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Rationality or Irrationality?
The Annihilation of Hungarian Jews

Departure and Return
György Konrád Remembers

Dohnányi at Tallahassee

Engineers of Light

Urban Icons

Thirteen Days in the Death of Liszt

Count Sándor Teleki
and Victor Hugo's "Fancy" Frieze Coat

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Cover design: Péter Nagy. Photograph: Jewish women being led through the streets of Budapest to concentration camps, 1944.

Courtesy of Ghetto Fighters House in Memory of Izhak Katzenelson.



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György Konrád

Departure and Return

Excerpts

With long hair curled up at the sides and wearing suspenders, I stepped into the living room, where the upholstery and the tablecloth were blue; it opened onto the sunlit balcony, where hot cocoa and curd cheese pastries were waiting. I was well disposed to everyone, well aware of the many who had been working for me that day, making that entrance possible. There was a fire in the bathroom heater and in the tile stove in the living room, and the cleaning had long been done. From the kitchen came tempting sounds of active preparation.

I cock an ear: this might be the diminutive Mr Tóth, bringing buffalo milk and buffalo butter. I would see his buffalo from the train window on the way to Várád, stretched out in a big pond, in summer just lifting their heads above water. Mr Tóth wasn't much larger than I. He was very graceful in unrolling the bordered handkerchief in which he carried his money, including the monthly payment for which he would bring milk, curd cheese and sour cream, all just as white as the buffalo were black.

I would have liked to be very strong, and would give our coachman's biceps a hopeful squeeze. It had a nice thick bulge, and I wanted mine to be just as sun-browned, just as swelling. András and Gyurka the horse brought water from the artesian well in the grey tank-cart. Women waited their turn in line there, with two pitchers apiece. I remember the coachmen András and Gyula, and Vilma, Irma, Juliska, and Regina from the kitchen, and Annie, Hilda, and Livia in the nursery, the nanny's bed near mine.

The fire still crackles in the tile stove. There is no need to close its door until later, when the embers start crumbling. I rub the side of it and sit down to the table, where a booster pillow lies on the chair. It is nine o'clock. My father al-

György Konrád

is a novelist and essayist, whose latest book is A közép tágulása (The Widening Middle) The above was excerpted from Elutazás és hazatérés (Departure and Return), Budapest, Noran, 2002, the first volume of a memoir in progress.

ready went down to his store at eight, where his assistants and errand boys were waiting for him at the door. I will have to eat breakfast without him, in the company of my sister Éva and my nanny. Our mother will join us later if she can spare the time, setting her keys down on the blue tablecloth. Opening and closing all the various doors and drawers took a good while.

This was perhaps my third birthday, a Saturday. Behind our house, the play of bright light off the synagogue's yellow wall dazzled my eyes. In the garden, the walnut and sour cherry were already in bud. Around me in the living room there was silence, but you could hear rustlings coming from the dining room. It was fine that everyone was murmuring in there—as long as the door didn't open, which allowed me to wait a little longer before having to openly express my happiness. Once I had my gifts, the proper thing would be to play with them—but how long am I supposed to sit on that rocking-horse?

The big news was that the storks had taken up their position on the tower next to the Tablets of the Covenant on top of the synagogue; the winter hadn't destroyed their nest. The one tower was the family home, the other the sanctum of the man of the family, where towards evening, having supplied his family from the hunt, he would retire to ponder, one leg up, his bill tucked in.

One group of smells is the firewood chest, together with the aroma of burning oak. From here we may proceed to my parents' bedroom, where the scent of my mother's dresser dominates, and its ever-present lavender, a moth repellent. Another exciting odor-symphony calls me to the kitchen—but please can't we put off eating for the moment, maybe just a curd cheese pastry a bit later to go with my café au lait, but please, for now, the smell of onions and bloody meat is just too much, and I am not ready for the sight of a hen lying on stone, blood spurting from its neck onto a white enameled plate that the servants let coagulate, then cook with fried onions for their morning snack.

The breakfast is splendid. Now let's make some serious plans for the day. We'll go down to my father's hardware store, a space ten yards by twenty, with a cellar underneath used as a warehouse. If something was made of iron, you could find it there—anything the people of Truncated Bihar County could need—aptly called "Truncated," since neighbouring Transylvania was uncoupled from Hungary after the First World War, including its capital of Nagyvárad (Oradea) (together with most of my family, Hungarian-speaking middle-class Jews), and then Berettyóújfalu became the seat of what was left of Bihar County. Everyone came here to do their shopping for the week on market Thursdays, even from outlying villages.

