along with the bed. Suddenly, darkness and clammy cold envelop me, and I am listening intently as if from within a deep well. From high up, the uncle begins to speak:

"So, you want to go home?"

"Yes!" I answer, with feeble stubbornness, without conviction. All at once, meaningless terror rises inside me. The bed begins to rise along with my voice, returning to its old place beside the uncle.

"You are at home now, here," he answers, and glances at the ceiling. "Where else could you go to?"

"Home. To mother and Ági."

"To mother, to mother..." Silence, the uncle doesn't look at me, he's looking somewhat to the side. "To your step-mother!" he says, after a long pause, forcing out the word from deep inside him; relieved that he could come out with it, he gets to his feet and begins to pace the room. I sit up in bed; my throat suddenly swelling inside, I choke back a sob and my anger. "It's not true," I flare up from within, and I want to shout.

"Yes, yes... step-mother," comes the response. Now fear seizes me and stifles my protest. I can sense the agitation behind the quiet voice; his pacing quickens, and I follow him with my eyes.

"You're a big enough boy, you may know now. She's a good woman, you should love her; she has brought you up for the past ten years, been a mother to you in place of your mother, but..."

"It's not true!"

"But it is true, son. Your mother, your real mother died when you were born. You were already one year old when your poor father married your mother."

"You're lying!"

He sits down again on the chair beside my bed, and looks at me. His voice is tired and warm.

"Why should I lie, little chap? That's how it was! And your mother's very poor, she can't bring up two children. She doesn't want it this way, she says she can work to support you as well; but that would be very hard. Tell her you'll stay here."

"I won't stay!"

"My dear, dear boy, why make your mother's lot more difficult!"

"But it's not true mother's not my mama!"

"Anna!" The uncle calls towards the adjoining room, and with that stands up. The aunt enters apprehensively, somewhat pale. "He'll have even more of a temperature," she says, averting her eyes from me. "Where's the picture?" the uncle asks, with an awkward gesture, stamping a foot.

I am sitting up in bed, there's a stitch in my chest; I'm shivering, and I know that it's true. Once, a long time ago, we went with mother into a shop for something; the shopkeeper greeted her as an acquaintance, and enquired after relatives. Ági and I both said our names; and when asking about me, the shopkeeper said: "You did get the boy, then?"

"Get him? I bore him, my good man!" And she threw her arms around me. I looked up at mother and saw her put her finger to her lips and shake her head angrily. They talked for some time, and when we left I turned on her:

"Why did that man say you had got me?"

"The nice man had mixed you up with someone else."

"Who with? Who's the one who was got, then?"

"Did you get me too?" asked Ági's tiny frightened voice. Mother became angry.

"I didn't get anyone! Don't be silly. The gentleman mixed you up with the Fazekas family. They got a child once."

"Who are the Fazekases?" I can hear my voice, and the child got and the one born became mixed up inside me, because the one who is born is also got. At first, each child is swimming in a great sea. But the got child is Ági, because mother got her once from God; I can even remember it. She got her in the clinic in Bakács Square. Father bought flowers for me, and I had to give them to mother when we visited her.

"The Fazekases don't even exist," I shiver, "we're the Fazekases... I'm the got child!"

Aunt comes in, pats a little hollow in the blanket and sets a picture in front of me. "Here's your mother. You see, I didn't lie!" the uncle murmurs.

I look at the picture. A beautiful serious lady, a stranger to me, is standing in the picture; she has on a hat with white roses, a white dress with flounces, and is looking to one side thoughtfully. I just stare without touching it.

Aunt approaches the bed and lays the Frommer beside the picture. Slowly, I put out a hand from under the blanket. I raise the pistol, cradle it against my cheek; closing an eye, I take aim at the handle on the window.

A cry escapes from my aunt. I put the pistol down, and lie back.

I'm not thinking of anything; I'm feeling lonely and full of shivers. Then the first stirrings of a word within me, one I heard in an office a few days ago where we went with mother; a man with a beard said it of me because my father was dead. But that's not why he said it!

"I'm really orphaned now!" I shout, throwing myself back in bed, face to the wall, and begin to sob with my mouth open. I curl up, pain in my knees, a throbbing ache in my ears. The pillow grows wet; I slide down still further under the blanket. The pillow's corner is beside my mouth; I bite it, tear at it. My head is spinning.

When I awake, the room is empty. The windows gleam in the semi-darkness. I'm feeling weary, and somehow a stranger to myself. "Anyway, I'm going to die," I'm thinking, "then they'll get a fright here..." Within me revenge rears its head; I'd like to punish everyone for everything. I fold my arms behind my back like I used to in school. I'm waiting for death.

Mother hurries along the passageway in front of the windows, her mourning veil floating out behind. She rings. Aunt enters the room, and puts on the light. She snatches up the picture which has slipped down to the edge of the bed, the Frommer also, throws them into a drawer, and runs to open the door.

"How is the child?" I hear mother's voice; then she bursts in, kisses me on the forehead and feels my hand. She brings in coolness and a nice smell.

"I kiss your hand!" That's how I greet her. At my voice she flinches, bends over me, and looks into my eyes. "Give me a real kiss," she says, stroking my face with hers. I kiss her. Straightening up suddenly, eyes flashing, she says to the aunt sharply:

"Who told him? Who dared tell him? You?"

"Lajos did," the aunt breathes, frightened, backing towards the door.

"Curses on him!" hisses mother. She lets her arms fall and stands staring in front of her wearily, helplessly. Then she sits on the edge of the bed, and tears begin trickling slowly from her eyes. I stroke her arm, and she nestles against my breast; sobs shake her. I want to cry too, but I can't. I put a hand on her head; I'd like to console her. "I ought to help somehow," I think, feeling old and wise. "Anyway, I'm going to die," I'd like to say, but don't dare. We are alone in the room among the at that time still strange furniture and strange things.

Mother struggles to her feet, sits on the chair, dries her eyes, and smooths aside hair falling over her forehead.

"But Ági's still my sister?" I ask.

She nods, catching her handkerchief to her mouth, and sobs into it again.

And I was to live for a long time among the then strange furniture and strange things, while the furniture from our home wandered to N. with mother and Ági. And if I went there once or twice for a holiday every two or three years, I had to make friends with the old furnishings all over again.

"How did my mother die?" I asked the aunt, in the twilight once, some three years later.

"Get on with your reading, and don't be asking silly things! She died!"

"Died how? And why did she die?" My voice must have made her frightened, because she turned to face me and clasped her hands.

"It was too much for her heart, it was a twin-birth."

"A twin-birth?" I repeated it after her, amazed. "How many more things are people still hiding!" grinding my teeth together... My hand flies into a fist. "What a family! Everything turns out differently than with other people, normal people!"

"Where's my twin now?" suspicious, I pressed the aunt further.

"He died, he was sickly, he lived only a minute or two. He was a boy, too."

"And?"

"And what?"

"And... and did mother die because she had twins?"

"That she did," the aunt quickly wiped away a tear. "Anyway, there's no helping it now, don't be asking; and besides, it's not fitting to speak of things like this. You should be ashamed!"

"But there's nothing not-fitting about it!" I stormed. "And father?"

"Can't you leave me in peace? Your father wasn't in Pest; he only got there an hour later. Do your reading and leave me in peace!"

I take a deep breath, swallowing my heart back down my throat.

"Only twenty-eight she was at the time, poor Ilona," my aunt cried suddenly, and went

out to the kitchen. I pushed open the door after her, but she shut it again and turned the key from the kitchen-side. "Read, and leave me in peace," she shouted, her voice hoarse.

"If I'd been father, I'd have thrown that brat against the wall, you know that?" I shouted through the door.

"Are you crazy? What brat?" The door opened suddenly.

"Me", I hissed through clenched teeth, "for him, everyone died; only I am left! And no one'll ever know whether it was I or my brother who died. If there are twins, how can people tell?"

"Have you gone crazy?" The aunt's tears ceased. "Come on, we'll go to the cinema!"

"I'm not going to the cinema!" I fumed. "Mother shouldn't have been allowed to have children; who was the stupid doctor who let it happen? I'll kill him!" I aimed a kick at a corner of the sofa, and rushed out into the street.

And then the beginning of something about which only poems can be written... would that be when youth began? What years they were! Was it you who remained? Or the other? You killed them—the voice was saying—you killed them, you kill-ed th-em, you kill-ed th...

After midnight. Father died, and mother died too. *Mother* lives far away, and Ági lives far away too. And one by one all the others have died; now that America-goer, bullying dear Eduárd has died. Jean departed, the day before yesterday. Once again, wing-spread news of mobilization; and up he went to the embassy. "May I have your service papers," the clerk extended two fingers. Jean dug them out. The fellow scanned them, then returned them. "You'll travel back immediately; not to Paris though, to your service depot. Have a good journey." He stuck out a hand. I was waiting in the street in front of the embassy. Jean was pale as he came out, and he told me all about it. I stopped a taxi. We went to the hotel, and from there to the station. We did not speak. And when he had to get on the train, we suddenly kissed each other. Today, he's already on the Maginot Line. And who knows whether I'm living? Whether he's living?

When does childhood pass away? And when does youth? When life? No one ever notices.

I could catch the moment only twice, when the petal leaves its place, and when it spins to the ground. And both of the flowers were tulips, and both of them were white.

And is the twirling petal already dead
on beginning its descent?
Or does it die only on reaching earth?

(End of August 1939)

DEZSŐ TANDORI

THE CLEANING OF A LOST PROPERTY

Translated by Tony Connor

I.
(Guidelines, to be deleted)

In order to
speak at all
of his protracted stay in W.,
to picture to ourselves
in space
his arrival, his departure—
to the (same) place, from the (same) place—
his extensive ramblings (in the meantime)
with their seemingly aimless repetitions
(as if he were roaming about an empty city),
we must first speak
of the streets leading into and opening from Plac Trzech
Krzyży: — Wiejska, Bracka,
Mokotowska, Zurawia, Hoża,
Książęca, Aleja Ujazdowskie,
having mentioned these streets
we must extend the circle to a certain degree,
but for the present only on Wiejska, Mokotowska and Aleja
Ujazdowskie itself, and even there only as far as Piękna Street,
Ujazdowski or tażenki Park,
Koszykowa, or perhaps as far as
Plac Unii Lubelskiej,
which he always reached by these routes.
It must be stated
that the three streets mentioned above,
(one of which is an "avenue," strictly speaking)
branch, ray-like
from Trzech Krzyży Square; and that if we
start off on Bracka, let us say, going
in the direction of Aleja Jerozolimskie

and reach the small square
to the left of Aleja Jerozolimskie (facing
Poniatowski Bridge)
which is paved with stone slabs
to which Hibnera, Szpitalna, Widok and
Krucza Street
(intersecting at right angles
with Żurawia and Hoża
and converging with Mokotowska at Piękna Street
at an acute angle) lead,
if we start off on Bracka Street—
which is not quite parallel to Krucza Street
and not quite at right angles to Aleja Jerozolimskie,
we will be following one of his most frequent routes.
Because, while he (retrospectively)
felt that walking on Aleja Ujazdowskie
(namely: away from his lodgings or back to them)
was a violin or piano concert, that walking on Wiejska
was chamber music, and that Mokotowska
was a brass or wood-wind motif
drifting bizarrely from some orchestra; the Bracka
represented, by the same token,
a common-or-garden metropolitan cacophony.
Nevertheless he perambulated,
he perambulated a lot. At this point
it would, no doubt, seem a pleasant detour
to remark the details of his strolls.
He lingered, he sat at various places: for example,
in the Kultury Park (by the fountain),
on the avenue-wide steps,
and on the terrace of the coffee bar on Piękna Street
next to the post office—specifically
on the concrete base of an iron fence overgrown
with rambler roses in Bagatela Street (which connect)
Plac Unii Lubelskiej and Aleja Ujazdowskie)
nearby an empty stone basin in Aleja
Róż or Szopena Street.
Moreover—and he felt this even more important
(at the time)—He would have liked to sit down
(among other places) at Koszykowa, at Krucza,

at Hoża, etcetera. It must be said
that he did not sit down in Ujazdowski Park, in Łazenki
(the Chopin memorial near Bagatela Street)
—at least not on the first day. Later he did
sit there, and everywhere—on benches
and anything else to hand. And he sat
(not on the first day when hedidn't use
public transport) on a trolley-bus,
the route of which—taking him as it did
around Plac Unii Lubelskiej, Aleja
Ujazdowskie and Koszykowa—he became particularly
fond of. Next to walking
this trolley-bus ride was his favourite. Yes,
all of this would seem a pleasant detour. But we are
only endeavouring to extend
the circle to a certain degree
around his lodgings, to indicate his travels
to Trzech Krzyży Square and along
Wiejska, Aleja Ujazdowskie, and Mokotowska
(a route he rarely took!)
Or we could set off in the direction
of Bracka; perhaps not
on Bracka itself, but
from the small square to the left of Aleja Jerozolimskie
on Nowy Świat Street—which is also on the left
if we go in the direction of Poniatowski Bridge,
and all the way along Krakowskie Przedmieście
(the continuation of Nowy Swiat Street)
to the Plac Zamkowy, and from there
to the Old Town. This way we would again follow
his (other) most frequent route.
Another pleasant detour here would be to state
that in the meantime he ate meals
at several places. Or better to state:
mainly at one place, on Krakowskie Przedmieście. We
could mention the names of the two or three dishes
he became particularly fond of (at this point
he, certainly, would be unable to prevent himself
from dwelling upon the omelette with jam,
made very dry and turned slightly brownish,

and the pastry called "Pirozski") to the
exclusion of almost every other food. Mentioning
the names of dishes
(he)
would undoubtedly remember the occasion
when, being both hungry and tired of the
snack in his shoulder-bag (always beside him
in his wanderings) he threw the food
to a stray dog sniffing around his bench,
and was able thus to go and have lunch with a
clear conscience. The dog,
however, followed him and endeavoured to
enter the restaurant with him, whereupon
he would have sought the assistance of the waiters
had he not observed that they were about to voice
protests against the animal. Though trivial
the matter seemed too complicated to explain, so
he wandered some distance on and dropped
in at a doorway of the Kilińskiego,
where he found an inner courtyard, closed the door
on the dog, and escaped, running (partly
from the concierge who popped out having heard
the barking; partly from the dog who escaped
in the twinkiling of an eye) in the direction
of the small palaces of Miodowa. But
in order to picture for ourselves
(in space)
the route
of that desperate manœuvre—or the other quieter
and seemingly more aimless manoeuvres in the Old Town
we must become acquainted with the street-system
in the Old Town—which appears, on a larger scale,
in a box on the map.
Anyway, now
we must spread the map of W. in front of us,
and patiently examine all the possible
combinations of routes, if we are to be able
to speak, at least somewhat concretely
about his proposed stay.

II.

*(Residence exercises)**; **

* (Whatever with full knowledge of the above doesn't sound strange.)

1. His arrival (at the station at the "end" of Aleja Jerozolimskie).
2. The steps of the tram (from which he jumps at the last moment, and—at about midnight—accepts an offer concerning his future lodgings).
3. His lodgings in Trzech Krzyży Square (a five-storey building between two parks).
4. The backstairs, which he runs up and down every day, jumping the stairs by twos (or not by twos).
5. The shower-room (he takes a shower before setting-off for a walk with his host in the Old Town).
6. The room his host vacates for him (he moves into another room).
7. The ticket and travel office on the corner of Aleja Jerozolimskie. From two touts he buys—with great satisfaction—a ticket (of admission) for the Saturday/Sunday International (etc.).
8. The park beneath his lodgings. On a bench he finds a morning paper with the current cinema programme in it.
9. The fountain. (He washes his face.)
10. The Ujazdowski Park; he sits down several times. (But doesn't enter.)
11. The fountain (cont.) which, next day—after the International (etc.), he would gladly discuss with his host and friend and the others. (Because: see item 12.)
12. The locals are more familiar with the local participants in the International (etc.) than he is. (He didn't take out his score card once.) (Locale: ascending the avenue-wide stairs of the Park.)
13. The locals are also more familiar with the fountain. (How did it get there! Locale: The deli-

catessen in the basement of the department-store on the corner of the small square paved with stone slabs. Intense neon light; shopping for the occasion of the successful ending of the International—etc.—Mainly drinks; two jars of cucumber.)

14. One jar of cucumber (shopping for his own purposes).
15. Two sausages, diminishing considerably (brought from home). (In the course of drinking he steals into his room, where he bites off a piece of sausage to help him stand the etc., see: "Several bottles...")
16. He can stand it. His host (and the company) thinks he goes out to vomit.
17. He and another guest "hold" the head of his host in the bathroom.
18. Invitations (from members of the company) (to go on trips next day; by car, apparently).
19. Concerning the invitations (his reserved attitude). He asks his host about (to let him have) a few more days in the room.
20. The time of day: 10 a.m. (Monday) (next day).
21. (Going to) (coming from) the shower. (He doesn't meet any acquaintances.)
22. Locality: see: *GuideLines, to be Deleted.* (Time: Monday) (Tuesday) (Wednesday).
23. One copy of the local (sports) paper. Topic: comparative scores in this year's and last year's International—etc. (He takes out his record book.)
24. Variations in the weather (continuously dry, windy and sunny). (Combinations of the same. Days: Monday, Tuesday, etc.—separately.)
25. Next to a stone-basin, in sunny, dry weather. Rambler roses (the same day).
26. (In ... weather the) Locality: setting off in one direction.
27. The porter's lodge beside the swing-door at the bottom of the backstairs. (Topic: a demand to be awakened by the porter.)

28. Locality: see item 27. (Topic: a further demand concerning the same thing. Apologies for the uselessness of wakening.)
29. (Repetition of the above.) (Days: separately.) (In the meantime: a visit to the travel and ticket office at the corner of the square paved with stone slabs. His tickets, purchased at home, to G. are valid; enquiry for a convenient train.)
30. His thoughts.
31. Locality: still W. (still not G.).
32. Plans for his journey to G. (to the sea). Idea of a night train (his timetable in the glass case of the etc. on the corner of the small etc.).
33. Cinema programme. Checking the time of a performance (an evening performance) with the departure of the train.
34. Cinema in the Wola. Getting there. (By tram; neglect of tram-ride description. For tram-ride in K. see Part III.; *The Cleaning*.)
35. On the platform of the tram on the way to the cinema (something about the tram-ride after all). Finding the cinema. Past 8 p.m. in the Wola. (The common yard of some one-storied houses; drying sheets, next to the cinema.)
36. On the platform of the tram after the movie. Passing the station at the "end" of Aleja Jerozolimskie (travelling towards another station). (Something about the tram-ride after all, cont.)
37. The illuminated windows of a textile (?) factory in the night (still on the tram-ride). (He watches them from the platform; they disappear.)
38. All along Aleja Jerozolimskie by tram (crossing Krucza, Bracka, Nowy Świat) (or rather: not *crossing* any of them). Station.
39. Night train leaving for G. Getting on board, next to loading ramps.
40. The (crowded compartment of the) night train leaving for G. (Attempts to sleep.) His bag on his lap. On his bag: his head.

41. In G. he cannot find the sea. (Time: after arrival at G.)
42. Rainy weather in G. Having breakfast (inside); rain (outside). He doesn't get omelette (with jam).
43. Empty (dirty) one pint mug (on the bar-counter, looking back). Rain (outside). Cathedral (outside and inside).
44. Streets in G. (He cannot find the sea). Factories (he's probably near the sea).
45. He takes the tram (No 3).
46. (Train-ride across the suburb: see part III., in K.) The resort town of G.: S.
47. An error: the terminus of the No. 3 tram is not S. as yet. (Farther on by bus—respectively back by bus—to S.—resp. from S.)
48. (In S.: the park (of the spa)—the small church closed. Mobile vendors in the park; medical springs; BAR-DANCING-RESTAURANT; pier.) (The pier at S.) (cloudy weather, strong wind; a boat sailing.) (From the pier at S. the factories of G. and the spire of G. cathedral can be seen.) (Change from bus to No. 3. tram on the way back.)
49. Some hours before the return journey by train from G. to W.
50. Fighting to get a place on the train for W. Standing-room only (20 or more people) on the back platform. Five-hour journey back to W.; ideal position next to the window that can be opened (about 2 cm).
51. He and an (ex) champion skater press down the window (using joint force) (about 2 cm).
52. Air through the window.
53. Conversation (for the first time in 10 days he is "having a conversation").
54. Whistling, singing one—?—tune.
55. A long-lasting whistle. Forgetting (consciously) the W. address (forg., consc. to write down etc) of the (ex) champion skater and his family.
56. (Previously: invitation etc. See item 55.) The

station with its loading platforms is familiar (approx) by now. (He is addressed by his unknown compatriots.) (He answers using the language of the locality.) Some words. The train moves off. (He is departing with euphoric happiness.)

57. Back to Trzech Krzyży Square. His host (and etc.) still nowhere.
58. One more day in W. Walks in the Old Town. (Sunlit telephone boxes. Leather seats in the bistro. A tree in front of the bistro with redbrick-inlaid walls. The shadow of the tree.) (Again, long, coherent, bracketed qualities.)
59. Small children from the neighbourhood. Further conversation (in the Old Town, about stamps. A little boy joins him. Other little boys join them.)
60. In the Old Town; (or: perhaps just outside the Old Town.)
61. Offers for swapping of stamps. Forcible movements necessary to get away. (When on Krakowskie Przedmieście he is relieved.)
62. The site of a bombed house (lawn, benches, gravel walk) next to Hotel B. (Hotel Bristol).
63. Hotel Bristol. (Ministers and Ambassadors arrive by diplomatic cars.) The Hotel Bristol (diplomatic cars lined up in the slightly sloping street where the side entrance is.)
64. Hotel Bristol. (The night-life around it. Provisions for entertainment and income.) (Persons unfamiliar to him—or a more vivid expression.)
65. The painter with "cocaine", (Whom he knows from the bastion of the Old Town) appears in front of the main entrance of the Hotel Bristol with a wooden trunk. They put the wooden trunk into the boot of a ([Ford]) Cortina. (Persons unfamiliar to him.)
66. Nobody (a minister? an ambassador?) comes.
67. He doesn't go to eat omelettes with jam.
68. Sunset (that day).
69. "To whom? Why? How?" (Persons unfamiliar to him, cont.)

70. Finally, neither. (The sunset falling on the walls of the tower-buildings faced with stone slabs. There he walks at the foot of the tower-buildings faced with stone slabs. Next day the weather will be fine.)
71. In the evening. "The crystalline surface of the breaks in the air." (Nonsense; there are no post-cards available of this phenomenon.)
72. He doesn't send any postcards. (See items 69 and 70.)
73. The answer to one (several) question(s) (doesn't come).
74. At the backstairs. Demand to the porter.
75. His hosts find him in the act of packing (they arrive). Pieces of luggage (the shoulder bag and the—green!—sports-bag). They try to make him stay.
76. Invitation (neglect of circumstances) (here) (for vinjak) (invitation).
77. Its refusal, etc., etc. (Then: vinjak, etc.)
78. Finally. (after all) his host (and another) holds his head in the bathroom. (Then: further bottles, etc.) (Then: he vomits alone.)
79. In the bathroom again. Refusal of invitation again. (PERSONS UNFAMILIAR TO HIM) + (effect of vinjak) (lack of sausage and cucumber).
80. Farewell to his hosts (doesn't happen). Waking up after a short sleep. Already on his *way back* from the shower room (he cleaned it) he meets the porter coming to wake him.
81. Taxi on Trzech Krzyży Square. Running with the sports-bag (and the shoulder-bag).
82. Familiar station (the loading platforms). The train leaving for L. (More exactly: leaving for K. via L.)
83. , and other omitted items.

**Whatever with full knowledge of the above sounds strange see from any item above.

III.
The Cleaning

If he has the time, if he is
able to recollect it later on—this is how he will begin. Let us,
instead, begin this way: from W.
he went by train to K., more than a day's
journey. Originally he had intended
the travel by boat, but a cabin-
ticket proved too expensive
(in the local currency) and without
a cabin the trip would have been rather
uncomfortable. It was as if the decision
not to travel by boat had been made
at home; for, (as in the case of
the excursion to G.)
he had purchased a railway ticket from
W. to K. via L.
before he began his trip.
The route was roundabout. In the end
L. remained, but only instead of the shorter route
from W. to K. In other words
he travelled *via* L., which meant no more
than twenty-five minutes there between trains. In fact
he didn't leave the station—that is what remained
of L. But he didn't mind: it was K.
he was interested in. He had been in K. once, added to which
the letter of recommendation he obtained in W.
(between two vomitings) was addressed to the very hotel
in which he had been unable to stay
(because he had, somehow, lost his papers)
on the occasion of his first visit to L. As for
his roundabout route from W. via L.,
he didn't regret it; indeed, to a certain extent,
the used ticket calmed his conscience. From L. to P.
(the last change before L.) he jolted
along in an old-fashioned wagon with large compartments,
thronged with local people, their luggage and goats;
approaching P.?—the train emptied, so that
"he could well have danced." He began to feel

tranquil after W. How did this get in? He looked
out of the window: the landscape was uninteresting,
similar to where he came from. Through the window
the wind (carrying the rain past)
blew in. In P. the sun was blazing: even
the wet concrete beneath the engine's
over-spill pipe felt dry (this might have been
a joke he'd have risked had he wished
to speak in any tongue) (this, too: how did it get in?) (however,
his mouth was too parched to use foreign
words). The buffet
was closed. At last
the express to K. arrived, crowded.
He had difficulty in finding a seat, and when
he found one he sat in it
immediately, of course. It struck him
how well-dressed his travelling companions were, though
this was the second class.
Many of the passengers were going
to K. for entertainment—it being Saturday, and K. itself
was crowded: there were throngs at the station
and on the boulevard (lined with trees and
late 19th century houses) (what's this doing here?)
built along the path of the former city walls.
There must have been something wrong with
the transport system (an electricity failure?),
for there were no trams, so he set off walking.
As he went along he made a note of
a pleasant restaurant, or eating-place
where he would be able to obtain
a glass of beer and a good omelette (with
cheese and jam) once he had attended to
the matter of his hotel room. It stood on the corner
of Castle Boulevard and Suburban Avenue—a right angle
where he saw a tram and took it. Its route
lay through wooded country: to the left groves and fields;
to the right the city sports-complex-swimming pool—
(This is how it should be done! Finally I've
got it!) *The Lido*. He decided
to visit the place sometime. The tram terminus

would be at the edge of the town; not too far
from his hotel. It was. His luggage—
a sun-faded, green, trapeze-shaped sports-bag—
(and a shoulder-bag!)—
was not too heavy. The grocery shop at the corner
was not closed. He stopped
and bought a bottle of soft-drink (lemon) so that he might
drink it (have something to drink) in the
hotel room. He had left W. at 5.30 a.m., and now
here he was at the hotel in K. In the lobby
he had to wait for the return of the person
to whom his letter of recommendation
was addressed. There wouldn't be
any problems, that was obvious, but
he was told that there would be a wait of some hours,
so he decided to take a ride on the tram
back from the suburban terminus,
which would provide him with an opportunity
to study everything, from the blue dressing cubicles
of *The Lido* to the restaurant on Castle Boulevard.
(The grocery shop was closing
as he passed it.)
In the restaurant
he actually
had a meal.
The beer he particularly liked because of the
frosted, dewy appearance of the glass. He was glad
to be free of the sports-bag
(left at the hotel desk). He walked
to the main square; he looked round at the
familiar buildings. The basins of the fountain
were overflowing: water pouring onto the stone slabs. Pigeons
were being fed. Returning to the hotel
he obtained the key to his room. To the question
"How many days do you want it for?" he replied
by stating how many day he wanted
it for (three, he said). When
he entered the room the sun was setting.
The hotel stood on the outskirts of the town. Fields
spread around it, neglected, empty of new

buildings. In the distance—to the right—
were some tower-cranes; to the left was the town
with its towers and roofs. Across the fields
between the towers of the town and the cranes,
the setting sun was reddening. He unpacked
what little he had to unpack; he took a shower in the bathroom
(common to his and the next room), and returned to his room,
where he sat on the edge of the bed. He heard music—
the then-fashionable dance-tune adapted from
Finnish folk-music. He looked down—
bending across the railings of the balcony to do so—
six storeys, to the tarred roof of the
restaurant belonging to the hotel. Could the music
have emanated from there? No: as he discovered, finally,
it came from the storey above him (or rather
from the second storey above him). He went upstairs
and glanced in at the night club; in accordance with the
demands of the then-fashionable dance
the people on the dance floor were marching
(in a circle) holding one another by the shoulder.
He returned to the storey where his room was. He spent two
days in K.; he didn't return to the restaurant
on Castle Boulevard for lunch or dinner—and it must be
said that misfortune attended these meals. The hotel clerk
to whom his letter of recommendation has addressed,
obtained for him free lunch and dinner tickets
from the hotel's own restaurant; he escaped
from the meals with the exception of one
evening. In the town he revisited a number
of buildings—spending very little time at
the historical monuments. During his first visit
to the cathedral
he had admired a small lady-chapel
enclosed by a railing; this time
it gave him no pleasure. On Castle Boulevard
(on both occasions) he read the newspaper
reports of the results
(the scores) of combats in a certain sport. The reports,
naturally, gave most attention to the fortunes
of the National Team, but he was able to learn

the position of his own compatriots as well. Four days
later, at dawn, his train departed for home.
He had to get up very early, so he arranged
for a phone call from the hotel clerk.
He also arranged
for the driver of a private
bus, waiting for guests,
to convey him to the station. He got ready
rather slowly: he threw his things into the sports-bag, he
took a leisurely shower. The bottle he left on a shelf,
aware that he could have taken it back the previous night
when the grocery shop at the tram terminus
had been about to close. They drove across
the sleeping town, in a completely different direction
from that of the suburban tram, the swimming pool
and Castle Boulevard; nevertheless
they pulled-in, eventually, at the corner of the latter (where the
station was). The bus had deposited him
far too early: he had to stand, shivering, for three hours
before his train arrived. The neon lights
of the station were extinguished as the dawn fog rose.
The sun's first, etc.,
through the dawn fog. The three planks of the bench
were wet. The time passed
rather uneventfully—then the
local railwaymen assembled the train. If

I have the time, if I am able

to recollect it later on,

won't this be the last?—
the dawn of this dawn, this half-light,
won't this hotel be,
this departure, the lift's linoleum
glide, or the
bannister, the long metal tube,
the landing's rough ground glass, neon
rustling into the deaf
ears of press-buttons
lurking in the wall

(if he has the time,
if he is
able to recollect it
later on,

(Somewhat detailed
description of the hotel)

won't be the last—
I turn my key. (He turns kis key.)
(DAY, EVENING, DAWN,
NOON, NIGHT
ALWAYS ITS OWN DAWN, (?)
DAY, NOON, NIGHT,
EVENING,
NONE, THAT IS NONE.)

This morning the morning doesn't take
place,—
everything can't happen at once.
While I negotiate the lobby (While he negotiates
the lobby,

both lift and staircase will be deserted; (Unless somebody else
is using them!)

I leave only a single trace. (He leaves only a single
trace)

(THE SUN SETS. MONTHS
AND DAYS
END AT THE SAME PLACE.
FROM WHERE I CONSIDER (From where he considers
IT PERISHABLE it perishable)
IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW
MUCH PREAMBLE
I INCLUDE WITH THE (He includes with the
MINUTE) minute)
(OF IT; IN IT.)

One more wash, instead of packing.
Your pyjamas halt, barefooted. (His pyjamas halt,
barefooted.) (?)

The balcony is cool.
You stretch, its shiver touches you. (Etc.)
Bathroom, shower, spray-beaten tiles.

It touches you again.
Endless soaping;
You wash your hair twice.
Instead of packing.

(DEEP WITHIN US WE NURTURE
AN IMAGE OF DEPARTURE,
SEPARATED FROM TIME AND PLACE
BY EPHEMERAL EARTHLY GRACE.)

Not even death
will be more sudden.
The key turns,
you begin to disappear into the lock.
You half leave, you half remain:
it is half of a day forevor half open.

You arrive, you enter:
the room is ablaze with sun,
impersonal corners—
a compass-point in each one.
Hunger comes, and thirst,
you eat whatever's cheap,
nothing remains after yourself
except a stale crust
and an unreturned bottle
left on a bathroom shelf.
Four a.m.
The shops are asleep.

INTERVIEWS

THOMAS BALOGH ON HUNGARIAN TELEVISION

We are standing in the middle of the City of London. One square mile full of banks. The Bank of America, the world's largest bank, the Morgan–Grenfell banking house, Barclay's Bank, the National Westminster, the Bank of England, the central bank nicknamed by the English the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street are also here. The underground station is also called Bank. When I was here for the first time I thought that it was an underground bank. The Hungarian International Bank is round the corner, in Princes Street.

Tamás Balogh started his career as a banker in London. In Budapest he had been an assistant of Professor Ákos Navratil at the Law Faculty of the Pázmány Péter University. Lord Keynes offered him his first post on the strength of a paper he had written on the threat that French policies would finally lead to the destruction of German democracy. From here he set out on the meteoric career which was to make him the first Hungarian member of the House of Lords.

Q. *Professor, you're a well-known figure in Hungary and not only amongst economists. We are proud that someone of Hungarian origin has been a member of several English governments and also that you were the first Hungarian to take a seat in the House of Lords. How does an economist feel if he can try out his theories and ideas in practice?*

A. I wouldn't call myself a theoretical economist. I started my career here as a banker. I wrote reports on the world situation and on the state of certain countries and firms. My first job in England required that I watch and analyse the real world. I have never since concerned myself with theory for the sake of theory, only as a means of speeding up and deepening the analysis of real problems.

Q. *But before you came to England you had worked for some time in Geneva. I have read a paper of yours which was published in the Navratil Yearbook in 1935, a time when you were already working in Geneva, in which you gave a comprehensive picture of the situation and expected trends of the world economy.*

A. Yes. I wrote that in England. I came here in 1930, then worked for six months in Geneva at the Secretariat of the League of Nations, and then I returned. The article published in the Navratil Yearbook was an analysis of affluence. What do we understand by affluence, what is our attitude towards it, to what extent can it be quantified. After two years I began teaching, first here in London and then in Oxford. But my field has always been practical economics.

Q. *But at university in Hungary . . .*

A. I was first research assistant to Professor Navratil for a time. I worked in the Collegium Hungaricum in Berlin, then I got a Rockefeller Fellowship, a grant which took me to America, mainly to Harvard.

Q. *Professor, I am surprised that you speak such good and fluent Hungarian after so many decades.*

A. I don't think it is all that fluent. . .

Q. *Of course you have difficulty with technical terms which you learned directly in English.*

A. My parents and other members of my family lived here until their deaths. And many people of Hungarian origin live here, Lord Káldor, Professor Barna, Professor Gábor, Professor Kürti; a fair number of Hungarians came to England. Some arrived as long ago as the twenties, then came the Hitler wave which was followed by several other waves of immigration. It is very interesting that a relatively small country like Hungary has produced such a lot of people working in universities and banks abroad. And those who remained at home are also first-class people.

Q. *This is also true of other professions such as János Neumann in mathematics, Edward Teller... Did you know any of the people you regularly meet back here in Hungary?*

A. Nicky Káldor and Muki Kürti. We were in the same grammar school, the Mintagimnázium*. I didn't know Barna at home.

Q. *Many people believe that the secret of the Hungarian intellectual élite living abroad lies in the Mintagimnázium.*

A. This is not so. The Lutheran grammar school, the Mintagimnázium and perhaps the Piarists—these three educated most of them. Johnny Neumann and Willy Fellner went to the Lutheran grammar school in the Fasor. But many came from the Mintagimnázium, the two Szilárds, and others, also Káldor and Kürti...

Q. *What kind of teachers were there who provided you so well intellectually?*

A. Come now, I was a teacher myself in Oxford for 32 years but I don't think that teachers have any great influence. It consists rather of their advising us what to read and how to approach what we read. I cannot remember any great thinker in the Mintagimnázium but they were kind, the classes small, and everybody was very ambitious. And you know, in Hungary, when this emigration took place, someone of Jewish origin was only able to make a career if he was much better than the non-Jews. Most of those who made a career abroad came from that background. Compared to what you had to achieve in Hungary to get on, what you had to do abroad was a mere nothing.

Q. *I would have thought that it was difficult for a foreigner settling in England to make such a career.*

A. No. It was easier here than in Horthy Hungary. I had read law at the university besides working at the Credit Bank. And I had written a book on inflation published by the Academy and I won a place in the Collegium Hungaricum. This helped to raise you above the grey mass. In Germany I was very lucky, I was dealing with precisely the same topic as the President of the German Central Bank. So I could go to work there and got the Rockefeller grant from them. After this luck came my way again. And so I could climb higher. I cannot imagine Popovics* or Imrédy** offering me a job in the National Bank on the strength of a good article.

Q. *But still one cannot attribute your success to a lucky string of accidents. First you had to write the book on inflation which made your selection possible.*

A. Yes. You can put it like that, but I still believe that luck played a tremendous role. I am sure that I had a lot of luck. Take one instance: Oliver Sprague, my professor at Harvard, became adviser to the Bank of England in the year I first arrived in England. And he had ample opportunity to find me a post. True, I had written a number of papers for his seminar but if he hadn't come to London those articles wouldn't have had any decisive impact and value for my further life and career. So you see, luck is very important.

* *Mintagimnázium* (Model Grammar School) was a secondary school in Budapest, where trainee teachers could do their teaching practice.

* Popovics, Sándor (1862–1935) economist, Minister of Finance, President of the Hungarian National Bank (1924–1935).

** Imrédy, Béla (1891–1946) President of the Hungarian National Bank (1938–39) later Prime Minister, was executed as a war criminal in 1946.

Q. *And if a foreigner starts out or works in a similar field in England, his not being English. . .*

A. It is much easier to make a career in England with a foreign than with a working-class accent.

Q. *This is also a rather biting criticism. So prejudice against somebody not being English doesn't count for much?*

A. Now the situation is different. But at the time I settled here this was not felt.

Q. *And you took this into account and this was your reason for choosing England?*

A. No. The original plan was that I go to Hamburg and become economic assistant to Max Warburg, the great banker. He then sent me to London and France to acquaint myself with the banking business in these two centres. One of my professors in Germany had been Schumpeter. He wrote a letter of introduction to Keynes. Keynes invited me to lunch; he had just come back from a meeting of the Macmillan Committee where they couldn't explain to him why the French were piling up so much gold in the Banque de France. I had spent three months in the Banque de France and so was able to explain in a few words what had happened. Keynes was a very interesting man who greatly appreciated that I knew something he didn't. So he also recommended me to his friend O. T. Alk, and I had already two very good offers. One was very 'establishment,' the other very radical. I first went to see the first but I felt that I wouldn't get along well with my conservative boss, and then I went to Keynes' banker who was one of the finest men I have ever known. He hired and supported me. He had a lot of influence in industry, so I could settle down.

Q. *So one could say that England chose you, Professor, and not that you chose England.*

A. Well, I would say that I slipped in. I was lucky.

Q. *In 1935 when you were already abroad—I don't know whether in Geneva or in Germany or England—an essay of yours appeared in the Navratil Yearbook; it was an extensive and comprehensive analysis of the possibility of apprehending affluence quantitatively.*

A. I wanted to prove that this was impossible. Because affluence had aspects which never got into money circulation. So if you have a secure job or profession this in itself means a lot. If there is unemployment as now in England with 1.6 million jobless this means that at least three million others fear that they may lose their job. The quantification of national prosperity on the basis of national production does not tell us what prosperity actually is.

Q. *So prosperity has also a qualitative side to it, such as the absence of the fear of unemployment?*

A. Yes. But this was not accepted at the time. This essay was never published in England because they considered it too unscientific. One has the satisfaction of knowing one's ideas of 40 to 50 years ago are accepted now.

Q. *It has been said that you often understood a problem well before others. In 1929 you predicted the world crisis but you were not listened to. You also advised the introduction of severe foreign exchange restrictions in England very early on in the war. And in many other cases you have foreseen certain events. It cannot be all that agreeable to see into the future.*

A. It isn't, indeed, and particularly if you foresee things more than six months ahead. Because if you predict things over a longer period, let us say three or four years, then those who don't believe you or those whose sensitivities are somehow offended will be angry. And then if your prediction comes true it is even worse because they'll say that the crisis was caused by your forecast, and not that it could have been avoided with foresight.

Q. *You also foresaw that the devaluation of the pound, I think in '63 or '64, would have the opposite effect than was assumed, that it would lead to deflation, to disinflation. This was a very unusual approach, not only a prophecy but also a break with all tradition, a new trend in economics.*

A. Yes, now they approve it, Friedman

now subscribes to this view and thinks that it was very original. At the time I was in great trouble because first I opposed devaluation. And when it happened I thought that it would have been useful to take some countermeasures and strengthen our foreign exchange policy. Now we have got both inflation and unemployment. This situation is very much opposed to the tenets of Keynes. Hence I was not very popular, as a matter of fact I was never very popular.

Q. *Well, I am not familiar with the functioning of Britain's state administration but I have also worked in state administration, though in Hungary. And I have read C. P. Snow's* The Corridors of Power. *And on the basis of this book I would have thought that for a man like you, who does not consider himself a theorist but is one to a certain extent, apart from being a down-to-earth person, it could not have been very easy to work in public administration, even on a high level.*

A. It was not easy. But as long as you get along with the Prime Minister it's possible to work. The difficulties begin when you lose the backing which only a Prime Minister can give. In 1968 the university, as a result of the intrigues of certain colleagues, presented an ultimatum demanding that I either resign or come back. I was convinced that in my job as an adviser I needed a way of retreat so that I might say what I thought and not feel constrained to say only what would strengthen my position. I resigned and was appointed to the House of Lords. After four years I was back in the government as Minister of Energy. This happened because during the four years of Conservative government I had spent my time securing the greater part of the income from newly discovered oil and gas deposits for the state. I managed to arouse the attention of public opinion. We had three debates in the House of Lords and so I acquired a certain prestige in this special field.

Q. *Are you already feeling the impact of North Sea oil in the English economy?*

A. I am sure that it is having a great impact. The gas saves us energy imports to an annual value of £2,000 million and the oil saves 2,500 to 3,00 million, and this will increase to appr. 6,000 million, perhaps even more. One ton of oil is worth appr. £60 and British oil production will certainly increase to 100 million tons, i.e. £6,000 million per year. This amounts to only 4–5 per cent of the national income but it greatly improves our international balance of payments thus enabling us to wage an independent policy.

Q. *Our annual oil production is two million tons and although our gas production is quite important neither can serve as a base for putting our balance of payments in order, although this is as vital for us as it is for England.*

A. Two million tons is still £120 million.

Q. *True, but we must import six million tons from the Soviet Union partly for our heavy chemical industry and partly for energy. In a country like Hungary the increase of raw material production cannot have any great significance for the balance of payments. What would you advise as a way out?*

A. Industry like Japan's and tourism like Jamaica's. When I was home on a visit in 1973 I had a real surprise. I had the strong impression that agriculture had developed greatly in Hungary and this made the country more independent. Industrialization is also advanced, and modernization could bring very interesting results. And in view of the circumstance that in Hungary and generally in the socialist countries there is no unemployment, or rather that it appears in a different form, it can be expected that Hungary's national prosperity will increase considerably.

Q. *There is no unemployment in Hungary but many people are underemployed. And here loyalty is a big hindrance in the sense that we do not consider manpower as a mobile commodity and are afraid of moving it.*

A. This is so everywhere. It's natural that people don't like to change in the middle of life. What we call mobility means considerable insecurity for the individual.

Q. *But if I consider how often Hungarian jobs*

change hands on private initiative I must say that people are far less afraid of moblity than we, the government, are afraid of moving them, both for their own interest and for the sake of national prosperity. Hence the structure of our economy is changing very slowly and the product structure is material-intensive. The cost of materials amounts to 50 per cent of costs in the engineering industry, and a significant percentage consists of imported materials. In the vehicle industry the cost of materials amounts to 75 per cent. And this cannot be changed easily. Hungarian machines are too heavy; on the one hand they contain too much material, on the other hand their processing is not adequate, the machines are not modern enough, so the price we get for them is not adequate either.