On that day things would bustle in the early morning, bells chiming on horses' necks, with the carts on runners in winter. Even closed windows in the children's room could not seal out hoofbeat and whinny, the rumble of carts, the mooing of cattle. My father's hardware store was filled with customers, who

came ready to bargain for goods, punctuated by a lot of hearty back-slapping. His assistants, who knew most of them, did the same, and old Aunt Mari and Uncle János held up their end as well. My father's assistants and helpers all started out with him, trained by him from the age of thirteen. Before opening they would sweep the oily floor and sprinkle it down in figure-eights. The staff wore blue smocks, the bookkeeper a black silk jacket, my father a dark gray suit. The smell of iron and wood shavings wafted over me, then the grease they used on the carts from the axles, and then the oily paper used to wrap hunting guns. I could have told nails from wire by smell alone, with my eyes shut. In the store it was the smell of men, of boots, of the mid-morning snack taken there: bread, raw bacon and chunks of onion slipped under moustaches from knifetip.

Lajos Üveges can wait on three customers at a time, tossing pleasantries and encouragement this way and that, with time to ask me a "How's tricks?" He knows exactly what fitting you need for your cart; there is not a tradesman in Berettyóújfalu whose craft is new to Lajos Üveges. "Just watch how it's done," is his advice to me. I watch how he rolls a cigarette with one hand, builds me a seesaw or fixes a bicycle: That's how I should do it too. See how he speaks with the old peasants in a way that they get respect, together with the joke. Lajos' moustache exudes a pleasant smell of pomade, just like my grandfather's; the old man would give him some of his own supply. Ideal moustache wax scents exist, and this was it. For Lajos, it was sheer entertainment to smelt iron, fix a circuit, get the honey out of a beehive. He loved work.

In 1950, after my father's store was taken over by the state, Lajos Üveges was named manager of the hardware store with its twenty-two employees, which by then had taken over the first-floor apartment, using the neighbouring synagogue as warehouse. Among the assistants he was the best man for the job, though still not quite as good as my father.

My ancestors lived their own lives as Jewish middle-class Hungarians. My father was the primary taxpayer in the town's ambit of some twelve thousand people. As such, he was given membership at the gentleman's club—the "casino"—though he never went there himself. At the street entrance to his store, on the right side of the doorway, a mezuzah was nailed at an angle, a parchment roll in a mother-of-pearl case holding a handwritten text of the *Shema*, the main Sabbath prayer. "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." Only He, and no other. No pagan godhead in animal or human form.

Underneath it on the doorpost was a small metal plaque showing the outline of the historical borders of Hungary in 1914, and within it, painted in solid black, the 1920 territory, chopped to thirty per cent of its original size, with the slogan "*No, no, never!*", meaning that we would never make peace with this loss. The members of my family imagined that they were good Hungarians and good Jews at one and the same time. The two came to be viewed as separate during the Second World War.

The Hungarian government took up arms on the German side with the aim of recovering part of the lost territories, and was willing to send half a million Jews to German death camps in exchange. It was a bad bargain, because in the end they lost not only the Jews, but the territory as well, and were left with the shame of it, though not everyone feels this: some think that indeed many Hungarian Jews were killed in Auschwitz, but still not enough.

In the middle of the village the national flag flew at half staff, and as one piece of territory or another was rejoined to Hungary, they raised the flag a bit higher. On March fifteenth, a holiday to celebrate the 1848 Revolution, even the youth of the Jewish elementary school would march before it to orders of command, in ceremonial step, in white shirts and dark blue shorts.

My father, too, took part in the reoccupation of Ruthenia, and its cities of Ungvár and Munkács. At home he had his own gunner's uniform with a single white star on it, signifying the rank of private first class, but with the red braid on his arm that marked those who had finished *gimnázium*. With his own uniform, boots and horse, he could meet my mother on weekends in the hotel in Ungvár.

I advanced one rank higher in the military order, becoming a corporal, but my grown son Miklós did not carry on this upward career, managing only private in the French Army. In fact they tossed him in the klink for talking back to his commander.

On the nineteenth of March, nineteen hundred and forty-four, when the Germans occupied Hungary, I was eleven years old. What we around the table had merely feared had now come to pass. Our island of exception was no more; something new was afoot. How simple it had all been! How comical now seemed everything that had happened earlier! On how many evenings had I listened to the men's dinner-table strategising about how the English would move in from Italy and Greece, beginning the western invasion, giving Horthy more room to manoeuvre; he could then jump ship, and Hungary could begin an evolution into a neutral, Anglo-Saxon form of democracy. Until then, our fathers could hold out peacefully running their stores, medical practices and law offices. Until the arrival of the liberating English, the Jewish children could attend school in peace at that sad, little one-storey building with its dusty courtyard and beautiful prayer room, where the teacher would not humiliate them just for being Jewish.

On Friday evenings you could hear the shuffle of footsteps on the walkway by our house, where men dressed in black would make their way to synagogue under their broad-brimmed black hats. My schoolmates would also go with them, big-eyed, holding their fathers' hands.