A. I am not a Hungarian economic expert but I nevertheless think you are wrong to say that there has been no big change. Many people have moved from agriculture to industry, the ratio of workers in agriculture has greatly diminished. This is of course the same in every country; but in England you could not reduce it further because it is only 2 per cent, in the United States it has gone down from 15 to 4 per cent, in France from 28 to 12. The same is happening in Hungary, I think.

Q. *Yes, only not to that extent.*

A. If we bear in mind that agricultural cooperatives are also involved in industrial activity, the proportion is even higher. Of course in other countries you see always the good things, and in your own you are aware of what is bad. I don't want to say that I am very optimistic because I don't know enough about the situation in Hungary. But if one meets Hungarian experts one comes to the conclusion that there are many very clever and very courageous people there and one gets the impression that it's impossible not to achieve a breakthrough.

Q. *We hope you are right, Professor. And now let us come to the problem of working method. Only very few people are prepared to admit ignorance, that they are not competent, and I greatly esteem anybody who does make such an admission. I would like to ask you about your working method. To what degree do you rely on models, how far do you rely on your knowledge of historical background, to what degree do you rely on intuition?*

A. I don't know what you mean by intuition. If you call intuition sensing future possibilities on the basis of a long life then I must say that intuition plays a part. Economics is a very difficult field because everything depends on everything else and everything changes. You can't do what physics does, isolate a particular problem and experiment with it. First of all you cannot experiment without influencing other people and this very influence alters their perception of things and consequently their behaviour. In addition, the models ignore human beings, they are all very mechanistic. And yet this is the only possibility because how can you forecast if the fixed parameters change? But if one sums up one's experiences and considers the most likely reaction to certain measures, e.g. what will the reaction of workers to price increases be... I wish to say that the same policy can have quite opposite effects in different countries. I will give you an interesting example. When the Arab countries increased the price of oil the price increases in Germany were smaller than in Britain. Here they rose and the result was that wages went up more than prices. So our balance of payments got into a terrible mess. In Germany wages did not increase, the German trade unions knew that this would only accelerate inflation, and they did not demand high wage increases. So in one country, Germany, price increases led to deflation, in another, England, to inflation. In order to be able to forecast and make a correct analysis of an economic situation you must not only be an economist, which is a profession, i.e. not a science but a trade, a very specialized trade, but you must also have sociological and historical knowledge. And considering that man never learns from the mistakes of others, old gentlemen like myself are of some use. After all, before becoming senile one aquires a lot of experience, and this experience plays a much

greater role in economic forecasting than in physical or chemical experiments.

Q. *If you say that, Professor, you who have trained generations of economists, then philosophy, history, and sociology are at least as valuable for the qualification of an economist as his splendid knowledge of mathematical linear programming.*

A. Linear programming is something different. This is easy if conducted on a technical level, if e.g. it is possible to maximalize profits in an oil refinery with the help of a linear programme. But then you know what sort of oil you put in, what mixture you use, how much capital you invest, what you are capable of technically. The trouble starts when psychological factors begin to influence people. And psychology consists of two parts, the recent past which is still alive in people, and their traumatic and psychic injuries.

Q. *Much is written nowadays about the information explosion, that people are unable to digest the flow information which reaches them. It is said of you that you are able to process and evaluate an unbelievable quantity of information at a fantastic speed. They say that when you worked for the government your notes were flying all over the place and allegedly Lord Keynes said that he learned more from you in two hours than in two weeks of information gathering.*

A. This is an overstatement. This observation of Keynes refers to the time when I was a banker. I had built up close connections with American journalists in pre-war London who were fine people. By meeting them regularly you could gain a lot of information you wouldn't have got otherwise. Besides, you joined a few lunch and dinner clubs frequented by junior state officials. They were my colleagues. At the time there were only few economists in the City but they were excellent. And also one acquired the necessary experience of extracting the sort of information people did not want to communicate.

Q. *But this also means that the man-centredness which you mentioned when we were talking about the nature of economics is also present in information-gathering, in that you relied not only on what was on paper, in statistical publications.*

A. One forms one's opinions on the basis of impressions. I have my impressions and, depending on whether these impressions are stronger or weaker, I can weigh up the different factors and get an overall picture of things. At the time in the Prime Minister's Office all the better state economists and officials who had a knowledge of economics and myself used to meet regularly, so we knew what measures were being prepared. In this bureaucracy it is most important to learn things at a point where they can still be modified. It they get firmly established, you cannot do anything.

Q. *Is this not a question of prestige?*

A. The need to change a ministerial proposal can lead to a very disagreeable quarrel and people are very sensitive. Therefore a condition of effective intervention is early information.

Q. *Later on those who have thought up something will regard it a point of honour to defend it, even against their better judgement.*

A. This is so.

Q. *How do you assess the present condition and the future of the international monetary system? You had an argument with Keynes about the Bretton-Woods agreement. In what did you differ?*

A. We differed on two questions. Keynes was a revolutionary in so far as he demonstrated the possibility of lasting unemployment. Neo-classical economics denied this, and believed that with liberalization the rate of growth would increase. Hence unemployment could be overcome by political measures. I found this to be true of countries which were in a position of control but in countries under control the situation was precisely the reverse. This was the first thing. The second was that Bretton-Woods had not only restored an old economic order but in addition it did not grant enough reserves enabling the International Monetary Fund to give adequate help to those who would be in trouble as a result of the restoration of

these old rules. So it was not good for the British qualitatively and absolutely insufficient for everybody quantitatively.

Q. *But the Bretton-Woods agreement was not created by Keynes, it was concluded against his will.*

A. He was a very strange man. I owe him my life and my career. He gave me a job when I learned that there was no possibility of my going back to Germany or Hungary.

Q. *I read in a biography of Virginia Woolf that he was an important figure in the Bloomsbury Circle.*

A. Yes.

Q. *He must have been a colourful personality.*

A. He was a fine man. And to be backed by him was an uplifting experience: you thought yourself a genius. To be dropped by him was unpleasant.

Q. *What do you think of the present state of the world's monetary system?*

A. If people are rational they can live with these things without any disaster taking place. The trouble is that people are not very bright, and everybody wants to rid themselves of responsibility. In economics the best procedure is to exclude the personal element. This can be achieved on the basis of the neo-classical model because this works quite mechanically through the market and there is no responsibility whatever. Now the Arab countries which are unable to consume their enormous income have with great efforts purchased the "France," a splendid ship, and wish to convert it into a hotel on the Red Sea or in the Persian Gulf which has the most horrible climate on Earth, especially in summer but also in winter. So they spend money on things like this. The best hospital of the world is in Riyadh. And still they cannot consume their money. Oil incomes have gone up from 15,000–18,000 to 100,000–120,000 million dollars and they are unable to spend 40,000–50,000 million of this. If the Arabs were a "united states" with Egypt involved I would suggest that the money could be invested at home to improve conditions in Egypt. But only Iran and Venezuela have a big enough population to be able to set up a development plan. Even Iraq is unable to do this. So between 1985 and 1990 there will be 500,000–600,000 million dollars of vagrant money.

Q. *Everything will remain as it is?*

A. It can only get worse.

Q. *What do you think, within what time-span and how will the enormous imbalance between the developed and developing countries get better or worse?*

A. The situation is getting worse and worse. In the developed industrialized countries the population is decreasing or growing very slowly. On the other hand, in Latin America the annual growth is 2.5 per cent.

Q. *This means that per capita income will decrease?*

A. Decrease or stagnate. The terrible thing is that in the developing countries the poor will get poorer and the rich richer. There is no African country without a strong bourgeois class living on a European level. They have taken over the customs and lifestyle of the European colonizers, they have clubs with swimming pools and tennis courts, and by now traffic jams in Nairobi are almost like those in New York. From the human point of view the situation is bad at the moment. But it is also true that there is now a tendency to put emphasis on rural development. And considering what clever and well-coordinated planning could achieve in this respect in Hungary, this seems to be the correct course. So here is potential improvement but at present the situation is horrible.

Q. *Professor, what are you doing nowadays?*

A. I have retired; I hold a seminar at Oxford together with a friend, a former pupil of mine, on the problems of the developing countries; and I write. Two articles of mine will appear soon: one on world development, another on the possibility of a future crisis.

Q. *And what are your chief conclusions?*

A. That it would be good to take political action and take certain precautions. Then I am vice-president of the British National Oil Company; there I deal mostly with

general economic questions. And I am adviser to my former boss and I still have a room in the ministry.

Q. *It was Wedgewood Benn, wasn't it, who, in order to keep his seat in the House of Commons, renounced his hereditary...*

A. He forced the Prime Minister at the time to appoint life peers who do not pass on their title, so a lot of technocrats got into the House of Lords.

Q. *I heard that you said in your investiture speech that they had heard all sorts of accents in that house, now they had to learn the Hungarian accent. Is this true?*

A. It is.

Q. *You had arrived from Hungary, with a Central and East European experience, history, tradition, and insight into human nature. Was it not difficult to understand and adapt to the English mentality?*

A. In 1940 we feared that they would give in here as they did in France. As a Central European I would never have thought that they would be able to stick it out. But under the leadership of Churchill they saved the world. One lives here and has to deal mainly with Englishmen, so one changes. Perhaps I am now neither a West European, nor an East European, simply a European.

Q. *Nevertheless, the experience and knowledge accumulated in childhood and in secondary school must have contributed to your being able to put across an original vision in England.*

A. There are some elements in the English situation which are new (the English empire has disintegrated within half a century), and some which resemble Hungary's situation in 1918. One should not forget that István Tisza annexed the Herzegovina and Bosnia in September 1908, the "Hungarian empire" was at its height in September 1918. Six weeks later it shrank. But here there was no Horthy Fascist reaction as in Hungary and this shows that English society is very different from pre-war Central European society.

Q. *They are less inclined to extremes, they rather...*

A. They rather stick to the well-trodden path. Just take the successes of the Germans on the material side and their mental imbalance. From the social point of view we can admire the English...

Q. *So* homo economicus, *the man who behaves on the basis of economic motives, is an abstraction?*

A. This abstraction is unsound and has nothing to do with prosperity. You cannot argue that the Americans live twice as well because they can buy twice as much as we can. If I had gone to the USA I could have made twice or three times as much money as here. I could have earned a lot but what would I have done with all that money?

TAMÁS BÁCSKAI

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND NUCLEAR POWER

Brunó F. Straub in Interview

You are chairman of the National Council for the Protection of the Environment. This body is fairly new but there is also an agency operating under a similar name. Would you be so kind as to tell us what the responsibilities of the Council are and explain the division of labour between the Council and the agency?

The council's job is to work out broad policy objectives in the area of environmental protection and to supervise the measures taken throughout the country. The members of the Council include representatives of the various ministries, national authorities, social organisations, as well as specialists and scientists.

The National Office for the Protection of the Environment under the chairmanship of Secretary of State György Gonda coordinates all practical work in this field. Its chief concern at present is to build up a national network and a staff of experts with whose help the measures decided upon can be implemented. However, environmental protection is not an end in itself and does not exist in a vacuum: it must be a feature of everyday life in industry and agriculture.

The Council has the following tasks:

1) To prepare long-term policies. The new council has adopted earlier plans which include the allocation of funds in various fields for the prevention and elimination of environmental damage.

2) In its capacity as an advisory body to the government the council determines priorities with regard to finance.

3) The council's activity formally consists of presenting recommendations and proposals but where agreement is reached it can also adopt resolutions about how much the ministries represented on it should spend from their funds allocated for environment protection.

You are a biochemist. Do you consider your chairmanship to be a scientific post?

No, I don't represent scientific research on the Council but my past work gives me two advantages. One is that as a biochemist I am at home in chemistry and biology, and I worked for a long time at a medical university where I heard a great deal about hygiene. This is of great importance in environmental protection. My second advantage is that in the past decade I have been working in various international organisations, such as the governing body and, later on, the scientific council of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I have just resigned from another chairmanship: for two years I was president of the ICSU (International Confederation of Scientific Unions). In these jobs I learned how to assess and evaluate requirements in the light of harsh realities in a constructive way and without being opportunistic. For several years I was on the ICSU committee concerned with coordinating research in environmental protection, so I acquired a good grasp of the general situation. Obviously I can make use of this organizational experience in the work of the Council but I stress that my job here is not to promote science but to utilize it for socially important ends.

I think it is clear from the foregoing that effective environmental protection requires a reliable scientific base. Hence research is already in progress under the present Five-Year Plan: this work is coordinated by the Office for the Protection of the Environment. Work is now under way for the next five-year period with the cooperation of a wide range of specialists; technologists, chemists, biologists, geologists, soil scientists, agricultural experts, doctors and lawyers are all involved in this work, and there is even a

likelihood that a computer model will be used for assessing and coordinating the complex findings.

A much-discussed topic nowadays is how the country's scientific capacity could be used more efficiently for speedier development. You are involved in basic research in an academic institute; what do you expect from research on environmental protection?

In my capacity as chairman of the Council I naturally expect research to be a reliable and useful aid in our work. I will give you an example: I expect experts in hydrology, biology, soil research, sociology and other fields to explore the probable consequences of building the Gabchikovo reservoir; it should be possible to reduce detrimental consequences to a minimum in the actual building of the reservoir. Another example: research should explore the changes in the quality of different soils under the impact of the intensive use of fertilizers. We still don't know much about this, we only have a few indications of these changes but research should be able to offer much more realiable data on the possible consequences of human intervention in the natural world.

These examples show that your prime concern is applied research connected with projects which can be completed within a few years. As a biochemist concerned with basic research don't you find that basic research is also necessary in environmental protection?

My answer is relatively simple. I put this idea forward at a recent conference in Stockholm. In my opinion the work of a scientific researcher always consists of three elements: firstly the development of theory, basic research with a view to the acquisition of knowledge; secondly the teaching of science and the training of experts and scientific researchers and thirdly, the practical application of science. The relative importance of these three components depends on the level of development of any given country. In a large, highly developed country these three activities can be separated and it may be that in a research institute work is only or mainly basic research with very little teaching and practical application; in another institute teaching will be the most important and the two other activities relegated to the background, while in a third type of institute practical application may be the main concern with much less basic research and little or no teaching. Obviously in an underdeveloped country only the latter is important and possible. However this is the main thing: the standard of teaching and practical application is always determined by the level of basic research in any given particular country. Those who will or cannot afford basic research as a support for teaching and practice are like the poor who only cook with water.

I believe that this applies to all fields, including environmental protection. We need usable data and clearly formulated rules which determine what we should be doing. 80 to 90 per cent of available research capacity should be encouraged to do this work. But this research work can only succeed if there is also a highly qualified research staff, consisting of outstanding creative scientists and people who are able to teach and educate good scientists. These people should be supported. The whole thing is not so complicated because basic research, teaching and practical application require different sorts of people. We should see to it that the right people are put in the right place where they can do the most good.

Coming back to environmental protection as a challenge the whole economy: where should environmental protection begin?

Right at the outset, at the planning state. The future environmental impact of an industrial plant, a housing scheme or a holiday resort must be considered right at the very beginning of the planning stage. In all investments of this kind we should understand what they mean to our environment in general. Research still has a lot to do in this field but the planning experts should already be aware of the information available in the technical literature.

Hungary's first nuclear power plant is now being built in Paks. There is controversy all over the world concerning nuclear safety. Does the Council concern itself with the power plant in Paks?

It does. It is our task to concern ourselves with the impact of the power plant on the environment and to present proposals for possible protective measures. These matters will be discussed during 1979. The reactor at Paks, however, is a well-tested Soviet type, which has been used successfully in various places for several years; it has strict safety standards. But there is something we must deal with: the power plant gets its cooling water from the Danube and this water is then sent back, so the river will become somewhat warmer and this will produce slight changes in the ecological system. The other important question in connection with the Paks nuclear power plant is that minimal radioactive pollution is to be expected as a permanent feature of its immediate surroundings. It must not be allowed to exceed a certain permitted level. These problems are, however, well-known and their solution does not present any special problem. Although many people will be surprised, I must confess that I am much more concerned about our increasing coal-mining activities and the number and capacity of coal-fired power plants. They present a much more difficult problem for environmental protection than a nuclear power plant of the same size.

How would you sum up the tasks of environmental protection in Hungary today?

I think the basic job is to work out what can be done with the means available right now. The role of science in this is to provide the necessary data for decision-making. This is no small task.

GÁBOR PÁL PETŐ

SURVEYS

MIKLÓS SZABOLCSI

LITERATURE, CRITICISM AND REALITY IN THE HUNGARY OF THE 'SEVENTIES

I

Marxist criticism in Hungary has done its best over the last ten years to evaluate the country's literature, to survey its currents and trends, and to analyse its underlying values.

Undeniably, however, Marxist criticism has serious shortcomings in Hungary. Its credit has diminished in the eyes of the writers, the reading public, and those responsible for the country's cultural policy.

There are subjective reasons for this decline of authority, such as jealousy and envy among writers, a certain cult of spontaneity and an entirely unjustified superiority complex.

But there are objective causes, too. The fundamental one seems to be that social reality—and hence the reality created by literature and reflected by it—have produced complicated phenomena, and these new phenomena have yet to be analysed convincingly by criticism. We are at a loss as far as the character and the direction of the changes occurring in society and literature are concerned. In addition to this, the decrease in the influence of criticism in Hungary can be explained by certain inherent problems. One of them is the oft-mentioned information explosion. The universal type of critic who is able to survey the entire literary process, keeps in close touch with both national and world literature and can form an overall view of their development, has become a rarity, and this is a world-wide trend; in fact, it is increasingly doubtful that such a type can exist at all, so huge is the amount of information that has to be digested. Today, a critic wanting to pronounce an authoritative value judgement, ought to be familiar with the entire literary output of Hungary as well as with that of Hungarian literary history; he should read all the periodicals and they are many; he ought to keep abreast with the latest findings in an as wide a range of the social sciences as possible—this would include philosophy, demography, sociology and psychology; he should make a study of national history, from pre-history to ethnography; he should have some idea of the natural sciences; and, last but not least, he should view Hungarian literature in the context of literature in general, of literary trends in the neighbouring socialist countries and the rest of the world—but all this would require an almost superhuman effort and an almost superhuman capacity for classifying the information and knowledge thus acquired.

One of the causes of the decrease in influence of criticism is the peculiar "meta"-language, the jargon of the literary critic which is becoming ever more removed from the idiom of Hungarian literature, be it common parlance or the language of popular science. Finally, the role of criticism in the

cultural structure and in the structure of the media that transmit culture, has undergone a change. For there is considerable antagonism not only between critics and writers, but also—and this is a symptom that can be observed in quite a number of countries, e.g. those of Western Europe—between critics and the culture-transmitting media, for instance publishers. And it is by no means accidental that in Hungary the publishers' discontent with the critics is expressed both in print and publishing policy. The role of publisher and critic has changed in Hungary too; naturally, both work for one and the same cultural policy, but with essentially different goals and tasks, so that, from time to time, clashes of interest occur between the culture-transmitting media and the critics. Consequently, the relationship between cultural policy and criticism must be thought over in this sphere too. All this, however, cannot cover up what I believe to be the fundamental problem, namely that we—the writers, critics, and people called upon to transmit and spread culture—should arrive at a common interpretation of the changes taking place in the Hungary of today and in contemporary Hungarian literature.

II.

It is only natural that the international situation, with all its successes, setbacks, and contradictions, should leave its mark upon the position of present-day Hungarian literature. The years 1968–70 represent a turning-point in the history of West European literature. In our literature, too, the years 1968–70 conclude an important phase and herald a new, equally significant, period; the split in the international workers' movement (the Chinese question), its successes and new problems had a profound intellectual and emotional impact upon our literature, just as the events of world politics could not fail to exercise their influence upon it. I have already referred to two facts—both of great importance in the world economy—that influence life in Hungary today in another way: 1. The transition into a new era in the world economy, caused by a price explosion, the effect of which, according to economists, will change the face of the world as much as the one at the beginning of the nineteenth century or, still more, the one in the seventeenth century. 2. The entry of Hungary into the rank of countries of medium economic development.

From the point of view of social history, with the socialist transformation of agriculture and the subsequent and continuing re-alignment of the population structure, the socialist transformation of the economic and social structures has been completed in Hungary. As is generally known, the socialist transformation of agriculture was completed by 1963–64 or so, and we are just beginning to feel its effect. The results of the transformation of industry, of the location of industry and of the changes in the population's occupational structure are also well known. On the surface, the everyday life of the country shows many signs of the transformation—signs both favourable and alarming. We live in what is a fundamentally beneficial and satisfactory economic and social system which, however, continuously produces new contradictions and raises new problems. Today, the average white-collar worker in Hungary views the country's achievements with some satisfaction; at the same time, however, he is faced with arduous problems and unsolved questions. The two together—satisfaction and pride on the one hand and the problem of "let's keep what we have, but what comes next, what turn are things going to take?" on the other—characterize almost the whole of Hungarian literature.

The new contradictions that are emerging are well known—some of them are cropping up, perhaps, as antinomies, i.e., as sets of contradictions almost insoluble or at least unsolved at present. One of our main problems—influencing literature

and the population's general disposition alike—is the fact that answers to the question of how to solve these contradictions are simply not forthcoming and concepts for long-term solutions do not constitute a part of common knowledge either. We are just beginning to work out the model of the socialist way of life in an advanced economy; the contradiction consists in the fact that we cannot renounce, even if we wanted to, the increasing pace of the production of consumer goods and the satisfaction of people's everyday requirements; and we have failed so far to integrate this into a system of aims, values, and norms which would, in the long run, guarantee a model of the socialist way of life.

This system of aims, values, and norms, which would distinguish the way of life determined by economic development in Hungary from the consumer model of capitalist society, can only be discerned in the vaguest of outlines. The well-known intractibility of several other unpleasant problems can be traced back to this one fundamental problem; let us mention, *inter alia*, the shortcomings in labour morale, the problem of petty-bourgeois consumerism, the prestige system based on the possession of goods, etc. We are therefore living in a long-term process the effects of which are, in the short run very contradictory and complicated.

Another basic conflict of this kind, very strongly reflected in literature, may be summed up in the notion of socialist democracy. What are the structures, the institutions, and habits that can regulate the clash between momentary and long-term interests, and what are the levelling mechanisms which would allow individuals opinions and interests to be brought together and represented in complicated decisions that reflect the nations interests? These questions preoccupy public opinion.

Anybody who has undertaken the management of even such a small unit as a school class is well aware of the complications involved. (And the bigger the unit, the greater the difficulties.) Every kind of management involves an element of control and coercion. How can this minimum of coercion, of compulsion be brought into harmony with short-term and long-term interests? How can the requirements of management, control, and organization be made acceptable and comprehensible to the people and organizations concerned? And *vice versa:* how can the representation of short-term and long-term interests, the voice of the people, assert itself in local and national leadership?

As far as the more immediate tasks are concerned, the country is faced with such problems as the transformation of the uneconomical structure of the national economy—a transformation touching upon the immediate, day-to-day interests of a great number of people and which today produces profound social contradictions—indeed, in the period ahead, it is likely to be the source of the deepest contradiction in our society. Technical advance is certainly needed, but a high pace of introduction jeopardizes the professional status and self-esteem of a broad section of skilled workers, both in industry and agriculture, and of white-collar workers, too. There are, of course, retraining programmes but we all know what sort of human, political, and professional problems these involve.

Stability in political leadership cannot hide the necessity for change and mobility elsewhere; the making use of experience must go hand in hand with the advance, in all walks of life, of the young generation—and all this raises a great number of personal problems. While realizing the necessity for technological progress, the danger of pollution, resp. the protection of the environment must also be taken into account; and the assertion of socialist democracy cannot be allowed to impair the authority of professional management. All these contradictions present themselves in a social structure burdened with the deeply rooted habits and

shortcomings inherited from the past and strained by the newly acquired social mobility.

Day by day, reality throws up extraordinarily complicated new contradictions and, to make it worse, the old contradictions live on. The transformation of the country's demographic structure—not so much the decrease in the number of villages as the growth of middle-size and small towns, a phenomenon running counter to all prophecies—raises brand-new human and moral problems. On the one hand, the strata that have become marginal, so to speak, and change their residence, place of work, and way of life, or commute and travel, are getting ever more numerous; on the other hand, the new communities are not elastic enough; it being almost a commonplace that the housing estates have not yet become real organic communities.

One of the main failures of social science in Hungary today is that these problems have not been pointed out courageously and resolutely enough; there are no comprehensive plans or studies that provide an adequate analysis or ideas for an improvement of the situation. In several spheres, e.g., in the school system—more precisely, in general schooling—the greatest problem is that although we are making piecemal reforms and tinkering with the mechanism we do not yet have any coherent plan for the long-term transformation of the school system as a whole. People, especially young people, try to understand present-day contradictions and take cognizance of them—provided they know the direction of development and have some notion of the model we should like to construct. We, members of the older generation, are still burdened, on the one hand, by the messianic and utopian concept of the late 'forties according to which, through the transformation of the property relations, we would build a completely new world at a stroke; on the other hand, by the voluntarist notion—not devoid of élan and dynamism—which offered ready-made recipes for every walk of life and which offered apparent justification, from the point of view of the future, for each and every one of our measures, even the wrong ones. We no longer need any justification of this sort. However, we seem to have gone to the other extreme: it seems as if we lacked the courage to offer any real perspective, to offer long-term solutions.

Looking at everyday life in Hungary, there are many things that are inspiring, and many that are depressing. The details should be brought together so that an overall picture can be formed. Thorough analyses are being carried out in some spheres of planning and research. The trends and the various alternative models have been outlined. However, there is little contact between planning and research on the one hand and literary life on the other. Literature and culture have but little contact either with the Social Sciences Institute of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, or with the research workers of the National Planning Office. We know very little about each other's work and ideas.

If such analytical work is either not known about or entirely lacking, then spontaneous and superficial reactions prevail, and everyday consciousness—also the consciousness of the artist, and of cultural life as a whole—is bound to be dominated, in most cases, either by unjustified bursts of enthusiasm or by panic. It is by now a truism that in the absence of a Marxist interpretation non-Marxist interpretations are born or revived. The various versions of New Left ideology are always ready to answer questions and explain contradictions in Hungary's intellectual and literary life. In their extreme form, New Left views consider the signs and symptoms of alienation and bureaucratization of decisive importance; inspired by a nostalgia for the past, they totally reject industrialization; and as a solution, they suggest small communities or communes operating on the basis of the working

people's free will, or small groups, or factories or producers and consumers, i.e., an extremely primitive version of the self-management model. This ideology—which goes hand in hand with the outright rejection of the existing socialism, and leads, through classic revisionism, to the rejection of Marxism—considers this country's social system to be bureaucratic state capitalism. It systematically exercises its influence in literary life in Hungary, mainly on the writing of verse; but also makes its presence felt in literary criticism.

In one of my writings, I dealt with the so-called ideology of compromise, which is wide-spread among young people in this country, and constitutes a misinterpretation of the revolutionary attitude. The desire to revive classical capitalism is also present in Hungary, but to a smaller extent. The middle-of the-road populist ideology which advocates small-peasant communities is also on a downward trend; it was quite popular once, but, to my mind at least, it no longer claims to be able to solve any of the problems I have mentioned, and makes itself conspicuous solely with its frequent talk of the degeneration of the system. Naturally, the weary renunciation of trying to understand the world, let alone change it, and a concomitant new-fangled irrationalism or mysticism, constitute undercover ideologies.

As a consequence of all these contradictions, some authors find themselves in a personal crisis: they have doubts about their real vocation and role as writers. This, of course, makes an additional impact, and a negative one at that, on literary and artistic life. Behind this vocational crisis of writers in particular, and intellectuals in general, there is the problem of the overall disposition of intellectuals or, to raise the issue on a broader basis, the question of the place of the individual in an advanced socialist society.

III

Thus, the complicated contradictions of a development, which, taken as a whole, is favourable, characterize the present; in everyday life, these contradictions sometimes produce dismaying and exasperating facts for the explanation and solution of which we have but little to show.

Literature tries, in its own fashion and by its own means, to interpret reality—and, as a consequence of the very nature of literature, it does this mainly in a critical way. Socialist literature and art are characterized, first and foremost, by this critical attitude, by their tendency to probe into reality, to interrogate it, to reveal its hidden secrets. The question is how and by what ideological means they interpret the constituents of reality. In the absence of a convincing Marxist viewpoint, literature—and, of course, criticism too—will interpret them on the basis of another ideology. Literature shapes a comparatively independent or autonomous world out of the elements of reality, by regrouping and re-interpreting them. In this way, works of literature and literary trends will call attention to the contradictions of reality. Criticism must observe this closely, and must complement and evaluate this, i.e., it must make out, from the work, how things really stand, even if, as frequently happens, the work meets with strong opposition on the part of those concerned and even of the readers.

On the other hand, the writer's, the artist's consciousness—and, of course, the critic's consciousness, too—can, at the same time, be interpreted as everyday consciousness, as false consciousness, and it often happens that the description of the contradictions of reality has been filtered through just such a defective consciousness. The task of criticism is to classify and qualify, to separate the socialist elements of consciousness from the non-socialist ones —all this while firmly standing on the ground of reality and theory. Literature and

criticism alike are confronted with the same reality; both try to answer, each in its own way, the questions raised by reality; and both rely on the same facts, on the same data. Criticism, however, has an additional and none too easy, task, viz., it must transcend itself and work on two levels—that of empirical reality and that of the reality created by literature—and confronting the two, it must take a stand of yet another sort, a stand formulated on the plane of criticism. The critic isn't infallible either—he is confronted with the same problems, with the same complex of reality, false ideologies, and fragments of ideologies, as the writer.

Before making some observations about the relations between literature and reality, I should first like to make two methodological remarks.

It would be a mistake to consider Hungarian literature only in terms of poetry, even through Hungarian poetry can pride itself on poets of world rank and—let us not be afraid to say it outright—on quite a few *chefs-d'œuvre*. However, we should try to evaluate Hungarian literature on the basis of *all* kinds of writing—prose, plays, memoirs, sociology on a literary level, *and* poetry. If we look at Hungarian literature from the angle of poetry alone, the overall picture is bound to become distorted. For most of our poetry has, as far as both poetic method and language are concerned, entered a period known as modern poetry—but at the same time it reflects all the emotions, anger, and despair in a direct way; reflecting the experience of reality in a historical-intellectual manner is becoming rare—in fact, this manner is about to disappear altogether.

The other remark is a commonplace; yet it won't do any harm to repeat it: literature is not a photographic reproduction or rendering of reality; out of the elements of reality, it creates a new one—we are confronted with writers' worlds, sovereign worlds, and the characters of the writers' works are not identical in each and every detail with the heroes of reality. When speaking, as we shall do, about the relations between Hungarian literature and the reality of the 'seventies, this transposition, this indirectness must be taken into account.

In my opinion, the great trend of Hungarian socialist literature of the 'sixties continues, but in the new medium, in the midst of the new problems and contradictions indicated above; this literature (and this trend) is often faced with new problems; consequently, new sentiments and new attitudes are bound to emerge; but also a certain degree of perplexity can be registered, and even some self-complacency at having lost all perspective and conviction.

IV

The main trend of the Hungarian literature of the 1970s is the same as the one of the 1960s, both in style and content, viz., a number of socialist works inquiring into reality and criticizing it. (To give some examples: the range of works extends from Gyula Illyés's rationalistic poems to those by József Sárándi's lamenting the state of the world; from József Balázs's peasant realism to Erzsébet Galgóczi's ballad-like prose; through Lajos Mesterházi's parables to the autobiographical prose of *Belváros és vidéke* [Inner City and Environs] by Gábor Thurzó; from István Örkény's grotesque plays to Gyula Hernádi's *Vörös rekviem* [Red Requiem] utilizing the armory of effects of the avant-garde; and, as far as the subjects are concerned, they range from Magda Szabó's *Régimódi történet* [Old-fashioned Story] through Tibor Cseres's *œuvre* about the war years to György Moldova's reportages about the Hungarian railways.) In my opinion, sociological works of a literary kind, which seem to be enjoying a new popularity, also belong to this forceful socialist trend, just as do the parable and the grotesque. A strong group

within this trend (though less numerous than in the sixties) is represented by quite a few works—both belletristic and non-belletristic—inquiring into present-day Hungarian reality. In this context, we need not debate the problem of "fiction or non-fiction," it being clear today that a well-written sociological reportage, a tape-recorded reportage, or a good memoir is just as much part of literature as a novel; in Hungary the distinction between them is becoming blurred. One trend of poetry which is represented by such poets as Gyula Illyés, István Vas, Gábor Garai, and Mihály Ladányi, involves an endeavour to reproduce present-day Hungarian reality directly. This literature, characterized by public-spiritedness, and dealing with the arduous problems of present-day reality in Hungary, if read as a single great work, as it were, raises some social problems with particular force.

One such problem is the relationship between the community and the individual—and it is the particularly gifted individual we have in mind in this context. The works in question warn us that the talented individual is often at a loss when trying to find his or her place in socialist society—his or her fate is either tragic conflict with the masses or conformity. School—general and/or secondary school—often serves as a model in motion pictures, novels, short stories. András Simonffy, Gábor Czakó, and János Rózsa (the latter in his film *Spider Football*) obviously are not only talking about schools—the real issues are the working of small communities, manipulation and control, the outstanding individual and the community. Literature here touches upon a most sensitive point indeed, namely the problems of excellence as opposed to conformity, the problems inherent in the working of collectives and the methods of leadership and/or manipulation. Another question broached by Hungarian literature with much greater force than hitherto is that of the modern family. In recent years Hungarian literature has been dealing in a modern, novel fashion with marital relations and with the question of sexual morality. The pioneer in this field was László Németh who, in his novel *Irgalom* [Mercy] treated this problem really thoroughly. It was the first such case in Hungary in two decades. Courageous confrontation with one's origins and with the—seemingly harmonious—life of the older generation (and, beyond this, with the family dynamic in Hungarian society) is one of the signs indicating that sexual morality has changed, the family has been transformed and that new forms of coexistence, of living together, have emerged. A number of works demonstrate this quite clearly, both in subject matter and linguistically. And there is a third theme: the place of the young in society, or rather, in many cases, the difficulty young people have in finding their place in society; these young people mostly differ from the hoodlum type described by Gyula Marosi, István Csörsz, István Császár. These—more recent—books deal with youth trying to find its place in society but driven, for the time being, to its fringes. Hungarian "blue jeans" prose has also made its appearance; it is about young people in search of a way of life, and emphasizes the homogeneity of their mode of life, parlance, and attitudes.

All these, and other, social questions treated by this type of literature, public-spirited in its choice of subjects, are real problems, problems that are awaiting solution. However, even this literature, delving into reality, is inclined to see things in extremes: outstanding, tragic heroes on the one side—with their failure often leading to violence or violent death—and the rank-and-file leading a dull life and eking out a miserable existence, on the other. These last few years, the majority of short stories have dealt with such-like existences. The monotony of the life the man-in-the-street lives is depicted in all its greyness, in a whole series of works: peoples' lives pass drearily by devoid of substance. It is as

if the naturalist trend of the end of the 1920s were now being revived in Hungary, an echo of the young János Kodolányi and of the bourgeois-radical writers who in the inter-war years portrayed the dull and dreary lives of the Budapest petty-bourgeois. A neo-naturalist tendency, probably a conscious harking-back to the late twenties, is emerging in world literature, and the influence of Céline and Döblin is strongly felt. In present-day Hungarian literature, this "grey monotony" frequently crops up, mainly in relation to young people and their yearning nostalgia for a revolutionary *élan* or as a sign of disillusion and a sort of bored contempt for man. In reality, grey monotony is a concrete and complicated phenomenon which we have not adequately analysed so far; at its root there is an inevitable, objective process, namely the increasing division of labour, and this is a factor of consciousness, lacking the need to spend leisure hours in a cultured way, and also—this is an as yet unsolved question of finance and organization—the scarcity of facilities for spending one's time in company usefully and harmoniously after working hours.

Literary works that try to grasp and comprehend this most complicated process, which endeavour to dig down beyond superficial symptoms and delve into intricate family, social, and class relationships, are absent in this critically-minded socialist literature (or are present in it to a small extent only). Both the exotic elements and dreary tedium are represented in forms that range between tragedy and neo-naturalism, and with increasing misanthropy in the case of some writers. Contemporary man, grasped intellectually, and represented without glorification but also without hatred, is missing.

In prose literature, we have the parable of philosophical content, and the ironical or indulgent grotesque; but the number of writings giving a properly thought-through, intellectually reasoned picture of the present, the recent past—or even of the writer himself—is comparatively small. It is perhaps understandable that, at present, the functions of such writings are being taken over by the genres of direct representation, viz. the documentary and reportage (György Moldova), and that, on the other extreme, geometrical utopianism, sci-fi, and futurology (Gyula Hernádi) are gaining ground—both on a high level and presented in a novel way.

V

Another strong tendency in contemporary Hungarian literature is the reappraisal of national history, in poetry and in plays, just as much as in the newest wave of memoirs; from Gyula Illyés's, István Vas's, Sándor Tatay's, Lehel Szeberényi's, Emil Kolozsvári Grandpierre's writings about the Second World War and/or pre-war years, right up to the memoirs of non-writers. It is noticeable in European literature—indeed even in world literature—that, owing to the difficulties in writing fiction, tape recordings, sociological documents and, principally, memoir-like autobiography presenting individuals' lives in a historical framework, have become popular and successful. In Hungarian literature, too, writers' autobiographies go into the relationship between the individual and his country's history, and, naturally, shed light on hitherto unknown aspects of Hungarian history.

In other writings of mine, I have pointed to the fact that 1848 and 1867—the War of Independence and the Compromise with Austria—seem to be dealt with ever more frequently in Hungarian literature, and I have also mentioned that the story of the last years of the Second World War seems to be one of the most often told stories in Hungarian literature. In fact, there are very few literatures that have done so much to depict historical forces and to examine the nation's conscience as Hungarian literature. This trend started with Tibor Cseres's im-

portant novel *Hideg napok* (Cold Days). Books of the most diverse genres have dealt with these years—from József Balázs's *Magyarok* (Hungarians) to Mária Ember's *Hajtűkanyar* (Hair-pin Bend), from Tibor Cseres's new novels to György Moldova's *Szent Imre induló* (St. Emeric March) and Imre Kertész's *Sorstalanság* (Fatelessness). What is more, this trend is devoid of the chemically pure extremes of national self-abuse on the one hand and of the notion of the "innocent, sinless nation" on the other; instead, human and social problems unfold in all their complexity, with individuals—and the people—trying to find their way in the labyrinth of history. When all is said and done, this trend is one of the healthiest manifestations of present-day intellectual life in Hungary.

Another much covered period is the 1950s which together with the years 1945–1949, are among the unsettled questions that preoccupy intellectual life and political thought in Hungary. The dialectics of necessity and freedom unfold here: to what extent was the series of the events of that period necessary; to what extent was the individual's position and role predetermined and to what extent was he free to act; the questions of belief and non-belief, of party loyalty and good faith, of so-called purity and blamelessness are also raised.

There is an enormous variety of attempted solutions to these problems. In his *Ménesgazda* (The Stud Farm), István Gáll tries to show how, because of the historical situation and despite the subjective good faith of individuals, some *had* to play a fateful role and why it was almost impossible to solve situations in a satisfactory way. The novel digs deeply into the problem of potentiality and necessity. At the same time, it seems to suggest that if, as a consequence of a most complicated historic process, the individual becomes involved in a situation where he has almost no possibility of choice, he should nevertheless try to assert himself in one way or another. István Sőtér's novel *Elveszett bárány* (Lost Sheep) represents the extreme—it shows, first and foremost, the vision of the individual who has remained pure and intact even amidst the greatest vicissitudes of the great historical storms and turmoils.

The dark picture of the years of the personality cult—the records of humiliation, degradation, and manipulation—serve as the background to the works of Péter Nádass (a mere child at the time) and György Konrád (a young lad in those years); they are choked by shame and anger. Iván Boldizsár's diary-like short stories and Géza Hegedűs's *roman fleuve* also fall under this heading. The questions of era and age, the dilemma of loyalty and disloyalty, of participation and withdrawal dominate in Lajos Mesterházi's works; his writings are taut with intellectual tension and present the ponderings and inner struggles, the "in-spite-of all" endurance of the history-shaping middle-generation of communists. This is also the theme of Tibor Cseres's work in the 'fifties, in connection with the white-collar workers of the preceding era. And it emerges in poetry and straight memoirs, sometimes with the author shifting responsibility onto someone else. It even occurs, especially in the case of young writers, that these difficult and complicated years become distorted into stereotyped and hackneyed caricatures.

The 'fifties are a popular subject—and not only in Hungary; the answers given to these questions are of international interest. Literature formulates the questions of belief and non-belief, of community and individual, as well as the problems of contemporary communist behaviour, of communist man. It has been pointed out by some experts that the appearance, in poetry, plays, and novels, of the motive of internecine war—in works by Gyula Illyés, László Gyurkó, and András Sütő—is a way of treating these issues. It is noticeable that Hungarian literature, starting from the events of the fifties (and from other events as well), endeavours to arrive at historical generalizations—sometimes (or, rather, some time ago)

it protests against power as such, at other times (mostly nowadays) it completely despairs of man's chances and future. Representing the intricate situations of the fifties, this literature sometimes omits to pose the question of the correct, the right choice, and to examine whether there was any alternative between community and individual, but feels that *any* choice was wrong from the outset and *any* stand hopeless from the very beginning. Such generalizations are latent in a number of works; this desperate reaction to history's many senseless phenomena can be found in the long series of diary entries of the late Tibor Déry, and in a number of other works of his; and it is there in György Konrád's novel *A látogató* (The Case Worker). At the sight of accumulated violence, the oppressive feeling of violence and destruction, of violence as the main motive force of human history, dominates Miklós Mészöly's much debated novel entitled *Film*, and other novels and poems too.

VI

A great problem of Hungarian literature, closely bound up with the country's history and the present-day situation, is the intensified search for national identity; the problem of the *nation* is raised in the 'seventies in literature and in culture in general. The coming to the fore of all that is *national* is not an exclusively Hungarian phenomenon. The search for national characteristics, for national identity has gained much in strength in the course of these last ten to fifteen years in both the capitalist and the socialist countries—and even more so in the countries of the Third World. Not long ago, I participated in a meeting, in Italy, of the writers' associations of the Western countries where this was one of the main problems to be dealt with. The representatives of small islands took the platform, such as the Faroes which belong to Denmark yet constitute a separate linguistic unit with a separate writers' union. And the growing conscious of languages extant in the territories of the Italian and French national states, languages oppressed for several centuries, that have not reached a literary level, the question of Sardinian, Friuli, or Romansh literature and of all Celtic literatures was raised most seriously. Just how realistic or unrealistic this is, what just demands and injustices are concealed behind this problem—I would not like to say just now. There is no doubt, however, that, parallel with industrialization and economic advancement, we are proceeding towards cultural and even linguistic differentiation within what previously were homogeneous national states. In Hungary, the situation is, of course, different; our national state is not linguistically divided in this manner, and it is difficult to imagine our dialects as the bearers of any separate literatures or any cultures differing from the Hungarian. However, the search for national homogeneity, identity, and continuity is also a very strong aspiration in Hungary, indicating, as it does in Western Europe and in the socialist countries too, processes that are more thoroughgoing and of a different kind. The advance of that which is national may point to a great variety of *other* social or economic problems; there are countries, for instance, where the wholesale glorification of the nation's past and the unhealthy stimulation of national consciousness serve to divert attention from grave social and economic problems. There can be profound differences between *national* and *national*, between "national road" and "national road," between folklore and folklore—it all depends on their function.

In Hungary, for example, the question of the national past, national characteristics, national traditions, and national consciousness are closely linked to the problems of social transformation, of the changing way of life, because the communities which were the main upholders of traditional national characteristics, have broken up. As László

Németh pointed out several times in his diaries and conversations, he considered the complete transformation of the peasantry and the breaking up of the old professional middle-class intellectuals to be the loss of the "sub-soil" of the Hungarian nation. He had a pipe-dream about a middle-class, a "new nobility" called upon to lead the nation, to be the bearer of its true values—wishful thinking indeed, for such a class never existed, and, at most, only a few individuals embodied the writer's ideal.

Here, too, we should get to the root of the situation. The writers in question do not wish to recall the has-beens of bygone days; they do not wish the revival of the petty-bourgeois way of life, of the "Hungarianness" of yesteryear, and the spurious, superficial, nineteenth-century trappings connected with showing off one's national roots. However, with the transformation of the peasantry, an entire system of folklore and popular customs has also undergone a transformation, an entire system has become detached from the living community, a system which, indeed, *was* the medium of national features, of old traditions. The wave of current interest in folklore is attempting—successfully in some cases, less successfully in others—to integrate these values into the system of habits and the cultural structure of present-day society.

The specific cultural assets, ways of life, and attitudes created by the communities of old—from dialects to home furnishings—have become detached from the community which was originally their bearer, and have become in many cases mere decorative elements. Fear of a characterless, quasi-cosmopolitan, petty-bourgeois way of life is justified; but it cannot be combatted with the restitution of an idealized, romantic folklore. Another reason for the popularity of everything that is *national* is connected with the question of how and in what way a community relatively small in number can survive in an era when a series of new nations are emerging and when the populations of the great nations are on the increase.

From this point of view, the stress laid on the national factor is linked with economic development and, culturally, with the search for everything that is distinctive.

All this is also related to the search for small communities and organic groups. In the place of a fragmented way of life, people are looking for a new community—for the purpose of enjoying themselves, singing, dancing, or just being together. In metropolitan life, the search for new communities also reinforces adherence to national values.

The situation of the Hungarian minorities abroad—and the problems bound up with this—is perhaps the most essential part of this issue. Impatience of any kind is harmful in this domain; we must have trust in and promote, in all socialist countries, the full realization of the Leninist policy for solving the question of national minorities. This wholesome process can be transformed into something harmful by chauvinist bias and contempt for other nations. Mutual mud-slinging can, of course, incite passion and hatred. Each and every mistake committed in this domain is bound to be reflected in literature—a sensitively reacting medium—in strong emotions and grievances; and this can serve as an opportunity for the unleashing of really noxious passions. It is in the interest of us all to examine this question with a cool head and with a sense of responsibility.

In literature, the national question rarely appears in all its aspects. It is voiced in poetry—in the invocation of national destiny and of national history, in the despair felt for the disintegration of the peasantry, or in a somewhat more sober description of this phenomenon. The question is treated indirectly by plays and films—from film director Zoltán Fábry's *Magyarok* (Hungarians) to Gyula Illyés's theatre pieces. György G. Kardos's trilogy of novels—*Avrahám Bogatir hét napja* (Bogatir's Luck), *Hová tűntek a katonák* (Where Have All the Soldiers Gone?),

and *A történet vége* (The End of the Story)—also deal with the problems in an indirect way by waging the war against the bearers of hatred, national bias, and chauvinism on a different battlefield. Or is it a battlefield different only in its outward appearance?

Also part of the process in the cultural sphere is what is called folk surrealism, i.e., the utilization, in other structures of modern art, of the constituent elements of folklore, detached or separated from their original context, in other words, folk art as a factor renewing culture, or adorning it in certain ways. Hungarian literary criticism has to examine this complicated series of phenomena with a high degree of differentiation; it must look for the forces, the trends, and the problems behind the symptom of the "national" element gaining prominence.

VII

One of the better developments in Hungarian literature is, in my opinion, the new tendency to ascribe increased importance to the problems of the individual. This tendency is called ontological or existential literature. It is considered the only possible modern model for the future by some, and a symptom of decadence by others. Just as in the case of the national question, it is important to treat the problem in a sophisticated manner. The inner problems of the individual, his place in the world and in society—all this has come into the centre of Hungarian literature, which is a welcome, and, in view of the social processes mentioned above, perfectly natural phenomenon. Socialist development increasingly requires independent and creative individuals. The disintegration of the old communities directs attention—though in a way wrought with contradictions—to the problems of the individual. The entire process can be considered an indication of the accomplishment of the socialist personality; fundamentally—if not in all its manifestations—the highlighting of individual problems is one of the aspects of the evolvement of socialist man, of the socialist attitude in our literature. The question is a complicated one; in some Western literature, there has been, for some years, a sharp turn from the problems of the community to those of the individual. To mention an example: Peter Schneider who had been Rudi Dutschke's assistant in the West German anarchist movement, a writer himself, created a sensation on the West German book market, his book entitled *Lenz* scored a sweeping success. The one-time "revolutionary," the ex-anarchist, the once highly committed activist, goes on a pilgrimage to Italy; disillusioned with politics and action, he returns to the road of individual revolt, to sentiment. There is a process of escaping into the individual; and in socialist literatures, too, the tendency to place greater emphasis upon the individual to the detriment of the community can be seen as a sign of disillusion and withdrawal; with the intention, however, of creating the socialist individual in other—or, sometimes, the same—literary works. There are cases when these Hungarian works fit into the contemporary West European pattern of neo-existentialism and, mainly, into that of neo-surrealism which is particularly strong; at the same time, however, the stress on the individual in poetry, prose, and plays organically follows from developments in Hungary. László Nagy's poetic feat, for instance, a solution of this question on a universal level, demonstrates in the era of transition, of the break-up of old values, a human attitude forged from a new kind of loyalty, strength, and sentiment. I consider the Ferenc Juhász-like poetic model as being of the same ilk—it tries to bring about this new individual by integrating him or her more fully into the global situation, and even into cosmic processes. István Vas's permanent poetic struggle for man's place in history is part of the same trend; and so are Gyula Illyés's

poems about death, and also István Örkény's short novel *Rózsakiállítás* (Rose Show). It is by no means accidental that one of the most frequent indications of this human problem is the day-to-day confrontation with natural death; as a matter of course, facing death, sickness, old age is a problem which is treated with greater emphasis in peaceful circumstances. In my opinion, Miklós Mészöly's novel *Saulus*, Tibor Déry's *Képzelt riport egy amerikai pop fesztiválról* (Imaginary Report on an American Pop Festival) fall under the same heading, as does a trend in poetry represented by Gábor Garai, Ottó Orbán, József Tornai, and others. With this greater stress laid on individual problems, also sweeping, non-Marxist, non-socialist views and solutions emerge. János Pilinszky's latest book, *Beszélgetések Sheryl Suttonnal* (Conversations with Sheryl Sutton), with all its beauties of detail, is still a work of profound, catatoic solitude, of absolute reticence and withdrawal, and expresses the anxiety, the blind dread of community-less man cast into the world, and also a certain kind of new mysticism and irrationalism. And a certain kind of criticism in Hungary approves and idealizes this concept of solving the questions of the individual and of existence by utter solitude; and there are also religious invocations for the solution of the problems of the individual. Such an attitude on the part of some of Hungary's young poets, writers, and artists is the other side of this individual-centred literature; it is closely related to West European neo-conservatism; it gives prominence to the individual by renouncing social action and social ties.

The importance, role, and justification of the writer and the poet as an individual, and the meaning and significance of their work—all this is receiving increased attention nowadays. It is closely bound up with the problem of the individual's place in society. Artists feel the proclamation of one's absolute and unconditional sense of calling an entirely out-of-date attitude, and have the same opinion of literature, i.e., it is just a nice game and played by the "independent artist." It is increasingly characteristic of poetry in Hungary that (just as in some foreign countries) it is becoming, to a considerable extent, "literature dealing with literature," i.e., that its dominant themes are the artist's place and position, the existence of and the need for—or the uselessness of—literature. Here, too, the open questions of culture's function, of the model of the man of the future, and of the relations between the individual and society must be taken into consideration.

Hungarian poetry deals mainly with the consciousness of this role and with its crisis. It reappraises the literary and historical past from this viewpoint. And in this domain, the distortion of the Ady image was a striking symptom in 1977, the hundredth anniversary of the poet's birth. Endre Ady was wept over by some as an unsuccessful prophet and a frustrated man doomed to solitude. In Hungarian literature the poet's roles and functions have become ever more numerous: he is a clown, a medicine-man and/or a tribune of the people. Part of present-day Hungarian poetry only sees "Hungary in winter," a country moving towards "sublime decadence," ruin and misery. As for prose, the revival of the "new wave" of a few years ago (written off, by the way, several times since) is an indication of this public disposition—a tendency which places the figure of the hoodlum, the misfit, the tramp into the centre. When analysing these phenomena, one must carefully distinguish between what is politically justified lamentation on the one hand and mere fashion and affectation on the other, and one should try to discern the real underlying problems. We should realize that the actual problem is the relationship of the individual to society in socialism. And very often, when the wish for the fulfilment of the personality is voiced in literature, it is the question of youth's place in society, of its potentialities and

even of its political activity which is actually meant. Hungarian literature refers to very general problems, viz., to that of the individual's self-expression, to self-fulfilment in society, to his or her creative spirit.

VIII

The answers given to the challenge of reality—works that have come to constitute entire currents—raise the problem of Hungarian literature's place in present-day world literature. Hungarian literature is a part of socialist literature, its strongest current being the realist one, the one which interrogates reality. And socialist literature that grapples with the problems of the individual and of history is no different from world literature of this type.

After a period of a kind of isolation Hungarian literature is today keeping abreast with the trends of world literature. Both cause and effect of this is that the horizons of realism have widened and become enriched. As a characteristic development—which has come about simultaneously in other literatures too—irony and its instruments, viz., stylization and the grotesque, have become general; in prose, language has become strongly differentiated, local and group idioms have gained ground; in poetry, the style termed folk surrealism has become dominant, the instruments and forms of indirect representation—from the parable to the montage of quotations—have become most widespread, and the waves of the neo-avantgarde have also reached Hungarian literature.

All this—together with all inherent contradictions—is a process that has enriched literature, even when there's a bit too much neo-romanticism and neo-Art Nouveau in it. The question can, however, be raised whether one cannot imagine a different kind of modernity under present-day conditions. In prose, there's relatively too little intellectual terseness, cultural width, and poetic sensitivity; and in poetry, intellectual prosiness seems to be in short supply.

IX

To sum up, let me revert to criticism. We critics are not very sure of ourselves when analysing and appraising reality and social processes. This is the reason for there being two extremes. One of them is mere description and analysis without any criticism. Some of the critics content themselves with describing the works, excellently sometimes, yet only on the level of a commentary. Others, also on account of this inherent uncertainty—and this is the other extreme—are prone to superciliousness and sometimes, mainly in theatre criticism, to nastiness. We write relatively few articles analysing processes, and studies measuring the *œuvre* against reality.

One of the problems of criticism in Hungary is the methodological split between the history of literature and literary criticism. We have achieved important results of international acclaim both in literary theory and literary history; but these results do not show very much in the field of criticism. Our frame of reference has become rather frayed at the edges, and neither do we dare use notions of aesthetic qualification courageously enough—we are hesitant in judging the aesthetic value of this or that work of literature. There are nuances within Marxist criticism, too, and it is not their social origins we have in mind here, e.g., the Lukács school. Then there are János Horváth and László Németh, in short teachers and masters; as a matter of fact, there are also non-Marxist and even anti-Marxist examples of criticism. Recently, and a little belatedly when it has already fallen into discredit in Western Europe, the concept of literature as pure linguistic text was proclaimed by some, and also the revolutionary concept of the neo-avantgardist transformation of the language; and some

announced the very death of literature, particularly of poetry. In not a single instance did we pursue as much as a friendly debate with the adherents of such theories. There are critical opinions in Hungary glorifying the magico-irrational; others snub committed literature; others again judge the rich variety of Hungarian literature on the basis of the one-time concept of realism, and would link this notion to a small group or to a certain generation only. And there are, of course, differences of opinion according to generations in judging the literature of the fifties or the seventies.

The task of criticism in the period ahead is to try and clarify these differences; to try to formulate a valid picture of reality—in much closer contact than hitherto with writers and with the social sciences. To achieve this, it is necessary for criticism to be much more independent of intellectual, scientific and literary performance. The present practice of allowing the publishers a lot of scope while criticism has to bring about balance, to pass judgement and to explain, is questionable to my mind. The practical consequence has been that criticism has had to pay, or should have paid, the price for the mistakes of publishing policy, of film-makers, and of exhibition organizers. In this way, we have officially relegated criticism to the role of censorship. However, criticism is an independent evaluating activity, and it should have the same right to form opinion as publishing, as cultural policy-making and, of course, as art. It is from this position that facts must be faced—facts of reality, of literary policy, and of cultural policy.

I started by saying that there are differences of opinion and of interests between literature and criticism. Such differences of opinion and interests will continue in the future, too, and not only between criticism and literature, but also between criticism and criticism, between literature and literature. These conflicts should not be aggravated by increasing the tension between literature and criticism, but must be solved by adequately appraising Hungarian social reality and Hungarian art on the basis of a common point of view.

ZSIGMOND PÁL PACH

EAST-WEST RELATIONS IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

In the development of the western and the eastern parts of Europe there were considerable differences even during the Middle Ages, in the early and late periods of feudalism, in respect of the rise and flowering of the feudal system, its demographic and structural features.

Up to the second half or the end of the fifteenth century, however, development on the whole tended towards greater balance between the economic and social levels of Western and Eastern Europe and the time lag of the latter was smaller. This applies to the Slav nations as well as to Hungarians. These were societies which had been built less upon precedents of antiquity and had taken the road of feudalism later, even though the qualitative uniformity of mature feudalism was accompanied by a quantitative lag, especially in regard of population growth, industrialization, and urbanization. The law of uneven development showed itself

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in the fact that the countries of East Central Europe—although hampered by the difficulties of urban bourgeoisification—went through the first and second (early and mature) periods of feudalism within a relatively short time and began to catch up with the countries of Western Europe with "compound development." This was also due to the fact that the appearance, within the feudal system, of the incipient forms of capitalist production was not yet exclusively a Western European phenomenon; the centres of early capitalism are to be found in Flanders, in urban districts of Northern and Central Italy, and in Southern Germany.

The evolution of peasant and bourgeois commodity production in the countries of East Central Europe, the appearance of elements of the home market, the preponderance of money rent over the serfs' feudal dues in kind, the emergence of serfdom from the dreadful burdens of early feudalism (the equivalent of *servage* in Western Europe), the winning of the serfs' right to mobility—all these point in the direction of a development very similar to that in Western Europe. This also applies to the political superstructure. By the fifteenth century feudal monarchies had also been established in some states of East Central Europe—e.g. in Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary—moreover, at the peak of their royal power, George of Podebrad (1458–1471) and especially Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490) also made attempts to further the development of centralization. Among their contemporaries, Casimir IV Jagiello, King of Poland (1447–1492), consolidated the Polish-Lithuanian federation, and, with the Peace of Toruń (1466), which put an end to the Thirteen Years' War, subjected the western possession of the Teutonic Knights (Royal Prussia), including the region of the Vistula estuary, which ensured him an outlet to the Baltic Sea. (The order of the Teutonic Knights only retained its eastern territories, the future principality of Prussia. And "Ivan the Great," Grand Prince Ivan III of Moscow (1462–1505), occupied a number of principalities in Central and Northern Russia and laid the foundations for their territorial unification.

2.

Up to this point European development as a whole had been towards an evening up between the western and eastern parts of the continent, but from the turn of the fifteenth to the sixteenth century onwards a contrary trend became increasingly dominant. The differences in development between Western and Eastern Europe, instead of diminishing and disappearing, became more marked and deeper. While the areas where early capitalism had flourished outside Western Europe exhausted their potential for development during the sixteenth century and had fallen into decline by the seventeenth century, in the West new centres of capitalization were formed which proved viable even in the long run. While the decay of medieval order started and continued in several Atlantic countries—of course, at different rates and not without ups and downs—in the countries of East Central Europe, including Hungary, similar developments stopped short and came to an end; the feudal system survived and, as the result of the sixteenth century conflict between the opposing tendencies, was only consolidated in some respects by the seventeenth century. Between the mature stage of feudal formation and its period of decay there was an entire historical epoch: several centuries of late feudalism that was unknown to the classical process of development in Western Europe.

What caused this dichotomy, this widening of the gap between the western and the eastern half of Europe from the turn of the fifteenth to the sixteenth century onwards?

The partial explanation has long been known and is clear. The shifting of the centre of growing international commerce from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, the great geographical discoveries, the over-

seas colonial ventures which opened up abundant sources of capital accumulation prompted the capitalist development of Western Europe, which had had an advantage over the countries of East Central Europe from the very start. The latter did not profit from the new Atlantic world market, on the contrary, they had just lost the role they had earlier played in the trade between Asia and Europe.

This explanation, however, needs complementing. Of course, the fact that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe—apart from the undertakings of South German merchant capitalists—did not take part in the discoveries, in the expanding ocean commerce, in the colonization of overseas territories, was in itself a disadvantage to them in comparison with Western Europe and was instrumental in their belated capitalist transformation. But it was more than that: there was a closer connection between expansion in Western Europe and the lag in Eastern Europe. Namely the initial process of development of a modern world market not only spread to the colonies but also to the countries of East Central Europe; the latter were not left out but were caught up and implicated, more forcefully than before, in the current of the international revolution. In the period of the exploration of new continents and the discovery of overseas markets, in the period of the expansion of *inter*continental trade relations between Atlantic countries, the *intra*-continental trade of Western Europe with the countries of East Central Europe did not slacken either, but it grew many times over; what is more, it assumed real importance just at that time. These fast-expanding relations of intra-European trade became really important factors in the nascent system of the modern world economy—and this in such a way as to stimulate and intensify the industrial-agrarian division of labour between Western and Eastern Europe. Thus the eastern part of the continent itself became in several respects the reserve, the hinterland, the basis of the Western European centre—which was carrying on the colonial exploitation of overseas territories—in its progress towards capitalism; and the lag of industrialization and urbanization in the East, which in the fifteenth century had still been only quantitative, grew further and took on a qualitative character.

3.

Global dimensions were reached during the centuries of the Middle Ages only by long-distance commerce which transported luxury articles from South and East Asia to the Levant, and from there—partly on land routes but mainly on Mediterranean vessels from the North Italian cities—further to Europe, and in exchange exported primarily precious metals to the Orient. This old-type international trade (it had its origin not in the internal development of European production, nor in its social division of labour, but in the differing natural-economic conditions prevailing in the far-flung regions of Eurasia and in the geographical division of labour between them) served to satisfy the luxury needs and prodigality of feudal lords and rich burghers.

The beginning of modern-type world market relations was marked by the fact that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the bulk of international trade turnover in Europe increasingly shifted from luxury articles to consumer goods. There started to unfold—after centuries of historical antecedents, of course—an international trade with a new composition of goods, based on the internal growth of the European economy, on the advance of the social division of labour, on the development of agricultural and industrial commodity production, and at the same time relying upon an expanding consumers' market: it satisfied the demand for the basic necessities of urban and rural populations who were increasingly dependent on goods available on the market.

A peculiar situation arose in the process. While trade on the newly discovered sea routes was, at the outset and for a fairly long time afterwards, composed of goods mainly suited to medieval demands, it was the coastal routes between Atlantic ports—from the Baltic down to the Straits of Gibraltar and further into the Mediterranean—and the land routes between Western and Eastern Europe that bore international trade in a new pattern of goods.

In the first formative stage of the modern world economy the overseas colonial territories were not yet linked to the Western European economy in the modern sense of a world market. In the sixteenth century it was primarily the staples of medieval long-distance trade, spices, that were shipped from Portugal's Far Eastern colonies to Europe. And in the first half of the seventeenth century imports of the Dutch and English colonizers which replaced those of the Portuguese were of a similar character: about three-quarters of the imports of the Dutch East India Company and at least two-thirds of the imports of the English East India Company between 1619 and 1621 consisted of pepper and other spices. And the transports from Spanish America to the mother country were overwhelmingly precious metals (chiefly silver) extracted by slave labour: with a share of more than 95 per cent in 1594 and 84 per cent even in 1609. Only later on were these followed by considerable quantities of agricultural products from the New World, including sugar and tobacco; and only afterwards did the colonies, first those in the Americas and then those in the Far East, become mass markets for Western manufactured goods.

In the period from the second half of the fifteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth it was precisely the countries of East Central Europe which, as suppliers of food for public consumption and of industrial raw materials and as buyer's markets for industrial consumer goods, especially textile goods, were linked to the consolidating Western European economies through the new type of international trade which was arising from the development of commodity production and division of labour. Towards the middle of the sixteenth century, woollen fabrics had a 60 per cent share of Poland's total imports from Western Europe and 48 per cent of this shipped on the sea routes; next to them came salt in seaborne trade and hardware in overland trade. The share of textiles in Hungary's imports from the West was still greater; in 1542 it was 68 per cent, again followed by hardware in second place. It was, besides internal motives, precisely the expansion of the markets in East Central Europe that prompted the developing industrial districts of Western Europe to increase their commodity production, to move beyond the framework of the system of craft guilds, to create the initial forms of capitalist manufacture. What exerted a retarding effect on the industrial development of the countries of East Central Europe was, in addition to internal limitations, the increase in the imports of Western manufactured goods, their extension to mediocre and cheaper textiles apart from quality cloths, thereby hindering full development of the guild trades and the conditions for their capitalization.

Another, no less important, aspect of the development of intracontinental trade relations of the modern type was the increase in the export of agricultural produce and raw materials from the countries of East Central Europe to the West. Poland supplied Western Europe mainly with grain crops (rye for the most part), as well as with cattle and furs; these three commodities made up 90 per cent of all her exports to the West in the middle of the sixteenth century. Taking an average of the years 1565 to 1585, grain alone had a share of 66 per cent in Poland's seaborne exports; the rest was made up of raw products (timber, potash, hemp). Hungarian exports to the West also consisted of two important items in considerable quantities: cattle and copper. Moreover,

not only growing export markets in Western Europe but also favourable marketing possibilities opened up to East European agriculture: the sixteenth-century price revolution created favourable terms of foreign trade.

4.

It was not accidental that the large-scale rise in prices, the price revolution, coincided with the beginnings of the evolution of the modern world evonomy; it was in close connection with the discovery of the new sea routes as well as with the discovery of the new type of intra-European trade relations. One of the factors of this connection has long been known and is obvious. When, from the middle of the sixteenth century onwards, the flow of American precious metals from America to Spain and further was at its height, the increase of money in circulation led to a rapid decrease in its value, and this caused a jump in prices. On the other hand, the rise in prices—more precisely, the change in price relations, in the price structure —had begun a good many decades before. Namely the shifting of the commodity pattern of international trade from luxury articles towards consumer goods necessarily brought with it a similar tendency in the price structure. In the long run there was a relative drop in the price of Oriental spices whose supply was considerably augmented by Portugal's maritime transports; on the other hand, there was a rise in the prices of prime necessities for which a growing demand was created by the broadening of the sections of the population dependent on market purchases. Among the articles of public consumption the increase was noticeable first of all in the prices of agricultural products and raw materials, while there was a considerably smaller increase in the prices of manufactured goods; the growth of the population partly or wholly leaving agricultural production boosted the demand for foodstuffs (and raw materials) in the industrializing and capitalizing districts of Western Europe, and this increased demand was not yet followed by a growing productivity of agricultural labour (the switch-over from the traditional forms of agriculture to the more developed crop-rotation systems did not make headway until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, first in Holland and then in England).

This price revolution, or more precisely: price-structure revolution, was not confined to Western Europe, but, through the network of broadening intracontinental trade relations, also found its way into Eastern Europe; it spread to all those European countries which were drawn into the formation of the modern world economy. Not only through direct commercial connections did the new price conditions get transplanted from the Atlantic centres of capitalization towards the East—as in the case of the grain exports which for the most part came through Amsterdam, or as in the case of copper exports from Upper Hungary (Slovakia), the bulk of which, up to the sixties of the sixteenth century, was also shipped on the Baltic-North Sea route first to Antwerp and later to Amsterdam and Hamburg—but also indirectly, chiefly through the towns of Southern Germany. In fact, at about the middle of the sixteenth century, these latter carried on flourishing trade with Northern Italy over the Alps and with the Netherlands via the Rhine, and at the same time entertained systematic trade relations with East Central Europe, for instance along the Danube with Hungary where they exported mainly textile goods in exchange for cattle.

The new Western European price structure, with its most dynamic component, revolutionary grain prices, reached the countries of East Central Europe—including Hungary who did not supply grain to consumers on the Atlantic coast—and forced up the prices of agricultural products on the *home* markets, too. Consequently high profits were to be expected not only from exports

to the West but also from the sale of produce on the home market.

This was precisely the force which attracted certain strata and groups of the landowning classes of the countries of East Central Europe to the trade in agricultural products; wherever they could, they engaged in export business, or else in home trade, by making use of their feudal privileges *vis-à-vis* the urban merchants and the peasant commodity producers. And to procure an appropriate amount of goods for sale on the market, they again laid hands on the rent-services of their serfs, and then enlarged their allodial lands and had them tilled, in the beginning by hired labour or by unpaid labour, and later, from the last decades of the sixteenth century onwards, overwhelmingly by serf labour—again binding their serfs to the soil and utterly exploiting their labour-rent obligation.

This consequence of the price revolution can be traced along another line, too. The rapid increase in prices and the consequential large-scale depreciation of money substantially reduced the value of the peasant's money contributions, i.e. the form of feudal rent that had become widespread in East Central Europe by the fifteenth century. For the landlords to raise the money rent from time to time in proportion to its fall in value—to introduce a sort of "sliding scale for money rent"—was, of course, out of the question. An obvious antidote to the reduction of income might have been for them to exploit the feudal rents paid in kind more forcefully and thus to compensate for the depreciating money contributions.

The price revolution—which widened the gap not only between the prices of agricultural and industrial products but also between prices and wages—expedited the use of wage labour on the farms and in workshops of capitalist entrepreneurs and tenants. This is what happened in England where, as Marx put it, the progressive fall in the value of the precious metals, and therefore of money, brought the farmers golden fruit, and the tenant paid both his labourers and the landlord in money of diminishing value; thus the tenants grew rich at the expense both of their labourers and their landlords. Surely the price revolution hindered this process on the allodial estates of the landlords in East Central Europe, for these latter were at most only budding capitalist and experienced feudal landlords. Though they would have profited by wages in the conditions of money depreciation, they lost on the money rents; still, they did not live in the world of profits and wages, they lived in that of rents.

While the price revolution had a similar influence on price conditions and the relation of prices and wages all over Europe, its influence upon the shaping of *production* relations in Eastern Europe was essentially different from that in Western Europe. In the East it helped the feudal-manorial methods of agricultural commodity production and trade in land produce to predominate, and this in turn entailed reversion to rents in kind, a certain relapse into subsistence farming, the establishment and re-establishment of bonds of the *servage* type. This hampered the development of the home market, of the social division of labour, and obstructed for a long time the shaping of capitalist conditions in town and country alike; it put a stop to the rise of a mercantile and manufacturing bourgeoisie or of a bourgeois-minded new nobility as well as to the bourgeoisification of the peasantry.

Thus, within the bounds of the nascent system of the modern world economy, as against the capitalizing and industrializing central districts of Western Europe, the countries of East Central Europe as a whole were reduced to the role of an outlying agrarian zone and got stuck at the level of late feudalism.

It was thus from the turn of the fifteenth to the sixteenth century onwards that there began in the countries of East Central Europe a trend of socio-economic development different from that in Western Europe,

a trend which was to lead to the abandonment of peasant and bourgeois commodity production, to the "second edition" of serf bondage of a *servage* character.

This unfavourable change of direction in economic and social development made its effect felt, of course, on the political plane as well. From the structure of the second serfdom—similar to the first *servage* in the early centuries of feudalism—there followed the reunification of economic exploitation and extra-economic (politico-legal) compulsion on the level of the village, of the manorial estate. As opposed to the centralization of political power, the endurance of the decentralized rule of the nobility, the rigidity of the feudal institutions, the survival of the manorial-territorial instruments of oppression provided the structure which was suitable for the emergence of a late form of feudal serfdom.

It is then no wonder that the oligarchic and feudal forces in the countries of East Central Europe were again thriving not only at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century—at a time when the weak Jagiellonians, as successors to Matthias and Casimir, wore, in addition to the Polish crown, the Czech and the Hungarian crowns as well—but even throughout most of the sixteenth century. After the Mohács disaster —when the Emperor Charles V's younger brother, Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, ascended the throne of Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia and (competing with János Szapolyai) also the Hungarian throne (1526–1564)—even in spite of the urgent need to centralize the state organization in view of the Turkish conquest, the role of the representative organs of feudalism remained practically unbroken in these territories. And the Polish-Lithuanian state (Lublin Union; 1569)—in which the characteristics of the second system of serfdom appeared, as it were, in a chemically pure form as early as the reign of the last Jagiellonians and then after the extinction of the dynasty (1572)—took on particularly sharp forms of the Rzeczpospolita, a republic of the feudal nobility (*articuli Henriciani, pacta conventa:* 1573). Moreover, when at the turn of the sixteenth to the seventeenth century the Habsburgs of Austria—imitating the example of the Spanish branch and instigated by the Jesuits during the reign of Rudolf II (1576–1612) who had been educated at the court of Philip II—first started an attack in the spirit of the ideas of the Counter-Reformation and of absolutism, they soon had to yield to the Estates of their lands which for the most part had been converted to Protestantism and which began to seek the way of progress in a federation of republics of the nobility on the Polish model. And, considering also that the Brandenburg electorate of the Hohenzollerns—with most of its inhabitants also converted to Protestantism—served as one of the most distinct examples of the feudal state in Germany *(Ständestaat)* during the era of the Reformation, it can be said: in the early seventeenth century the triumph of feudalism seemed to be total in this part of Europe. It may be all the more surprising that already during the next few decades the efforts at centralization gained renewed strength in the Habsburg countries just as in several other states of the area, followed by the establishment of absolute monarchies in the middle and in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

The clue to this phenomenon cannot be found if the changes in the political structure of some countries of East Central Europe are just considered in themselves, or if they are taken in conjunction with the relationships of the Spanish and Austrian branches of the House of Habsburg or looked at in the broader context of the struggle between Reformation and Counter-Reformation, but only if they are seen in an all-European context, if they are considered within the framework of the international political system arising in the Europe of early modern times, as parts of that system.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the ties between the western and the eastern

parts of Europe became closer not only in the fields of commerce; not only economic effects—like the new structure of price conditions, or ideological and social currents like the Reformation or the Counter-Reformation—spread comparatively fast from West to East, but political contacts also became extensive. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe could not evade the politico-military effects either, the less so since these made themselves felt even more directly and drastically. The contacts and the power relations between Western and Eastern Europe manifested themselves not only in trade balances but, mainly, in the balances of the armed forces. And even if under the conditions of the sixteenth-century agricultural price revolution the trade balance between the countries of Western and Eastern Europe turned in favour of the latter, the balance of military strength, on the other hand, with the rise of centralized monarchies in Western Europe, was evidently against Eastern Europe, especially from the 1560s onwards, when the Western armies grew considerably in size and, owing to the strategic revolution—the introduction of field artillery and a modern infantry—achieved qualitative superiority in respect of striking power, too. The superior strength of the absolute monarchies rising in Western Europe, their international influence, was the *exterior stimulus* which prompted some governments in East Central Europe to conform to the political structures of the West: to build up a similarly centralized state apparatus and military machinery, to secure their survival, their own power, their competitiveness in the constant politico-military rivalry between European states.

Thus in a period when the socio-economic development of Western and Eastern Europe was in process of splitting into two, it soon became obvious that the future in Europe belonged to only one kind of political system: the centralized state organization. It became manifestly clear that only a strong centralized power would be in a position to repulse attacks from outside, to defend its independent statehood, to consolidate and improve its standing in the international arena. Thus, in spite of the diverging trends of socio-economic conditions, a tendency similar to that in Western Europe was also bound to come about on the level of political development in Eastern Europe.

What is more, it became a key problem of the future for the countries of East Central Europe to decide which of them would be able to take up the international challenge by establishing a strong centralized state, an absolute monarchy, and which of them would fail to meet the challenge.

PÁL GULYÁS

EVERYDAY RURAL LIFE IN NORTH-EAST HUNGARY

This article introduces the reader into life in three Hungarian villages. It makes no claim to be comprehensive, neither has it the aim of outlining a situation that is representative of the country as a whole. With a total area of 93,000 square kilometres, Hungary may be a small country, but the features of her human settlements vary considerably from region to region. Historical, natural, and economic reasons explain the striking

differences between towns and villages in Western Hungary, between those in the south or middle of the Great Plain, and between the ones we are about to examine.

The names of the three villages are Ibrány, Buj, and Paszab. They are in Szabolcs-Szatmár County in north-eastern Hungary, about 25 kilometres from the county town of Nyíregyháza. Most of the land in this county was concentrated in big estates before the Second World War and farmers lived in abject poverty. It was from this region that most Hungarians emigrated to America and it was from here that the largest number of migrant labourers seeking employment in other parts of the country came.

Surveys and statistics from those times show that poor families, usually with many children, did not even have meat and fruit once a week. Their staple diet was onions, bread, and thin soups of a low nutritional value. More than one-third of the population had insufficient breakfasts and evening meals (if any at all) and the majority of them only ate occasionally.

Poor nourishment went hand in hand with inhuman housing conditions, epidemics, and lack of education. Three quarters of the houses were of adobe only. The rest were built of two feet high brick walls. Servants' quarters at the big estates were built in such a way that several families shared a common kitchen. The roads were unpaved, there was no clean drinking water and no electricity. Tuberculosis, pneumonia, colitis, dysentery, typhoid, and diphtheria took their toll while 131 in every one thousand live births did not reach one year of age. A significant proportion of the adult population was illiterate.

But we don't have to go back to the thirties of forties. The rate of progress will be striking enough if we compare the Hungarian village of today and ten years ago.

Nowaday, in this region anyone who does not dissipate his income can live without financial problems whether he is an agricultural cooperative member, an industrial worker, or whatever. There are about 3,000 houses in the three neighbouring villages with a total population of 12,500. Old houses, similar to the ones people used to live in, are very rare. And even then they are only similar, not the same, because these old houses have been expanded, modernized, supplied with electricity, and the rooms provided with floor-boards or parquet flooring. But the overwhelming majority of houses are new, usually with three rooms, bathroom, tiled roof, and fences; they could be called luxurious.

The state guarantees long-term credits and tax exemption to anybody who builds a house of his own. In Budapest and other towns and industrial centres, housing estates with high-rise blocks have been built under different conditions from those pertaining in the countryside. In places like these three villages, families traditionally join hands and help one another in the construction work.

Earlier, if you said village, you meant agriculture and the synonym for the people living there was peasantry. This situation has changed completely. By now, only a small percentage of village people are employed in agriculture. As a result of the establishment and strengthening of agricultural cooperatives and the growth of mechanization and the use of chemicals there has been a sharp drop in the number and proportion of the so-called farming population. Only about 17 per cent of all active wage-earners work in agriculture, a figure that used to be around 50 per cent.

Another factor in this development is that, parallel to large-scale industrial development, a process of industrial decentralization, i.e. a radical relocation of industry to the countryside, has taken place in Hungary. Most new workers are village people who abandoned agricultural jobs to take up industrial employment. This is how the current situation emerged where about half of all industrial workers live in villages and not in towns. They work in local or nearby plants and factories. Although a little late, a large-

scale development and expansion of services has also begun, something requiring an increasing number of people. Finally, an extremely important element in social restratification is that there has been a significant growth in the number of professional people working in villages.

So if we look around in the three villages, we should know that the great many new houses, electrification, the good pavements, the well-cared-for parks and all the other signs of prosperity are evidence of the striking increase in wealth not only of cooperative members, but also of industrial workers and professional people. There is hardly a family in which both (or several) wage-earners draw their incomes exclusively from agriculture.

There are several types of cooperatives in Hungary. From an economic and social point of view, most important are the agricultural cooperatives that began organizing a multitude of tiny plots into a system of large-scale farming after the land of the big estates was broken up. This type of cooperative made up-to-date large-scale agriculture possible and has resulted in yields two or three times greater than were achieved before. And it is also a fact that incomes are decided not by the amount of land the farmer offered to the co-op but by the quantity and quality of the work performed.

The other form of cooperative, also widespread throughout the country, is the general consumers' and marketing cooperative. The latter is rooted in strong historical traditions in Hungary. Such organizations were established at the end of the last century, but they really became widespread only in the period between the two world wars. After 1945, side by side with the old *Hangya* (Ant) cooperative network, those who had just been given land also established cooperatives of a similar type. Later these merged with the Hangya network and since then, meeting the changing and continuously growing requirements of the villages, have been indispensable, especially in the supply of goods and in the catering industry. There are only a few state-run commercial companies, shops, and restaurants in Hungarian villages. It reflects the general situation that there are none of the latter in the three villages in question. All services—including banking—are handled by cooperatives.

Shops, restaurants, and services influence people's way of life, way of thinking, behaviour, and expectations. From a business point of view, turnover, profits, and stocks are of enormous significance; they are not only ends in themselves but also means towards promoting a permanent rise in the living standards of the population. And it is also a kind of channel through which a large quantity of goods, including furniture and other consumer durables, get to these villages, partly through purchases made by the more than one thousand commuters working in Nyíregyháza.

There is a new supermarket in Ibrány. It is clean, orderly and has almost the same wide assortment of goods you would find in a supermarket in any large city, functional fittings and plenty of room for customers. The management makes sure that shop assistants have a good knowledge of the goods they sell. There are frequent sales promotions with detailed counselling. They are popular because customers are informed how to use childcare articles or detergents in the most efficient way.

Similar demonstrations are held at another new shop, the household and hardware store, where pesticides and other chemicals are sold, and at the store that sells various consumer durables. There are regular educational lectures in the autumn and winter months, with the financial support of the general consumers' and marketing cooperatives, on themes ranging from poultry-keeping to fruit-growing or vegetable-growing under plastic sheeting. There seems to be a growing interest in such instruction, as most families have gardens or household plots. With an eye to this, the general consumers' and marketing cooperative has opened a shop

selling fodder in all three villages, while similar shops are also run by the agricultural cooperative and the marketing company.

The clothing store has a satisfactory choice of goods. Clothing items following the latest lines in fashion always sell fast as the differences between town and village are gradually disappearing. If you buy a ready-made dress or suit and it needs altering, you can have it done free of charge and fast by the general consumers' and marketing cooperative.

Paszab and Buj are both much smaller villages, but they also have new stores and shops. Equipped with refrigerators, the self-service shop at Paszab or the recently opened butcher's at Buj meet the most demanding requirements. The supply of meat at the butcher's in Buj and the whole region has improved significantly. Some 957 pigs were slaughtered last year by a special group within the consumers' and marketing cooperative.

The special groups within the consumers' or agricultural cooperative comprise people who are engaged in growing the same kinds of vegetables, or fruit, or in breeding the same types of animals. There are, for instance, groups specializing in gardening, fruit-growing, poultry-breeding, hare, pigeon, or pork-breeding. They husband their resources on their own, elect their own leadership and sign contracts with the cooperative concerning the purchase of the materials and fodder they need and, of course, the marketing of their produce as well.

In close cooperation with the state farms and cooperatives, small-scale agricultural production in Hungary involves some 1.7 million families. In other words, almost all village inhabitants are engaged in some sort of small-scale farming. They include not only agricultural co-op members or workers on the state farms, but also a great many teachers, office, trade, and industrial workers. And the state extends many-sided and far-reaching support, since the maximum exploitation of all production potential is in the interests of society as a whole. Hungary exports a significant amount of agricultural produce and foodstuffs and small farms can contribute to supplying the population with food and to increasing exports.

Household farming earns the small farmers considerable incomes. True, they work hard for it in their free time, but they find the effort worth while. They can use time they would otherwise waste and it keeps pensioners occupied. This also explains why so many new houses have been built in the villages and why demands formerly regarded as unattainable dreams can be met today.

Renewed and restored, an old building houses a restaurant where there is music in the evenings. It used to be a dark place with a plain floorboard, and a little cake-shop attached to it. Customers who remember the old days say decent people always used to keep clear of it, as revellers and drunkards would stagger around in front of the building. Now it is a third-class restaurant, but from its appearance it could be a second-class one. It is not an elegant place, but its guests usually have a good time. Other examples are the Flower café in Ibrány, or another one opened in Buj.

The restaurant can seat one hundred and fifty and it also has a beer-garden accommodating 80 people. The restaurant often plays host to meetings of co-op members, graduation parades and sometimes also weddings. Huge weddings under marquees in the gardens or courtyards of private homes are increasingly being replaced by weddings held at the restaurant. It is rented for the occasion and food and drinks are ordered well in advance. The same wind of change is also revealed in the fact that many families no longer bother about making sophisticated cakes at home, instead, they order or buy them at the cooperative cake-shop.

Ibrány, Buj, and Paszab: none of these three villages rise above the national average as far as progress in general and the supply of goods or entertainment in particular is concerned. The progress they have made is close to the national average and its adds to the significance of the remark the locals con-

stantly repeat: you can hardly recognize them. And the remark also applies to the services available, and this despite the fact they have neither been expanded nor improved to the same extent as the supply of goods and entertainment facilities.

There is a new petrol station operated by the general consumers' and marketing cooperative in the vicinity of Ibrány. It was badly needed, for in Ibrány alone more than four hundred families have cars of their own. But there is no car mechanic in the region. Although the machine plant of the Ibrány agricultural cooperative takes on car repairs—whenever it can—they do it only for the general consumers' and marketing cooperative, the council and various companies but not for private persons.

In Ibrány, there are 2,000 houses and 1,600 television sets. The number of radios is higher, almost every family has a washing-machine and there is a refrigerator and a vacuum cleaner in 80 per cent of homes. But if any one of these household appliances goes wrong, repair is difficult and lengthy.

Ten years ago, one ladies' hairdresser seemed to be more than enough for Ibrány. Now there are two, they work from 8 in the morning to 10 at night, they just can't cope with all the work. The same thing applies to the only dressmaker.

There are 35 tradesmen in Ibrány. They include masons, locksmiths, electricians, house-painters, roof-tilers, and plumbers who are also specialists in heating systems. The latter are also kept busy since 10 per cent of all houses in the village have central heating.

Village life creates a demand for services that is typical of villages and small settlements. Some of it is met by the cooperatives. The consumers' cooperative has a tractor with a trailer, two big and two small lorries. They deliver the consumer durables bought at the shops and stores either free of charge, or at a nominal cost. But the consumers' cooperative also chops firewood and delivers it. They help those who keep animals by delivering fodder. The co-op offers the same service by horse-cart, tractor, and lorry. Another cooperative service grinds corn at four places and undertakes the purchase of artificial fertilizers and sells them to small producers at wholesale prices. The co-ops also undertake plant protection for the small producers at cost price.

Such is the supply of goods, entertainment, and services in the three villages. However, one might also add that, despite the development over the past years, the population is not always satisfied with the 37 shops and 15 restaurant units. They miss many small machines, tools, and spraying devices, there is a shortage of cheap plates, glasses, ceramic products, bicycles, washing-machines, spin-driers, and traditional kitchen stoves. People need more cement, wall-tiles, and roofing materials.

The population contributes significantly to the solving of the problems that affect the common good. This includes not only voluntary work, but buying shares in the consumers' cooperative as well, providing the cooperative with 2.2 million forints. It is spent on various projects, and helps make conditions more comfortable. Maybe Ibrány, Buj, and Paszab will be even less recognizable in, say, five or six years' time.

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

GYULA ILLYÉS

FAREWELL TO ISTVÁN BIBÓ

1911–1979

Address delivered at the funeral on 21 May, 1979

I am bidding farewell to István Bibó on behalf of those who knew him as a colleague on *Válasz*,* after the war. He immediately won our respect and we grew very fond of him. We welcomed him with pleasure and gratitude as a young man on the threshold of his active life, who offered clearly thought-out economic, legal, and philosophical ideas to a movement rooted in the spirit and in art. The writers in it, for the most part spontaneously, supported the cause of sections of the people that were swept into catastrophe and of a country that faced catastrophe; they recognized and proclaimed that there was a time and place when the indivisible service of beauty and truth demanded action.

Before he presented himself as a writer and publicist, István Bibó's life resembled that of those Hungarian itinerant preachers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who, leaving a country that had sunk into a physical and spiritual quagmire after years of abuse, struggled to Utrecht and Montpellier to study the Scriptures. There a thousand opportunities awaited them, not only culture but an easier life, and a more successful ministry. But they returned to malaria-infested villages, and built churches amidst the mud huts.