On the day of the occupation, I sat with my father in front of the radio in his bedroom. There was no news of resistance; the Hungarian troops did not put up a fight. The Regent, the government, and the country all lay down for the forceful Germans. I did not much trust Horthy. I had had a lead soldier of him from

my earliest boyhood: around him were his officers, gendarmes, and the leaden infantry—all in green. Only Horthy stood out, in his cornflower-blue admiral's coat with gold epaulettes on his shoulders. I had a cannon as well, that shot little cannonballs a yard or so. The battlefield was the large, brown linoleum surface, where I would divide the armies and the equipment into halves. In the early days, the winning army was always the one led by His Grace the Regent. Once we entered the war, a cannon ball knocked His Grace over; from that point on, out there on the linoleum, the army under Horthy was the loser. I would hit him with the cannon; he fell on his back.

That evening even the uncles and cousins sat in front of the radio. There was a piece of stray news that a local garrison commander was displeased by the entrance of the Germans, and I immediately imagined that it might be the Újfalu regiment, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Egyed, to stop them. After all, there was a large barracks on the edge of town, a powerful garrison with cannon drawn by large-bodied artillery horses. If the Regent called on the people to fight for their freedom, he would find a foothold here in Bihar County.

"Him, of all people? Here?" István's smile was more than acerbic. But yes, since the Lieutenant Colonel is a good man, and no friend to the Germans. For years, I had been making political prayers to myself in bed after the lights were out. At school, I only discussed the war with István, between classes, out in the hall. We looked around to be sure that others could not hear us. We soon learned that we were individuals to be avoided. On the evening of that very same day, we had to recognise that not just Horthy, but also the commander of the local garrison offered no resistance. The next day German tanks stood in front of the town hall and the Calvinist church. On them sat soldiers in pike-gray uniforms observing events in the small marketplace. Civilians avoided contact with them; some even avoided looking in their direction. To the crackle of a forceful march, in ranks so tight they practically touched, the Germans demonstrated on the main square how a parade was supposed to be done—not like those cock-eyed Hungarian foot-sloggers. Patrols moved through the town commandeering apartments, including my uncle's house in its entirety.

So my cousins also moved in with us. Friends and relatives would visit my parents to exchange news and share their bewilderment. My father sat out in the sunshine of the balcony with his eyes closed. He had had to close the business, being no longer allowed to open the door of his own store, which after all was no longer his. There was a lock on the door with a seal on it. All valuables had to be turned in, including the radio. We three boys slept in the sitting room, or rather pretended to sleep, then turned on a low lamp and availed ourselves of the walnut brandy in the sideboard to provide us the alertness we needed for a night of talking politics.

At the age of eleven, on the fifteenth of May, I found that my father was not mine but the Gestapo's. Amid gendarmes and German officers, he departed through the garden gate. From the upstairs balcony, I watched his back, slightly bent. I had never seen him escorted by bayonets. After the men had been led off, we went to the dining room, where we could follow them through the upstairs window, which looked out on the street. In front were the Gestapo officers, behind them a couple of gendarmes in their cock-feathered hats, then my father and uncle, then more gendarmes with fixed bayonets, and drawing up the rear, the ridiculous policeman Csontos. The flagstones in the street on this day, the fifteenth of May, were most probably hot. Everything was as usual: the horse-droppings in threes drying on the stone, the yellow light on the thick spire of the Calvinist church, and the indifferent row of acacias along the main street.

My father looked neither right nor left; no one greeted him and vice versa. If one is being escorted by armed men, it is instructive to observe the faces of acquaintances approaching from the opposite direction. My father knew all those he passed, but had no reason to greet them; he walked like an actor making an entrance on screen. The scene was not outrageous, just unusual. First puzzlement on the faces, then, slowly, things fell into place: well of course, this is next, now they are taking the Jews. Only my mother and us children remained in the house.

My mother decided that something must be done. How can it be that the Hungarian gendarmes would take her husband away, just like that, at the command of Germans in black uniforms? And what of the Hungarian leadership at the top of the local administration? Did those gentlemen, whom we knew, contribute to this impossible situation?

My mother dressed up nicely and went to report this irregular incident to the chief constable, and to make a complaint. As she was leaving there, a black car stopped alongside her, and from inside came a voice in German: "Mrs. Konrád, step in. Do you want me to lock you up with your husband?" asked the Gestapo chief. My mother nodded. They did her the favour of putting her in the same jail as my father, though in another section. The gendarmes had rounded up a number of Jewish men—the wealthier and better-known ones—as hostages. The others' wives stayed at home. Only my mother was together with her husband.