István Bibó acquired his higher learning in Geneva. He had gone there as the offspring of a highly educated family—as the talented son of the head librarian of Szeged University—to further his study of jurisprudence. He learnt much else as well.

He learnt loyalty and courage: what we Hungarians like to call the classical European attitude. He immersed himself into the philosophy of the *encyclopédistes* who looked to practical activity for the definition of good and evil. After returning home, István Bibó soon found his way to all those who with a similar value system were looking for a job to do that would prove a calling.

István Bibó's father was also interested in ethnography, like just about every literate person in Szeged at the time: teachers, parsons, actors, archaeologists, historians, painters, poets, doctors—especially the young. This was the young jurisprudent Bibó's second great university.

In this way his singular scholarly discipline and calling took shape. As a good start he taught political science at the University. A practical result was his first great book published as early as the autumn of 1945. *A magyar demokrácia válsága* (The crisis of Hungarian democracy) deservedly aroused attention and prompted respect. It was followed in 1946 by *A Kelet-európai kisállamok*

* The monthly review *Válasz* (Answer) was started by young, progressive writers in 1934. Publication was stopped in 1938 due to political and financial difficulties. The review was restarted in 1946, edited by Gyula Illyés. The second period of *Válasz* lasted till 1949.

nyomorúsága (The misery of the small states of Eastern Europe). At the same time, by then a senior official in the Ministry of the Interior, he prepared a draft for the reformation of the Hungarian administrative system. The thought that urban bounds *(városmegye)* should replace the castle bounds *(vármegye)*, which evoked the fortified centres of yore, became the ideal of properly decentralised states years later. Bibó's writings on historical and constitutional subjects became regular features in *Válasz*, and the occasion for constructive discussion among intellectuals with their roots in the peasantry and working-class who were seeking a feasible way out of the tragic situation of the time and from whom a renewal of cultural life and intellectual ethics was to be hoped. Then, in 1949, *Válasz* was silenced at the same time as the people's colleges and other undertakings of popular education were finally dissolved, to the lasting detriment of cultural progress in Hungary.

By that time István Bibó was already well and favourably known beyond the frontiers of the country. As a scholar and publicist he rivalled in authority those whose disciple he had once been in Geneva and elsewhere. His writings were closely read and widely spread in distant lands to the day of his death. The attention they might have received would have been greater still had he chosen to stay abroad. He could have done so later, but he stayed at home.

It is here at home that we are burying him today, a man strong in his commitment to loyalty, knowledge, and disinterested service, who remains our consolation even in death. He himself relieves our sorrow, with his example that, behold, such men are also born of this earth.

Let us once again pay a last tribute of respect to his wife, who died a few days before him, and in whose fresh grave we place him.

István and Boriska Bibó radiated loyalty, knowledge, and devotion as a couple that belonged together. Let us cherish their memory for the sake of our own enrichment.

ÁGNES NEMES NAGY—POETRY AND TRANSLATION

Readers interested in such matters deserve some explanation of how translations of poetry correlate with their originals—an explanation, in short, of the special problems posed by the originals which enable them (or not) to travel, and in what guise, to a surrogate linguistic system. In the case of Hungarian poetry translated into English, what is surrogate is nearly everything—not merely vocabulary, as is largely the case in translating the Romance languages into English (I ignore for the moment strictly prosodic matters), not merely the relatively easy structural modifications required of a moderately inflected language such as German. A few words about Hungarian are in order.

The most conspicuous fact about Hungarian is its isolation. An Ugrian language of the Finno-Ugrian family, its nearest relatives are Vogul and Ostyak, two distant languages still spoken by small groups on the western side of the Urals. Its connection to Finnish, Estonian, and other languages of the Finnic branch, is even more remote—analogous, say, to the connection between Polish and English, or German and French. It is an isolation of which Hungarians are

Translator's Preface to *The Selected Poems of Ágnes Nemes Nagy*, to be published by Iowa University Press.—*The Editor.*

extremely conscious, and in complex ways. "The word for 'yes' in every language in Europe has one syllable," someone in Budapest said to me: "we have two." The tone was one of exasperation; but it conveyed, as well, pride. I remarked to a poet that Hungarian struck me as extraordinarily musical. "A harsh music," she replied. "The language is a disaster, like our history." But she was laughing as she said it.

Hungarian is not only highly inflected, it is agglutinative: relationships which in English are indicated by the use of prepositions are signalled in Hungarian by suffixes. Similarly, verb forms—a small battery of tenses and, in addition, causative, frequentative, diminutive, and potential forms—are indicated by suffixes; furthermore, the form of transitive verbs is determined not only by the subject but also by the object—if the object is specific the verb ending is different than if the object is general. Pronouns are used sparingly: if the object of a first-person verb is the second-person singular, no accusative pronoun is necessary; and since there is no grammatical gender, the *he-she-it* cluster is dispensed with; principally, verb-endings do the work of pronouns.

These few structural peculiarities of Hungarian—hardly an exhaustive list—make one crucial point by which the translator had best be obsessed, even though he may frequently be unable to accommodate it: that in addition to being an extremely refined language, Hungarian is an extraordinarily compact and economical one. The American or British translator, confronted with a Hungarian poem, views it as a kind of shorthand which needs fleshing-out, rather like one of those Japanese paper flowers that blossom when placed in a dish of water. My guess is that it takes, on the average, at least half again as many English words (and often twice as many) to convey a Hungarian sentence.

The Hungarian vocabulary is enormous. It would seem to be almost as large as that of English; more important to the translator is the fact that it is a highly concrete vocabulary. The critic Balázs Lengyel (as it happens, the husband of Ágnes Nemes Nagy) writes that "Hungarian has not undergone to the same degree the process of abstraction in usage which characterizes most Western languages, so that the original descriptive force of word-roots and images is still vivid." The most common word for *brother* (or *sister*), for example, is *testvér:* literally, *test (body)* plus *vér (blood)*. *Equinoctial* (see the poem "Storm") is literally *day-night-equality*.

Often there is little the translator can do to preserve this vividness: the term *equinoctial storm* is, after all, too idiomatic to ignore. On the other hand, I have done so where the effect in English stops short of awkwardness. Early in the poem "Between" the word *madártan* occurs—most normally, in English, *ornithology*, but alternatively (and literally) *bird-lore;* I have chosen the latter, especially because the word is immediately preceded by *madár*, so that *madártan* comes as a repetition.

A word about prosody. Free verse is written in present-day Hungary, but on a far smaller scale than it is in the West. The reason, again, is rooted in the nature of the language—generally, that the rhythmic and sonic complexities available to the poet are enormously rich, and few poets even today fail to take advantage of them. First, Hungarian is at once an accentual language and a quantitative one; the possibilities that this coincidence offers for rhythmically formal verse should be obvious. Second, especially as a consequence of its agglutinative character, rhymes in Hungarian are almost limitless—exact rhymes, but also assonantal rhymes and, to a lesser extent, consonantal ones. Five-syllable rhymes are not uncommon.

The consequences of these formalities for the translator vary with his own language and with the meaning of modernity, or contemporaneity, in his own poetry. The French translator of modern Hungarian poetry often finds it necessary to sacrifice the formalities of his originals in order to write what he

feels are credible French poems. Fortunately, or so I believe, English poetry in the 1970's offers options; and where the effect of a poem has seemed to me to depend heavily upon its formalities, I have chosen to preserve (or translate) that effect. Not, however, slavishly. Where the original incorporates a strict rhyme scheme, I have used rhymes as strictly as my ear allowed, although the pattern may not be the same, or as rigid, as that of the original. Where the original is metrically tight, I have attempted an analogous tightness in translation, although the precise form may differ; in several poems, for example, I have found a three-stress line congenial in adapting a four-stress original. But the central point bears re-stating: a poem's formal qualities are a major part of its meaning, and those qualities may require translation.

My practice in making these translations was to begin with rough versions provided by a native Hungarian, then proceed to the standard Hungarian–English dictionary to be certain that I understood the normal range of meanings of all words in the original. (Often I had recourse to the English–Hungarian dictionary for cross-checking, as well as to an English-language grammar of Hungarian. When necessary, I consulted with my Hungarian informant.) This phase of the process involved, as well, *listening* to the original, getting some sense of its rhythmic, and other sonic, characteristics.

While some of the problems entailed in making English versions (as well as occasional solutions to those problems) suggested themselves from the very beginning, they became paramount after I felt that I had a sufficient grasp of the original to begin thinking of it in terms of a poem in English. The only general comment I can make about this procedure is that I sought to retain as much of the detailed sense of the original as I could, consistent with making an idiomatic poem in English. When I had completed tentative final drafts, I visited Budapest, where I spent several long sessions with the poet, and to further reduce the chances of misunderstanding, an Americanist from Budapest University. On the basis of what I learned in these sessions, I proceeded to my final revisions.

A close look at one of these poems will illustrate some of the difficulties I have referred to, as well as certain others. It is a short poem, but short as it is—in part because of its shortness—the translation was a full year falling into place.

LÁZÁR

Amint lassan felült, balválla-tájt
egy teljes élet minden izma fájt.
Halála úgy letépve, mint a géz,
Mert feltámadni éppolyan nehéz.

And the rough version provided me:

LAZARUS

As he sat up slowly, in the region of his left shoulder
a whole life's every muscle hurt.
His death was torn off, like gauze.
Because to be resurrected is just as difficult.

The poem presented no verbal problems of understanding. On the contrary, it is not only lucid but enormously powerful merely as rough statement. But there were serious problems. First of all, the poem is extremely tight formally; rhymed in couplets, and metrically in an absolutely secure five-stress iambic line. While in other poems rhyme and meter might not require major attention, the power of this poem struck me as in great measure accruing from its epigrammatic tightness. And so the major effort, mechanical as it was, was a search for rhymes —with at least one inflexible word, *gauze*, which would not rhyme and for which there was no substitute. Indeed, I decided that if I could not find rhymes which would tamper only minimally with the sense, I would abandon the poem altogether.

There was another problem, less insur-

mountable, but subtler and rooted in some basic differences between Hungarian and English verse. The point here is that Hungarian verse moves, paces itself, generates its emphases and feelings, in ways totally foreign to English. English creates the illusory tensions which pace the feeling largely by impeding and accelerating the line. To impede a line, for example, we rely heavily on the rich possibilities of stress (four degrees, the linguists tell us); we dislocate the stress by reversing feet; we spring the rhythm by bunching stresses. And we may further encrust the texture with words containing consonant-clusters (rare in Hungarian).

While accent is important in Hungarian (the stress invariably falling on the first syllable), it is not as strong as it is in English. The stressed syllables in a line more closely approximate each other in emphasis, and the weaker syllables are more uniformly weak. Furthermore, the degree of emphasis between stressed and unstressed syllables is smaller than it is in English. It is rather the co-existence, with accent, of quantity, and an intricate set of rules governing the harmony of vowels, that accounts for the phonetic richness of Hungarian verse. In short, an American or an Englishman listening to Hungarian verse might find it musical; he would surely find it curiously unemphatic.

Even so, these phonetic peculiarities by themselves would not be sufficient to distinguish the more important words in a sentence from the less important—a distinction which in English is, once again, principally a function of stress. It is here that morphology plays a major role: word order in Hungarian can be almost anything, and while any shift of order will affect the precise shade of meaning, the most sensitive position in a sentence is that immediately preceding the predicate: it is that word which assumes a major emphasis—but let us say *importance*, rather than *emphasis*, to make it doubly clear that we are talking about meaning, not sound.

A grammatically assembled version of our poem may help:

As slowly (he) sat up, leftshoulder
(in)-region
a whole life's every muscle hurt.*
His death in that way torn off, like the
gauze.
Because to rise again (from the dead)
the same kind difficult.

We can now see certain priorities which the rough version scarcely hints at: that *lassan* (slowly), *úgy* (in that way), and *éppolyan* (the same kind) receive significant emphasis. In the case of *úgy*, the translation does not even appear in the rough version: understandably, because there is no way of incorporating it literally and have it make sense; yet its function is to point to and reinforce, as excruciatingly as possible, the image of caked gauze being torn from a wound.

My solutions of these problems (grapplings with them, rather) are evident in the final version:

Slowly as he rose, in the region of his left
shoulder
every muscle of his whole life was torture.
His death was flayed from him, torn off
as gauze is torn.
Because it is just that hard being re-born.

Slowly, with its falling rhythm, long *o*, and terminal juncture, occupies the first position and is echoed in *rose*, *shoulder*, and *whole*. That utterly foreign *úgy* becomes a rhetorical elaboration in a long and rhythmically roughed-up line (which I still, however, hear with five stresses) that regenerates itself after a painfully long pause. And the strength of *éppolyan* is translated in the heavily sprung monosyllables with which the poem concludes. Indeed, with the exception, for ob-

* The word order follows the original. But since, in Hungarian, the suffix denoting possession attaches to the thing possessed, it is worth noting that the relationship of *life (élet)* to *muscle* (*izom* in the nominative) is delayed until the line reaches *izma* (*muscle* in the form clarifying its grammatical position *vis-à-vis élet*).

vious reasons, of *flayed from him*, I have impeded the movement of the poem wherever possible. It seemed to me the most promising way of enacting its meaning.

The first paragraph of this preface used a high-sounding phrase, "surrogate linguistic system." I hope that by now that phrase has earned its keep. Indeed, the remoteness of Hungarian from English raises some interesting questions. Can we say, for example, that Ágnes Nemes Nagy sounds like my versions of her? I doubt it—not, certainly, in the sense that a good translation of Racine sounds like Racine, or a good translation of Rilke sounds like Rilke. I tend to suspect that a poet's voice—however we choose to define that baggy but unavoidable term—can survive transport to another language relatively unimpaired if the two languages are structurally similar. Survive *transport*. Because it is questionable if the voice itself is part of what is translated. If the translator has done his job, the voice accompanies his changes unobtrusively and more or less firmly. But what of a language so alien to English that it does without prepositions—surely one important way in which voice is achieved in English? Must not the terms of voice, the clues to it, be very different in Hungarian, so different as to alter the meaning of the notion itself? Often while making these translations I had the feeling that I was *assigning* them a voice, one that would be audible to the ears of an English-speaking audience. But I cannot pretend that it is the same voice that is heard in the originals. It is certainly a different voice from those in translations I have made of other Hungarian poets.

I think we are left with a strange sort of speculation. And hope: that if Ágnes Nemes Nagy wrote in English, this is the way she would sound.

II.

Ágnes Nemes Nagy was born in 1922—of a generation that includes János Pilinszky in her own country, Herbert and Różewicz in Poland, Popa in Yugoslavia, Holub in Czechoslovakia, Doinaș in Rumania. The point is not merely that these are major poets of our time and that she is their peer, all of which is true. Nor, although this will be qualified, that they are all from Central European countries: one could extend the borders, cautiously, to include Celan, Amichai, and no doubt others. What these poets have in common, apart from age, is a sense of historical and political pressure that has exerted a strong shaping influence on their work. An influence stronger on European poets than on those of Britain or America, stronger on the poets of Central Europe than on those of Europe at large.

Even so, the nature of that pressure is frequently misunderstood. Westerners still tend to assume, too easily, that it is the socialist experience that principally accounts for the striking efflorescence of post-World War II poetry in Central Europe. Two points need to be made at the outset. What is perceived as an explosion of poetic talent in Central Europe is in part at least illusory. All of the countries involved have poetic traditions that extend backwards in time for centuries, and all of them have produced major poets prior to our own time. Quite simply, the West has by and large ignored them. Secondly, the very real increase in poetic activity in Central Europe must be accounted for by a complex of factors that go well beyond any one event of the past thirty or forty years: by, for example, the increasingly accelerated pace of all events, to which Western poets have also responded; to the gradual lowering of barriers—and not only ideological ones—between East and West; to the increased sense of need on the part of Central European poets to reach into major cultures; to the enhanced sense of community among poets throughout Europe; to the proliferation of translations in all countries. And all of these factors—hardly an exhaustive list—have technical as well as ideological ramifications. In short, without minimizing the importance of the Stalinist

years, during which this generation came to maturity and during which many of them were not permitted to publish, one must nevertheless locate that experience within the broader frameworks—historical, philosophical, geographical—that collectively or variously obtain. As for the typical stance of the individual in the face of "events"—and these poets all begin in isolation and are forced further inward—that has become, after all, a characteristic stance of European literature. One can cite names almost at random—Kafka, Pavese, Eliot, Tsvetayeva, Camus, Grass—to realize that what is at issue is a positioning of the writer *vis-à-vis* his material which, however modified by individuals, is by now solidly traditional. It is also a positioning—and Eliot here is the exception—which is fundamentally apolitical, whatever case can be made for politics as a formative factor.

What the countries of Central Europe have in common, and this notwithstanding (especially in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia) the existence of large ethnic minorities, is a strong sense of national identity. More important for our purposes, they are identities which have been continuously threatened by the re-definition of borders, by political upheavals, by changing forms of government, and by the manipulations of major powers—in short, by histories that by any definition have been turbulent and disruptive. These histories, it is necessary to add, did not begin in the twentieth century. The responses of poets of course vary, from century to century and from place to place; nor are these responses necessarily directly *to* the sorts of conditions I have outlined; more often they are not. But those conditions have constituted a weight, conscious or not, which has been a major part of their cultural and psychological legacy.

The situation in Hungary, which proportionately may well have more poets of consequence than any nation in Europe, requires special explanation. By far the smallest country in Central Europe—it is slightly smaller than Indiana—it is also, for philological reasons discussed above, the most culturally isolated. It is, as well, landlocked, a geographical fact that occupies a prominent place in the Hungarian's sense of his identity. But most important is the country's political and social history. It reads like a chamber of horrors. Especially since the early sixteenth century, the country has been repeatedly overrun, looted, ravaged, devastated, subjugated. When Nemes Nagy, in her poem "To My Craft," refers to "the never-ending siege of Buda,/ I've known since I was a cell," she is making of Hungarian history nothing less than a racial memory, a conceit no Hungarian would consider extravagant.

One predictable result of the historical legacy has been an especially strong sense of national identity. And it is a sense that from the very beginning has informed, even characterized, Hungarian poetry—most forcefully since the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when poetry achieved popular recognition as the finest (and normal) expression of Hungary's aspirations and the Hungarian's will to survive. It is a position which poetry continues to enjoy and which manifests itself in enviable ways. Streets and squares are named after poets; the average Hungarian can quote poetry at length; the living poet is a figure of respect. Nor is it a matter of the political dimension of poetry expressing itself as chauvinism, although this has of course happened. One man of letters has observed that in the poetry of Petőfi and Ady, whom most Hungarians revere as their greatest poets of the past, the themes of love and politics are "so interwoven you can't say this is a love poet, this is a political poet, because the two are together."

Still, what I have called the political dimension in part accounts for one of the shibboleths of Hungarian criticism, which habitually distinguishes between those poets of peasant origins and those of working-class or intellectual origins. It is a distinction which is frequently blurred in the actual work, yet

its persistence is revealing. The principal contemporary poets of peasant backgrounds whose work in some measure justifies the classification are Gyula Illyés, usually considered the dean of Hungarian writers, Ferenc Juhász, and the late László Nagy.

Ágnes Nemes Nagy is not of this group. She is highly educated, rigorously intellectual, and fluent in several languages. She has taught, edited, and translated extensively from French, German, English, and classical writers. Her essays on poetry, as yet untranslated, are reputedly brilliant. And her work owes as much to Eliot, Rilke, and the French surrealists as to her great native forbears. Even so, she is unmistakeably Hungarian: the "pressures" are everywhere evident, although individualized in a body of work that bears little resemblance to anyone else's. One walks into a Nemes Nagy poem as into an abrupt change of climate. Indeed, her poems resuscitate a cliché: they build a whole new world. It is often a surreal world, but the surrealism is a matter of landscape, not of language or local image. Taken as an *oeuvre*, and they should be, her poems present a vision of the contemporary world which is at once unique and disconcertingly familiar.

It is, primarily, a vision of fallen man uncomfortably accommodated to a fallen world. Uncomfortably, because he still harbours, if only unconsciously and as a crutch of grace, traces of the lost world whose irrecoverable existence nevertheless enables him to survive.

Like someone who came with a message
from far away
and then forgot it completely,
and of all of the grainy light only a handful
stayed in him, tied in a bundle—

so wanders the forgetful one
in his body's rumpled coat.
("Like Someone")

Normally, however, the vision is stretched on a larger frame. In "The Horseman," for example, that remarkable picture of a modern waste land, the horse and the horseman are both diminished from some previous incarnation of power and authority. At the beginning of the poem we have an image of a pole-well, which is later played off against an image of a castle or fortress—but in memory only, since the fortress too serves only as foil for the parched landscape to which the poem finally returns. Or that terrible and bitter poem "Statues," in which the products of creation, of a Creator, are seen as artifacts, sculptures, with just enough human consciousness to perceive their helpless condition, but without the capacity to rectify it. The poem asks the same question that Blake asks in "The Tiger," except that here the products of creation—or evolution—are impotent pieces of junk-sculpture with nothing of the power with which Blake endows his tiger.

Yet, strangely enough, the darkness of this vision is mediated by the very ability to experience it. Access to Nemes Nagy's moralized landscapes is invariably through vision in the literal sense; and a concern with perception, with fidelity to what the eye sees, is a recurrent insistence in her poetry. I think it is no accident that the first four or five poems in my selection are about looking, one of them even called "But To Look." It is as if the act of seeing, however painful the sight, were a validation of something central and redeeming in man's nature, including the ability to make poetry. "Four Squares," for example, is thematically related to most of her other poems, but it is chiefly brilliant because of the sharpness of visual detail, the optical perceptions which control its movement. As she looks at the four panes, one at a time, and describes what she sees or doesn't see, it becomes apparent that it's in part at least a poem about the limits of perception and how the imagination can compensate for those limits. Even if the imagination must invent its consolation, one feels that that power of invention is itself being celebrated.

Often too the weight of perceived detail is scientific in a technical sense. The processes of physics, and especially geology, abound ("Between," "The Geyser," "The Proportions of the Street"). "Between" contains not a single personal pronoun, and only marginally any sense of a human observer. The action of the poem, which is almost entirely geological action, seems to be taking place in some phantasmagorial movie. Yet I find the poem extraordinarily moving: the set of opposing relationships which it develops is inescapably read against a definition of what it means to be human; and if the human position is necessarily a precarious one, the very excitement which the poem generates as it details the impersonal functions of the universe declares a value in being part of natural processes, hostile though they may be. The most striking poem in this respect is "The Proportions of the Street," in which a texture of abstract technical terminology unlike anything in contemporary literature is mediated and given meaning by the playful, ironic, and tender returns to the "inconsequential" domestic cat.

Most often, however, it is the more normal motifs of landscape which provide Nemes Nagy with her imagery. Trees are everywhere in these poems, as are birds and horses. (The title of her selected poems, *The Horses and the Angels*, poses the polar opposites between which the speaker is located.) In part their functions are traditional: birds are free, trees are rooted and aspiring, horses are powerful, etc. But whatever their functions as metaphor, chiefly they are presences, with biographies and wills of their own—unpredictable, mysterious, frequently threatening: the trees in "Pinetree," "From the Hindu Songs," "Night Oaktree," and "Before Then;" the raindrops in the second of "Songs;" the bird in "Bird." Even domestic objects have their lives, can be metamorphosed, can get out of hand, like the shirt in "Storm." For what the eye perceives, in Nemes Nagy's world, is not thereby fixed, much less controlled. It is a world which even in its most regulated processes is too precarious for that, too *nearly* human. But if it's a world which is in imminent danger of getting out of hand, it's the only one there is; and what the eye, and the poem, *can* do is avoid the moral, and possibly mortal, error of flinching from it. The dignity of Nemes Nagy's poems is that they know this, and they make a fearful joy out of that knowledge.

BRUCE BERLIND

ÁGNES NEMES NAGY

POEMS

Translated by Bruce Berlind

THE LAKE

Somewhere there exists,
somewhere there exists,
something somewhere is alive.
I hear it clear as it swishes,
some susurrus of a slow wind.
I hear it clear some spring,
it issues from the hollow of a large tree,
inside it are porpoising up-and-down up-
and-down: black alder leaves.
Somewhere there exists,
somewhere there exists,
some slow lake.
Inside it are porpoising up-and-down up—
and-down: millions, millions of jugs.
As pigeons' wings, some places
plash in the sky the lake
bubbles from the jugs' mouths.
I hear it clear, as, in continuous succession,
the thirsty pigeon-wings swish,
ten stories
up the ecstasy,
the plash of heart wrung from body.

I'm here drenched in a rain of shards.
And I'm gauging from my bruises which ones
would be good for a jug.
And I'm shoring it up with wire wire upon wire
and I hear with a sharp splurge how
the lake splashes splashes.

THE GEYSER

It started. First the salts.
A new crystal forms when it breaks down.
It started. The frozen heel of
the whole globe stomped it into the ground.
Then the concavities. It strained
under weights out of all proportion,
slowly with its slender body it squeezed
into agony between crumpled rocks,
and without warning a chasm, a
cavern-sized reverberation, and next
once more the black snailshell
of the gigantic stony brain, it
ground itself down to gaps and clods,
the screw-thread, already smoking,
got hotter and hotter, till finally—

It gushed upward. And stayed there.
A lanky perpendicular moment
pinned to the steaming icefields.
The leap itself was bodiless,
a watery muscle of pure silver,
stretched-out, preposterous—
Then it fell down.
The jet withdrew in the body,
in the briny belly of the smoking earth.
And now and again the hollow mine-shaft
jerked, as rattling, retreating,
its receding bestial heart beat back once more.

Both translations will be included in "The Selected Poems of Ágnes Nemes Nagy," translated by Bruce Berlind, to be published by Iowa University Press.—Ed.

THREE UNUSUAL NOVELS

Péter Esterházy: *Termelési regény.* (Production Novel) Magvető, 1979. 473 pp.; Gábor Czakó: *Várkonyi krónika.* (Chronicle of Várkony), Szépirodalmi, 1978. 453 pp.; Tibor Cseres: *Parázna szobrok.* (Lewd Statues), Szépirodalmi, 1979. 664 pp.

The three most important Hungarian novels to appear in some time are interesting from several points of view.

One of them is their unusual form. All three, by Péter Esterházy, Gábor Czakó, and Tibor Cseres, diverge from the general traditions of the realist Hungarian novel. Their chronology is mixed up, the narrative is interrupted by the author's interjections, comments, documents, philosophical deliberations. All three, especially Esterházy and Czakó, adopt an ironical, aloof stance which helps them to create the necessary perspective and detachment. All three novels deal with the problems of Hungary's past and present. Esterházy is concerned with economic, Czakó with sociological, Cseres with political and social questions and attitudes to life.

These books are serious, clever, and puzzling: they are not quite without ambivalence. They leave room for alternative solutions to the problems raised, they allow for a variety of interpretations.

The youngest of the writers is Péter Esterházy; born in 1950. His remarkable talents were already demonstrated by his first two books: *Fancsikó és Pinta* (Fancsikó and Pinta, 1976) and *Pápai vizeken ne kalózkodj* (Don't Go Pirating in Papal Waters, 1977) reviewed in NHQ 70.

His new work, *Termelési regény* (Production Novel) has an ironic sub-title: "kisssregény," explained by the author in a wry footnote. With mock seriousness he refers to the circumstance that the letters "ss" in the Hungarian word "kiss" (little, though it is spelt with one s) evoke the whistling of the wind. He writes his work to the sound of this whistling. And: "I took the liberty of mentioning also that the form 'kisssregény' contains the English word 'kiss'... Hm, hm, he though superficially, so this will be a novel with kisses. This pleased him."

This note illustrates some of Esterházy's characteristic formal tricks. Firstly, as the narrator, he alternates between the first and the third person singular. He pretends to be three persons and to be talking with himself. This makes his self-expression more dynamic and more dramatic: a lyrical narrative in the first person singular would be much less colourful. The note also shows that he appreciates subjective associations which express moods. He often inserts them into his texts. The instant classification of associations and ideas is a habit of Esterházy's. If he states something he immediately questions it with an attribute or an interjection, under- or overstating it. All this serves to express the ambivalence of his own attitude to his active ity as a novelist, to the part of the book h happens to be working on and to the fragmentariness of the world in general.

This permanent state of formal tension, this inclination to continuous self-control is a serious handicap. The author exposes his work to the danger of becoming bogged down in nit-picking details. He risks the meaning disappearing in a mesh of interpretations, sacrificing the living organism of the novel to mechanical formalism.

However, Esterházy manages to make his mannerisms natural. He involves his reader in his formal potterings, thus providing him with wonderful entertainment. He imitates Joyce, his (self-confessed) ideal in a way that parodies his inventions, his time and space games, his blow-ups, his micro-analyses, his stylistic and essayist conceits

and other peculiarities. He also takes into account the fact that, since Joyce, the development of visual culture has contributed to a generation growing up with an accelerated rhythm of life and speedier powers of comprehension. It is a generation of people for whom the simultaneity of spatially distant events is not a literary novelty, who have a more sensitive receptivity towards extremes of style and ways of behaviour. This is not to say that this is all on a more conscious level. They are more used than former generations to being non-plussed, disconcerted, shocked, and showered with witticisms. And in more recent years they have been able to tolerate the ambiguity and relativity of the world and of human life, the impossibility of classification and pigeon-holing.

Esterházy's work is deliberately full of tricks and ambiguities. The author knows what he is doing even when he is apparently only fooling around, jesting, and grimacing. His first and most perplexing idea is by no means a gratuitous one: his real "production novel" is in volume only one-third as long as the exactly 68 notes which accompany it.

The basic novel describes a working day in the life of Imre Tomcsányi, a young computer technician. The plot is only that the staff at a research institute doing profitability calculations unexpectedly bursts into action. They have to find some papers on parametric programming in the filing cabinet in room no. 903. The muddle-headed general manager appoints a section leader called Gregory Peck to perform this task. He relies on Imre Tomcsányi, the youngest worker in the section. After overcoming many obstacles Tomcsányi procures the paper or some similar document. The main difficulty is that the contents of the filing cabinets bury the members of the research section. By the joint efforts of the whole enterprise they escape from under the avalanche of paper. This lucky delivery is then followed by a celebration.

Splendidly characterized figures and brilliant ideas blow up this basically short-story satire into a slim novel of nine chapters. The first chapter acquaints us with the general manager's muddled ideas. In the second we witness an amusing staff meeting attended by a host of characters ranging from the charlady, the party and trade union secretaries to the lady secretaries. The third chapter is a depiction of morning in the section: a mixture of professional polemics and informal loafing about. The fourth chapter presents the strained relations between Tomcsányi and his section leader and between the section leader and an attractive female collaborator called Marilyn Monroe. The fifth chapter is a brilliant satire: an interior monologue characterizing the egoistic and narrow-minded mentality of the general manager and in general of all conceited bosses. The sixth chapter begins in a corridor in the institute just before lunch; very soon it becomes a parodistic parable. The scene changes into a parliamentary lobby where we learn about the affairs of the country partly in the manner of Kálmán Mikszáth, a nineteenth-century classic, and partly through one of the speeches of Mátyás Rákosi, the former Stalinist party leader.

The seventh chapter describes Tomcsányi's and his companions' feelings when, in the spell of happy future, they brace themselves to accomplish their task. In the eighth the description of the rescue from the mass of paper is mixed with hunting scenes and other phantasmagoria of the computer technicians stuck in the filing room. The conclusion is a strange celebration where the hero, Imre Tomcsányi, is first laid out in state. He comes to life and in a cartoon-style happy ending he receives the favours of a snub-nosed girl, a crane operator.

In the margins there are occasional arrows which indicate that in the line to which they point we will find numbers referring to the "notes" in the second part of the book. The brilliantly humorous autobiographical notes sometimes have a loose connection with the text, sometimes none at all. At any rate, they throw light on the intellectual mechanisms

of Esterházy's sophisticated way of building up the novel, on his characterization and on his playful view of the world. The explain why he likes indirect, multi-layered self-expression and all the modern devices of dissemblance.

One reason is, of course, literary fashion. On the other hand both personal and historical reasons force him to exert, not without some embarrassment, permanent self-control. He must assess his role, evaluate his situation as a writer in a socialist society from every angle and justify his art from the point of view of criticism. Esterházy is a descendant of one of the best-known and once wealthiest Hungarian aristocratic families. (His hand-written family tree is in the novel.) Wherever he has got to in his short life—be it deportation, school, football team, party, place of work, publishing house, editorial office—he has had to struggle against his being regarded as a walking anachronism. He reacts to his situation in every moment of "Production Novel." Of course family background is neither an advantage nor a disadvantage for anybody with true talent, although it can be helpful in that it encourages intellectual alertness, rational compensation, and superiority.

Esterházy's faults are also the faults of youth. His disparate autobiographical notes show that even he is not always pleased with everything he does. But he is delighted with his way of doing it. He cannot imagine that any football, mackintosh, friend, or pub other than his own could be better suited for passing on to posterity. If he were to select among his experiences, meetings, cherished objects, and people more carefully he could bring out what is really important more clearly.

However, neither his youthful playfulness nor his sometimes awkward showing-off detract from the fascination and ingenuity of his book. With his youthfulness, versatility, individual charm, ease, and facility the author offers a view of the world as seen and lived by his talented contemporaries in the Hungary of the second half of the seventies.

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Gábor Czakó was born in 1943; he started his career as a writer with a novel in 1970. *A szoba* (The Room) bore witness to his sensitivity to social problems, demonstrated that he had sufficient experience of life, an ability to observe people, create characters, and represent situations. In this first novel bad housing conditions ruin the friendship of three young men and the love affairs of two of them.

His second volume *Emberkert* (Garden of Men, 1971), contained twenty-one novellas and short stories; his Aesopian fables were remarkable. In 1973 he published a volume of reportages on young people. In these *Indulatos jelentések* (Irascible Reports) he displayed his moral passion and his zeal for field work. In his novel *Megváltó* (Saviour, 1974) he evokes the story of a young pop-singer and his environment before his court trial: the young man has been imprudent enough to get himself involved in a criminal case.

Csata minden áldott nap (A Battle Every Single Day, 1975) is a novel for young people. Its unusual concept is based on a Hungarian classic, Ferenc Molnár's *A Pál utcai fiúk* (The Boys of Pál Street).

His new book, *Várkonyi krónika* (Chronicle of Várkony, 1979), is a voluminous novel written with excellent humour and an artfully ingratiating manner. To a certain degree it resembles the famous peasant novels of Eastern European literature.

The scene is Várkony, a non-existent but easily imaginable village with a population of a few hundred people. It has no railway station, a bus service links it to the nearest town 7 kilometres away. The influential people in the village are all related to each other. The characters in the novel, with the exception of a few immigrants and guests, are the descendants of the Guti or the Gaál family. They are distinguished by the sobriquets given to them by village public opinion on the basis of what have been considered

to be their outstanding attributes since times immemorial. (E.g.: Guti the rich man, Gaál the blockhead, Guti the survivor, Gaál the wine-bibber, old Guti, Guti the cripple, percentage Gaál, etc.)

The young hero of the novel, 17-year-old Laci Gutisgaál, arrives in this village, in the house of Éva, widow of Márton Guti. He has just graduated from the college of commerce and wants to see the village where he has so many namesakes. Éva, widow of the village schoolmaster, is in reality his mother but as she doesn't know who the father is she keeps the fact of her motherhood secret. The dead cantor and two other persons, now also dead, could have been his father: the dean and Márton Gaál-Guti. These three and the living Gaál the subterranean, the underground communist party member, were all lovers of the gay and zestful Éva at the same time.

The living and dead men engage in lengthy debates in the house of their former mistress. Apart from the insoluble question of paternity, they talk about every conceivable subject: life, death, love, morals, religion, politics. The members of this strange council of village elders gently poke fun at each other, they are never quarrelsome, vicious, or aggressive towards each other. Not so the village inhabitants who, after work, drink pear brandy at the place run by a philosophically-minded publican and are constantly at each other's throats.

An ageing writer with a limp arrives in the village at the same time as Laci Gutisgaál. He and the priggish reviewer, who also has a limp, have only come for a literary get-together but they come under the spell of the everyday goings-on and gossip in this secluded spot and its permanent state of uproar. They even become the cause of unexpected events and have to suffer their agreeable and disagreeable consequences.

No more than two weeks pass between the arrival of the boy in this hillside village and the end of the novel. (By the way: it ends with the description of a merry funeral.) In this time the reader becomes acquainted with the ABC of social life, he gets to know the leading lights and representatives of the school, the house of culture, the party organization, the production cooperative, the pioneer group, the church, and the pub. He is treated to numerous, half-serious, half-comic, meditations on politics, history, literature, art, living, business, marriage, fidelity and infidelity, freedom and necessity, the love of one's home and the wish to get away. The author's views on the devil and hell are left unrepresented. They have no place in his carefully and rigorously constructed concept.

An important feature is the jovial, intimate, and seemingly natural narrative style which allows for a multitude of elaborations and digressions. The author does not remain in the background: he appoints himself chronicler and by that right intervenes in the events whenever he pleases. He comments, expresses an opinion, airs his doubts, and encourages the reader to persevere with the book by promising him that the less riveting passages will be followed by more exciting fare—and he always keeps his promises.

In the first lines of his chapters he forecasts the mood that will prevail in them with a description of the changes of the times of day, the weather, the behaviour of the animals, the ironical recording of the flight of the crows, the state of plants and trees. He concerns himself with creating an atmosphere of intimacy, he describes the taste of food and drink, people's habits and physical characteristics. These requisites of the nineteenth-century novel are entertaining, and incidentally prove that Czakó is a master in the ironical employment of these time-honoured devices.

Czakó steers clear of the fashionable technique of alienation. The leisurely but never long-winded narrative style of this carefully constructed book makes for great readability and is a successful revival of the traditional Hungarian provincial novel. The characters, despite their eccentricities, are convincing

and true to life. Their discussions and arguments are leisurely and clever in a rustic sort of way. Their problems are characteristic of village societies in the seventies. Their wise meditations on their situation, their joviality and cantankerousness ring a very familiar bell in the ears of the reader.

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Tibor Cseres was born in 1915. He comes from Transylvania; he graduated in economics at the University of Kolozsvár. His first work published in 1937 was a book of poems but since 1950 he has only written prose. His major novels are *Térdigérő tenger* (The Sea Reaching to the Knees, 1954), *Here báró* (Baron Drone, 1956), and *Pesti háztetők* (Housetops of Pest, 1961). The last-mentioned was made into a film. His *Hideg napok* (Cold Days, 1964) about the massacres in Újvidék in the Second World War is world-famous as is the film version directed by András Kovács.

His selected short stories were first published in 1967. In the same year he published *Fekete rózsa* (Black Rose), an unusual detective story whose solution is left to the reader. In 1968 he again took up the theme of the Second World War in *Bizonytalan század* (Uncertain Battalion). He made a novel of the activities of the Volunteer Battalion of Buda which turned against the Germans in 1944. In *Játékosok és szeretők* (Players and Lovers, 1970) he offered an authentic picture of a Hungarian village between 1948 and 1956. The hero of the novel, an erstwhile priest, becomes a journalist and then a country, resp. district functionary. His adventures, the stations of his career are an ironical rendering of the darkest five years of post-liberation Hungary. The tragedy of 1956 was described in the story *Ember fia és farkasa* (The Son and Enemy of Man) which appeared in 1975 and in *Siratóének* (Funeral Dirge), an ambivalent, ballad-like escape story from the Second World War.

His novel *Parázna szobrok* (Lewd Statues) published in 1979 is the summit of his achievements so far. It is an examination of the conscience of Major Béla Thormay in 1963, year of the Kennedy murder. This officer in the socialist Hungarian army is not a straightforward hero. He is a representative of those regular officers who served in the army of Miklós Horthy and, at the side of the Germans, fought against the Soviet Union in the Second World War.

Hungary had no real interest in the war against the Soviet Union. Those who fought in it such as Thormay, an officer in the tank corps, knew before the defeat of the Germans before Moscow that they stood no chance whatever against the much better equipped Soviet armies, who were fighting for a just cause. There are historical passages in the book which show that the destruction of the Second Hungarian Army in January 1942 at the Uriv bend on the river Don was only the confirmation of the severe doubts which regular army officers had regarding the course of the war based on their assessment of the situation. The accurate and detailed description of the moral and psychological state of an army forced to fight without hope and purpose until the end of the war is, however, only one aspect of this novel. Cseres experienced the war personally as a Second Lieutenant of the reserves.

His other intention is to clarify for his hero and his readers why the members of his generation are unable to forget their war experiences. Why do their thoughts revert again and again to its horrors and why does a feeling of responsibility never leave them?

The author examines the question of historical, political, philosophical, and human responsability. He does not accept the simplification which accuses the entire Hungarian people of having voluntarily accepted and practised the Fascist system. He does not agree with the view that it was entirely the choice of the Hungarian army whether they turned against the Germans and went over to the Soviet Union or not. He cites evidence that proves that not every Hun-

garian statesman agreed with the pro-German policy. He supplies data which demonstrate that it was *also* due to the manipulations of the Great Powers that Hungarian politicians nourished illusions about their own role and about the country's present and future. He recalls several negotiations conducted by Beneš, the former Czechoslovak head of state, which show the misunderstanding partly responsible for the Great Powers' assessment of the real nature of the Hungarian state.

Naturally Cseres does not try to assess the measure of responsibility. His main concern is what the individual can do in specific historical situations or what he cannot do when circumstances prevent or hinder him from doing what he thinks best. Against a philosophical background he starts off the examination of individual and national conscience with a general moral question.

In the light of the knowledge of the latest findings of Hungarian historical research the author, in the course of a personal, national, and philosophical analysis, suggests that the past reaches into the present. So here, unlike in many of his short stories and novels, he does not limit himself to narrating exciting parables and thus giving the reader food for thought. He wants to grasp the invisible essence, the soul of the age. He wants to reflect the state of mind of the nation at any given period and the issues which effected the existence of every individual, whether he knew it or not.

The novel is a tense narrative with many surprises; its suspense is not diminished by the insertion of the above questions in the course of the action. Events start in the spring of 1963, with a regular staff meeting in the Hungarian Ministry of Defence. Major Béla Thormay has been invited to report on the preparations for the April 4th parade. A letter is circulated among those present at the meeting in which a former officer threatens to make an attempt on the life of a head of government coming to visit the country. The letter could, of course, be the work of a madman but in the light of the murder of Kennedy, Thormay and his superior think that it is worthwhile looking into the case.

The Major suspects one of his former fellow officiers, Staff Captain Aladár Tömössy because he thinks him capable of planning and executing such a risky action, either by rational design or out of mere madness. He tries to find him by tracing the people on a group photo made in 1939 including him and his wife together with thirteen other people who could have some connections with the extremely talented and self-assured Aladár Tömössy. In the course of the fast action that follows we are acquainted with the past and present of all fifteen of them in severely "cut" film-like scenes, which are composed mostly of agitated dialogues. The mystery remains open to the very end as in an Agatha Christie novel but it soon emerges that not only the results of the investigation are interesting but also the everyday people, most of them still alive, who turn up from the past—from the years 1939 to 1945.

Parallel to Béla Thormay's, other investigations are running. A Colonel of the old stock, a General, a Jewess, owner of a tobacconist's and a chief rabbi, in their search for different data, reveal unexpected and surprising facts from the past. An internal military inquiry is also initiated. An informal gathering of friends turns up many secrets and chance events from Thormay's former life.

The thriller-like suspense is partly due to the retardation technique applied by Tibor Cseres. With its consistent use he is able to render and relate everyday things in a way that makes one's breath stop. He is very good at maintaining the reader's interest and alertness by stylistic means. To achieve this he divides his novel into two parts.

Part "A" contains the fast action. Part "B" (the longer part) contains the motives which help us to understand the briefly described events in part "A" better. These motives are written in the form of notes, they

can be read again and again, they explain and help to remind the reader what has happened. The documents in part "B" outline the historical background and thus create intricate cross-connections.

The minor characters, especially if they only appear once, are described vividly. On the other hand, the traits of the leading characters, the four officers, sometimes run into one another. This indicates the possibility that ex-servicemen of that generation, despite their different characters and the diversity of their post-war careers, have almost identical fantasies, illusions, and ideas regarding the questions raised in the novel.

The homogeneous style of the book is a brilliant achievement. The dry military sentences are slightly archaic. Sometimes the unexpected use of technical terms and abbreviations has the impact of surprise. The entire book is characterized by restraint, quiet humour, subdued eroticism, virile directness, and elegance.

ZOLTÁN ISZLAI

POETRY AND POLITICS

György Aczél: *A kor, amelyben élünk.* (The age in which we live.) Kossuth. Budapest, 1979. 168 pp.

The present book contains eight writings in the chronological order of appearance. A classification according to subject or form is of course also possible.

"Continuation and renewal" and „Our principles in practice" are articles which first appeared in dailies; "Angola on the road to social progress" and "Workdays and prospects"[1] were originally contributions to public debates; "The age in which we live" and "Politics, arts, creative work" are major papers; "Unity—colourful diversity" and "From many starting places—in the same direction" are answers to questions submitted by *Humanité* and the Indian journal, *Mainstream* respectively.

As regards the actual dates, the volume encompasses the period from 1st May 1977 to the Ides of March 1979, but as far as content is concerned, "the age in which we live" is our own, complete with is historical conditioned reflexes, achievements and contradictions.

In other words, this book is much more than just the working journal of a prominent politician. Its purpose is to act as a signpost helping readers find their way in the thickets of the urgent issues of the day. Whatever the origin or first place of publication these are political writings par excellence. They all show that the author knows his subject, has done his homework, and is keenly aware of the historical, ideological and literary background, and implications, of what he has to say.

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I should like to consider the book first from the angle of international relations, looking at the *points d'appui* for an evaluation of the current world situation. When it comes to cultural policy I shall stress those conclusions which Aczél reaches with the help of literary examples, be they foreign or Hungarian.

The international dimensions of "The age in which we live" are determined by Marxism–Leninism and the organic interactions of internationalism and national historical experience assuming the form of consciousness, both as historical and practical

[1] An English version appeared in NHQ 71.

projections. György Aczél, for instance not only points out the common lessons of the 1919 Republic of Councils in Hungary, the civil war in Spain and democracy in Chile which were all drowned in blood ("The first two were overthrown by military intervention, the third by a bloody military coup enjoying outside support. And all three were followed by vicious fascist dictatorship."), but also stresses "dimensions of alliance" such as the CMEA, the Warsaw Treaty or Hungarian–Soviet friendship. It is typical of the way he argues to correlate the facts of history with those of politics. For instance, in reply to a question put by the *Humanité* correspondent, he characteristically answers with a question: "What would it cost the world if there were no Soviet Union? How many Chiles would there be? Where would be the independent countries of the third world? Could the longest period of peace in the history of Europe, 34 years, have happened?"

The briefest discussion of the global interaction of history and politics is bound to lead to a consideration of the experiences of other countries and other nations and of Lenin's notion that the working class movement is international by its very nature. György Aczél, following Lenin, goes on to argue this does not simply mean that it is our duty to fight against chauvinism wherever it may occur. It also means that a movement started in a young country can be successful only if it can make use of the experience gained in other countries.

Today when one can find out about an event on another continent in a matter of minutes, when there is an increasing interaction of events in this world grown smaller, the exchange of experience between nations looking for the path to socialism, or actually travelling on it is a question of special importance that also concerns and effects Hungarians: "It is of epoch-making significance that 84 colonial countries, ranging from India to Algeria, from Vietnam to Cuba, from South Yemen to Angola have gained independence since 1945." The eponymous piece repeats the example, ploughing more deeply: "More than eighty countries have gained independence from colonial rule since the Second World War. While these countries were under colonial oppression, the struggle for independence was their common, or at least closely related lot. Having gained their independence, these countries show a whole range of specific problems related to their further development and in that sense, the third world today is much more confusing than it used to be at the time of colonial rule. For instance, the position of victorious Angola or Laos obviously reveals the so far unknown difficulties presented by the necessity of coping with the enormous burden of a colonial past and inherited backwardness and of proceding towards socialism under such conditions."

I have quoted at length since the piece I propose to take a closer look at deals specifically with Angola. It provides an example of how an exchange of historical and cultural experiences is and can be of general interest.

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What I have in mind is "Angola on the road to social progress," an address given by György Aczél at the founding Congress of the Angolan Communist Party held in Luanda.

Discussing the period following the formation of MPLA, the Angolan Popular Liberation Movement, György Aczél raises the question of establishing a new culture and illustrates his points with a wide variety of ideological and literary documents. As he puts it, the rising new Angolan culture must meet a double requirement: it must revive past values and open itself up to the world, to universal culture. Apart from its original context this sounds a rather general line of policy, but it is nothing of the sort, as György Aczél repeatedly refers to Hungarian experience. To quote: "Our experience shows that two chief sources of danger have

to be eliminated in the process of meeting this double challenge. One is turning to the past, which means isolation and improvishment, an attitude which rejects everything that is not ancestral and national." It goes without saying that in the next sentence György Aczél lays down the Marxist position on *négritude*, the African manifestation of national small-mindedness and ancestor worship: "Those proclaiming such notions in fact confront racial discrimination with another racial theory, and in this way deprive themselves of the solidarity of workers in other parts of the world."

This is a concise and to the point verbal blow against utopian socialist notions which have been raised to the status of theories in the third world, that is Senghor's idea of *négritude*. As the Hungarian economist, ideologist and historian, Professor Imre Marton, points out in an outstanding piece of work, the *négritude* theories of Léopold Sédar Senghor, Senegal's poet-president, reveal "most clearly the indecisions of Utopian thought based on cultural disintegration." Senghor, believe it or not, maintains that culture takes priority over politics and that nothing is more alien to African culture than Marxist ideology.* "Black power? African socialism? Thoughts on the development of Angola and Mozambique,"** by András Sugár, the Hungarian television pundit, gives telling examples culled from personal experience which illustrate Marton's above quoted remarks. *Négritude*, writes Sugár, "is the strategy of black skin," the advocates of this "racism turned *per verso*" proclaim "exclusively African" socialism and, using the slogan *poder popular*, they demand that all *mesticos* should be eliminated from the leadership and all the key positions in the administration and the economy.

When György Aczél on the speaker's platform in Luanda, referred to *négritude*, all his African listeners were aware that he was hinting at the eclectic political views of Léopold Senghor, the poet-president and that he did so in the presence of another poet, Agostinho Neto, the Marxist president of the MPLA. I may be wrong but I assume that President Senghor's name was left unmentioned precisely because he is a poet and was showing tact towards President Neto. For there was every sign that György Aczél read not only the works of Amilcar Cabral and Marxist views on *négritude* while doing his homework for his address, but also African literature. Tibor Keszthelyi's *Az afrikai irodalom kialakulása és fejlődése napjainkig* (The emergence of African literature and its development to date, 1971) possibly provided him with important guidelines in several respects, but what appears to be of even greater importance, György Aczél's study was also embroidered by deep-lying recollections and experiences. The attitude of his generation concerning Africa was expressed by Miklós Radnóti way back in 1932 from the angle of the class struggle: *Snakes whistling in bushes / the heavy smell of the hosts wafted: / the Negro proletariat was on its way* (Song of the Negro who went to the City).

More than thirty years later, György Aczél was able to witness the dispensing of historical justice prophesied by the poet in the last line and it is only natural that he remembered these words by the Hungarian poet when he conveyed the congratulations of the Hungarian people to the victorious black proletariat at the founding Congress of the Angolan Party, marking the culmination of the Angolan revolution.

The other task the new culture was faced with, György Aczél said, was the integration of the values of universal culture. But this must not be done through an indiscriminating acceptance of everything that comes from abroad, but through creative adoption, since "Flowering cultures rely on traditions, further develop the values inherited from the past and are able to integrate all that can enrich their own national cultures by draw-

* See: "Backwardness and Utopian socialist ideas in the Third World." *Világosság*, 1975/10, pp. 585–593.

** *Világosság*, 1977/3, pp. 178–182.

ing on universal culture and the achievements of civilization."

And this is the point where the poetry of Miklós Radnóti who showed such an intensive interest in the struggle for independence and the cultures of the colonial peoples enters György Aczél's line of reasoning.

"This is how a Hungarian poet described his sufferings and his loyalty to Hungary, his devotion to the colours of the Hungarian flag: *The poet will be killed, for he teaches the truth / He knows, blood is red, / snow is white / and the fluffy stalk of the poppy is green.**

The quotation is from *On a Copy of the "Steep Road,"* a poem Miklós Radnóti wrote on June 1st 1939 and published in the review *Nyugat* the same year. However, György Aczél did not copy the four lines from a volume of Radnóti poems or an anthology, he quoted from memory. That it had been lastingly imprinted on his mind explains the different, one might say new version. An article by István Vas on Attila József recently recalled (in *Kortárs* June 1979) an episode of Tibor Déry's last hours when Déry stubbornly repeated the rhyme "alkonyul — lekonyul" (night is falling—it is drooping), but no poet being present no-one could tell where the line was from. Half-jokingly, someone said why didn't they ring Aczél, he knew so much poetry by heart. "Yes," said Déry, "call Aczél!" And György Aczél who indeed knows volumes of poetry by heart (a tremendous source of consolation while he was in prison) answered instantly that those lines were by Attila József. He was able to quote the poem right there on phone. Comforting memory retained the Radnóti lines too in the form in which he included them in the speech. One should quote this version just because it is different from the original, and that is how it became personal, a revelation of the deep impact the poet made on another.

* In the original poem, the poet *witnesses*, instead of *teaching* the truth: the two words sound similar in Hungarian: *tanít* (to teach) — *tanú* (witness). (Ed.)

The Radnóti quotation György Aczél remembered and included in his address is in fact a most expressive and bold parallel to a stanza in a poem by Agostinho Neto:

"It was a moving experience to read a poem by President Neto who used the same colours of red, white and green to express the idea that the creative work of the people will one day serve popular welfare... *"Our fields / are red with coffee, / white with cotton, / green with maize. / We shall prosper."*

Having surveyed the personal motives behind the inclusion of the Radnóti quotation in György Aczél's address in Luanda, one should also examine the origin of the lines by President Neto. That should throw light on the association with Radnóti from another angle and will justify even more the structural place and function of the quotation.

I looked through all the bibliographies, anthologies and papers that I thought might have contained poems by President Neto, and I could not find the Hungarian source from which György Aczél might have these five lines from *Havemos de voltar* (We Return) but could not find them anywhere. Finally, since after the Angolan Party Congress (7th to 10th of December 1977), translations of Neto poems were published by the same translator (The African Train.—*Az afrikai vonat*—Népszabadság, 18th December 1977.) who was responsible for *The First Congress of the Angolan Popular Liberation Movement* (MPLA), I called on him, András Gulyás, a noted translator from Spanish and Portuguese. It turned out that he had been György Aczél's interpreter in Angola and he remembered that at the time of preparing for the Congress, György Aczél, who had looked into all available sources of information, had also read a book on Angola by a Pole and that book had contained a rough translation of those Neto lines. Having reached that stage, nothing was easier than to find a copy of *In a Hail of Bullets in Angola* (Golyózáporban Angola földjén) by Ryszard Kapuscinski published in Hungarian in a library where the final chapter presents both

the Portuguese original and the Hungarian rough translation of the Neto stanza:

"Before I leave, I shall visit President Neto to say good-bye... We discussed poetry, I had his latest volume of poetry published in Lisbon this year, his *Sagrada Esperança* with me.

As nossas terras
vermelhas do café
brancas do aldogao
verdes dos milharais
havemos de voltar

Roughly translated: *Our lands / are red with coffee / white with cotton / green with maize / we shall prosper.*"

The Neto quotation included in the address was heard by Congress delegates in Angola "translated back" as it were into Portuguese, so President Neto's poem was read out in Luanda in a precise version. Naturally, the Radnóti and Neto lines have to be compared bearing in mind considerations that have nothing to do with scholarship. There are differing motives behind Radnóti's use of the symbol of red-white-green. However, one only reiterates and strengthens the other in meaning and sound; one should not forget, an address is after all a piece of oratory that has generic forms of its own. I am even inclined to think that the Neto quotation found in the Polish book brought back—as a parallel to clarify and explain an idea—the lines of the Radnóti poem.

A decisive point in any public or political speech is its conclusion, the strength of the idea set forth in the final part and the extent at which it can carry away its audience emotionally. György Aczél's address in Angola was especially successful in that respect. The final sentence was: "Comrade Neto's poetic revolutionary prophecy he wrote in prison: '*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. Theirs will be the country and the gratitude of the people.*'" It would be a vain effort to try to find the Hungarian original of that final quotation. György Aczél could include it only by studying a Neto volume in the Portuguese original. His interpreter has confirmed this and I may complete the information he gave me by adding that they probably looked at the same Neto volume *Sagrada Esperança* (Sacred Hope) published in Lisbon in 1974 that Ryszard Kapuscinski took along with him when saying good-bye to President Neto among the palm trees on the shore of the Belas Bay in Luanda. With the help of the poet-translator of the Hungarian Neto volume, I can now present in Portuguese and in translation the lines from *Noites de cárcere* (Prison Nights):

No silêncio sepulcral
das quatro pareded sem sol
lê na Biblia
oferta de esperança de sua mãe;
"Bem-aventurados os que têm fome
e sed de justiça ..."
Porque deles será a pátria
e o amor de seu povo.

In the sepulchral silence / of the dark within four walls / he reads from the Bible / he'd received from her mother: / "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst for righteousness..." / For theirs will be the land / and the love of their people.

The poetic quotation selected to wind up the address is as accurate as possible and its context also reveals that its suggestiveness is to no small degree due to the Biblical reference. In it, Agostinho Neto (incidentally the son of a clergyman) refers to the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew, 5,6.). However, the conclusion of the text of the gospel ("...for they shall be filled.") carries here a social, patriotic content with special reference to Angola.

All this did not have to be explained to the Luanda audience: the mere quotation could touch off the above chain of associations.

The address György Aczél gave in Angola is also suggestive in its printed form. It is a political paper with a blend of personal ele-

ments and artistic intuition which is therefore closer to the modern essay than to the usual political speech.

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It was quite intentional that—pars pro toto—I discussed in detail this particular writing. I selected the Radnóti–Neto parallel from a rich world of literary examples and wanted to show that this paper in the volume, "The age in which we live" also throws light on important relationships: historical experience that can be passed on and common tasks and prospects. It will be useful reading for all those who would like to use the compass of a "Marxism the truth of which is evident in everyday practice in many parts of the world."

SÁNDOR IVÁN KOVÁCS

THE LEGAL SYSTEM OF THE EEC

Ferenc Mádl: *The Law of the European Economic Community* (Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1978, 330 pp. In English)

A new feature of economic life in our time has been the opening of negotiations between the CMEA and the Common Market. Both of these economic communities are forms of international integration, though the two are different from each other in both content and in character. In contrast to the Common Market, whose bodies are increasingly taking on a supranational character, the CMEA has no common customs policy, no quotas, no common executive and legislative apparatus like the Parliament, the Court of Justice, etc. Essentially the CMEA serves the promotion of bilateral contacts, since the parties conclude their commercial treaties on a bilateral basis. The foundations of the EEC on the other hand are: (1) absence of customs duties, (2) assertion of the so-called four freedoms (free movement of goods, services, people, and capital), (3) free economic competition and, finally, (4) common agricultural, transport, foreign trade, and credit policies.

In the 1960s the integration of the Common Market was in full swing. This process has not exactly come to a halt, but it has now considerably slowed down, a fact that is well illustrated by the postponement of the introduction of the European monetary system which had been promised by January 1, 1979, as well as by the wrangle over direct elections to the European Parliament. Even though the slowdown in the development of the Common Market can be seen clearly, there is no denying that its international reputation is unblemished.

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As capitalism was going over into its monopolistic stage, relations between the corporations and trusts of different countries grew ever closer. The internationalization of capital increased. The forces that determine the development of this integration are, on the one hand, the privately owned capitalist monopolies which adjust themselves to the competition taking place nowadays on the world capitalist markets and, on the other hand, the state, which also exercises a growing influence upon international economic relations. Experience has shown that many of today's economic problems are beyond the power of monopoly capital.

Of course, the economic integration of states has a special character and their role

in the process of integration becomes greater, for, as was stated by the EEC (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, June 24, 1977), 45 per cent of the gross national product of the member countries goes on public expenditure. The author points out on several occasions that economic integration—that is, the economic integration of these states—is not a chance phenomenon but an objective necessity.

New forms of the international division of labour, however, not only evolve on the regional scale. New forms are also met with in the relations between the CMEA and the Common Market. In the economic relations of CMEA states and EEC states a growing role is assigned, in addition to traditional trade, to a new type of relation, that is, cooperation agreements, which are to create new forms of the international division of labour. In view of such perspectives it is increasingly necessary to study the legal system of the Common Market. This is why this book by Professor Mádl can be said to be filling a gap.

Interestingly the author points out that socialist literature has long misjudged the economic activity of capitalist states. In this respect the difference lies in the fact, the author stresses, that the decisive majority of the instruments of production in socialism are owned by the state, and this is what leads to the state's role in economic organization, one might say, to its managerial role. This is also the basis of the role played by the legal institutions which consequentially differ from those of the bourgeois state. But the role of the capitalist state is also changing: especially since the Second World War the state has increasingly intervened in domestic and international economic processes. This even finds expression in the various legal systems, especially where the legal foundations of capitalist economic integration are concerned. The author points out that the law applied within the Common Market is not a kind of new legal system, but the pragmatic implementation of the monopolistic economic policy of the state in developed capitalist countries. Neither the provisions of law nor even the existing literature on the EEC legal system clarify the connection between forms of ownership and production relations. Simply and pragmatically they take note of the property relations of member states, and they become the basis of the regional legal system. Its source is therefore partly German law, French law, and when great enterprises are established, account is even taken of American legal practice, as is shown by the application of antri-trust laws in the case of cartels. With such legal practice the question arises which of the two, "community law" or national legislation, is given priority. The book quotes the decision of the EEC Court of Justice stating that in accepting the Treaty of Rome the participating countries give priority to the rules of the Common Market, so much so that when cases are referred to national courts, in the event of dispute the legal organs of the Common Market have to be consulted.

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The author investigates this pragmatically constructed legal system from many sides. The economic policy of the Common Market is based on competition, the prerequisites of which have to be created, and this means that no state can facilitate the situation of its enterprises with regard to competition. At the same time the EEC promotes the concentration of enterprises on a European scale. The problem is to link up and coordinate this action with competition. Competition and the size of the enterprises, however, determine the economic structure of the system. The Economic and Legal Commission of the Common Market approves, to a certain extent, of the formation of large economic units in the various branches of industry, and at the same time it considers it important to devise brakes which can guarantee competition between big enterprises while having regard to the small and medium-sized enterprises, too.

The book reviews a number of cases from the practice of the Court of Justice which prove that, from the legal point of view, the concentration of enterprises and economic competition must have equal freedom and, while the large companies grow rich, the development of the small ones and their participation in competition must be guaranteed. To this end there is need for tax and financial measures and a series of other arrangements to secure the mobility and development of small and medium-sized enterprises. This quasi-compromise spirit is also illustrated in another topic discussed in the book, the question of cartels.

There is very considerable confusion concerning cartels. The author states that, from the historical angle, the cartel is the expression of a special contradiction. On the one hand, along with free competition which atomizes the market, there has also appeared a "consumption-manipulating" capital; on the other hand, the capitalist mentality is "ashamed" of this undermining of the classical freedom of the market. The official "anti-cartel" attitude has been influenced by the American anti-trust law which is really the source of all anti-cartel laws.

EEC legislation has also created a compromise in this respect. On the one hand, in Article 85 of the Treaty of Rome, it has announced that cartels are prohibited, as is also made clear by the various "regulations" issued by the Common Market. At the same time, as against the American law which declares all market-sharing contracts, price agreements, etc. *ipso facto* illegal, EEC practice distinguishes between good cartels and pernicious cartels; legal practice is imbued with the conviction that the anti-cartel law is to be applied only if the working of the cartel violates or may violate the public interest. Therefore, while in the USA the act itself is forbidden, in the Common Market only the effect has to be investigated. The author enumerates a series of cases from which it becomes clear why the Legal Commission of the EEC or its Court of Justice has exempted enterprises or concerns, from the effect of the cartel law. Most of the rulings are pervaded by the condemnation of what is called a "dominant position." To clarify this was deemed so very important that a panel of professors was appointed to do the job. According to them, "dominant position" means that an enterprise or the combination of several enterprises displays an activity, or employs a strategy, which not only influences the decisions of other economic units but also hampers their development. Legal practice therefore regulates not only the cartels but the concentration or combination of enterprises, too. True, it also makes a distinction. Cartels are forbidden in general, and a licenced one is the exception. For concentracions or combinations the exception is their restriction. From this it also follows that if the provisions of the cartel law were applied to the concentrations, this would result in easing the prohibition of cartels or in increasing severity with regard to concentrations. Therefore these are judged not pursuant to Article 85 of the Treaty of Rome but to Article 86 which does not provide for any general prohibition.

The above picture shows that the agricultural policy of the Common Market and the existence of the big coal and steel trusts are not easily adapted to free competition. The fact is, however, that the anti-cartel and anti-trust laws have to be reckoned with.

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It is still more difficult to solve the contradiction between the market orientation of the EEC and the supra-competitiveness of state-owned enterprises in Western Europe. This question is closely related to state sovereignty, or rather to the immunity of state enterprises.

Certain state enterprises already enjoy special privileges, a fact that often violates the principle of competition. State-owned

enterprises embody a part of state sovereignty. As in the other cases referred to above, the EEC legal system operates with compromises here as well. On the one hand, it recognizes the special functions of these state enterprises; but, on the other, it obliges the Common Market countries not to invest the enterprises with powers contrary to the letter and spirit of the Treaty of Rome. The situation is more difficult with the establishment of supranational companies required by new projects (atomic energy, etc.). In order not to impair state sovereignty, these enterprises are regulated individually. Thus, the observance of the Euratom agreement, for example, is controlled by the Common Market authorities, but the operational activities of the individual enterprises are governed by the laws of the country concerned.

The author deals in detail with the questions of integration, sovereignty, and immunity, looking mainly into how the controversial issues are decided. Possible forums range from the International Court of Justice at The Hague through national courts to the EEC Court of Justice. The author discusses this last-mentioned body, whose decisions are accepted by the member countries, in detail.

Developments up to now are evidence that the existence and practice of the Court limit the sovereignty of member states, but Marxist analysis of the decisions also shows that from the class point of view the Court is not an autonomous body, since it does not smother the interests of capitalist groups, which it would have the power and authority to do. This finding is also substantiated in Western European specialist literature.

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RÓBERT HARDI

FIVE POETS OF THREE GENERATIONS

Zelk, Zoltán: *Mindennapi halálaim* (My Daily Deaths), Szépirodalmi, 1979, 126 pp.; Tandori, Dezső: *Még így sem* (Not Even So), Magvető, 1978, 325 pp.; Jánosy, István: *A kővendég* (The Stone Guest), Magvető, 1977, 203 pp.; Gyurkovics, Tibor: *Istenigazából* (Well and Truly), Szépirodalmi, 1978, 283 pp.; Szécsi, Margit: *Mit viszel, folyó* (River, What Are You Carrying), Szépirodalmi, 1978, 367 pp.

Poems signal the passing of time: for "373 days," for eighteen months and according to another poem, for three years Zoltán Zelk has been an inmate of hospital wards.

"For three years I have been sitting in the grandstand, waiting to see with calm despair who is going to win the race, my doctor or my illness."

The title of this five-liner is *Szurkoló* (Fan). Even in prose translation it betrays the poet's passion for games and sport, especially football. The only thing the poet can do while watching the "madness" of his body is describe his grave condition in terms of his favourite entertainment. Sport is a symbol of health, the football-metaphor penetrates the hospital ward, and brings the outside world into the room.

In another of his poems Zelk, a great lover of animals, who has written a lot about them, complains that he has not seen

a dog "for three years." His friends brought "a poodle, starry-eyed, with a star-like heart" to his sick-bed and the deeply moved poet day-dreamed of dashing over the hills with a variety of dogs with the town in tow. The poet, incapable of writing himself, dictates his verses and never gives up writing because "a poem is more important than anything else," as said one of his teachers, Mihály Babits, the great Hungarian classic of the first half of our century.

The walls of the hospital ward are extended by nostalgia, memories, poetic mission, and love. Moving lines describe the poet's faithful nurse, his second wife who has been "sitting up with him for countless years." The hospital ward is peopled with the memories of childhood and youth, poverty and humiliation, but not only with these. Like André Malraux in *Lazarus*, the last volume of his autobiography dealing with his fatal illness, Zoltán Zelk also evokes the great examples of human solidarity. He writes about those who protected him in the war, during the years of persecution, about his wife who brings "fervour into the poems" of the man who lies awake in the hospital "twenty-five hours a day." Like Malraux, Zelk also evokes the two types of solidarity: war and sickness.

Zelk's career started towards the end of the 1920s when the "isms" were being replaced by more structured, more traditional forms. For several decades the greatest weakness of his always high-quality poetry was a sort of overdone sentimental volubility as if the rhymes, rhythms, melodies, and the stanza structures selected were bigger than the poet himself. In the last ten years Zelk has dropped all superfluous elements, his poems have become markedly shorter, and rhyme has tended to disappear from them. His formulations are terse, his messages clear or ambiguous as in the *Cabbala* or in the classic French aphorism.

"My friends believe I'am reclining
they don't know that I'm already learning to
walk
with resignation, at the side of God."

This poem is entitled *Mert így igaz* (Because it is so). May I quote here another three-line poem, which proclaims Zelk's system of values, his unshatterable zest for life:

Not even the flames
of unbearable pain
can quench my fear of death.

I think one of the main differences between Zelk's past and present poems is that the latter's effect does not suffer greatly from prose translation. The difference between prose and verse tends to disappear: their terseness turns these texts into poems.

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In the early seventies Zelk commented on the work of a much younger colleague in an enthusiastic poem. (In the beginning of the fifties Zelk had been on the curriculum of Tandori's grammar school.) Tandori's poem which so impressed Zelk was entitled *Táj két figurával* (Landscape with Two Figures); it was a regular chessboard with a knight and a pawn. Tandori's first book of poems, *Töredék Hamlethez* (Fragment to Hamlet), appeared in 1969. He had started as one of the most consistent representatives of Mallarmé's tradition and the group of Hungarian poets who continued it after the Second World War (János Pilinszky, Ágnes Nemes Nagy). He wanted to say the maximum possible with the fewest words possible. His poetry was a search for the absolute and unmutable to the exclusion of every contingent, accidental and narrative element. His next book, *Egy talált tárgy megtisztítása* (The Cleaning of a Lost Property), was printed in 1973. This signalled a new period in his poetic career. (See

this poem, translated by Tony Connor, on p. 98 of this issue.—The Editor.) Although some of the poems in this book were still written with the aphoristic conciseness of "Fragment to Hamlet" its most characteristic pieces, influenced perhaps by T. S. Eliot, vary and confront the incidental, and the commonplace. The anecdote and the story played an increasingly important role, their vocabulary was drawn from slang.

Tandori's newest collection of poems, *Még így sem* (Not even so), is the continuation of *The Cleaning of a Lost Property*. It is, however, not only a continuation but also a renewal, mainly because Tandori's ambition is not to write isolated, at most loosely connected poems, but to "create a book of verse." He explains his reasons in these terms: "Maybe I have felt increasingly that the writing of one poem ended just when it would have been good to start it. Maybe I was also seized by an emboldening feeling of insecurity, which is not necessarily an achievement of the present: Thoreau, the peerless novelist and forest-dweller, noted in his diary in 1841: 'The slightest sound at night can make life seem inexpressibly serene and grand. It may be Uranus I hear or it may just the shutters.' So if we don't understand something sufficiently it's best to test it against something else we don't know."

Making books of verse, as explained in one of these poems comes close to novel-writing and indeed, both before and after writing these verses, Tandori published novels.

Another new thing is that the poet has built his personal mythology or narrative world into his poetry. Milne has certainly influenced Tandori in the creation of his koala bears in the volume of prose verse *Itt éjszaka koalák járnak* (Koalas Walk Here at Night), published in 1977. But, whereas here they did not transcend the limits of their own world, in *Neither that Way* they touch upon Tandori's other worlds.

Most of the poems in *Not even so* are sonnets; there are also some ballads *à la* Villon and hexameters. The poems are variations of one and the same thing, process or state, and from time to time the the poet adds explanatory and qualifying footnotes to some of the lines. Tandori speaks with admirable professional knowledge about the problems of his craft—this is one of the basic motifs of his poems. How to write a sonnet, what are the requirements of story-telling, what is the psychological and logical mechanism of writing poetry? Dozens of sonnets deal with these questions. Tandori is perhaps the most prolific of our literary translators in recent decades; among other things he has translated Hegel, Arnold Hauser, Heine, Rilke, Peter Handke, Beckett, Sylvia Plath, Cummings, Randall Jarrell, and Turkish and Lithuanian poets. He has also translated Musil's great novel, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (The Man Without Qualities). He knows his craft inside out and the ins and outs of his profession are an integral element of his poetry. His poems mainly treat the possibility and impossibility of knowledge, the contingency of evaluation. The variants both invalidate and reinforce each other. The essential and the inessential change places whenever the poet looks at his subjects from a different angle.

The subjects, the "heroes" of the poems are the means of the craft, in the main language itself. Tandori explores the hidden syntactic possibilities of language. His other heroes are artists, poets, and painters always seen from a different aspect, such as Hölderlin, Rilke, and Klee. Other heroes of this poetry are the mythological figures of the twentieth century: household names in the world of sport, along with the koala bears, these products of Tandori's own individual mythology to whom he refers with the same self-evident naturalness as to a landscape, city, work of art, or artist, sportsman, or friend. "Neither that Way" is perhaps the most rigorous proof of Hun-

garian anti-romanticism, although, like an underground stream, the poet's profound emotionalism can always be felt.

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I mentioned T. S. Eliot's verse earlier. At the turn of the seventies *Prufrock* was a source of considerable encouragement to Tandori. I should mention here another work by Eliot, *The Waste Land*, the fourth part of which, *Death by Water*, has been translated by three Hungarian poets, Sándor Weöres, István Vas, and István Jánosy. Weöres and Vas are among the best-known contemporary Hungarian poets at home and abroad. A volume of Weöres's poems has appeared in Penguin. By the way the title of one book of verses by Weöres, *Merülő Szaturnusz* (Saturn Submerging), contains a poem of the same title, dedicated to the memory of Eliot; Vas has dedicated fine essays to him and visited him in the fifties in London. Soon after the war Vas acquainted Jánosy, then a beginner, with the work of Eliot. All translation is interpretation and hence also a kind of criticism. Even a superficial comparison of the three Hungarian versions of Death by Water is highly instructive because it leads us into Jánosy's workshop.

The narrator in Weöres's translation speaks dispassionately and matter-of-factly about a death from which he draws a lesson that can be drawn from every death. His voice is a shade rhetoric but this pathos is part of the objectivity of his report. In Vas's version the narrator hurriedly tells the story, since it is not particularly any business of his, such things being commonplace. Jánosy's narrator sobs, curses and is ironical all at the same time, he identifies himself with this death. The narrator in Jánosy's poem (friend? companion? acquaintance?) respects the dead, the narrators in the Weöres and Vas versions (one more a priest, the other more a journalist) deliver a routine report.

Jánosy received a classical education. He translated Aeschylus, Seneca, and *Paradise Lost* (but also the *Ramayana*, Dylan Thomas, and Ginsberg); he wrote his first poems during the war. He was not yet acquainted with surrealism when he started recording his dreams. His new book of poems, *A Kővendég* (The Stone Guest), contains his first dream poem, written in 1942. In the post-war years, in his first great period, he was mainly concerned with the figure of Prometheus. The Prometheus motif and his lively interest in dreams have accompanied him through the thirty years of his poetic career.

"The Stone Guest" consists of three cycles. The first mostly contains memories of childhood and youth, and dreams about "peddlers," "the first woman," or the impact of *The Brothers Karamazov*. In the second there is a poem entitled "Miltoniada" and others inspired by Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Beethoven, and Kodály. Jánosy identifies with them to the same degree as his narrator in "Death by Water" identified with the dead Phoenician. The third cycle is a classicist tragedy in four acts, *Claudia*. The heroine of the title is the daughter of the exiled Julia, the grand-daughter of Augustus who will be the wife of Pontius Pilate. The scene is Jerusalem at the time of the trial of Jesus; most scenes are set in the house of Pilate. Claudia hates Tiberius for perverting her, and to the utter horror of Pilate she refuses to worship her grandfather as a god. Her visions evoke childhood memories of Rome and its environs and she is in search of the absolute. One of her slaves, Mary Magdalene, whom she wants to save, draws her attention to Jesus. Pilate, the intimidated bureaucrat, is the "blind tool" of Seianus who, as we know from Tacitus and Suetonius, has been the all-powerful lord of the Roman Empire under Tiberius. Pilate, fearing denunciation, does not keep his promise made to Claudia and condemns Jesus. After his death he learns of the fall of Seianus. Both Claudia and a friend of Pi-

late's see the manifestation of Prometheus in the crucified Jesus. The tragedy includes a chorus and touches upon many questions of power politics, depth-psychology, sexual pathology, and the ethics of art.

The dream motifs, the elements of depth-psychology, the Prometheus symbol bring Jánosy's poetry closest to surrealism, although it contains many direct descriptions and untransposed narratives. Nearly all his poems have a mixed vocabulary consisting of slang and scientific and mythological terms. The passionate rhetoric generally washes away the structure of his stanzas, the rhythm of the lines changes all the time.

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Tibor Gyurkovics, poet, novelist, playwright, and short-story writer, was born in 1931. His first book of verse appeared in 1961. He graduated as a teacher of handicapped children and a clinical psychologist; his professional interests can be felt all through his verse. It is not that psychological interest is absent in Hungarian lyrical poetry, but Gyurkovics is a *professional* who has practised for fifteen years and so has had the opportunity to gather extensive experimental material. He knows psychology not only from his own observations and books but from the experiences gained in his daily practice. Gyurkovics is not an anguished and naïve neurotic: without ever being pedantic he perceives, senses, confesses, and even diagnoses his torments and hopeless loneliness ("I am... past saving") in several of his verses. The experience which determined his childhood was war. "...always the bomb, the bomb," he writes. His main influences are Dostoevsky, and very probably Kierkegaard. The material of *Istenigazából* (Well and Truly) was selected from five earlier books.

Again and again he examines human relationships, untiringly he analyses the child–mother, child–father, and father–daughter relationship, and the relationship between man and woman in changing situations. He is against cheap resignation and complacency; his Altató (Lullaby), written for his daughter, characterizes this attitude. According to the traditions or rules of the genre the lullaby suggests relief, peace, and security to the child. In this poem, addressed as much to himself as to his daughter, Gyurkovics wants to arouse the consciousness of hopelessness, fear, and loneliness.

This mood in conveyed even in a few lines of prose translation:

I betrayed you with the room, with the
stick with your name carved on it, with
the golden fly-paper—
I feigned protectedness—
I must cry out, you three-year old,
watch out—
I cannot help either.

Gyurkovics has written dozens of poems about hopelessness and the necessity of love. He said in one of his prose-poems: "Only others can heal us. It is impossible to live alone... Our life has shrunk to a single point: help... Poems are the debris of love."

He has also drawn countless portraits: of the monk who did not reach God "because of women," and who is "the perfection of myself, the abstraction of every love," of the foundling, "a shadow of black flesh," of the blind, of Raskolnikov.

Many artists and works of art have inspired him. He has written poems about Leonardo, Utrillo, Modigliani, Bosch, Velásquez, and others. I mention Klee separately because this artist has become implanted in the intellectual life of Hungarian youth of the Gyurkovics–Tandori generation. He returns to the figure of Jesus in many of his verses. Once he narrates the story of Jesus directly, true to the original, once he comments on him as if he were the hero of a work of art. In Bosch's painting Jesus is "like a highwayman," in Caravaggio's he

looks "like a woman." He writes of Jesus: "...no one is worthier of being loved."

The poems of Gyurkovics make uncomfortable reading, chiefly because of their formal discipline. In his case discipline of form means that he condenses his message into the traditional stanza structure, into regularly repeated lines. His favourite form is the poem four or eight lines. Although he does not shrink from bold enjambements, in general sentences are identical with the lines in his poems. He almost never changes the mood, rhythm, or tone within one poem.

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Margit Szécsi has been publishing since 1949, her first book of verses appearing in 1955. She is the widow of the poet László Nagy who died recently. *Mit viszel, folyó* (River, What Are You Carrying) is a selection of her best work over thirty years. The selection has been severe, even too much so, since many fine poems have been left out, including the one which appeared in NHQ 55 in Laura Schiff's translation:

"Whoever's executed by loneliness
has a black death,
because the sun rises without him,
and a million bats fill
the gapless avenue.
The engine starts noiselessly,
and he sleeps under the wheels.
I step onto the train—
rout my loneliness."

This severity, however, only proves the wealth of Szécsi's output and is the result of a well-balanced poetic conception.

Her speciality is the ballad in its different variations, the long meditative poem and the short aphoristic verse.

"River, What Are You Carrying" is the fragment of an autobiography, a woman's life in village and town. Its documentary value is inestimable: perhaps there is no one else who has the courage to speak with such self-evident naturalness of a woman's emotional life, of her memories of poverty and of the power of love.

I, Margit Szécsi,
lover of kisses and wine,

she writes with calm assurance. The best proof of her independence is that any intention of *épater* is absent from her verses. The heroes of this poetry are Gypsies, protective "broken-nosed" boxers, fellow artists, and, most of all, the poetess herself, creating self out of "obscurity and absence." Apart from its documentary value the main feature of Szécsi's poetry is its magic. It has preserved the old evocative force of the song. Its melody and intonation grip the readers's attention. In her long meditative poems where she departs from the song, or in the four-line poem below, she still maintains the power, terseness, and multi-layered ambiguity of the song:

7 o'clock, theater time, dinner time
I've made it onto the streetcar
life's mine
I bring home a nickle bunch of dead
and higher priced, a pot of condemned.

(*Az Ember*—"Man")

"Risk has been my luxury," Margit Szécsi wrote in one of her early poems. *Madár és denevér* (Bird and Bat), the poem in many parts which closes her book, proves that risk-taking is a permanent feature of her poetry and thinking. The poem recalls the youth of Lajos Kassák, the great poet, painter, and organizer of the Hungarian avant-garde.

To Angyalföld Lajos brings the Why,
and give us this day our daily Why.

The ethics of Margit Szécsi are based on these two lines, the early "risk has been my luxury," and the late "give us this day our daily Why." Her poetry is ample evidence.

LÁSZLÓ FERENCZI

A HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS OF HUNGARIAN ACADEMIC PUBLISHING

An Exhibition of European Scientific Books in Buda Castle

In the Middle Ages the language of Hungarian scholarly books was Latin, but later an increasing number were published in German, too; the logical explanation for this is the very stormy four hundred years relationship with the House of Habsburg. This enabled Hungarian scholars to have an international reading public and, with any luck, to gain European fame as well. This relatively favourable situation was brought to an end, paradoxically enough, by the founding in 1825 of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (at that time known as the Learned Society). The demand for modernization, which was so emphatic in Hungary during the first half of the nineteenth century that Hungarians still call this period the Reform Era, made the renewal of the Hungarian language an absolute necessity. Therefore, when the Academy started functioning, one of its main tasks, or perhaps its most important task, was to cultivate the Hungarian language. It was realized that one of the primary means for propagating scholarship in Hungary was the creation of a flexible and modern Hungarian language. The Hungarian language, which proved to have great advantages from other points of view, made it difficult for the international community to have access to the results of Hungarian scientific research.

A very sad example of this has recently been pointed out by the President of the Academy, János Szentágothai.* In the 1880s a pioneer of bacteriological and neurophysiological research in Hungary, Endre Hőgyes, published the results of his extremely important work on the connections between the sense of balance and eye movements—but only in Hungarian. Consequently these results could not find their way into contemporary currents of international scientific knowledge, although Hőgyes was proceeding along the same paths as were his colleagues abroad and was even ahead of several of them. By the time his work had been translated into German, decades later, it only rated as a curiosity in the history of science.

At that time Hungarian scholars, if they wished to enter the international arena, had to rely on foreign publishers, and this obviously limited their scope. For various reasons the Academy could not be of any essential help in this respect. Up to 1949, the year of its reorganization, it had published all in all 61 volumes in foreign languages (43 of them in Latin), and 5 periodicals in altogether 93 volumes in German.

The situation changed radically in 1950, when Akadémiai Kiadó (Publishing House of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) was established, one of its main tasks being to publish works by Hungarian scientists in foreign languages. Although this undertaking encountered a lot of difficulties (provision had to be made for professional translators, foreign-language editors and revisers, and—the most difficult of all—for distribution abroad), a modern and large-scale enterprise for the publication of books and periodicals in foreign languages was built up within a fairly short time. In the beginning, eight to nine foreign-language books were published annually, and in four years 18 periodicals appearing in the most widely used foreign languages were launched. The number of books published annually was 79 in 1960 and over 100 in 1966; since then the yearly number of volumes has been around 100, and at present that of foreign-

* For an interview with János Szentágothai, see NHQ 74

language periodicals is 53. Most books appear in English, followed by German, Russian, and French, in that order, and also in 13 other languages, such as Polish, Spanish, Italian, Croat, Czech, etc.

Cooperation in Publishing

One of the primary preconditions of this fast development was the establishment of manifold and close contacts with foreign publishers and booksellers. A very useful method (but not the only one) is what is called joint edition of books. This means that some of Akadémiai Kiadó's publications are sold by foreign firms as their products on markets which are not easily accessible from Budapest.

This is how the situation arose which in 1968 the New York periodical *Scientific Research* described as follows: "The publishing arm of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was established 140 years ago by Count Stephen Széchenyi (who also founded the Academy) to bring the scientific literature of the rest of the world to Hungarian readers; but the emphasis has shifted to bringing Hungarian scientific literature to the rest of the world, and the Academy now publishes Hungarian works not only in Hungarian, but in most European languages."

The foreign-language books and periodicals of Akadémiai Kiadó are already known and bought all over the world. Akadémiai Kiadó also helps branches of science for which the necessary facilities exist to set up one of their international publishing centres in Hungary. It has been possible to approach this goal in radiation chemistry, thermal analysis, mathematics and Finno-Ugric linguistics. Further efforts are needed in Orientalism and haematology.

In the past thirty years or so, Akadémiai Kiadó has established contacts with about 150 foreign publishers and booksellers through joint editions and other cooperation ties. Thus, when it celebrated 150 years of academic book publishing in 1978 (the first academic publication, the Academy's draft programme, appeared in 1828), it had the spontaneous idea of organizing an international scientific book exhibition in Budapest to display books of those publishers with whom the closest contacts had been established in recent years.

Exhibition under Unesco Auspices

As it happened, this idea came to the notice of the Hungarian National Commission for Unesco, which then called Akadémiai Kiadó's attention to the provision of Unesco's programme for 1977/78 which contemplated sponsoring just such a European scientific book exhibition. The fact is that this item in Unesco's programme was based on a recommendation from the so-called third basket of the Helsinki Conference as a provision of its Final Act.

The two ideas were united. Akadémiai Kiadó undertook to invite to the exhibition not only its foreign partners but, through the National Commissions for Unesco, all countries which had then signed the Final Act of Helsinki. In return for this arrangement Unesco provided moral and also some financial support.

As was to be expected, not all the invited countries sent their publications to the Budapest exhibition. In spite of this, 21 countries apart from Hungary and Unesco itself took part in the exhibition with more than 4,000 books and periodicals representing 144 publishers. To the best of our knowledge such a large-scale exhibition has never before been mounted in Europe.