This saved our lives. I later found out it was an Arrow Cross pastry-cook that turned us in; I have him to thank for being alive. Perhaps his problem with us was that we avoided his shop, though the entrance was actually pretty spectacular: polar bears, cut from jigsaw planks and painted in oils, licked raspberry and vanilla ice cream in the doorway. But the ice cream was worse than it was at Petrik's, where, between butter-coloured tile walls, two little bird-faced old ladies with buns of grey hair served cream pastries and ice cream, reliably. They used eggs, sugar, vanilla—all the right ingredients—and avoided forays into experimental pastry. They were not Arrow Cross, and went to church every Sunday

morning, arms linked, in white silk blouses and dark grey veiled hats. They opened their shop only after Mass, selling with a whiff of church-smell the cream pastries that had been baked at dawn, still lukewarm.

But they were not the deciding figures in history. Providence had put the switch into the hands of the other—the one who compensated for poor quality with painted icebergs and seals—to decide my fate. By finding an appropriate outlet for his flights of fancy in the genre of the denunciation letter, and thereby getting my parents into a Gestapo internment camp, he bestowed tremendous fortune upon us, for the result was that we all, one way or another, avoided the common fate of the Jews of Újfalú, which was Auschwitz.

In May of 1944 it was rumoured that the Jews outside the capital would be resettled in a work camp in what was formerly Polish territory. Cities were being built for them, set among lakes and forests. They would be set off from the rest of the population, but otherwise their lot would be good. From this point on, Jews and Christians could not live together or even have contact with each other. The source of the problem—us—had to be isolated.

The authorities relied on our understanding: naturally we cannot live together. The thought would never enter our minds. The Hungarian Jewish paper was still exhorting everyone to respect the laws and follow regulations to the letter. Now, in this difficult hour—in a time of trial—if we hold our own and show that we are good Hungarians, perhaps we might hope for some relief.

All this national solidarity about segregation was perfectly fine, but meantime how complicated the process was, in organisation, in execution—and how much meticulous work was required on the authorities' part, how many Interior Ministry functionaries and lower officials had to shorten the hours of their rightful sleep, and ask their wives' forgiveness, but this deportation was very complicated work. Every bureau had to play its part, from the gendarmerie to the Government Commissioner for Abandoned Possessions. Worthy of special praise was the railway workers' model cooperation during enemy bombing. In just a matter of weeks, the Jews, packed into freight trains, rolled out of the country. Collecting six hundred thousand Jews into city quarters surrounded by plank fencing, with an armed guard, then taking them off in freight cars: now *that* was something to drink to. The daily papers of the provincial cities announced, with a sigh of relief, that the air was clear, the region Jew-free.

We received a letter from some relatives in Budapest inviting us to go and stay with them. We needed to decide quickly whether to stay or go. Jews were no longer allowed to travel on trains, and papers were checked constantly throughout the trip; the duty to denounce was generally accepted. For us to travel to our relatives' in Budapest would have required special permission from the gendarmerie. An exception, a one-time suspension of the regulations. Why should

we go, anyway? Why shouldn't we stay with the others? We had aunts and uncles and cousins in our town, and here we were still in our own house. Maybe they won't get to us. Maybe some higher power will intervene. I rocked myself on the swing. The happiness of our ever-present swallows was unalloyed, and I was an Újfalu boy in my every sinew. I must live here, and die here.

But if they come for us? It was easier to hide in Budapest, harder to find a needle in a haystack. I cast incantations on the closed garden gate, still foolishly thinking that my parents would simply come home. They would knock, I would open the gate, and there they would be, smiling in the gateway. I heard a knock. Jumping off the swing, I ran to the gate, and slid back the bolt. There was no one at all there. German soldiers were walking the main street with local girls.

I gave myself a good shake: we will leave this house after all. I went up to the apartment to make sure the thirty thousand pengős was in its place, and it was. I went across the street to the house of a Christian lawyer. A good customer of my father's, fairly rightist, slightly anti-semitic, but not excessively so. I asked him to arrange transit permits for us. "It will cost a lot," he said. "Do you have money?" I said we did. "How much?" So I told him. He said that sum was enough, and that I should give him half of it in advance. I went back and brought him the fifteen thousand. He said he would inform us on the following day about what he had arranged. The whole matter must remain among ourselves. Not a word about money.

The lawyer came the next day for the other fifteen thousand, saying I could go pick up the papers. But first, he said, I should go to see headmaster Somody at the Civic Boys' School, who was a very good man and had a favourable opinion of my schoolwork. I should thank him, my well-wisher, for being receptive, along with the other gentlemen, to our petition. I went to the headmaster, thanked him for his kindness, and clicked my heels. He smiled at me, stroked my head, and said that I should continue to study hard and be a good Magyar child. Now it was time for me to go to the gendarmerie for the transit papers.