Held from October 13 to 22, 1978 in the Hungarian National Gallery in the building of the one-time royal palace of Buda, the exhibition was opened on Hungary's part by Béla Köpeczi, Deputy Secretary-General of the Hungarian Academy of

Sciences. In his address he summed up briefly the past and present situation in the publishing of academic books and periodicals: "During the past 150 years the Academy has contributed to the propagation of domestic and foreign scientific achievements, to the progress of science, to the development of education and general culture in this country. Both the scope and the quality of this activity changed after 1950, when Akadémiai Kiadó was established. This publishing house has brought out books and periodicals in Hungarian and in foreign languages alike, and we can say it has done it in all branches of science. Besides this, it has published dictionaries and encyclopedias, and has therefore also been active in the dissemination of general knowledge. I specially wish to emphasize the work it performs in the publication of books and periodicals in foreign languages and which makes it possible for Hungarian scholarship to be part of international scientific life, to make its achievements known all over the world, and to foster the spirit of international cooperation."

Having outlined the circumstances under which the exhibition had been arranged, Béla Köpeczi concluded his address with these words: "Nowadays, in this age of the scientific-technical revolution, the role of science has grown tremendously. Science also directly promotes economic, social, and cultural development. Its international nature has extended and strengthened, since mankind everywhere comes face to face with global problems and with the demand for their solution. The most important among them is peace, and we believe genuine science must serve the cause of peace. The founder of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, István Széchenyi, wrote in connection with writing in general: All writing which is not aimed at the improvement of man, at the greater well-being of mankind, will sooner or later provoke nemesis. This statement is applicable to all sciences and scientific publications."

In his address, Taha Hussein, the personal representative of the Director General of Unesco, emphasized the importance of the European scientific book exhibition. He added that, in so far as Europe is an incomparable illustration of today's great scientific and intellectual progress, Hungary occupies an important position in this field. A perusal of the catalogues of Hungarian publishers makes it clear that the great many books published on the most varied subjects and the great number of copies printed presuppose an enduring and watchful interest as well as millions of readers.

The European scientific book exhibition was divided into two sections: the larger, comprising upwards of 3,000 volumes, represented foreign publishers in 29 branches of science, including firms of world-wide fame such as Nauka of Moscow, PWN of Warsaw, Wiley of New York, CNRS of Paris, the Akademie-Verlag of Berlin, Elsevier of Amsterdam, Pergamon of Oxford, Academia of Prague, Springer of Vienna and New York, the VDI-Verlag of Düsseldorf, etc. The other half of the exhibition room was filled with about 1,000 volumes from Hungary's 150 years of academic publishing: a smaller section exhibited volumes from the past whilst the larger part showed the current publications of Akadémiai Kiadó.

About 40 per cent of the exhibits consisted of books from the human and social sciences, the other 60 per cent included works on mathematics, the natural and applied sciences. Most of the first group of books belonged to the domains of history, science theory, and economics, the second group was dominated by medical science and technology, followed by mathematics and physics. A great number of encyclopedias and dictionaries were also on display.

The volumes that attracted most buyers were for the most part medical books and works on mathematics, as well as dictionaries.

PÉTER RUBIN

ART AND ARCHEOLOGY

A HUNGARIAN "PEINTRE MAUDIT"

László Mednyánszky (1852–1919)

Hungarian art criticism has a great many debts to pay, and one of the largest is due to the memory of László Mednyánszky. His person and work keep eluding scholarly analysis, prompting essays and memories instead. Ever since Ernő Kállai's 1943 book[1] the only step forward has been publication of excerpts of Mednyánszky's diary (1960)[2]. The growing recent interest in the art of the turn of the century has left him untouched. His art was unrelated to Art Nouveau, the dominant school of the time.

Much is still lacking before Mednyánszky's art can be surveyed from the angle of our own times. It seems difficult to gather even fragments of the huge, scattered material, since his works are undated. Kállai alone identified 2000 paintings, drawings and sketches by 1943, but even that he considered insufficient. The catalogue of the 1979 Hungarian National Gallery Mednyánszky Exhibition lists 581 works, hardly more than Kállai once saw in the Nagyőr Château of the painter's niece. Some 200 works are on display, hung as they come, without rhyme or reason. It tends to call attention to the gaps.

[1] Ernő Kállai: Mednyánszky, Bp. 1943, Singer és Wolfner, 121 pp., 80 black and white illustrations. In Hungarian.

[2] László Mednyánszky's Diary *(Napló)*, Budapest, 1960, Képzőművészeti Alap, 197 pp. In Hungarian.

And yet, much has been written about Mednyánszky, and that with appreciation. His importance was correctly assessed already by his contemporaries who likened him to Dostoevsky. His friend, Zsigmond Justh wrote about him in 1890: "These gloomy autumn moods, these 'genres' loud with the poetry of unhappiness, at the same time tell human suffering, in the same way as the works of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky." Justh also presented a most interesting and authentic portrait of Mednyánszky in his novel, *Fuimus*, which described the decline of the Hungarian aristocracy in the upcountry. "That minute the door of the salon flew open and Lipót Czobor (patterned on Mednyánszky), came in, not exactly suited for civil society. His shirt was open at the neck, the collar being held together by a sort of ribbon, without even a rumour of a necktie. His frock-coat was in one piece, but stained, the bottoms of his trousers were ragged, the sole of one of his shoes gasped, displaying his big toe. He did not appear to have the faintest idea how he looked." It is understandable that a painter-baron in rags, who had left behind his estate and distributed his wealth, was considered an eccentric. His isolation which became obvious above all in external features, his way of life and neglected appearance, have basically determined the judgement both of his contemporaries and posterity.

What however is much more important today is to see how deeply his attitude was determined by his age and the fate and philosophy of his class, the Hungarian aristocracy, and the degree to which it was unique.

He was one of those aristocrats who was aware of the decay of his class and, being unable to do anything about it, lived it as an existential tragedy. Justh wrote about his circle of friends of which Mednyánszky was a member: "We are ahead of the nation from which we have become separated and this is why they do not and cannot understand us. With us the beginning of decay can already be felt. Ours is a race capable only of work, of art—not of life. The art of life and success has not been granted to us."[3] For them the sense of existence was therefore provided by art and not by social action, art as the only "real" life and at the same time also a means of withdrawing from society. Art, however, in their interpretation is not solely activity but also contemplation, the experience of the world in terms of the categories of aesthetics. For them the relationship between man and the universe was determined by a fatal consciousness of solitude and a philosophical experience of existence. Man forms part of cosmic existence, but the cosmos at the same time is also the projection of his personality. In their world outlook the material and the transcendent eternally keep permeating each other, with every fact at once material and intellectual.

This is the philosophy at the back of Mednyánszky's painting, and this is perhaps why it appeared to be so alone among the period's Hungarian pictorial aspirations mainly based on sensualism. Mednyánszky actually lived through all that and therefore his personality, life and art form a unity about which it can be truly said that he not only painted his pictures but actually lived them. His painting drew on two subjects: landscape and human figures. He did not need more, because, as he noted in his journal: "Seeing nature has been my main occupation from earliest youth, this has been the meaning of my life."

[3] The Journal and Letters of Zsigmond Justh, Budapest 1978.

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Mednyánszky was the scion of magnates; he was born in 1852, in Beckó, in northern Hungary. He lived the life of a well-to-do, pampered child, and was brought up in a cultured and sheltered atmosphere. His talent showed at an early age, it was said about him that he could express himself in drawing before he could speak. From childhood he felt an attraction for nature, he roamed the hills for days; and sought his friends among humble folk. His father advised him to study in Zurich, at the Technische Hochschule and though he dropped out, he maintained an interest in physics and technology all his life. At the age of twenty he enrolled in the Munich Academy, and later continued his studies in Paris, but his academy studies tended to put a brake on his growth as an artist. His father leased a comfortable studio in Paris, opened an account and sent him a remittance. Mednyánszky turned the studio over to one of his friends, and distributed the money among the poor. He worked in an unheated storeroom and went to eat with the ragmen in a soup-kitchen. By that time he was twenty-four, a fully grown character, with an established way of life which he never changed. During his second stay in France, in 1889, he became familiar with Buddhism which justified intellectually what he felt instinctively.

He felt remorse for being rich and felt he must help all those who suffer. Throughout his life he worked strenuously, he painted several thousands of canvases, most of which he sold at ridiculously low prices to be able to help those in need. He was constantly on the move between Vienna, Budapest, Paris and Rome, to return from time to time

harrowed and ragged, to Beckó or Nagyőr. He worked the waterfront, lived among tramps, roamed the hills on his own, making friends with shepherds and charcoal-burners. And yet he was extraordinarily well mannered and well educated, he was familiar with the artistic schools of his age and judged them according to their worth. His pursuit of knowledge knew no limits. He observed volcano eruptions and floods, desiring to delve deep into natural catastrophe and human misery. He was sixty-two when the Great War broke out, and he volunteered as a war artist. He spent more than two years in the firing line.

*

His life spanned the years between 1852 and 1919, that is the great period of modern art. Naturalism, impressionism, Art Nouveau, symbolism, expressionism, cubism and nascent abstract art followed each other in quick succession. However, his work belonged to no school.

Early on he was influenced by Barbizon. He was subject to gloomy, mystical moods, to a mysterious, emotional poesy fed by light and the atmosphere. Weary sunshine filtering through gloom, mists and hazes blurring forms, fill his canvases with the silence of evanescence, with a grief projected into nature.

These fleeting shadows and quivering visions became suddenly repleted with colour during his second stay in France. From the autumn of 1889—interrupted by two brief stays in Hungary—he travelled the length and breadth of France for thirty months, beginning in the north and moving southward. Although there is no mention of Monet and Pissarro in his journal, his familiarity with Impressionism was probably a decisive experience. He made notes of the way he saw the landscape, and these descriptions are impressionistic sketches. "The morning sunshine sheds its light on the snow. A perfectly clear sky at minus fifteen centigrade. The planes illuminated slantwise are rosy, with a slight lilac tinge. Those illuminated perpendicularly are a sparkling orange. The shadows are wonderfully blue and ethereal, with a greenish shade. The sky is greenish and translucent." Impressionism, however, was only a painting technique and the way they looked at the world was far from him. He was of a much too meditating and mystic frame of mind to exclusively remain an objective observer of nature. He always perceived the transcendental contents behind experimental observations. He noted in 1896: I made my first experiments aimed at generalization with the help of the mist. In the mist bodies do not appear with their material local colours but are summarized into a bigger mass. The moonbeam and the rays of the sun came only later. In that case the local colour almost completely disappears, giving place to light. (In a certain respect the transfiguration of the material.) Despite all this he painted his landscapes in the studio.

From the mid-nineties on, gloominess once again prevailed in his pictures. The sunny colourfulness of impressionistic effects ceased and the overwhelmingly grey and brown tones were covered by chiaroscuro. This dark, gloomy mood however was no longer coupled with the sentimentalism of the earlier years but with a dramatic character. A tragic tension can be felt in the landscapes, even the trees in blossom so dear to him are surrounded by the darkness of the swamp, of decay. He was deeply shocked by his father's death, and even painted a number of allegorical compositions using the symbolism of death. However, the subject, fashionable with artists of the Secession or Art Nouveau school, was alien to him and only involved a short deviation from the line of his development.

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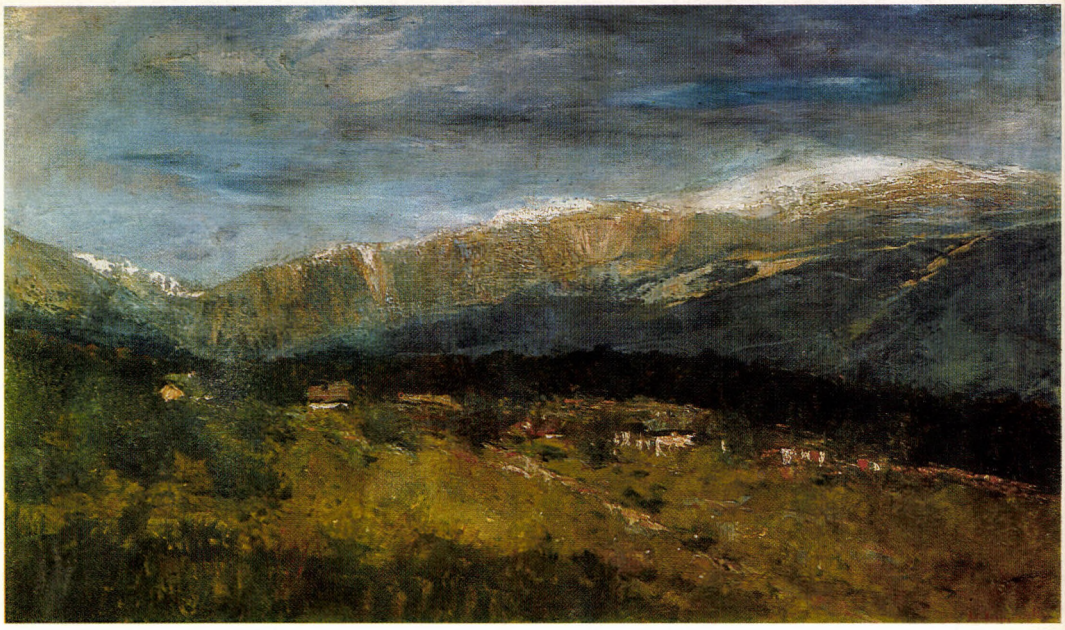
In 1897 Mednyánszky showed his work in the Georges Petit Gallery in Paris.

Corvina Press, Alfred Schiller

László Mednyánszky: Trees in Flower (oil on canvas, 190×243 cm, cca 1900)

Levente Szepsy Sz

László Mednyánszky: Stormy Landscape (oil on canvas, 80 × 100 cm, cca 1915)



Levente Szepsy Szücs

László Mednyánszky: Tatra Landscape
(oil on canvas, 70 × 101 cm, cca 1898—99)

László Mednyánszky: River Bank with Willows
(oil on canvas, 121 × 160 cm, 1900)

Corvina Press, Alfred Schiller

Levente Szepsy Szücs

László Mednyánszky: Serbia (oil and tempera, 67.6 × 100 cm, 1914)

László Mednyánszky: Head of a Tramp
(oil on wood, 45 × 34.5 cm, 1897)

László Mednyánszky: Old Tramp
(oil on wood, 17.5 × 13 cm, cca 1915)

Levente Szepsy Szücs

László Mednyánszky: Siesta (oil on canvas, 70×100.3 cm, cca 1890)

Levente Szipsy Szikts

ELEMÉR POLONY: SECRET OF THE HUMAN LANDSCAPE
(OIL, 145 × 127 CM, 1973)

Levente Szepsy Szűcs

ELEMÉR POLONY: STRUCTURE IN GREEN
(OIL, 137×112 CM, 1977)

It was there he first presented the people of the urban fringe, scenes of night life and the cheaper coffee shops, the seemier side of life. Adrien Remacle, who introduced the catalogue, observed the connection between Mednyánszky's portrayal of men and women and his landscapes. "Trollopes of La Villette, a killer lurking in the blueish light of an off-side gas-lamp, and sombre hills which remember the atrocities of the past are all members of the same family." In compositions with people he never depicted a given scene or event, his works are not genre pictures but a given situation or character, rising into universal regions, becomes the embodiment of fate.

The demoniac element dominates even his landscapes, but always linked to the depiction of a concrete place. The danger-fraught, tragic atmosphere is suggested by the colours, lights and shadows, the choice of masses and proportions. It is not the situations that are tragic, but existence itself which does not allow self-oblivious joy or absorption in the transitory beauties of a landscape. He painted sombre hills, rushing waterfalls, and the mysterious, uncertain contours of the transitional hours of the day—dawn and dusk—with a matchless suggestivity.

It is characteristic of his paintings of people that he always choose a close view, concentrating on carriage, the hands and the eyes. He painted hardly any portraits—one of the finest is that of Zsigmond Justh—but all the more heads. He descended to the very depth of the human soul when painting the down and out; the pictorial composition almost hypnothizes you. These dregs of society, apathetic characters one and all, shoved to the fringe of human existence, look at us wide-eyed, like starved animals that have gone wild.

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Mednyánszky spent two years in the front line, drawing. On his return home he immediately started working on the sea of sketches he had accumulated. He painted in large patches, held together by silhouette drawing, or he placed a milling crowd of tiny figures into a landscape suggesting infinite horizons. In some of his canvases he came close to expressionism; the objects shaped with wild, flowing strokes of the brush being barely perceptible. The wounded and the dead, soldiers marching and soldiers camping, prisoners of war, and civilians on the run are subjects. There is a constant flow of suffering, defenceless people in these pictures, among huge mountains or on broad plains. Landscape and man merge into each other, nature becomes one with human tragedy.

Mednyánszky's life's work stands alone in Hungarian painting. Slowly working himself free of graphic, detailed depiction, excessively linked to the subject, his extraordinary sense of colour helped him to develop his peerless pictorial style. His depictions are always realistic, but the content making itself felt beyond them and hardly expressible in words, raises the spectacle into a vision. "There must be a bridge between the finite and the infinite," he said. This, in the last analysis, is the goal of all art, but only a few succeed in achieving it. Mednyánszky was one of them.

ILDIKÓ NAGY

ELEMÉR POLONY'S LYRICAL ANATOMY

The painter Elemér Polony was born in 1911 in Gyöngyös, Hungary. He now lives in the United States. He started his studies in the painters' school of Vilmos Aba Novák, then he went to the Budapest Academy or Fine Arts where he was a pupil of Gyula Rudnay. Neither of these two masters were considered conservative in their day yet they represented opposite poles. The works of both were stylized although in a different way—Aba Novák used shrill, bright, uniformly applied colours whereas Rudnay painted in deep-brown, low-keyed tones. I only mention this because neither of them left any trace of their influence in the work of Elemér Polony. Their only legacy was a respect for "painting as such," i.e. for craftsmanship, but this is a general feature of Hungarian art. Polony took this vocation to America with him. He received a scholarship to go to Rome in 1948 and went to work there and later in Florence. He moved to the USA in 1952 and now lives in New York. He has now left on a long tour of Europe and has organized four exhibitions in the Federal Republic of Germany. The same material was on show in the Hungarian National Gallery in Budapest.

Polony held another exhibition in his native country in 1970.* The catalogue's preface was written by the late István Solymár, the then Deputy Director General of the National Gallery. His key sentence retains its validity for the present exhibition: "A small nation like ours cannot afford the luxury of breaking its connections with compatriots who have proved themselves in other parts of the world, often in the face of merciless competition..."

The present exhibition demonstrates that colour is the dominant feature in the art of this *poeta doctus;* the graphic skill which is only suggested in his paintings is in full evidence in his graphic work. His art is distinguished by three main features: a formal idiom related to biological surrealism, an attraction to ideals (this is also evidenced in the successful series of totem poles—as shown by the colour photos), and lastly the strictly realistic but stylized character of his drawings. He is still as passionately involved in them as he is in his painting.

Polony is a sensitive, lyrical and "picturesque" painter. The paint is laid on thickly, richly, almost with sensuality. Another characteristic is a certain luminescence achieved not by glazing but by the placing of the colours: in a dark-toned picture an intensive patch of colour will light up and give life and vividness to the dark parts of the picture. His pictures are often built up between two vertical lines like the storeys between two walls of a house or the ribs between the sides of the human trunk. His requisites are the molecule, the suggestion of human organs, bones, even rows of teeth, i.e. everything organic. The grand scale inspires this artist: despite the extra difficulties involved, the large-size paintings are better than the smaller ones.

The Mystery of the Human Landscape (1973) was directly inspired by anatomy. Of course, Polony's transposed formulations require some effort of the imagination to understand. The composition seems to be an X-ray of the human body but its colours are arbitrary: the body is a deep violet, the heart pink, the liver is liver-coloured, and the background cobalt-blue. *Structure in Green* (1977) can also be classified as a biological painting. The composition is strictly centralized—there are several dark-greens, blues, and violets—majestic, almost sombre colours. From this ensemble an apparently indistinct but in fact very distinct, small orange patch shines forth and dominates the whole composition with its fiery colour and shades.

* NHQ 41.

Polony's classical, Greek-style drawings are very different from his paintings. Apart from the influence of Picasso the drawings of Szalay were undeniably a major source of inspiration. (Lajos Szalay * is a Hungarian-born graphic artist who also lived in the USA. His great talent fascinated Hungarian graphic artists betwen the two world wars, to such an extent that now, many generations later, the Szalay tradition is still alive.) The subjects of Polony's drawings are mythological or symbolic, he renders every detail with brilliant draughtsmanship. It is as if two different hands had produced the paintings and the drawings. This two-facedness, however, does not mean inconsistency, it is a complex elaboration of the same basic idea and way of thinking, the expression of the same reality on different levels. This directly or indirectly illustrates Polony's creativity because however much he abstracts, he always remains representational. "I stand with one foot in the clouds and the other on the ground," he said when we talked in Budapest. "Without reality I would be unable to express myself. I call the combination of these two directions new realism because nothing can be created out of nothing. The richer we are the more we can give."

J. F.

* NHQ 38.

BELATED HOMAGE

I.

LAJOS SZENTIVÁNYI'S RETROSPECTIVE

In his lifetime, Lajos Szentiványi (1909–1973) had a single one-man show in 1955, in Budapest, a most modest affair, where, due to lack of space, the artist could present only a small part of his work. It is for the first time that Szentiványi's paintings, which were included in every major collective exhibition both in Budapest and in the provinces, are on display in a wider selection, helping one to form a true picture of the artist. The present exhibition in the National Gallery (April–May 1979) is a belated homage and also a measure of value, and this double function correctly refers to the place of Szentiványi's work, which though ever in the public mind, was little known in detail, and still awaits the attention it deserves.

Not that this is difficult to do. On the contrary, what one would want to say is virtually self-evident. The three spacious rooms offer sunny colours, light pastel shades, forms drawn with loose contours: a system of colour and form typical of Hungarian nature painting between the two wars, above all the Gresham circle, * which eclectically incorporated from the art of Western Europe of the times all that it could reconcile with its own visionary view and with Hungarian traditions—the strength of German expressionism, Matisse's decorativeness, and a sort of intimacy which reaches back to Bonnard. But unlike the main figures of that generation, Szentiványi did not get going with the idea of breaking up accepted forms of expression, or the desire to be modern. He received a conventional training at the Budapest Academy, and later —while travelling in Western Europe in 1937, visiting Germany, Denmark, and Holland—he refined his art by a study of the classics. This is also borne out by the severity of his early canvasses. Ten years later, his stay in Paris, and especially in Southern France, enriched the palette of an already established artist with the buoyancy of Medi-

* NHQ 68.

terranean colours. Under the influence of this environment and of French painting, his Cannes works are more daring and breezy than earlier paintings.

This in itself perhaps shows that Szentiványi did not like large dimensions, but preferred proportions around one metre, using soft oils and bright water-colours. On his larger canvasses and cartoons for murals, the message comes through creaking and it can be felt that the artist felt most at home among trees in blossom, the slopes of vineyards, and within the intimacy of the four walls of a room. He consistently looked for the place man can occupy in nature, and therefore in the world, within a landscape which, even though not idyllic, still does not show that peculiar disharmony which shows the mark man has left on it. Szentiványi turned away from the visual shocks of the industrialized environment, from chaotically pullulating towns, and abandoned those subjects which asserted themselves much too imposingly. He painted nature and still-lifes because the changes in the weather, the succession of the seasons, and objects arranged on a table could most suitably be shaped so as to express his own emotions.

As Richard Wilbur said, there is no nature poetry, that is a poetry with nature as its subject, if the age does not know a nature philosophy in which the landscape and human spirit really have something in common. This is even more true of painting which is considerably more concrete than poetry. Twentieth-century man really does not know what to do with a landscape which, for the most part, has been shaped by himself. The fact that landscape assumed such a great importance for Hungarian painters between the two wars was not merely due to a world view rooted in nineteenth-century ideas. This metaphoric relationship between nature and the realm of feelings indicates that, like Szentiványi, a whole generation found no other means to resolve its agnosticism and anxiety than to tell it in landscapes.

Szentiványi belonged to the main body of that generation, and the characteristics of his talent, his contemplative frame of mind preferring softness and shaded expression, made him the right man to propagate that trend in the sense that he brought close to a wider public that which in the art of his predecessors had often seemed to be striking and difficult to accept. He taught hundreds of students at the College of Applied Arts (between 1957 and 1963) and at the Academy of Fine Arts (starting in 1963). Today his pupils follow paths that differ from their teacher's. Szentiványi's painterly manner, with all its virtues and consistence, has become part of the past.

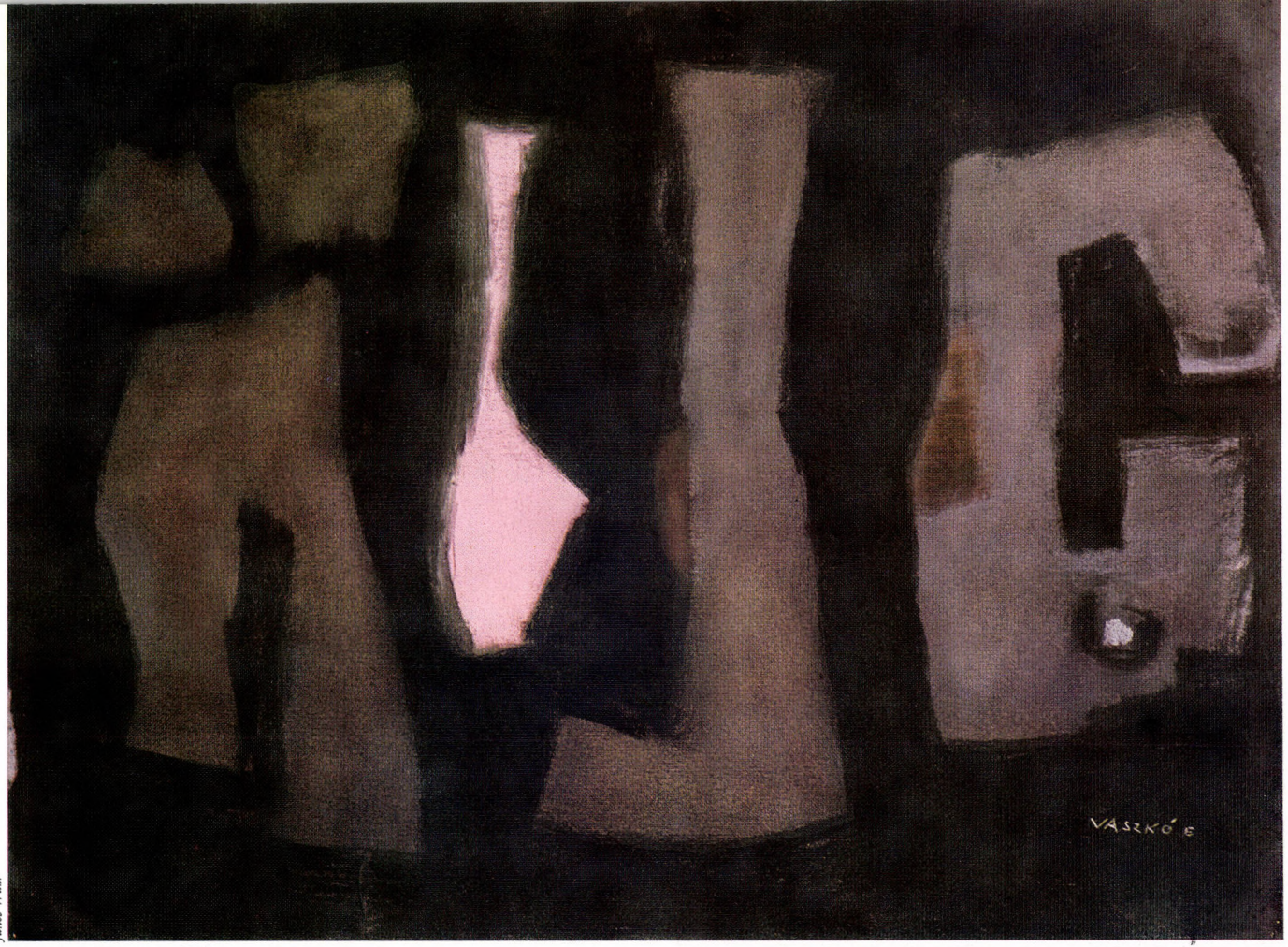
MÁRIA ILLYÉS

II.

IMRE CZUMPF'S MEMORIAL EXHIBITION

One would look in vain for Imre Czumpf's name in any of the handbooks on modern Hungarian art. His work was only known to a restricted circle, and his memorial exhibition (in the Fáklya Club of the Budapest Teachers' Centre, in February 1979) may also be considered just the first step towards a broader familiarization and appreciation of the works of this artist with a peculiarly individual tone. Though his abstract paintings did feature at some group exhibitions abroad (Kunsthalle, Bielefeld, August 1969; Oldenburger Kunstverein, January 1970) during the last two decades of his life (1950–1972), and he even had a one-man-show in London (Hannah Holmes Gallery, January–February 1965), he remained virtually unknown in Hungary.

In the fifties abstract art did not enjoy any official backing, and it is natural that individual work answering an inner prompting deserves increased interest. Imre Czumpf's works are not part of European (avant-garde) painting whatever some of the



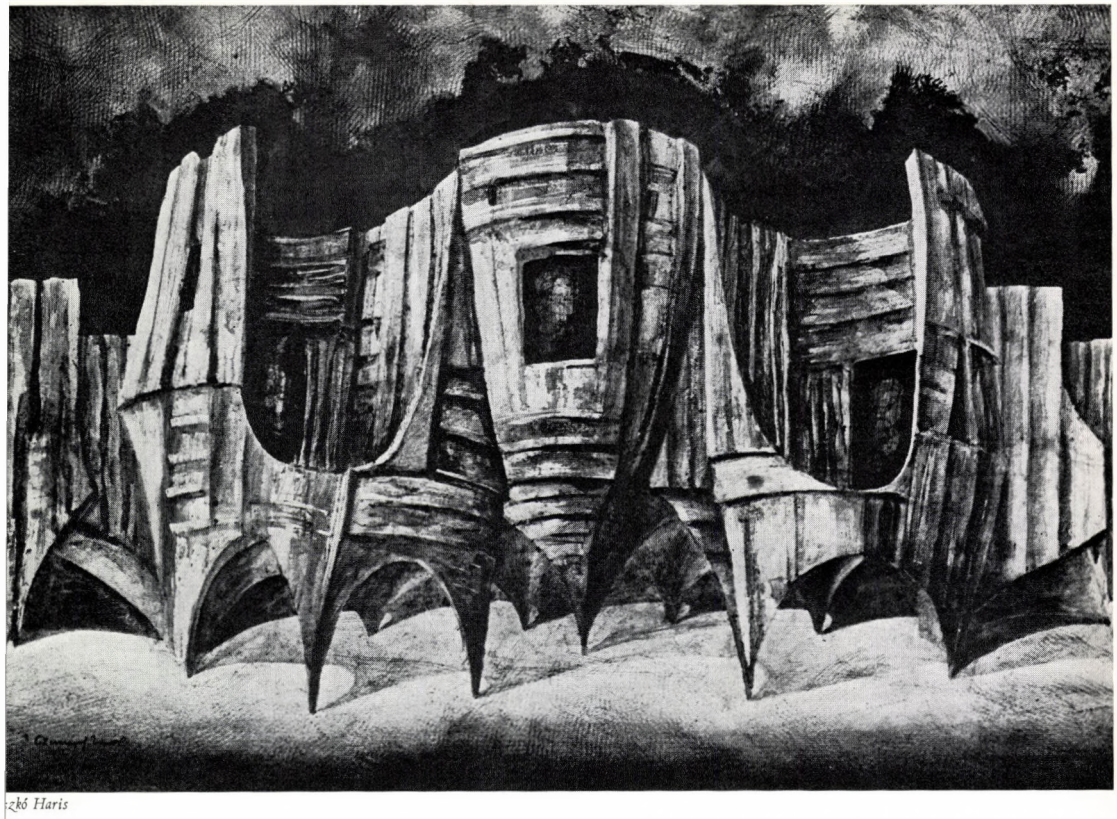
János Wabr

Erzsébet Vaszkó: Lightning (pastel, 70×90 cm, 1960)

LAJOS SZENTIVÁNYI: VINEYARD IN ARÁCS
(WATER COLOUR, 32×45 CM, 1961)

LAJOS SZENTIVÁNYI: IN THE GARDEN
(WATER COLOUR, 60.5×81 CM, 1955)

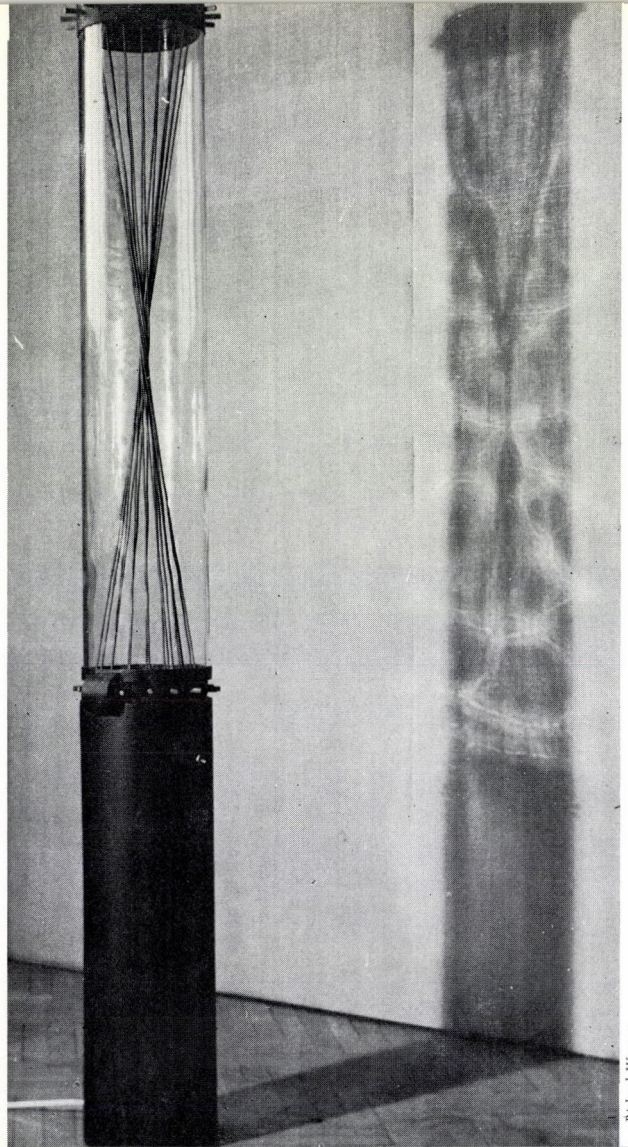
Ilona Magyar



zkó Haris

IMRE CZUMPF: DARKER THAN AMBER
(MIXED TECHNIQUE, 49×69 CM, 1962)

IMRE CZUMPF: PERUVIAN GOD
(GOUACHE, WATER COLOUR, INK,
69×49 CM, 1965)

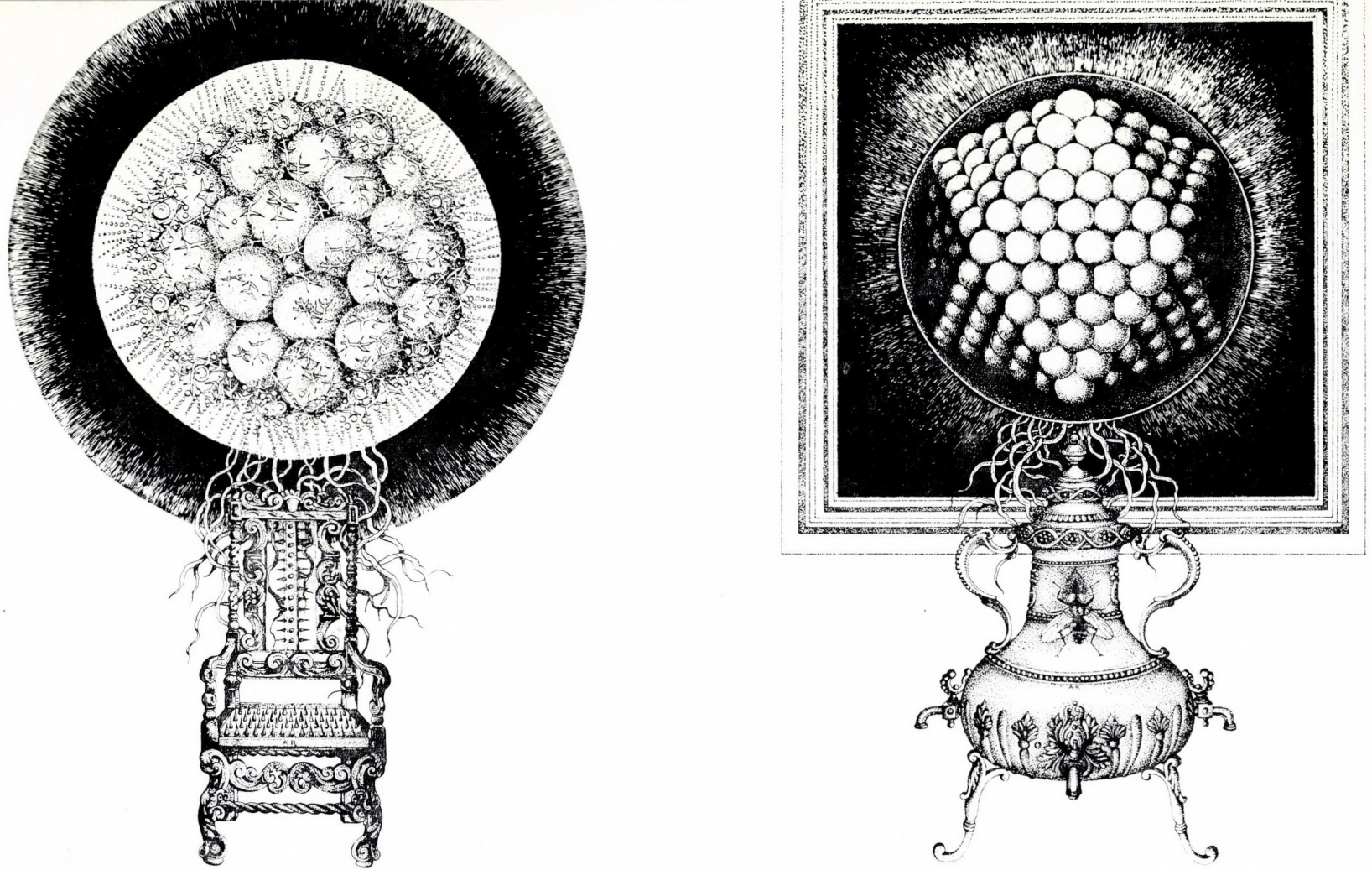


Richard Wagner

András Mengyán: Topological Form Examiner
(electric mobile, glass and metal, cca 80 cm high, 1978)

Katalin Káldor: Apple-Stairs
(painted plaster, 13 cm, 1979)

János Wahr



György Makky

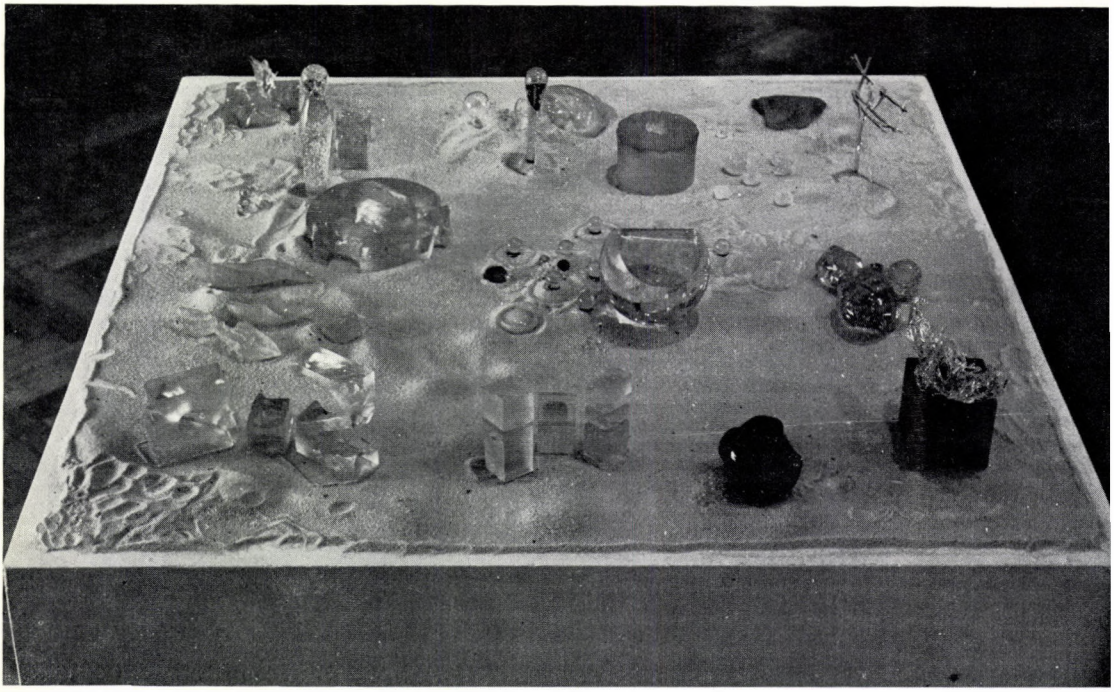
RAFAEL ÁBRAHÁM: MEDITATION III AND V (PEN AND INK, 30×19 CM, AND 37×22 CM, 1979)

Richard Wagner

Ildikó Polgár: Still Life (coloured china, the tablet is about 70×70 cm, 1978)

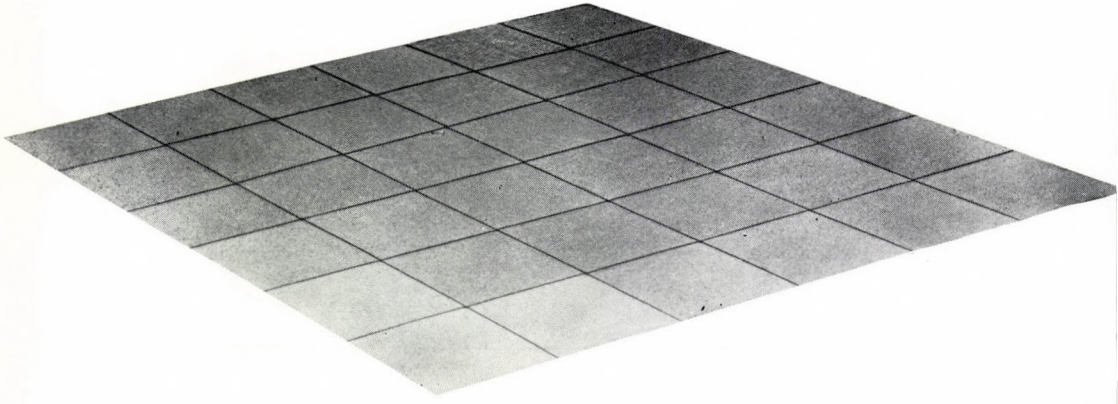
János Wabr

KATALIN KÁLDOR: THE TEAPOT (TURNED, PAINTED AND GLAZED POTTERY, 13 CM, 1979)



ÁGNES KERTÉSZFI: TERRAIN TABLE
(GLASS AND POLYESTER ON SAND, CCA 80×90 CM, 1978)

ZSUZSA TAR: VISUAL CREDIBILITY FLOC
(PAINTED, GLUED WOOD FIBRE SHEET, CCA 60×60 CM, 197
Richard Wag



notices of his exhibitions abroad might have said, they are the outcome of a complex inner development, an organic continuation of his earlier work which is only tangentially related to painting of an autonomous character.

He was a self-taught artist; as an apprentice fitter, he learnt technical draughtsmanship at night-school. During the Great War he did attend the Free School of Fine Arts where his teachers included Rippl-Rónai, Károly Kernstok, and József Egry, and he attended György Bölöni's and László Márkus's lectures on the history of art and aesthetics. Ignotus, Károly Kernstok and Ödön Gerő of the art sociology section of the Society of the Social Sciences provided the theoretical background. In 1919 Imre Czumpf was one of the painters at the artists' colony set up on Kernstok's property in Nyergesújfalu, and later, too, he maintained friendly contacts with his colleagues of that time. One of his drawings shows Gyula Derkovits "at the piano among friends."

Czumpf carried over from these years of his youth the longing for Paris that was alive among the painters of the 1910s, and later he himself visited France and Italy, and devoted a volume to the subject of his adoration (*This is Paris!*, Paál László Society edition, n.d.). His gracefully drawn Paris scenes are illustrations of texts by French writers and poets. Meanwhile he designed textiles, furniture, stage scenery, and like many noted artists of the thirties—Pál Fábry, Lajos Kozma, Albert Kner, Anna Lesznai, etc.—he taught for some time in the Atelier, founded by Dezső Orbán. He also used his knowledge and practical experience in applied arts with Vilmos Aba-Novák as the technical expert for the painter of monumental historical and religious frescoes. The ribbon-like, clearly arranged ornaments, threading through and linking up with each other, certainly form one of the motivic types of his later abstract works.

When he found time for it, he painted, and his works, almost exlusively pen-and-ink drawings and water-colours, featured in several group exhibitions between the two wars, and in the post-war years, until the early fifties. He was a graphic artist with an unerring touch and a strong preference for broadly undulating hills. His attraction for these spaces of a broad field of vision also characterizes his later pen-and-ink drawings. In the late years of his life, in the fifties and sixties, he undertook the restoration of murals as an additional job. All this time he was painting his abstract pictures. The earliest dates from 1950, a time by which even that promising abstract grouping which emerged after 1945 in Hungary—with Ernő Kállai, the most noted propagator and critic of the avant-garde between the two wars as its mentor—already became scattered.

His efforts were stylistically by and large harmonized with the major West European trends of the period, without being actually closely linked to them. For the most part he did not date his works, and thus one can only infer the course of his formal thinking and the closer interrelationships between the various families of pictures.

In the last twenty years of his life Czumpf seems to have applied to his pictures a pictorial structure that might be termed constructivist which was characterized by ribbon-like motifs and homogeneous or openwork colour surfaces, parallel with an informal solution coupling form and colour in an agitated manner. The far-reaching abstraction of motifs and the consistent use of visual sign-language meant formal meditation to him. In this process, as can be read from his pictures of a constructive character, it was primarily the use of the possibilities of two-dimensional space that acted as a catalyser: the specific life of space divided in depth, suggesting the relations of front and behind, of up and down, inspired the artist to experiment again and again.

From the mid-sixties on, the pure visual sign-language took on an increasingly definite, more and more expressive form, almost suggesting philosophical thoughts. This pro-

cess is evident in *Crystallizing Forms* (1965), built on horizontal and vertical axes; *Babylon* (no date) with black calligraphic signs arranged in the centre-line of broadly drawn colour planes; the surrealistic *Darker than Ivy* (1962); and perhaps the most expressive and most personal example of ribbon-plait ornamental pictorial formulation, *Peruvian Deity* (1965), with its treble figure featuring in folk art and ancient art alike.

In the last years of his life formal-conceptual absorption seems to have become linked with Czumpf's personal life more closely than before. He experienced the innermost questions of his existence in a cosmic relation, as a poetic, metaphoric surmising of thoughts which kept him occupied in his last years. These are surprisingly simple communications, and it is this simplicity and artlessness which conveys a dramatic force to these undated works which couple historicity with timelessness. In one of them colour and light-balls move with feverish haste (*Infinity*, 1970), another depicts a formation of double circles and semicircles linked together from some distance (*Onyx*, 1970); in one a warily outlined square is suffused with a streaming flood of light (*Cosmic Explosion*, 1971), again in another, which dates from earlier years, a red centre unfolds as a single colour patch in the midst of a black formation, resembling a tree (*Universe*, 1961). And all this is made not with a high-handed constructivist structure, but using an informal technique, suggesting mobility, pulsation, and vibration.

Imre Czumpf's works are exquisite documents of Hungarian abstraction, with their roots in the years when abstract art looked like having come to an end in Hungary.

OTTÓ MEZEI

SURREALISM, BIOLOGY, IDOLS

Exhibitions of Erzsébet Vaszkó, Rafael Ábrahám, and Katalin Káldor

Experts may find themselves in deep water at this exhibition. Who is Erzsébet Vaszkó, this solitary artist, who only exhibits once every ten years as now in the Gallery of the artists' colony at Szentendre but who enjoys as much status and prestige now among Hungarian artists as she did in her student years fifty years ago? The Vaszkó legend has survived to this day. "I paint every day," she says, "I work every day in order that inspiration should find me at work." This recipe is as simple as her destroying the greater part of her works is awe-inspiring. It seems that her high standards and admirable self-discipline account for her output being so small.

Her first period was inspired by the sight of mountains—*Máramarosi falu* (Village of Máramaros, 1942), and the later *Hegyek* (Mountains, 1964) are large-scale monumental paintings.

Falu (Village, 1941) is descriptive although in no ways conventional. In it Vaszkó expresses personal experience as she does now, but at the time the projection of her experience was more direct. Later her ambitions grew: "...with me form and content are inseparable. I want to express experience formally as well, by means of greater abstraction." The use of just a few colours, mostly dark colours and blacks, to the extreme limits of colour poverty, characterized her earlier works. Later this serious and sombre mode of expression developed into a conscious formal idiom. Her mode of construction is marked, its severity only softened into velvetiness by pastels and oil-pastels. Her more recent works are still in-

spired by nature but now Vaszkó condenses her personal experience into signals, sometimes letter-signals, such as in *Villanások* (Flashes, 1966), or *Töredék* (Fragment, 1970). Her dark series are sometimes counterbalanced by lighter cycles with a lot of near-grey coloration (*Papírsárkány*—Paper kite, 1967, *Kép III*—Picture III, 1970).

I would call her structured art a lyrically conscious kind of constructive surrealism. Erzsébet Vaszkó maintains her constant contact with life, with the present, but, when all is said and done, she builds on her own traditions. She is playful but her play is a duel between life and death.

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Before providing an account of Rafael Ábrahám's exhibition in Szeged's House of Culture I should perhaps make a personal remark: he was a fellow student of mine at Budapest university: I graduated in the history of art, he read English. After graduation Ábrahám started studying at the Academy of Fine Arts; he has been exhibiting these past 16 years. His knowledge of English came in good use when he exhibited in the Jan Clakson Galleries in Edinburgh in 1958 and in the Cazalet Galleries in London in 1969.

This artist has successfully created his own style in his engraving, lithography, and tint-drawing work. Recently he has been drawing with the accuracy of a photo-naturalist, be it with his etcher's needle or with his pen.

Strictly speaking, he uses the montage method but not the thesis montage of the avant-garde. He punctiliously juxtaposes ill-matched elements. I would call these works assemblages à la Rafi (his former nickname at university and now in the world of art). Biology has always been his central theme. In his new period he works on the basis of the rather severe rules he has elaborated for himself. What are they? An object—in general some fashionable antique like a rocking-chair, a carved throne—like an armchair (its seat studded with nails by the artist), a samovar, a silver cup, etc. with some microscopic engraving above such as cells or the enlargement of crystal systems; all these are placed in a large O-shaped or ornamented gilt frame. One of his recurrent favourites is the tree-trunk. In the past he built them up asymmetrically but now central-axial symmetry has become the norm. Living and inanimate objects, man and man-made objects are to be found side by side in his output.

His message is wry but not morbid. Sometimes he expresses himself directly, sometimes with a simple allegory, at other times by means of a single object or *aperçu*, perhaps in a language that the spectator does not even notice hidden in the picture. It is left to us to unravel the enigma by ourselves, should we feel inclined.

Ábrahám's method of engraving is very complicated. He saws off certain parts from the complete copper plate, so that he can do three variations of the same piece: the whole, or two or one page from the same plate. His coloured plates offer the same mutations. His embossed paper-reliefs are also original. In reproductive graphics technical inventiveness and manual dexterity almost have a dominant role. In this genre technique is part and parcel of the contents.

*

Katalin Káldor's posters won her recognition years ago. However, her present exhibits in the Helikon Gallery in Budapest are not posters. Or are they?

True, glazed pottery, plasticine figures, and coloured photos are also to be found. The plastics and coloured photos do not contradict each other or the poster because nowadays the frontiers between styles are increasingly fluid. I could also say that in this exhibiton Katalin Káldor offers us a peep into her workshop. Her favourite procedure is extremely laborious: she moulds the plas-

tic, makes a coloured photo of it, applies the desired text and the poster is ready. The two sections of the exhibition represent the first two steps in the making of a Káldor poster. This collection must be viewed in its entirety. I would call it genuine interdisciplinary art since it touches upon several special branches. Applied graphics have been made of some of the exhibits here, others perhaps will be posters, others again will remain what they are. However, they are all equally important. Káldor has elevated these statues and pictures from being "auxiliaries" into independent objects which exemplify the main directions of her interdisciplinary art.

The idol and the medieval icon were also animate objects. Káldor shapes objects, sometimes fruits, and puts life into them. (Her photos pressed back in two dimensions have the same contents.) The chair has a human leg, the teapot a human ear, the graphic artist's one finger is a pen, the other a sharpened pencil. Her transpositions are ambivalent, her messages multiple, her spirit primarily critical. In her work *Alma-lépcső* (Apple Stairs) she has cut a spiral staircase into the white flesh of the red apple but nobody should think of Freud. In Budapest's hilly region there is an Apple Street and an Apple Steps—Káldor happens to live near by.

She controls her dashing, sweeping imagination with a great deal of self-discipline, her idiom is akin to surrealism and dadaism, she is related to everything that is bizarre, even to caricature. However, none of these categories apply to Káldor. They are not synonymous. I feel that the best label would be the word absurd. One grain of greed, one moment of intellectual laziness would overthrow the balance in this special anthropomorphic and organic art, composed as it is of attraction and repulsion which is the very secret of its force and prestige.

JÁNOS FRANK

BORDER CASES

Young Artists in the Museum of Applied Arts

By the beginning of the century people had already started to abandon the practice of categorizing art into genres such as painting, sculpture, ceramics, etc. It is a tendency which has accelerated very considerably from the fifties ownwards. While at the beginning of the century only the collage and montage were exempt from the traditional genre classification, Duchamp's first *ready-mades* soon appeared as well as the use of new materials in artistic work—aluminium, chromium and above all, plastics. The inadequacy of traditional forms and materials was responsible for their increasing popularity.

With kinetic works, mobile sculptures, Heath Robinson-type machines and rubbishy plastic objects the artist is reacting to the transitoriness of values and objects and trying to articulate his criticism through happenings and other events. The manual shaping of the object, artistry, the creation of form in the strictest sense of the term, often sticks at the mere indication of their potential: the *concept* and the *ready-made* seem to suggest that the life-span of a work of art is anyway so brief that it is not even worth completing it, the mental registration of its possibility is enough.

The Museum of Applied Arts has undertaken to present, if only in broad outline, a survey of the work of the younger generation of artists. The 31 exhibitors include painters, sculptors, goldsmiths, potters, glass designers, graphic artists, textile designers

and others—but there is not a single painting, sculpture, drawing, piece of glass or porcelain at the exhibition. On the other hand, we can see several novel and original examples of the application of familiar materials and a good many new ideas.

The most noteworthy objects at the exhibition are the work of porcelain designers. They seem to have discovered multifarious possibilities for their material, and put the wittiest of ideas into effect. Among them Ildikó Polgár's ensemble of objects is pre-eminent. It is arranged into a still life of old gloves, a folded newspaper, empty Coca-Cola and wine bottles, an onion, a carrot, and wrapped confectionary, all made of unglazed porcelain. By representing worn everyday objects the dull porcelain, this elegant and expensive material, acquires here the effect of a novelty. Ildikó Polgár has not forgotten the original function of porcelain either: her exhibits include a coffee-pot and cup, also made of dull, unglazed and unornamented porcelain and cast in the original Zsolnay mould; and from its lip pours the equally genuine Zsolnay matrix decoration. Similarly witty is Rita Pagony's array of packaged glasses, cast in a single block and standing under a nylon foil wrapping. Mária Orosz's unglazed porcelain cube seems to have been made of soft textile, presenting several phases ranging from the flat to the taut, perfectly cubic form, the rise of the felt cube as it were, all in rigid porcelain. An excellent work by glass designer Ágnes Kertészfi, called *Maquette Board*, consists of softly coloured glass balls and glass forms scattered over heaps of quartz sand heaps, conjuring up varied, fairy-tale scenery and at the same time presenting the viewer with the versatility, diversity, and profusion of glass as a material. We are accustomed to it only in the form of window-glass and wine bottles.

One of the most forceful pieces at the display is *Steel Composition*, a work by Mária Lugossy who graduated as a goldsmith. This simple large-scale chrome-plated steel sculpture bears a symbolic intensity. The heavy horizontal steel bars soar upwards with an unexpected ease, with a formal elegance expressing self-confident control over the material.

The exhibition also parades a few works which do no more than allude to their potential. András Lengyel's *Road Signs—Beetle Hazard* is an absurd parody of a traffic signboard. El Kazovsky's series of photographs present the documentation of an action in a tense atmosphere; Tamás Eskulits's work, *Aunt Ilonka's Parcel* is actually a *ready-made*, a real parcel with a stuffed crow as its contents, and Aunt Ilonka's accompanying letter can also be read. Here, too, the work centres on absurdity: an everyday banality sublimated into elegant surrealism.

András Mengyán's electric mobile, Géza Sigmond's light mobile and László Hefter's illuminating glass sculpture enrich the display with objects which are usually absent from Hungarian exhibitions.

With regard to the youngest artists, Zsuzsa Tar, who graduated from the Academy in 1978, has come forward with a challenging work. Her glued and painted wood-fibre sheet work entitled *Flooring for the Authenticity of Vision* is a technically perfect depiction of a floor giving the illusion of moving away from the viewer. The beautifully and precisely executed floor-board at the same time raises a question-mark as to the authenticity both of painting and vision—it could serve as the pictorial motto of the exhibition.

In the final analysis, the exhibition Border Cases does not present any revolutionary innovations, not even the breakthrough of a radically new approach. It merely documents the fact that European and American artistic endeavours of the fifties, sixties, and seventies have had lively counterparts in Hungary, too, and that for the most part they are not reworkings or imitations but treatments of identical or closely related artistic and technical problems. It is not so much the works themselves as the posing

of the questions which are similar—to what an extent is one justified in producing works of graphic art, or rather, in what new forms and new ways can graphic art relate to the real world, how can it liberate itself from its urge towards decoration, how can it become comprehensible to everybody without having to make qualitative compromises? The majority of the border cases exhibited in the Museum of Applied Arts give a frank situation report on the obsoleteness of these border lines.

ÉVA FORGÁCS

THE RESTORATION OF A MEDIEVAL MASTERPIECE

Almost six years' work has succeeded in restoring a church masterpiece in Esztergom. This fine specimen of medieval Hungarian wood carving is the coffin of Our Lord of Garamszentbenedek, part of the collection of the Christian Museum in Esztergom. Its function is connected with Holy Week, with Good Friday and the dawn of the first day of Easter: it symbolizes the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ.

It is almost 500 years old. It is impossible to ascertain the exact date it was made, impossible also to know who carved this medieval work of art. The Christian Museum of Esztergom estimates the date to have been "around" 1480.

The coffin of Our Lord of Garamszentbenedek, or rather of Esztergom, is mentioned in Herder's encyclopedia. We know of a similar work of the same age but it is smaller and without great artistic significance. It was originally in St. Jacob's Church in Chemnitz and is today preserved in the museum at Karl-Marx-Stadt in the GDR.

The restoration of this unique Hungarian masterpiece took from 1973 to the Easter of 1979. It was presented to the public during the Easter holidays by Pál Cséfalvay, director of the Christian Museum, and Dezső Varga, chief restorer and professor at the Budapest Academy of Fine Arts. The costs involved, almost half a million forints, were met jointly by the state, i.e. the National Inspectorate of Historical Monuments, and the Catholic Church, i.e. Esztergom Cathedral and the Christian Museum.

Standing beside the coffin of Our Lord, immersed in the sight of the Apostles' heads, my mind was occupied with three questions: the origin, function, and restoration of this masterpiece.

Our Lord's coffin of Garamszentbenedek was used in the Gothic church of the Benedictine Abbey at Garamszentbenedek (which in now part of Slovakia). The abbey was founded in 1075 by Géza I, Hungarian king of the House of Árpád. The fortress-like monastery building still stands on the bank of the river Garam (Hron) in Slovakia. The building it is now a home for old people.

The former Benedictine Abbey, the church, and the estate belonging to the abbey all became the property of the canons of Esztergom after 1565. A few hundred years later, in 1870, it was reported to Cardinal János Simor, Prince Primate of Hungary, a great art collector and preserver of old village churches, decaying monuments, church treasures, and paintings, that the coffin of Our Lord of Garamszentbenedek was irredeemably ruined. Simor noted on the margin of the report: "vehementer enim mutilatum"—seriously damaged.

Following this, he had the badly damaged coffin of Our Lord restored in 1872 based on the designs of József Lippert. When the

MTI

THE GARAMSZENTBENEDEK COFFIN OF OUR LORD
(CHRISTIAN MUSEUM, ESZTERGOM)

MT

THE GARAMSZENTBENEDEK COFFIN OF OUR LORD. DETAILS

restoration was completed in Vienna, it was put into the Basilica in Esztergom, and there it was severely damaged during the Second World War. After the war, during the restoration of St. Stephen's Chapel in the Basilica where the coffin of Our Lord was kept, it suffered further damage when it was splattered with mortar in the course of the work. The climatic conditions in the Basilica were also detrimental. Eventually this unique work of art was taken to pieces and in 1965 transported to the Christian Museum and kept there for repairs and restoration.

This five hundred year-old masterpiece, is a high wooden construction, that moves on four wooden wheels. It consists of two parts: the lower sarcophagus' rich illustrations evoke the events that took place between Good Friday and the dawn of Easter Sunday. Christ is buried, Pontius Pilate and the Roman soldiers of the church stand guard by his grave, then Christ "descends into hell," and the angel announces to the women who have come to embalm his body that he is not there anymore, but has resurrected. The upper part of the coffin of Our Lord consists of a canopy with the twelve Apostles standing guard. On top of the canopy there are little gilded turrets.

It stood in the nave of the former church of the Benedictine Abbey at Garamszentbenedek. In the same Gothic church there is a cross with movable arms. On Good Friday the statue of Christ was taken down from the cross, placed in the sarcophagus of the coffin of Our Lord where they guarded it until dawn on Easter Sunday. After the resurrection the statue was taken out of the coffin and with the help of the movable arms put back on the cross.

The restoration took almost six years and was conducted under the direction of chief restorer Dezső Varga; he had fourteen collaborators, mostly young girls and boys.

The coffin of Our Lord was broken down into approximately 500 pieces. The guiding principle of the work was that all the subsequent layers of painting, any traces of later interference, were to be removed so as not to detract from its historical authenticity. During the restoration work carried out in Vienna in 1872 and based on faulty concepts many parts had been regilded; these layers were now removed, and the original gilt layer and the original colours restored.

The coffin of Our Lord was made of the small-leaf linden found in Central Europe. In Vienna, however, the damaged or missing linden carvings were replaced with pine and only the missing ornamentation was carved in linden wood. Now everything that was not original has been removed. The nails were not put back; the old nails and wooden screws were discarded and non-rusting copper screws used. Every single piece, almost 500 items in all, was impregnated with a fungicide. The work is held together by an artificial resin made in California. It also acts as a preserving agent.

Gentle faces, delicate half-tones, meditating apostles carved of linden—I am standing in front of the depiction of the women hastening to the embalming. I am looking at the slightly red, tilted head of the Apostle James. His face is bearded, on his head he wears a mitre. From his eyes there shines the infinite sweetness and sorrow of timelessness.

PÉTER RUFFY

THEATRE AND FILM

HEROES AND ANTI-HEROES

Years ago, dramatists insisted that Hungarian theatre and acting lagged behind the requirements set by modern authors. More recently, since the director's theatre has been gaining ground in Hungary, a great many companies have reformed themselves, the tide has turned, and now the leading figures in a regenerated theatrical world have the frustrating feeling that their search for works suitable to express their stage message is in vain. The promising development of Hungarian drama in the sixties has come to a halt. Often enough, half-baked or old plays pass for contemporary works in the repertoire but are incapable of meeting the real national, social, and aesthetic challenge of the new drama.

Most of this season's "new" Hungarian plays are not new; they were published or performed before. The most significant one, *Pisti in a Shower of Blood* by István Örkény (NHQ 75), was published ten years ago. And so the season's most significant and exciting experience was provided this time by the revival of a classic, not by a Hungarian but by a Russian author and not in Budapest but in Győr: it was "Storm" by Ostrovsky.

Sándor Weöres: St. George and the Dragon

Fourteen years after it was written and seven years after its first performance, this verse play by Sándor Weöres that has long been available in book form still succeeded in attracting attention at the Budapest National Theatre. Weöres is a poet known and appreciated abroad: the philosophical content of his often abstract, esoteric poetry may be objected to by many, but nobody ever challenges his unique mastery of form. For decades Weöres has been attracted not so much by the stage, but by drama. After several performances, his fairy-play in verse, "Boatman in the Moon," was turned into an operatic libretto, the music written by György Ránki. It was also performed this season. But his *St. George and the Dragon* (its original title was *Octopus*) was widely regarded after its first performance as a book-drama, albeit an excellent piece of poetry.

It was a challenge for Budapest's renewed and rejuvenated National Theatre to select this work for its first performance of a contemporary Hungarian play. It sets extremely high personal and technical standards. It is as if the director, Tamás Aser, wanted to put both his company and the public to the test.

"I write not for myself, but for others, therefore I aim at a kind of magnetism. It doesn't matter whether people understand my lines or not, but their nerves should quiver, like a string stretched in the wind," the poet once said. And he writes his poems accordingly. However, this time, the spectator feels he understands the words and the plot on the stage, but finding his way about in the labyrinth of the latter, probably

makes his nerves so taut that they no longer quiver.

The plot of this fairy-play is complicated and is multi-layered. It also calls for a huge cast. "In this work I've followed the atmosphere of the mystery plays on the one hand, and on the other the epic structure of Elizabethan drama with its great number of dramatis personae. I've borrowed my methods from Shakespeare, Webster, that passionate playwright of deep abysses, Kyd, that rider of waves, and Aphra Benn, who approached love and passion from another angle, through the eyes of a woman. I have followed them in having more presentation than character drawing, more action and clearly outlined situations than dialogues. Events are faster than the many kinds of decisions in this or that direction that try to control them. Yet, this is not a drama of destiny, but the raging of never-ending storms stirred up by people in their incessant struggle for different objectives. Neither the dragon-killing St. George, nor the supporters of the dragon finally prevail since, by the time one could defeat the other, the storm races past somewhere else and in a different direction. The only winner here is the scorching atmosphere that lovingly strangles and murderously devours everything, yet, in its ruthless, endless rotation, represents the uninterrupted flow of life itself." These words of the poet, however, only illuminate the structure of the play to a limited extent.

And as the story, which is set in the twilight of pagan times and the dawn of the Christian era, proceeds from scene to scene, as we grow aware of the problems of the Silene people protected by the Octopus in northern Attica and the fearful dragon's annual selection of a virgin bride, we feel increasingly carried away by the whirl of the plot. Just outside the city gates, there are the troops of the conqueror. Emperor Diocletian, while inside the walls the dragon's bride is being chosen. The one-thousand-year-old queen mother fears for her empire, the prince is worried about his younger sister, and Giorgio, the handsome leader of the Romans, feels pity for the disgraced girls and for the citizens who meekly suffer the disgrace. The dragon's actual physical existence is doubtful from the very start, but the psychological fact of panic is very real. Nella, the pretzel-vendor, knows better than the wisest of the sages that "whoever dares to doubt is dead and whoever believes will disappear: be it reward, or punishment, sooner or later the dragon devours us all."

With this thesis coming in the exposition, the play is already on the point of exploding, but as if preventing the fuse from burning its whole length, the author severs the thread of Nella's life, to pick up and twist on the next one. The miracle of Giorgio, that is St. George as a beggar pretending to be lame and made to walk again, Prince Lauro's adventurous abduction, the bitter lyricism of the plot within a plot, the love between sister and brother, the ironically portrayed conference of the powerful, the traditional sacrifice of a girl, the series of scenes in which old myths are destroyed and new ones are created follow one another in such fast succession that the spectator can hardly take in more than the adventures themselves and, fortunately, the poetry. True, even this gives more intellectual nourishment than many conventional plays. On stage or not, Sándor Weöres can only be judged his own poetic standards.

Tamás Aser, the play's director, said his main intention was to seek out the work's historical-philosophical message. Presumably, he carefully examined the argument that today's public accept the lesson drawn from the play's ironic conclusion, namely, that despotism does not give way to democracy simply because people begin to pay homage to a real saint rather than an imagined monster. The myth of power is unveiled and we also learn a great deal about personality cults. However, the parable in the play still contains enigmas worth our while

solving. But unfortunately, the performance at the National Theatre fails to plumb the depths of these enigmas and, sad to say, does not come up to our expectations and fails to reveal the dramatic character or theatrical maturity of Weöres's verse play. Once again, the director has failed to find the road leading out of the work's monumental labyrinth to catharsis. The roles do not develop into characters and the poetic merits of the text only shine in their full grandeur in rare moments. Probably dramaturgical concentration of the unperformably rich material, a selection and differentiation of essential and unimportant motives, and a theatrical style suited to express the parable could probably have dispelled the scepticism of professional circles towards Weöres's play. However, the spectacular revival with all its beautiful details has left the questions concerning the stage presentation of *St. George and the Dragon* and the best possible approach to its performance open.

Mihály Sükösd: The Outsider

The short documentary-like novel which served as the basis for this play was written in 1967 as an exciting intellectual venture by novelist, essay writer, and translator Mihály Sükösd. On the surface, it is a historical work, almost a documentary novel, as its main hero, Mihály Vancsura, once a soldier and Red Army patrol leader under the 1919 Hungarian Republic of Councils, is a historical figure. His life of total moral degeneracy after the defeat of the revolution is said to be fully documented. However, Mihály Sükösd is not a chronicler of events, he is interested in how the the soldier's feeling of being an outsider from the very beginning and serving the cause of revolution with growing indifference finally leads him to break away from his community and to demean himself by becoming an informer. The author's main concern is the social and psychological mechanism of how the man in the street is corrupted. Vancsura's disastrous life is in fact a serious illustration of a trivial thesis, namely, it proves that once on the slippery slope, there is no going back. Anyone who leaves his friends in the lurch for whatever reason, ideological or otherwise, will lose his footing in the absence of a moral attitude and community background and will sink deeper and deeper in the morass of treason. The process is not merely explained in psychological terms. The apparatus of power also has a role to play: it has the traitor in its grasp and prevents him from turning back on his fateful course. From being an impersonal servant of the apparatus of power, Mihály Vancsura sinks to become the traitor and murderer of the good friend who once saved his life.

Sükösd proves objectively and convincingly that it is not for money that Vancsura decides to serve the counter-revolution and its bloodthirsty commandos, but to find self-justification and (presumably) security for himself and his wife and especially because in the autumn of 1919 he feels he does not always want to be on the losing side. As for his remaining conscience, Vancsura tries to salve it with the excuse of all traitors and kapos that ever lived; if it were not him it would be someone else doing the dirty work, and whoever took his place would probably be more demanding, more cruel, and more stupid.

The Outsider is a documentary novel and psychological portrait, a polemical essay in narrative form, with history being not its essence but rather its form. The story of the heroes evolves in the course of tense situations, now and then inflamed by the radiation of opposing forces, but the nature of this play is not dramatic. Vancsura is a convincingly drawn, interesting, and performable figure, but not a dramatic hero. From the very moment (before the actual exposition of the play) the patrol leader sets out on the road of treason, he has no choices. And he has no real adversary either: he

submits to his employers and cannot come into conflict with those opposing him. And he suppresses his own doubts and anxieties far too quickly. His inevitable failure bears no trace of the magnificence of tragedy.

To an extent it follows from this that the first stage version of the play at the Vígszínház (Comedy Theatre) was, to say the least, not very successful. The author, the writer of the novel, seemed to be more interested in the settings, the twists of the story, and the historical trimmings than on the moral and socio-philosophical problems raised in the work. Finally, he tried to strengthen the play by exploiting the effectiveness of the subplots and by using naturalistic motifs—in vain.

The present system of season tickets and public organized attendance at theatres, as well as the general tactfulness of critics prevents any real failure from happening in Hungary. Sükösd's play at the Vígszínház, was one of the few exceptions. Members of the cast were ill at ease, those who liked the novel were disappointed and the students filling the auditorium often laughed where there was nothing to laugh about.

Against this background it is obvious why professionals reacted with uncomprehending surprise to the statement by Imre Katona, theatre director in Pécs, to the effect that he was trying to discover new merits in this work. The performance at Pécs's National Theatre proved Imre Katona right: his adaptation (differing in many respects from the old Vígszínház version and relying to a greater extent on Mihály Sükösd's original novel) rid the story of all superfluities, trimmings, and sub-motifs and concentrated on Vancsura's general and therefore still topical ethical problem.

Director Imre Katona uses the well-proved methods and light-effects of the modern theatre to set his sparse sets and huge cast in motion. He managed to avoid cheap effects the subject might have easily tempted him to use and the traps of highly-strung tense acting. The unbroken tension between stage and auditorium proves that the public regarded Mihály Sükösd's play not as some kind of historical illustration but a genuine drama of the moral predicaments facing us today.

András Simonffy: Japanese Parlour

Historical suffering has given way to historical responsibility as the central subject of the novels, dramas, and film scripts set in the period of the Second World War. András Simonffy is a talented writer of short stories, but he is too young for his soul-searching to be autobiographically rooted. Young writers in their thirties like Simonffy are in search of their fathers' role and historical responsibility when they tackle the question of national self-knowledge. And in Simonffy's case, this is literally the case.

He is the son of a Hungarian army major who accepted the dangerous task of being a delegate of the Hungarian resistance movement to fly on his own over the front line in a place with concealed markings in the autumn of 1944 and to report to Moscow on the possibilities of military resistance in Nazi-occupied Hungary. His dangerous mission redounded to the credit of the Hungarian nation, served the cause of ending the war and promoting post-war developments. (It is another question as to how much personal freedom of action he actually enjoyed.)

But his son is not, or is not only, a chronicler of his father's heroic deed: his mind is preoccupied with the strange situation that precipitated and then impeded the breakaway and tardy capitulation of Hungary in the autumn of 1944. His main interest is the dilemma the country found itself in as a result of which it was known as "Hitler's last ally," a label Hungary could not rid itself of for decades.

The *Japanese parlour* is in fact the forlorn office of the Japanese military attaché

accredited to Moscow. The delegate of the Hungarian military resistance movement arrived here in November 1944, a few weeks after Horthy's abortive attempt to pull out of the war and the Arrow-Cross take-over. It is in this office that the major meets the other Hungarians who had arrived in Moscow earlier, commissioned by Horthy to enter into secret talks on an armistice. Cut off from Hungary, these gentlemen are unaware of the fact that their mandate has lost its validity and that the man who signed it has lost power; in fact they understand nothing of history, only that whatever turn the fate of the country will take, they will lay claim to their share of power and possibly ministerial posts. Amidst petty arguments and a lot of bickering, genuine problems and the historical perspective seem to vanish from view.

The author raises the question of "whether those meeting in Moscow were people who could have been worthy and responsible representatives of what Hungary really wanted?" In his comments on the play, he asks whether "a process of loss-cutting was going on in the background, whether some participants were not acting with the deliberate aim of saving whatever was left to be saved? And whether on the other hand, it was not with the bitterness of emigration, personal emotions, and theoretical distortions that some politicians returned on December 6, 1944 to form a *joint* government in Debrecen? Whose image will emerge in a glorious light and who will disappear in the obscurity that defies all classification?" The drama, and especially its characterization, provide a reply to Simonffy's prosaic question: "Everyone is right and nobody is right in this drama. It is about people who, in a given situation and for whatever reason, are unsuited to fulfil their mission."

Based on historical facts and behind-the-scene secrets, András Simonffy's outlining of the situation is breath-takingly exciting but it is not dramatic. His heroes are more engaged in back-biting than in fighting a life-and-death struggle in Moscow. And although the future of the country is at stake, decisions are reached not on the stage but behind the scenes.

On strictly professional criteria, it is not difficult to fault the author: one could say that his play is static and he indicates or outlines his figures instead of characterizing them. The plot is burdened rather than enriched by the schematism of the "human aspects" of political events and arguments. It is a pity that the performance of the Thália Theatre in Budapest (director Katalin Kőváry, artistic manager Károly Kazimir) was not based on the writer's passionate search for the truth, his merits as political journalist, and his polemic attitude, but on the shortcomings of the work—its schematism, occasional cheap humour, and pathos.

However, if you take the effort of reading Simonffy's play before or after seeing it, you will certainly be overcome by respect for the author and his play. You will realize that Simonffy throws light on what has been an obscure chapter of Hungarian history and he does so in such a way that the experiences of the past and the political clearsightedness obtained as a result of a great deal of suffering do not prevent an authentic portrayal of the conditions of those times. His criticism never turns into caricature. The outcome, the document he presents, could not and has not remained a case study for historians alone. All the more since Simonffy puts the exciting little known events dug up from dusty files in the service of a good cause: that of national self-knowledge.

Ostrovsky: Storm

The Kisfaludy Theatre in Győr had been working under extremely adverse circumstances for several years until in the autumn of 1978 they were able to move into their new home, an unashamedly modern building decorated by huge slabs of pyro-granite

ceramics by Victor Vasarely on its two side walls. Fitted out with the most up-to-date technical and lighting equipment, revolving stage, trap-doors, and lighting bridge, the stage and auditorium with a seating capacity of 700 were handed over last year, but not inaugurated until the performance of Ostrovsky's "Storm." Written 120 years ago, this literary classic has received occasional performances in Hungary. However, this revival is not simply one of many. Two guests, György Harag, the talented director of the Kolozsvár Hungarian Theatre in Rumania, and one of the most interesting personalities in the Hungarian theatre, and actress Mari Törőcsik in the role of Katerina were responsible for the Győr production being a memorable occasion.

The director, György Harag, does not "reveal" the well-known classical author, but rather the message his work can have in the contempory world. His interest is focused on the social conflict underlying the fatal personal duel between Kabanova, the widow who safeguards old conventions and morals with desperate cruelty, and Katerina, the pure and brave woman with her longing for a personal fulfilment. He reveals the affirmation of life raising its head in the realm of tears and openly admitted sincerity in the society of hypocrites. Katerina, called "ray of light in the realm of darkness" by Dobrolyubov, the Russian critic with social democratic leanings, is not only a passionate hero. Her meeting with her lover is nothing more than an opportunity for her to break away from the prison of a marriage without love. Katerina aspires to the completeness of life, but she refuses to throw away what she cherishes most dearly for life alone, for mere physical existence: the meaning of her life.

No tricks, costumes, or gimmicks are used in the Győr production in an effort to deny or bridge the historical distance between characters and audience. On the contrary. With an as authentic and deep as possible a presentation of the author's world, with the psychologically elaborated multi-dimensional characterization of his figures, Harag makes us feel that yesterday's and tomorrow's moral norms continue to be at war with each other. He makes us aware that hypocritical widows clinging to the old world and its traditions, those possessing local power have not given up their family (and not only family) positions. That it is never without risks to fight against defencelessness.

No adjectives will describe the secret of Harag's art. Only the director's notes could perhaps suggest something of the elements of his method that can be translated into words and something of how the director managed to create the perfect illusion that the spectator is there in the milling streets of the town of Kalinovo. It happens before the first dialogue of the play even begins, with the aid of visual and acoustic effects recalling the world of Boris Godunov and of choreography that creates a very special atmosphere. Almost without words, we are introduced to the staggering human misery that not only falls to the lot of beggars and cripples, but also to great talents and great loves, the former doomed to idleness and the latter withering away.

The imposingly simple scenery of stage designer László Najmányi recalls rather than imitates Ostrovsky's world: the wide arch of an old wooden bridge in need of a coat of paint, the almost totally boarded-up windows surrounding the set, and the mysterious clicking sound of wooden door handles moved from the outside are all means of promoting the emotional impact of the production. Perhaps this is the most important feature of Harag's art, that is, with visual and acoustic means he transposes the situations he analyses with absolute logical accuracy into emotional experiences for the spectator, who as a result find them easier to understand intellectually. No crowd of his is ever faceless: each and every nuance adds something to the image the director creates of Russian society of the age.

Those who attended the rehearsals of *Storm* go into raptures over Harag's restlessly experimental, always well-prepared and yet improvised analyses of the characters, his didactic talent and his whole method of conducting the rehearsal. They recount how he is able to extract the maximum from his actors' potential. How he is able to discover profounder meaning and associations beneath the script's surface and having found them how he is able to communicate them with half sentences that seem to be sufficient for the actors to understand immediately. The spectator who is confronted with the end-result of all this realizes with the joy of genuine discovery how many excellent artists the Győr company has.

In producing *Storm*, the director has found his peer in the person of Győr's other guest, actress Mari Törőcsik. In a meteoric career Törőcsik has had many chances of acting out love, innocence, even revolt, but now, in the role of Katerina, for the first time she shows us the vibrating duality of a passionate young woman withering away in captivity and defencelessness and finally finding herself engaged in a personal revolt triggered by her acceptance of love and her struggles between these two extremes. Typical of Harag's boldness and his faith in Törőcsik's art, the director leaves the actress in almost complete darkness in her big scenes. We hear her voice but see no more than her outline, her white neckline rising defiantly and her figure, unbreakable for all its slenderness. You might think that this tiny, fragile woman dressed in black would be lost on the huge stage. But Törőcsik's voice, her suffering and passion and the magic of her magnetic personality completely fills the space.

The end of the season saw a long-awaited and most important miracle at Győr, a theatre that brought together talent, accuracy, and inspiration.

ANNA FÖLDES

HISTORICAL CLOSE-UPS

Pál Sándor: *Szabadíts meg a gonosztól* (Deliver Us from Evil); Pál Gábor: *Angi Vera* (Vera's Training); András Kovács: *Októberi vasárnap* (October Sunday); János Rózsa: *Trombitás* (Trumpeter)

In February the 11th festival of Hungarian feature films was held in Budapest. Of the 25 new films shown I saw Pál Sándor's *Szabadíts meg a gonosztól* (Deliver us from Evil), Pál Gábor's *Angi Vera* (The Training of Vera), András Kovács's stunning story about the fascist takeover in Budapest, *Októberi vasárnap* (October Sunday), and the young János Rózsa's *Trombitás* (Trumpeter).

In Pál Sándor's film, towards the end of 1944, when the Arrow Cross is in power, a winter coat gets stolen from a dancing school in a Budapest suburb. The aging cloak-room attendant is desperate, and sets out to find the coat in a world of moral and political disintegration made worse by the air raids. In the end the coat is found but the characters in the film, with but a few exceptions, die or are at least well on their way towards perdition.

The dancing school is situated in a poor district and at the same time serves as a brothel. The daughter of the heroic cloak-room attendant-cum-cashier is a whore herself and the old woman's son happens to be the unlucky and unscrupulous scoundrel

who has stolen the fatal coat. He has, not unexpectedly, an odd excuse: the money from the stolen coat does not go on food, drink, or clothing. He is unable to resist the charms of a beautiful inmate of the whorehouse.

In these pages I have reviewed one of Pál Sándor's earlier films, *Régi idők focija* (Football in the Old Days). The director has tried to evoke the same world here: he worked with the same author (Iván Mándy) and the same cameraman (Elemér Ragályi). The images are again vision-like as in the earlier film and these strange visions lead us into the hell of 1944 Hungary in which a cloak-room attendant does her utmost to restore honour but fails because this hopelessly decadent world does not tolerate honour. The cloak-room attendant has a helper in the person of a certain Mr. Svéd. This gentleman, who has a slight limp, is an expert in these matters and knows exactly where to look for the "blue winter coat with velvet collar" whose owner sits on a chair beside the cloak-room obstinately waiting for the restoration of his property. Before Mr. Svéd's intervention, however, the cloak-room attendant commits an involuntary homicide: in the dreary backyard she, together with her daughter and the latter's fiancé, a soldier who turns up suddenly, come upon a mysterious man carrying a sack. The son, the real thief, cries out that this is their man, they chase him and he falls into a shaft. The soldier climbs down, finds him dead but without coat.

In the next sequence we see the hefty soldier carrying a double-bass in an enormous case. Mr. Svéd thinks it best to take the dead man's body to the public baths and leave him in the water but a well-mannered Arrow Cross plain-clothes policeman and his two uniformed henchmen turn up and the detective forces the corpse's head out of the water with his foot. The corpse then comes to life, gasps for air and then immediately starts a frantic search for his identification papers and, of course, has no idea how he has got there.

After this unsuccessful attempt Mr. Svéd leads the cloak-room attendant, her daughter, son, and the soldier with his double-bass into a second-hand clothes shop. By now the girl's former lover, the moustached man, is hidden in the case, and becomes the saviour of the whole search party because the shopkeeper and his daughter knock them all down and bind them hand and foot. The moustached man frees them. The soldier, however, is unlucky: his papers and uniform are stolen, so he is now a deserter. Disappointed with his fiancée, he calls her a whore and breaks with her. The girl can now have a good time with her lover, the moustached man.

In the brothel the boy who stole the coat can at last make love to his beloved. Afterwards she, the boy, and his sister stray into an abandoned dry-cleaner's where, like a ghost and with a yellow star on his chest, the dejected and persecuted proprietor of the shop appears. The whore finds him towards dawn in a corner in front of the window: he has hanged himself.

In the lobby of a cinema Mr. Svéd is waiting for the fence to whom the boy has sold the stolen coat. But instead of the fence the involuntary deserter arrives with his hands bound and escorted by two guards. He gets permission to go to the toilet but as he does not come out for a long time one of the guards goes in after him and shoots him. The thief of the coat is the first who has to look into his dead face. Whilst this is going on, Mr. Svéd and the cloak-room attendant eat pretzels in the cinema lobby and realize that they still love each other. The only explanatory dialogue in the film is spoken here. The pretzel-chewing woman says: "How beautiful this rotten life could be!" "But it isn't," answers Mr. Svéd philosophically. And he is right because although he manages to buy back the coat from the fence, the re-emerging patrol with the well-mannered plain-clothes man at its head orders everybody to line up for a forced march including Mr. Svéd, the fence, and

all the hotel and restaurant guests as well as the long-haired woman whom Mr. Svéd has found in one of the rooms and whom he loves even more than the cloak-room attendant. When that unfortunate woman arrives on the scene with her son the entire group is lined up ready to start out for their unknown destiny. She asks Mr. Svéd to give her back the coat, the fence tries to escape and is shot. The cloak-room attendant watches helplessly as in the narrow back alley, with the rain beginning to form large puddles, the only person she ever loved and could trust is being taken away.

Cameraman Elemér Ragályi is at his best in these closing sequences: the vision is complete here. He shows the slowly marching group, the alley stretching into hopelessness, the deadly grey cold of autumn on the muddy road, the bare bricks with their peeling plaster as if they are demonstrating their sympathy for the world of humans. There are many similar sequences in the film but I found this the most memorable of all.

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Pál Gábor's film *Angi Vera* (The Training of Vera) is based on a short story by Endre Vészi. Its ethical and political outlines are clearer than those of Pál Sándor's film. Its humanism is more dramatic but in spite of these virtues I found that it did not delve deeply enough into the world of the fifties.

Vera Angi, an orphan and hospital nurse in the 'forties, is sent to a communist party school because she has unmasked the head physician's hypocritical behaviour. The head physician fires her, the party investigates the matter and, although for the time being there is no chance of punishing the criminal the militant girl is sent on a course lasting several months. The scene is the party school after the merger of the Social-Democratic and the Communist parties; men and women, the political, economic, and cultural leaders of the future, the intelligensia of the future are trained here.