A staff sergeant at the gendarmerie worded the permit and knocked it out on a typewriter with his large hands. It took some time to match the information on the birth records and police registration papers, and integrate that into the text of the gendarmerie permit. Rifles on a stand in the corner, hats with cock-feathers on the hat stand, the smell of boots, an old desk, a green table lamp, an inking pad, separate permits for each of us four, all in all eight thumps with the seal. At the other table, a corporal was eating bacon, and looked at me. "So you're leaving?" "Yes we are."

The staff sergeant handed me the four sheets of paper. He had worked hard on them and he was satisfied with himself, and with me because I smiled at him deferentially. He wished me a pleasant trip, for which I thanked him. The papers fit into the inner pocket of my linen suit jacket. Once out on the street, I imme-

diately knew that I had something in my pocket that other Jews did not. The town leadership had given its blessing to our departure.

We took a powder, was the saying then. Uncle Andor laid out his plan to us with grim self-assuredness: we were to hide in the workshop they called a glove factory, three streets over. We couldn't take much there with us, as the Arrow Cross was making patrols and we had to be inconspicuous. We could sleep on the cutting table and wash up back at the basin in the toilet. We couldn't turn on the lights, but if the sun was shining, enough light came into the basement room to read by at midday. We didn't hear any shooting outside, so hoped the worst would not come. By the second day certain comforts made their absence felt in the dark workshop, particularly for Uncle Andor, who noticed in the morning that he had left his shaving brush at home. A painful loss. Though you could rub up a little rudimentary lather with the tip of your finger after wetting and applying a little soap, neither this operation, nor its result, would be aesthetically satisfactory. Uncle Andor felt it was inadvisable to return home yet (though it was not St Bartholomew's night), but nonetheless, he must get the shaving brush.

It really would have been slightly comical if Uncle Andor just ambled out of the hiding place, went home three streets over, then upon returning carefully locked from inside the iron-grilled gate that opened on the street. As long as he was going for the shaving brush, why not have the whole family just go home and wait for whatever came, or even look for a better hiding place? The simplest solution in Uncle Andor's eyes (after excluding the miserable options of brushless shaving and not shaving at all) was for me to be the one to fetch the brush.

I set off. Soldiers with armbands were standing at the gate of the third building down. It was drizzling, and perhaps they really didn't know what their job was supposed to be. They called me over.

"Hey kid, come here. Aren't you a Jew?"

"Why would I be?," I asked.

"Well, you could be," they said.

"I could," said I.

"Well, aren't you?"

"Why would I be?" I asked, returning to my original question.

"Hey, that's the way Jews talk."

"Are you a Jew?," I asked.

"Why would I be?," he asked.

"Because you know how they talk."

"Come on, drop your pants." I didn't move. We stared at each other. "How about it then?"

"It's raining."

"All right. Get going." He and I both knew the score. That soldier simply didn't feel like killing me.

From there to the apartment, nothing in particular happened. When I got there, the elderly ladies asked me excitedly where the family had spent the night. I no longer remember what I came up with—something about being guests somewhere—but they got a peek of me slipping the shaving brush into my pocket from the shelf below the bathroom mirror. “You came for *that?*,” asked one of the ladies.

“Well then, good-bye,” I said.

On the corner, I saw Arrow Cross men coming up Hollán utca at a run. I took a quick turn off to the left, hoping to get back to my family via a detour onto Pozsonyi út. But I didn’t figure that they would be making parallel runs, and in large numbers, and that they would not only be coming down Pozsonyi út in a line that spanned the entire street, but also from behind—from the Szent István körút—in a chain to sweep up everyone in the street. In those days it was not hard to find Jews at midday in that part of town, the Újlipótváros. Those they detained were sent to the brick works in Óbuda, and from there they could be sent off on foot marching westward. There were still a few spots for packing them off onto railroad cars.

A few weeks would still need to pass for them to adopt the simplified procedure of fencing in an area and shooting people into the Danube. There was a thin man in glasses wearing a white armband who was trying to explain something about his exceptional status, since he had once risked his life in fighting against the Commune. The Arrow Cross man was silent for a moment, then spit a cigarette butt into his face and led him off to the side. People stood in line to have their papers checked. It wasn’t enough to have a document with an official seal; you had to answer questions.

I picked out a man in a leather coat and hat who had flipped its visor up, putting people through test questions, hands on his hips. There were still two in line before me. I slipped down on hands and knees and crawled off right by his brown hunting boots. There was an enormous racket going on, and he couldn’t really see what was happening off to the side amid that press. I was careful to just amble home, going around the block. I peeked around to make sure no one was around so I could knock on the workshop door unnoticed.