Pál Gábor has tried to render this sociological phenomenon in a sophisticated manner. He has emphasized the various aspects of his theme with the 1948 newsreels which introduce his film. They show mass meetings with enthusiastic, rhythmical hand-clapping, soldierly party speakers, Rákosi and Gerő as demigods. Gerő says in one of the newsreels that no harm will come to Social-Democrats not included in the now united party. Then at one point in the story there is the scene in which the political observer at the party school, a woman "hardened" in illegality, denounces a Social-Democrat who told her that they had dismissed him from his post because of his past.

So Vera Angi meets this old, puritanical communist and she also meets a very different woman full of zest for life who enjoys the pleasures of the body. The two women carry on a bitter struggle right from the start. A miner flees from the school and returns home but they bring him back and he promises forthwith to study and work "as befits a militant." Vera Angi offers to help him take notes. We also see the deadly serious, almost priestly and devout leader of the party school and the gentle, disciplined lecturer at the daily study groups whom Vera worships; whenever possible she asks him questions.

Their relationship develops into a breach of party discipline or, in everyday language, a love affair: the girl confesses her passion to the lecturer who has also fallen for her. What should be done in such conditions, especially in a party school? At night Vera sneaks into his room after telling him almost threateningly to expect her.

In the big love scene the lecturer at first does not even take off his clothes when he starts to embrace and kiss the naked girl. Then the charitable darkness descends on them and the man obviously disrobes and neglects party discipline. In the morning Vera creeps back to the common dormitory but she is lucky not to be noticed by her puritanical comrade and she is so scared

that she does not visit her lover that night. The lecturer asks her to come, and she rises from her bed, but another hot-blooded young woman sees her getting up and tells her to stay put.

After a couple of lonely nights the lecturer loses his self-discipline and falls for the girl hopelessly.

After some scenes at a dance and a cultural programme organized by the party school they arrive at the end of their course and there follows the individual appraisal of each participant.

The man who conducts this examination is a young and very dignified comrade sent from headquarters. True, the leaders of the school take part in the evaluation process, they speak to him and help him. Partly due to cameraman Lajos Koltai's excellent work this scene is very fine. It is like a public confession by members of a Fundamentalist sect, the only difference being that instead of believers it is the participants in the course the comrade is hauling over the coals. The leaders sit on the rostrum behind a table covered with red cloth like little tin gods: the ordinary mortals, the students, sit opposite them on the floor of the gymnasium. The crime attributed to a communist veteran of the Spanish Civil War is that he likes to narrate his "exploits" in underground work to other comrades. A peasant woman has been unable to develop her consciousness: she still follows her instincts. An officer is harshly reprimanded for leaving out a petty misdemeanour from his autobiography. At this point the hot-blooded young woman jumps up in defence of the Spanish War veteran. The dignified leaders at the table are deeply shocked at her outburst. The refined party militant sent from above coolly asks her her name and, when she courageously tells him who she is, he makes a note; nothing happens but everybody knows that this woman has forfeited her career for good.

Vera Angi is highly praised. She, however, remains true to herself: she confesses her love for the lecturer and also that she has spent a night with him. In this painful situation it is now the man's turn to make his decision and he does not hesitate: he confesses his love for the girl and declares that he knows his duty: he will divorce his wife and marry Vera.

One would expect the heroine to fall about the neck of this sincere and gallant hero but instead Vera gets up again and with comradely frankness tells the party leadership that her burst of feeling was not serious, in fact she never truly loved the lecturer, she was only fascinated by his extensive knowledge and earnestness, and she mistook this admiration for love.

This is, of course, the end for the poor man who must leave the party school, his wife, and on top of it all, lose his love.

Vera Angi, on the other hand, wins the party's full recognition for her firm, considerate, and disciplined behaviour. In the last sequences we see her in a car with the old puritanical comrade who takes her to the capital and tells her that the party has found an important post for her: she will become a journalist. The speeding car nearly hits a cyclist on the road. She is our hot-blooded friend; Pál Gábor wants to suggest that those who always say what they think will remain in some god-forsaken provincial corner.

So the film criticizes those years vigorously enough; my only concern is that throughout the whole film the emphasis is only on one year, 1948. Why does it not offer a broader perspective? As it is, the film lacks those deeper layers of meaning. The few moments selected from this period are much more applicable to the entire period of the 'fifties when many more blood-curdling things happened than this moral story about a party school. The director could argue that in 1948 things were not yet so distorted as they later became. But is it worthwhile measuring our artistic message so accurately? Or did Gábor believe that Hungarian filmgoers who know what happened later wil l

regard the small distortions as big ones? Than what about foreigners and young Hungarians born in 1960 or 1970? How can they understand the film's message? It is an old truth that the specific should contain a big dose of the general.

In spite of this feeling of something missing Gábor's film is good and there can be no doubt about the sincerity of his intentions. Lajos Koltai's sequences are comprehensive, powerful, and characteristic, we do not forget them. What I liked most in the film was its homogeneous and beautiful style, its sensitive rendering of objects, landscapes, and situations. I must confess, however, that I cannot recall any particularly captivating sequences. The scene is set in a closed environment and does not try to capitalize on this.

I think *The Training of Vera* could have been a remarkable film if the representation of the 'fifties in Hungary had been deeper and more tragical.

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I watched András Kovács's "historical thriller" (the description used by the director) *October Sunday*, as a story of my own stupidity and helplessness. A few years ago, I wrote enthusiastically about András Kovács's *Blindfolded*, a film I thought outstanding, a worthy successor of *Cold Days*. *Stud-farm*, released last year based on a novel of the same title by István Gáll, fell short of the complexity and dramatic power of the original story. *October Sunday* is just Kovács's cup of tea, the sort of undertaking which fully brings out his genius. He is a typical journalist-director always in search of events or situations. He is not especially concerned with what one might call cinematic art: nuances, style, or bravado camera work.

András Kovács offers us an experience of facts. In *October Sunday*, he does so masterfully, convincingly and sweepingly. As if the drama had taken place yesterday and not thirty-five years ago. This is the secret of his films: the Hungarian public cannot help feeling that whatever happened in Budapest on that Sunday of October 15, 1944, somehow does not belong to the past alone, it is part of contemporary history. It continues to surround it in the fluid state of decisions, events, and consequences around it. In other words, it affects you in all its details.

What then did happen in Budapest on that sunny autumn Sunday, the 15th of October, 1944? Admiral Horthy, the Regent, who had by then steered the country for more than twenty years through increasingly troubled waters, went on the air and announced in a broadcast address that Hungary had lost the war and that, having drawn the proper consequences from that fact, he had asked for an armistice from the Soviet Union. However, exactly because of the fear from the Russians, the move had not been adequately prepared—and how could it have been by the man who had led the Counter-Revolution in 1919—and the carrying out of the plan ended in a mess. This tragicomedy is the subject of András Kovács and his cameraman, István Lugossy. The Hungarian spectator, including the author of these lines, feels that this "historical thriller" is in fact an irritating, shameful, and painful tragedy.

What you feel is not the inevitability of historical drama where things could not have happened in any other way, you are in the grip of sorrow, an uncomfortable feeling, realizing that things could have taken an entirely different turn. We meet with a number of VIPs, including a prime minister, generals, staff officers, commander of the Guards who are unable to reach a decision or take steps to map out a decided course. András Kovács describes what happened as a "drama of the lack of action." I would rather term it a drama of not knowing how to think or die. This does not mean that I contradict the director: it is easier to describe what the figures of *October Sunday* missed doing than what they actually did.

A winning move by Kovács is the choice

of a man named Géza, Horthy's aide-de-camp, a most attractive personality, and moral being, as the principal character. The figure is based on real life. The Regent himself does not walk on until the last minutes of the film, so Géza represents the man who directed events at the highest level that particular day in Buda Palace. Géza keeps up secret contact with Moscow from a cellar in the Palace. He types out for broadcasting the text of the Regent's announcement which he received from General Lakatos the Prime Minister. He urges the commander of the Guards to adopt a firmer line of resistance. But no one bothers to prepare the officer corps or the troops and so the Arrowcross-men and the collaborators are not arrested. The Regent remains in the Palace, instead of making the announcement midst the fighting soldiers, telling them about the volte-face and the need to confront the Germans.

The Hungarian government and general staff were awaiting a miracle. They thought that once Horthy announced the armistice, the Germans would simply leave Hungary, and the British, Russians, and Americans would move in. They would have their cake and eat it too. The Regent, believed this naïve idea to such a degree that he informed his erstwhile allies of his intention. After all, a gentleman should be a gentleman even facing a paranoiac beast such as Hitler. How do the Germans respond? They are briefly embarrassed by a single factor: the lack of preparation. The scene in the film with the most important moral lesson is a conference of SS and Wehrmacht officers who discuss whether the Hungarian leadership seriously plans to pull out. One actually says it cannot be serious since not even the bridges have been blocked. The Hungarians would not make such a mistake. But they did: they did not block the bridges, the army failed to appear to encircle the German forces in the town and so on. Meanwhile, the Germans had taken all the necessary steps. Under the leadership of the infamous Otto Skorzeny, they kidnapped the Regent's son, an advocate among those close to power of the idea of breaking with the Germans and negotiating for an armistice. The film is a Hungaro–West German co-production with real Germans playing the roles of Germans who always act with determination. The lesson the film teaches concerning national self-awareness and the objective, almost respectful presentation of the enemy does everyone credit.

Naturally, András Kovács knows that political conflict will not make a film if it lacks human interest. We are shown a secret love-affair between Géza, the aide-de-camp, and the wife of a count who is an Arrowcross politician. It offers remarkable proof of Kovács's power of artistic expression that this emotional sideline that apparently earned a place in the film to give it balance does not only strike us as authentic but in fact has an important role to play in the story. Géza's suicide would not be so acceptable, had his motives not included the hopelessness of his love-affair. To continue the story: the Regent's announcement is read out on October 15, 1944, a Sunday, at noon. The country receives the news with a sigh of relief and anti-German officers are waiting for further orders. The commander of the Castle garrison has tank traps and land-mines placed around the Buda Palace, the government quarters, and Admiral Horthy's residence. Then, as I mentioned, they are waiting for miracles, in other words, they are all at a loss what to do. Those in the dark include the leaders, the men who must make decisions. It is typical of the situation that, when they are informed of the kidnapping of the Regent's son and Géza suggests that the government also take hostages, that they arrest members of the German Embassy staff, General Lakatos the Prime Minister turns down the idea as an impermissible challenge to an ally.

Acting resolutely once they have to fear no risks, the Germans advance with tanks and armoured vehicles along the Castle walls. Those who can escape. An order from the Re-

gent ends brief resistance by the garrison. The Germans are able to occupy the Palace and the Regent's quarters. A solution follows that is a peak of absurdity even in this tragicomedy when the Regent arrives and in the last minute, puts himself under the protection of the German army.

Protection against whom?—the ignorant may ask. Against whom would a country's all-powerful leader be protected by the enemy that captures him? The question is easy and infuriating to answer. For there were as many as two versions of wickedness and lunacy in Hungary. The impotence of those in power was matched by the perversity of the Arrowcross. While the upper class was not prepared to safeguard their power, the petty and stupid Arrowcross scum instantly jumped into lorries to occupy the point of strategic importance and, of course, to arrest those clear-sighted few who put up at least token resistance. Horthy did not achieve anything for Hungary, his blunder meant that he let the Arrowcross scum loose on the country.

That was the end of the big venture aimed at putting an end to Hungary's century-long historical decline.

I have not yet described Géza's genuine tragedy. But even he commits a silly mistake asking the Gestapo officer who is in charge of the whole action for help. Without treason there seems no way out. Géza wants to escape the Germans and Hungarian Nazis with his love. The woman is ready to go, to abandon her husband, but when the latter threatens to have Géza killed by his Arrowcross-men if his wife leaves him —she gives up. At the front door, the maid warns Géza to escape on his own as fast as he can. But he rushes back to the Regent's palace to burn all papers to stop them getting in German hands. By the time that is done, it is too late. He, too, is captured. When the Gestapo men start interrogating him, his answer is to pull the trigger of his pistol held against his temple.

Addressing a Wehrmacht officer in the big hall of the Palace, the Gestapo officer sums up the situation: "We have gained two months."

And we, Hungarians, lost not only a war that had been lost from the start, but also the chance to practise another kind of history, another kind of ethics.

We should have taken part in the armed struggle against Fascism in the front line in Central Europe. We failed to do so, we were unable to do so. This very good film by András Kovács holds up a true mirror to this historical paralysis. All of us ready to join him in his analysis of the situation then, and now, will certainly find the lesson useful.

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Under heavy escort, an elegant carriage proceeds on a hill road through forests in János Rózsa's *Trumpeter*. Huge trees are felled to block the road. Three men, apparently highwaymen, attack the carriage and the escorting horsemen. The travellers are all killed in moments. The trap worked: one of them, Földi by name, had lain down across the road as if he had been dead and for more emphasis, the others had pinned him down with a two-pronged pitchfork stuck into the soil. The elegant carriage stops, the "victim" is freed only for him and his two mates to instantly attack the stunned travellers. Földi tears off items of clothing from a woman dragged out of the carriage when his mate, *Törött orrú* (Broken Nose), stabs her from behind. An escaping horseman is killed by a pistol shot. Horse and rider fall into the abyss. Having collected the loot, the three men set the carriage on fire and they are just about to do so when a young boy with a trumpet on his shoulder jumps out of the straw. The assailants are doubtful about the child but he says that both his father and mother have been killed by the *labanc* (pro-Austrian Hungarian soldiers, enemies of the *kuruc*, who fought for Hungarian independence in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries).

These are the opening frames of János Rózsa's new film. A young *kuruc* meets three older *kuruc*. For Földi, Törött orrú and Szakállas (Bearded) say they are devoted *kuruc*, but Trombitás (Trumpeter) gradually realizes that they behave like ordinary robbers. They attack farms, lift cattle from strangers, steal chicken, ham, and sausage. They say they do all this in the name of Thököly, the famous *kuruc* leader. The innocent boy watches the cruelties of his dear fathers, that is what he calls them, to escape continuous beatings and when, on one occasion, they rape two peasant girls in his presence, he openly turns on them.

Of course, he is helpless against these brutal monsters without moral norms. So he just watches. One day, *labanc* troops arrive in the forest looking for the murderers of the nobleman and his escorts. They come upon the three *kuruc* soldiers. However, the *labanc* captain cannot outsmart the robbers who lie and flatter cunningly and say that they saw the mounted assailants who had killed the travellers. Tied up and covered with dry leaves, Trombitás can only listen to this description of the events. After all this, he is not surprised when the *labanc* captain returns to the cave one day, collects the valuables stolen from the carriage and, packing it all on a two-wheeler, disappears while the militant *kuruc* soldiers do not lift a finger. There is only one explanation, namely, the *labanc* captain and the three men claiming to be *kuruc* are all robbers, who sometimes share in the booty.

But little Trombitás does not realize this yet. Desperate by this time, he follows the *labanc* captain and when the path winds over an abyss, jumps on him, killing him and taking the loot back to the cave. The three *kuruc* who wake in the morning light look on little Trombitás with disappointment. They mutter something to the effect how it was a pity, as this was a good place for quiet attacks. No doubt, a viewer thinks, these three are ordinary robbers even if they were *kuruc* soldiers earlier in their lives. But the pace of the film doesn't leave you much time for ponderings and the next scenes are those of fair-sized *labanc* troops searching the woods for the murderer of their captain. They capture Földi, Törött orrú, and Szakállas. The three are handcuffed and tied up with the other *kuruc* in the woods where the *labanc* soldiers are having a great time. Trombitás is lucky. His three dear fathers had knocked him down and tied him up, so he is believed to be first, a victim, then, when the *labanc* soldiers help him regain consciousness, a witness who says that those three were the murderers. It does not occur to anyone that he may have killed the captain. So far, so good. But why don't those three who are innocent this time, speak up against him? Dramaturgically, this appears to be a snag that apparently does not bother the director who now starts washing clean the *kuruc* soldiers who have sunk so low. For Földi and Szakállas begin painfully droning a *kuruc* song, whereupon the *labanc* kill *Földi* by shooting him and then knock down Szakállas. With this scene, János Rózsa appears to tell us that in real difficulty their better selves gained the upper hand. As a result, the young *kuruc*, Trombitás, commits another blunder. What he saw makes him believe that his patrons are after all real *kuruc* soldiers, genuine patriots. He comes by a dagger and in a camp of incapably drunk *labanc* soldiers, he frees Szakállas, Törött orrú and a so far unknown *kuruc* from their bonds. We see their long, desperate running in the early morning mist, in the woods. They reach a corn-field, with the sun rising in the distance. The golden sight of sunrise is perhaps the most beautiful picture of the film whose cameraman, Elemér Ragályi, is known for his quite extraordinary flair for fine nuances of form and colour.

Rózsa continues setting a hot pace. The fugitives are out of breath as they stumble into a wine cellar. Another scene of wild, beastly drinking follows while animal passions break loose. Having drunk enough,

they praise Trombitás who has saved them. Szakállas calls him the new *kuruc* king and kisses his hands, so does Törött orrú. The unknown *kuruc* is surprised, but then takes from his shako an exceptionally fine gold necklace and despite the boy's protests, hangs it in his neck. They also give him a picture of Thököly painted on a pig's shoulder and extol him by saying how he would take revenge for the death of Földi and all other *kuruc*. But the two gangsters are gripped by uncertainty: how can they get back to a *kuruc* camp when they do not even know the pass-word. Their new acquaintance tells them the new password. Then Szakállas kills the poor man dealing several blows to his face and head. The gangsters just could not stand the idea that their companion was a real *kuruc*, while for them, there is no way back.

Trombitás watches the events in stupefaction. Only then he wakes to the realization that they do not belong in the same camp. But he must be careful not to share the fate of the poor man. He says he will hide the body, lest it put their enemies on their track. He drags out the body from the wine-cellar, places it by a stack, puts the gold necklace in his clasped hands and covers him with straw.

A sudden cut changes the scene and another excellent frame shows the marketplace of a typical Hungarian village. Peasants, children, and women watch as Szakállas is skinned alive and Törött orrú is impaled by the *labanc*. Trombitás is also there. When he hears sounds of commiseration in the crowd, he retorts that they are ordinary criminals. He is slapped, falls, his face gets covered in blood and mud. Henchmen peel the skin off Szakállas's back, Törött orrú screams with pain as he feels the sharp tip of the pale and peasants are horrified at the sight of the suffering victims. The *labanc* lieutenant then notices Trombitás and aware that he is a *kuruc* too, begins to chase him and once again, the boy runs through woods and meadows, waters and marshlands as he will obviously have to run all his life until he is killed by a *labanc* sword or bullet: he will be a fugitive all his life. His face in close-up also expresses that he has joined the *kuruc*. He is an outlaw, but will always fight for justice.

What I have said has probably made it clear that Rózsa the director and Ragályi the cameraman have, this time, made a rough, naturalistic film to express their political and moral message. This film tells me how easily difficult times and confused situations turn truthful people into compromising, greedy self-seekers with the full vocabulary of truth on their lips. But it is no more than an ideology of self-defence, self-justification. And Trombitás? His life shows how difficult, almost impossible, it is to find the right ideas and reach right decisions among such fakes pretending to truthfulness and relying on vastly greater experiences. To prop up this conflict, Rózsa has evoked the ruthlessness and cruelty of a whole age. No doubt, he did so in the interest of his message and not just to shock the public. Perhaps he has not always managed to strike the right proportions. If the naturalism of Japanese films (e.g. *Onibaba, In the Gates of Strom, The Seven Samurais*) served as his model, he should have born in mind that things have a different meaning in Europe. Yet, despite the historical distance, Rózsa has certainly succeeded in presenting the omnipresent social and political conflict of purity and squalor, morality and decay wrapped up in appearances in an exciting although visually cruel film. The harshness of visual expression often reduces the power of the impact, but I think, a great many scenes will live long in the public's mind. Scenes charged with meaning both at face value and in a wider sense.

JÓZSEF TORNAI

MUSICAL LIFE

PLAYING AMERICAN PIANO MUSIC

People very often ask artists coming home from America about the quality of American piano music because it strikes them that American architecture, literature, and films are much better known in Hungary than American music. Is it anything like European music? If so, is it merely a copy or does it have its own values? It is not so simple to answer these questions. American music has taken over a lot from Europe with regard to form, melody, and harmony but at the same time it has become increasingly independent since the beginning of the century; indeed, it is having a growing influence on European music. American composers can either capitalize on the experience gained from studying European composers and thus prove themselves, or accentuate the specifically American character of their music. This is primarily manifested in its more or less indigenous jazz tradition and partly in the more than usually enthusiastic embracing of technical developments and their immediate application.

Owing to reasons both musical and non-musical we have practically no knowledge of recent developments in American music. In my recital at Budapest's Academy of Music in February 1979 I wanted to convey as much information as possible although selection of music for a 90-minute programme is necessarily rather arbitrary. I felt that the introductory piece was almost obligatory.

In the early years of this century the piano music of Charles Ives with its fresh, insolent, candid, teasingly modern, and courageously populist tones insinuated itself into the crepuscular climate of Europe. Since the big sonatas were ruled out by their "celestial length" I started the concert with the *Three Pages Sonata*, an 8-minute musical aphorism built on the B–A–C–H motif which ranges from rigorously contrapuntal dissonances, from slow bell music echoing the chimes of Big Ben (in compliance with the composer's intentions I "mixed" this part with my right hand jumping from celeste to piano and back) to march music and ragtime.

The next item on the programme, both as a contrast and a complementary piece, was Geoge Crumb's *Macrocosmos* in 12 movements. After his bold innovations around the beginning of the century this music is a product of the composer's nostalgia for natural traditions (in this sense a contrast) which is at the same time imbued with an amazing technical inventiveness (in this sense a companion to Charles Ives' piece). Crumb's popularity has spread like an epidemic among those who cannot decide between modern music and intelligible music and whose interest is in any case not very great. Is this music a synthesis or just

an eclecticism, which evades the real issue? The views of professionals differ; I am inclined to the latter opinion. The wealth of ideas is undeniable: apart from the piano keys themselves, the exotic sounds of strings stifled by fingers, flageolets, the back of the hand or nails sliding on the strings evoking gentle breezes or thunderous storms—all this plays a spectacular and important role in this piece.

The piano-player—after overcoming his initial inhibitions—whispers, speaks, sings, and whistles while his two hands work with the dexterity and virtuosity demanded by a Chopin study. The pitch, duration, timbre, and volume of each and every tone is determined with the utmost accuracy. This is a rare thing today. All this is penetrated by an undeniable programme-like character and a sort of obsolete mysticism and even religious humanism, not very originally formulated but sincere. The more spectacular movements written in the form of symbolic diagrams were made visible to the audience with the aid of a projector and screen.

Next came the most popular and successful piece in the traditional European style of virtuosity, Samuel Barber's *Piano Sonata*. Its first performance by Horowitz was followed by a whole army of young American pianists. The first movement is traditional sonata form full of pathos and based on the opposition of main and secondary theme; then comes a Mendelssohn type of fairy dance, followed by a sad song, a more formal than substantial homage to dodecaphonic technique. The fourth and last movement is a fugue in which the "prize pupil" displays every trick of the trade and the rumbling, spectacular octaves in the final part offer everything the ambitious virtuoso and the connoisseur (but not revolutionary) could possibly ask for. The impact of Stravinsky, Prokofiev, and Shostakovich is obvious. Although it would be difficult to analyse the reasons here, I feel that it is the musical manifestation of the perceptible similarity in the tastes and mental attitudes of two big nations coexisting despite all their differences.

I did not want to overburden the programme so I could only take one more composer. There was one name which presented itself as a concluding item with the same unfailing assurance as the name of Ives had at the beginning. This name was of course Gershwin. His music, as long as the performing standard is adequate, cannot be taboo in a concert hall. This is demonstrated by its inclusion in "light music" concerts given by Cathy Berberian or the Kings Singers. I chose the piano transcription of *Rhapsody in Blue* and, as an "extra," I added the recently re-edited transcriptions of Gershwin's most successful songs. These brilliant pieces have been inaccessible for a long time unless you were lucky enough to acquire the first edition which was published in the 1930s, a rarity by now.

Who knows when there will again be a great composer whose songs are whistled in the streets and who, at the same time, is admired by such masters of serious music as Ravel. Whilst Gershwin's songs are undeniably products of the entertainment business, for me and also for the unprejudiced public they represent musical democratism in this increasingly polarized Babel of confusion.

ÁDÁM FELLEGI

THE HUNGARIAN DULCIMER

The cimbalom or Hungarian dulcimer is an ancient eastern instrument, though it has come to be regarded as a Hungarian one. The earliest depiction, found in Niniveh, dates from the 9th century B.C. It is mentioned on several occasions in the Arabian Nights. Miniatures of Persian and Mesopotamian origin show a timber box with eighteen metallic strings, which were sounded by using two sticks.

The cimbalom reached Europe in one of three possible ways, being transmitted either by the Moors when they invaded Spain, or the Turks when they invaded the Balkans, or wandering tribes of Gypsies, who may have brought it with them from Persia, Turkey or India. It must be presumed to have been present in medieval times and during the Renaissance as a folk instrument suspended from the player's neck. The instrument was perfected by an Eisleben violonist Pantaleon Hebenstreit (b. 1667). He spent five years working on it. The result was four times as large (with a hundred and eighty five strings) than the one in general use at the time. He toured Europe as a famous virtuoso, first receiving recognition at the court of Louis XIV. who most graciously allowed him to name the instrument the *pantaleon*. Hebenstreit died around 1750, very likely in Dresden, and his instrument disappeared with him, being replaced by early forms of the pianoforte (Hammerklavier) which was easier to play.

The first Hungarian report of the instrument is to be found in the 15th century Vienna Codex.* In the 16th century the word *cimbalom* was already used in the present sense of the term. 17th century Hungarian sources speak of its use in ensembles for dance music and to entertain people at table. It became an instrument in Gypsy bands during the 18th century.

* The Vienna Codex is a MS containing fractions of the Hussite Bible in Hungarian. *(The Ed.)*

Later developments involved a growth in size of the instrument as well as a division of the strings by the use of saddles, thus considerably increasing its range. Further developments, including the use of pedals, were due to innovations introduced by Vencel Schunda, a Hungarian instrument-maker. Liszt showed an interest in his work, thanks to which the cimbalom became a chromatic instrument suitable for the concert platform. In the 19th century both Ferenc Erkel and Mihály Mosonyi employed the cimbalom as an orchestral instrument in their operas. In his Hungarian rhapsodies Liszt made the piano sound like a cimbalom; in a number of other works he made use of the cimbalom as part of the orchestra optional. Paderewski was one of the few non-Hungarian composers who used the cimbalom in the orchestra.

In 1874 Schunda published the first systematic school for the cimbalom. By the 1890s forty master craftsmen, employing around two hundred journeymen, made the instrument in Hungary. Schunda alone sold ten thousand in thirty-two years. Liszt himself was present when the thousandth pedal cimbalom was ceremoniously handed over by the makers. The cimbalom has been taught at the Budapest National Conservatorium since 1890 and at the Academy of Music since 1897. The journal *Czimbalom* was first published in 1890, and *Czimbalom a családi körben* (The cimbalom in the home) in 1890 as well. A history of the cimbalom was published in 1906. The cimbalom, however, was, at that time, chiefly used by Gypsy bands or by amateurs accompanying popular tunes.

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Aladár Rácz, the virtuoso of the cimbalom, was born in 1886 as the third of the fourteen children of a village Gypsy fiddler. "My father gave me my first cim-

balom lessons when I was four... If I remember right, children were asked which instrument they wanted to play. An ancient cimbalom lay on the table. I liked the look of it and pointed at it: that's what I wanted. I had to learn around twenty-five to thirty tunes, and play them all every day." He was ten when he became a member of the same Gypsy band as his father. He could not read music then. At the age of sixteen he was engaged to play in a Budapest café. In the seven years he spent in the city he played for a number of Gypsy bands, learnt to read music, and taught himself to play the piano. In 1910 he was offered a contract in Paris, accepted, and set out for parts unknown with only small change in his pocket, and without knowing a word of French. He toured with ensembles he joined in Paris, and travelled as far as Scotland and Egypt. Saint-Saëns heard him in Cairo in 1913 and called him the Liszt of the cimbalom. In 1914 he moved to Geneva and then, because of the Great War, he stayed in Switzerland for many years. French schoolbooks opened the doors to science and literature for Rácz. He was still satisfied with his work in a café but neither his first wife, nor his fellow musicians were able to satisfy his craving for intellectual companionship. In 1914 he began to make his own cimbalom sticks. The problem kept nagging at him all his life and he continued to experiment with a variety of materials and ways of making cimbalom sticks. He changed from a finger to a palm grip. He also insisted on the importance of tuning, particularly when teaching. Towards the end of the 1930s he further perfected a Schunda cimbalom. He did not change the essence of the construction, but achieved an overall change in effect by the totality of minor modifications. His cimbalom had one hundred and twenty-three strings and he was able to vary the timbre in a great number of ways.

In 1915 Ansermet took Stravinsky to a restaurant in Geneva to listen to, and meet Rácz. Stravinsky described the meeting in his autobiography. He was most impressed by the virtuoso and sought his advice about obtaining an instrument. Stravinsky learnt to play the cimbalom, and wrote for the instrument himself. He consulted Rácz by postcard on whether his score for *Renard* was playable. *Ragtime* written in 1917, was first performed in Basle in 1930, and recorded in Paris in 1934, under the baton of the composer, with Aladár Rácz at the cimbalom.

In 1920 Rácz bought a whole box full of assorted scores. These included works by Bach, Scarlatti, Couperin and Rameau. In the following six years Rácz went on learning without a teacher, to play fugues and suites. He was still a café musician when, in 1922, he appeared on the concert platform. From 1923 on he regularly played for famous musicians in his own time. On March 9th 1926 he played for the pupils and teachers of the École Normale at Lausanne. His first public recital took place in Lausanne in the *Maison du Peuple*, on May 25th 1926. The *Gazette de Lausanne* compared the way he adapted Bach and Couperin to the cimbalom to Segovia's playing of the guitar. Jacques-Dalcroze invited Rácz to take part in the Rhythm Congress held in Geneva that summer, where he met Yvonne Barblan who later become his second wife. That autumn he gave recitals in a number of Swiss towns, including Montreux, Vevey and Fribourg, going on to Paris the following year.

In 1928 Rácz and Yvonne Barblan first experimented, then practiced and finally gave recitals of piano and cimbalom duets. In their playing the cimbalom always remained the dominant instrument. Rácz and Yvonne Barblan were married in 1931 and moved to Paris. In 1934 they visited Hungary—seeing Bartók and his wife as well, whom they had met earlier—and in 1935 they finally moved to Budapest. Rácz was almost unknown in Budapest at the time and the ice only melted slowly around him. True enough Kodály had already written to Rácz in 1929. "Dear Maestro: I was

happy to hear that you have undertaken the cimbalom part in the Háry János suite. Most of the well known orchestras performed it, but only New York and Amsterdam included a cimbalom. The good people of Geneva are therefore in luck. Judging by your reputation the score should not need much study on your part..." Early in 1937 Rácz appeared in Rome. He was so successful that the money he made allowed him to hire the large hall of the Academy of Music for a recital. Critical acclaim was unanimous. Aladár Tóth, for example, called him the genius of the cimbalom. In 1938 he was appointed professor of the cimbalom at the Academy of Music. That Autumn he gave the first performance of a Divertimento by György Kósa, a contemporary Hungarian composer. He gave many recitals, and received many invitations to play abroad, though, owing to the war, he could only accept a small number.

Outstanding post-war pupils were Ferenc Gerencsér (class of 1947) and József Szalai (class of 1948). Arthritic pains forced Rácz to teach at home, and Budapest Radio made arrangements to broadcast his recitals live from his home as well. These recitals were also transmitted by the BBC and Radio Paris and Warsaw. Colin Mason wrote in *The Musical Times* for September 1948: "Perhaps he plays a Rumanian or Hungarian folk dance to begin with: then he passes on to Bach, Bull, Couperin, Daquin, Farnaby, Purcell, Scarlatti. To hear these from him is a unique experience. The delicacy, purity, and refinement make you feel that you are hearing them for the first time, more exquisitely beautiful than they have ever sounded on the piano, the cembalo, or the guitar. Then you realize that this frightful Gypsy cimbalom, in Rácz's hands, is the perfect medium for ancient keyboard music. Until you have heard him play you can never really say you have heard the cimbalom at all." Aladár Rácz died on March 28th 1958.

Aladár Rácz's chair was not filled and the cimbalom was not tought at the Budapest Academy of Music till 1964, when a talented young girl came on the scene.

Márta Fábián was born in 1946. She began to play the cimbalom when she was eight, at the age of thirteen she appeared with the Children's Chorus of Hungarian Radio and was admitted as a pupil by the Budapest Béla Bartók Conservatorium and Secondary School. She considers herself as a disciple of Ferenc Gerencsér, one of Aladár Rácz's most talented pupils. Márta Fábián graduated from the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in 1967. At first she played mainly folk music, then the classics; with the passing of time, however, she became increasingly interested in contemporary music.

Talking to the writer of these lines Márta Fábián pointed out that Aladár Rácz was inimitable, and therefore she could not follow in his footsteps, besides she lacked the kind of piano partner that Rácz's wife had been. On the other hand she could, like Rácz had done in the case of Stravinsky, play contemporary music. Unfortunately contemporary composers showed little interest in the cimbalom, certainly not as a solo instrument.

"Péter Eötvös, Stockhausen's assistant, composed a live cimbalom solo for his electronic *MESE* performed at the Darmstadt Festival in September 1968," Márta Fábián went on. "It created a considerable stir. Stockhausen was angry to start with since he feared that a live instrument might spoil the electronic sound."

Hungarian composers presently took notice of Márta Fábián. András Mihály invited her to join the Budapest Chamber Ensemble, which was then being formed. György Kurtág wrote the cimbalom part of *In memory of a winter sunset* for her in 1969, as well as a solo work *Splinters* in 1973.

At her request a number of composers have recently included cimbalom parts in orchestral or chamber works, and a number have tried it out as a solo instrument as well.

István Láng has called Márta Fábián's playing deliberately instinctive and instinctively deliberate, stressing the love she feels for the instrument and her obsession with expression. What he had in mind is her missionary activity in the service of contemporary music. Márta Fábián of course plays folk music and arrangements, but her repertoire also includes the classics—Bach, Couperin, Scarlatti, Daquin, Beethoven and Mozart—as well as music for the cimbalom composed by Bartók, Kodály, Stravinsky, Boulez, Holliger, Wittinger and Zimmerman. Contemporary Hungarian composers whose music she plays include Sándor Balassa, Attila Bozay, Ferenc Farkas, Frigyes Hidas, Miklós Kocsár, Kamilló Lendvai, Rudolf Maros, András Mihály, Lajos Papp, Emil Petrovics, György Ránki, László Sári, Endre Székely, and Sándor Szokolay. She appears on thirteen Hungaroton records as soloist or member of a chamber ensemble. One is a folk-music selection, the others contain music for the cimbalom by contemporary Hungarian composers. Her first solo record, made in 1975, was awarded the Grand Prix of the French Record Academy in 1977. Márta Fábián has toured widely as a soloist and member of the Budapest Chamber Ensemble, and has taken part in many festivals of modern music. Joan Chissel hit the nail on the head in her review in *The Times* following her appearance at concert in 1975:

"The most exotic discovery was Márta Fábián and her cimbalom in a concert of contemporary music. Artistry like Miss Fábián's is not only extending the instrument's own traditional range of dynamics and colour but also encouraging serious Hungarian contemporary composers to write for it."

EMŐKE PINTÉR

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

BALÁZS, József (b. 1932) Section head at the Hungarian Institute of Foreign Affairs. Trained originally as a teacher of philosophy. Formerly on the staff of the Study and Analysis Section of the Foreign Ministry. International détente is his chief field of interest; he has published much on the subject in recent years.

BALÁZS, József (b. 1944). Writer. Trained as a teacher, graduating from the University of Budapest. At present with MAFILM. Novels include *Magyarok* (Hungarians) (1975); *Fábián Bálint találkozása Istennel* (Bálint Fábián's meeting with God) (1976); *Koportos* (1976); *Ártatlan* (Innocent) (1977) and *Szeretők és szerelmesek* (Lovers and those in love) (1978). "Hungarians" was filmed under the direction of Zoltán Fábri.

BÁCSKAI, Tamás (b. 1925). Managing director of the National Bank of Hungary. Graduated at the University of Budapest. Ph.D. in Law and Economics. Taught Public Finance at Karl Marx University of Economics (1951–1962). Engaged in peace research in Vienna (1962–1968). Joined the National Bank in 1968, where he directs research activities. Has written on the monetary role of gold, risk in economic life, disarmament, development, and income regulation in Hungary, etc. See his "Banking in East-West Trade," NHQ 39.

BERLIND, Bruce (b. 1926). American poet, a graduate of Princeton and Johns Hopkins Universities. Has taught English at Colgate University, Hamilton. N.Y., since 1954. Author of three volumes of poems. Has visited Budapest on two occasions as a guest of the Hungarian PEN Centre to work on his translations of poems by Ágnes Nemes Nagy, which will be published by Iowa University Press.

CSIKÓS-NAGY, Béla (b. 1915). Secretary of State, Chairman of the National Prices and Materials Office. Has published and lectured on price policy and other economic questions in Hungary and abroad. See "Socialist Economic Theory and the New Mechanism," NHQ 28, "The Monetary Framework of a Socialist Economy," 33, "Anti-Inflationary Policies," 55, "Hungarian Price Policy," 59, and "Thn Years of the Hungarian Economic Reform," 70.

FELLEGI, Ádám (b. 1941). Concert pianist. Studied at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest. 1966 took part in a course given by Paul Badura-Skoda in Vienna where he came top. Won the Arthur Rubinstein Prize in Rio de Janeiro in 1974.

FERENCZI, László (b. 1937). Our regular poetry reviewer. See his essays on Endre Ady, NHQ 66, on Gyula Illyés, 68, and on Ferenc Juhász, 74.

FORGÁCS, Éva (b. 1947). Art historian, on the staff of the Budapest Museum of Applied Arts. Has published *Kollázs és montázs* ("Collage and Montage"), Corvina Press, 1976, and studies on the Bauhaus and the art critic Ernő Kállai. Recent contributions: "Lajos Kassák Memorial Museum in Old Buda," NHQ 67, "Three Books on Art and Artists," 68, "New Corvina Books," 70, "The Miracle of the Puppet Play," 72, and "Tamás Lossonczy: a Retrospective," 74.

FÖLDES, Anna (b. 1931). Journalist, critic, on the staff of Nők Lapja, a weekly for women. Our regular theatre reviewer.

FRANK, János (b. 1925). One of our regular art critics.

GULYÁS, Pál (b. 1922). Journalist, on the staff of *Népszabadság*, also editor of *Hungarian Cooperation*, an illustrated quarterly published in four languages.

HARDI, Róbert (b. 1915). Economist. Has been lecturer at the Karl Marx University of Economics in Budapest, general manager of KONSUMEX, a foreign trade company, Commercial Counsellor in Beirut, and head of the Middle Eastern Bureau of the Hungarian National Bank. See his "Congress of the International Fiscal Institute," NHQ 18.

ILLYÉS, Gyula (b. 1902). Outstanding intellectual of great influence. Poet, playwright, essayist, Vice President of International PEN. See his poems in NHQ 33, 35, 46, 48, as well as his various essays and articles in 47, 50, 63, 66.

ILLYÉS, Mária (b. 1942). One of our regular art critics.

ISZLAI, Zoltán (b. 1933). Poet, author, one of our regular book reviewers.

KOVÁCS, Sándor Iván (b. 1937). Literary historian. Editor of *Kortárs*, a Budapest literary monthly. Has published several studies on old Hungarian literature. See "Albert Szenci Molnár, The Encyclopedist," NHQ 57 and "Bálint Balassi and Hernán Cortés," NHQ 70.

MEZEI, Ottó (b. 1925). Art historian. Published a book on Marcel Duchamps. See his "Vasarely Revisited," NHQ 48, and "Erzsébet Udvardi's Paintings in a Village Chapel," 74.

MOLNÁR, Ferenc (b. 1928). Secretary of State in the Ministry of Culture, graduated in Hungarian Literature from the University of Budapest, later taught his subject at his old university. On the staff of the Cultural Section of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party until 1974, when he was appointed to his present office.

NAGY, Ildikó (b. 1940). Art historian, on the staff of Corvina Press. Her main field is 20th century Hungarian art. Published a book on András Kiss Nagy in 1975. See her article on the same sculptor in NHQ 64, "The Museum of Naive Art in Kecskemét," 66, a review of a book by János Frank, 65, and "Hungarian Postimpressionism," 71.

NEMES NAGY, Ágnes (b. 1922). Poet, translator. Her selected poems appeared in 1969, a volume of essays on poetry in 1975. Translations include plays by Corneille, Racine, Molière, and Brecht, and poems by Rilke, St. John Perse and many other English, French and German classical and modern poets. See her poems in NHQ 23, 35, 62, 68, 73. Hungarian titles of her poems in this issue: *A tó; A gejzír.*

PACH, Zsigmond Pál (b. 1919). Historian. Director of the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and Vice President of the Academy. President of the International Economic History Association. Main fields are late-medieval and early-modern Hungarian history, with special emphasis on economic history. Among his books on these subjects, two appeared also in English: *The Role of East-Central Europe in International Trade, 15–17th Centuries*, and *The Levantine Trade and Hungary in the Middle Ages.*

PETŐ, Gábor Pál (b. 1926). Journalist. Science Editor of Népszabadság, the central daily of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. Graduate of the Veszprém University of Chemical Engineering. Worked in industry for a time, switched to journalism in 1961. Author of popular books on chemistry.

PINTÉR, Emőke (b. 1937). On the staff of NHQ. Worked in advertising and headed the promotion department of *Editio Musica*, Budapest. Has written a number of articles, as well as radio and television broadcasts on music.

POZSGAY, Imre (b. 1933). Minister of Culture. Graduated in History and Philosophy from the University of Szeged. Worked at the Bács County Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and was later Deputy Editor of *Társadalmi Szemle*, the Party's theoretical monthly. Does research in sociology, philosphy and aesthetics. See "Philosophy and Social Development," NHQ 62; "The Scope and Limits of Legislating on Culture," 66; "Nation and Mankind", 68, "Socialist Society and Humanism", 70.

RÁKOS, Sándor (b. 1921). Poet. Secretary of the translators' section in the Hungarian Writers' Association. Has published several volumes of poetry and, among others, a translation of *Gilgamesh*, as well as of other ancient Sumerian poetry. See his poems in NHQ 39. Original title of his poem in this issue: *Három Dosztojevszkij-maszk.*

RUBIN, Péter (b. 1918). Heads the information service of the Publishing House of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Author of a book on diplomacy.

RUFFY, Péter (1914). Journalist, on the editorial staff of the Budapest daily *Magyar Nemzet*. His publications include several books on travel, collections of articles and a novel. See previous contributions in NHQ 14, 15, 22, and 33.

SHAW, Sir Roy (b. 1918). Secretary General of the Arts Council of Great Britain since 1975. A graduate of Manchester University. Formerly a librarian and adult education lecturer. Publications include contributions to *Trends in English Education* (1959); *The Committed Church* (1966); *Your Sunday Paper* (1967); and a multitude of articles on adult education, the mass media and cultural policy.

SZABOLCSI, Miklós (b. 1921). Critic, literary historian. Deputy Director of the Institute of Literary History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. His main field is 20th century Hungarian and foreign literature. Has published a number of books, among them one on the artist as 20th century clown. He is responsible for the critical edition of Attila József's works. See "Social Taste and the Social Mind," NHQ 43.

TANDORI, Dezső (b. 1938). Poet, translator. Has published five volumes of verse, two novels and a great number of translations; the latter include Robert Musil's monumental *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. Original title of his poem in this issue: *Egy talált tárgy megtisztítása.* Other poems appeared in NHQ 33, 47, 49, 57.

TORNAI, József (b. 1927). Poet, translator, our regular film reviewer. See his poems in NHQ 38, 61, 72.

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