“So you’re back?,” asked Uncle Andor, kindly patting my head. He then had a shave, not skimping on cologne, then paced up and down stroking his chin. The lunch hour was approaching. Uncle Andor said that this was not a good hiding place, so one by one everyone should return to where he had been staying. As for my sister Éva and me, we should go over to Andor’s place for lunch after four. Until then we should wait over there “at that woman’s”—meaning Aunt Zsófi. He liked to speak disparagingly of her. But when we went over to 9 Hollán utca at four o’clock and rang the bell, the only one to answer the door was the same elderly lady who noticed my little manoeuvre with the shaving brush that morning. When I asked where the family was, she said that my uncle, his wife, and their two children had left with their luggage. Where she did not know.

My sister Éva and I stood around in the vestibule, at a loss what to do. It took a little time for us to grasp that our relatives had left for a hiding place—meaning that uncle Andor had procured them false papers, with which they would register as a Christian family of Transylvanian refugees under a new name, and stay with acquaintances who undertook this for money. We went back there the next day and the following one, but there was no news of our relatives.

The Jews were still being deported to Auschwitz from Újpest and Kispest, outer districts of Budapest, as late as the summer. They could have come into the city on foot or by tram, but they followed orders and went to the railroad station. Those among them who were Communists, Zionists, and resisters, and the bolder ones generally, got hold of false papers and went into hiding. Middle-class people more resigned, and perhaps more fearful, tried to ride out the most dangerous times in safe houses. These safe houses were inhabited by the better-off and more secular Jews who had managed to contact one of the neutral diplomatic missions. The poorer, orthodox Jews, with their black beards and hats, and wives in shawls, and sons with sidelocks, and daughters with big eyes, went to the ghetto. That was really their place, where their congregation was, and the greatest concentration of synagogues; both they and the neutral diplomats must have felt this. It was open season in the ghetto: drunken Arrow Cross men went in and shot at will.

Swiss letters of protection—*Schutzpässe*—were distributed in an operation organized by that country's consul, Carl Lutz. His name is mentioned less often than that of Raoul Wallenberg, though Lutz saved as many people as his Swedish colleague. So we moved to 49 Pozsonyi út, into the protection of the Helvetic Confederation, a building where my greatest respect went to three or four young men hiding out in the cellar. People whispered that they were resisters, who had defected from the military. There were perhaps eighty of us living in a three-room apartment on the fourth floor. At night we would stack up any furniture that could not be slept on. Not everyone got a bed or mattress, but everyone had at least a rug to sleep on. The four of us boys slept on mattresses on the floor by the window, behind a pile of furniture. It was like an ongoing house party. I wasn't bored much, and there was always someone to talk to. For two hours every morning, we could leave the building, five children hanging on to a beautiful young woman. Aunt Zsófi protected us, as perhaps we did her. Whoever asked for her papers was astounded. "Are these kids all yours?" This closeness diminished as time passed and some of those in the house moved down to hiding places, while others were taken away during spur-of-the-moment raids and shot into the Danube.

In the street below still Germans were shouting. The Russians were getting very close, but the Arrow Cross was still doing away with Jews and Christian defectors in the neighborhood. This verb—"do away with"—was on every public

poster, and it meant kill on the spot, and leave the body there. You could hear weapons popping off down in the street. By this time, documents meant nothing at all. All that had meaning was drunkenness, and fear, and the sympathy or antipathy of any given moment. The men in armbands with guns in their hands had plenty of people to shoot, though they had begun to sense that they couldn't execute every single Jew. They probably had trouble getting into the mood for man-hunting every day. Filling the Danube, where the ice was now breaking up, with old ladies and little girls, was an ornamental art whose charm was only intermittent. Even these defenceless people, of whom they could have killed as many as they felt like—even these expressed, if nothing else, at least the gentlest resistance in their eyes, reinforced by the gaze of passersby, who watched the quiet winter coats being led down to the riverbank with some degree of empathy. Of course you needed to make time for other things too, like drinking and getting warm. It must have occurred to some of the men with armbands that, if the Russians were already at the outskirts of the city—and with plenty of artillery too, judging from the unending din—then they would hardly stop there, but would move all the way into the centre of town. If they occupied the entire city, then the Arrow Cross people could expect anything but a decoration. This was not a pleasant thought for them. The mood for murder flared up and flagged by turns.

It was more dangerous to shoot at Russians, but the Jews were fish in a barrel. Life is a matter of luck, and death bad luck. You can do something for yourself, but not much, and sometimes pride keeps you from doing even that much. Several people were taken from the apartment the previous night. From the next room, by chance, and not from ours.

■ watch the Germans. Can they really think that they will drive back the Russians, just five streets down? They are intelligent, except for knowing what you are supposed to do and what you aren't. The Arrow Cross, on the other hand, are just the bottom of the barrel, the ones who flunked in class. Their only talent is for torturing cats. A child has to grow up to understand just how undeveloped adults are. A fourteen-year-old kid with a gun accompanied unarmed people down to the bank of the Danube. Instead of taking the gun from his hand, they went where he ordered them. Most victims just call it fate, a thing that should cause fear in them, and stir them to self-defense before the threat, be it sleet falling on their garden or death at the hands of another. But domestic animals get used to having their companions cut down around them, and so do people. You just can't feel outrage and empathy every half hour. We stand out on the roof terrace, hearing the occasional rumble of shots from nearby streets. Someone (armed) checks someone else's papers (unarmed). The one doesn't like the other's face, or his papers, and stands him at the wall and shoots him dead. Those taken down to the Danube have to stand in a row, their faces to the river. Their shots come from behind.

On the corner outside of 49 Pozsonyi út stood a barricade of cobblestones from the street. Dr Erdős had been pulled out of the building, together with other older Jewish men, to move stones; the younger ones had long been taken away. Six stones high and four deep: such a wall was impenetrable. The T-34 tanks that had made it all the way from Stalingrad would certainly be stopped dead here.

From the entrance door of the building, we children watched as the old men, bent over in the cold, picked at the stones with pokers and hammers, trying to separate the span-thick blocks, stuck together with pitch, then lifted them in their laps and carried them over to the roadblock. Young men in knee boots, black pants and green shirts watched over the work and hurried the old men on. One of them had a whip decorated like a hansom cab driver's that he cracked on the old Jews' necks. There is no denying they could have worked with more intensity.

It was probably that very fellow with the whip who outraged an older gentleman from the next building, where Christians lived. Sometimes old men stick together, even if it means crossing denominational boundaries. In any case the old gentleman got out his shotgun from somewhere, and hit and wounded the young whip-cracker. The Arrow Cross men thought that one of the Jews had taken the shot, and started shooting around blindly. The twenty barricade builders ran for cover and fell. Dr Erdős himself made for the main door of the building with quickened steps, though not rushing so much that he would draw suspicion. I was the only one still standing in the doorway; the other children and the doorkeeper, an even older Jew, had dashed up the steps upon hearing the shots.

I opened the boarded-up entrance door. Dr Erdős hopped inside. I wanted to shut it quickly and lock it before the tall young man with an armband pursuing him could push his way in. The two of us, a child and an old man, pushed from the inside, but our besieger, maybe 25 years old, managed to get a running start and push us back enough to get the tip of his boot in the crack. The game was his. He stood before us with a pistol in his hand.

He was taller than Dr Erdős, and his lip was quivering from wounded pride. These Jews slam the door in my face, just like that? A little smile—the smile of the vanquished—flashed over Dr Erdős' face. The young man held the pistol to Erdős' face and fired a shot into his temple. Dr Kálmán Erdős fell, and his blood flowed over the muddy, imitation pink marble stone. Now the young man in uniform took aim at my forehead. I looked at him more in amazement than in fear. He lowered his pistol and headed out the door.

By this time, the trams were delivering ammunition boxes ever more desperately to the frontline—that is, four or five streets down. Courageous women would leave the building and still get bread from somewhere or other. That day we moved to the inner room to sleep, since the outer one, hit by a bomb blast,

no longer had a window. We did not stay in bed, but crouched by the window instead, where we could watch the fighting. By the light of the Stalin-candles whizzing up into the sky, we saw a couple of war newsreel scenes, but in all their fullness, unbounded by any frame. A tank rumbled through the barricade, sweeping aside the basalt blocks, with other tanks and infantry in its wake. On the night of January 17–18, 1945, we watched the German soldiers, who had been on their bellies with machine guns behind the stone-piles, make a dash for the park. The fighting moved on towards Szent István körút.

So I watched the historical turning point (liberation for me, defeat for others) with my own eyes in the early dawn on January 18, 1945. A few young ladies, teachers, fashion designers and dancers hummed the *Internationale*, excited. We sang a German song about Flórián Geier. Aunt Magda, a tall, strawberry-blonde eurhythmics dancer, taught us these. She was a Communist, and said that we should be that too, because that was the only party in the underground. All the others were collaborating with the government. At four o'clock on that morning, we gave ourselves over to the state of liberation.

Later on, Aunt Magdi lost her enthusiasm, and tried to escape over the border in 1949, wearing the same ski boots in which she had spent the winter of the siege. The border guards shot at her, and one of the bullets found its mark. She died in the hospital.

Nineteen forty-five, January 18th: at ten in the morning I stepped out the front gate of 49 Pozsonyi út. Two Russian soldiers stood on the pavement in their torn coats, a little dirty, more indifferent and flagging than cordial. People spoke to them. They did not understand, but nodded. It was obvious that they were not much concerned with us. The two soldiers asked whether Hitler was there in the building. I had no particular information suggesting that Hitler was living with Budapest Jews in a house under Swiss protection on Pozsonyi út. Then they asked about Szálasi, head of the Arrow Cross: no, he wasn't living in our building either. After a moment we caught on that "Hitler" meant Germans and "Szálasi" meant Arrow Cross. They were fairly simple boys. They went down into the shelter with a flashlight, grasping the barrels of their submachine guns, prodded the people to stand up, and shone their light into every nook. Among the group were some deserters in civilian dress, whom they let be. The Russians were not particularly concerned with the fact that Jews were living in the building; if you tried to explain to them that you were a Jew, thereby expecting to get some kindness out of them, you didn't get far. But they were friendly enough to us boys, and we got used to their poking around in the basement looking for Hitler. There was a man down there who spoke Slovak, and could understand them a little. He immediately offered himself as an interpreter, and as the Russians went through the passageway, newly opened with a pickaxe, to the shelter next door, this Slovak-speaking Jew started barking out instructions like

some newly-appointed commander in civilian clothes, selected from the ranks of the blanket-clad. Once he had conquered his final vestige of hesitation, he bade farewell to his family and ran off after the Russians.

The soldiers broke into a shop and drank a large bottle of Chat Noir cologne. They reached for it confidently, as if familiar with the brand. It was very likely the closest thing to liquor there. We flocked after them too, soldiers in civvies, locals—Jews and gentiles alike. Some resourcefully took knapsacks along. I looted a harmonica that I later traded to Rebenyák for a bag of sugar cubes.

We could leave the building, whose neutral status had protected us, though it had not been enough to keep the other half of its residents alive. The yellow star came down from the front entrance; it now lay on a snow heap in front of the building. I was stepping from the house as a free man for the first time. I was perhaps also leaving my childhood, the years when prohibitions of all sorts hemmed me in. A few markings in Cyrillic script appeared on the sides of buildings. The shooting and bombing was over, and it was safe to come out of the cellar. There were still the occasional stray shots, but now it was the Germans shooting from the Buda bank. An entire burst of machine-gun fire would shower the street, and I learned just how flat I could press myself against a wall.

If, during unusual times, you act according to the notions born in normal ones, then you owe the Devil a trip. This requires a train ticket. The news in the line in front of the bakery, which the Dravidas had also heard, was that tickets were only available at the Rákosrendező station, a good couple of hours on foot from the centre of the city. It was a long trip, with Russian and Romanian soldiers everywhere. At times I was a bit afraid. My sister couldn't come with me, as the city was dangerous for young girls. I had no gloves, and tried to protect my hands from the cold with a hair net, who knows why. I held myself in some esteem with the thought that I was now truly hungry, and truly cold. But this long walk kept me looking, there being plenty to wonder at.

These were now second-echelon troops; the front line had already moved on from Budapest toward Vienna. Standing around on their trucks, these young men had collected all kinds of clothes, with skirts on over their pants to keep warm, and women's turbans on their heads. They were a wild bunch, making derisive remarks from the truck. We didn't understand them, but they always had a good laugh. When they urinated from the trucks, they enjoyed seeing the women turn their heads, and of course then they waved their cocks with even more gusto. One of them jumped down from the vehicle and offered a woman a square loaf of black bread, cut in half. The woman stepped back, but the soldier sidled up to her, stuffed it into her pocket, and left. The woman trembled. I took a kind of reserved interest in these round-headed boys, wondering at their parades of rags, their horsing around, and their sudden impulses. This all seemed to come naturally to them, but struck me as strange.

They didn't lack a sense of humor. Watching the rouge-lipped Romanian officers in white gloves swinging their cameras like proper gentlemen, they hunched over and laughed up their sleeves like village girls looking at polished city ladies. There were those soldiers who, with a machine gun, escorted men to do a little work, just over to the neighbouring town, or country, or continent, on out past the Urals—*Davay, davay!* They were promised a *bumazhka*—identity papers—and adult men obediently walked out of town, to the Tisza, there to continue by rail to concentration camps and the distant cold, in order to get, in the unknown distance, what they really had no need of: those stamped papers. A mirage.

The number of escapees per thousand was quite small, among Jewish and gentile Hungarians alike. Many more could have escaped than actually did, and many more could have stayed alive. As for their escorts, those freshly-arrived soldiers could be ruthless, indifferent, or humane. They were unfathomable, not susceptible to understanding. They were not quite as natty, disciplined, or angular in their movements as the Germans, but less soldierly and more relaxed. They were not so regular or predictable: one would give gifts to the locals, and another would rob them. It could also happen that the same man did both. There was no particular need to fear that the Germans would rape the women, but these others could unbutton their trousers with ease. These soldiers did not kill on principle, and even if they were glum when spooning out their mess tins, they also were happy to smile at someone, just like that, for nothing. It was easy to know what they would like more than anything: a warm room with a woman and something to eat. They would pull down the moon for the woman who would give them that. *Davay, little moon, davay!*

We ultimately did set off, at around two in the afternoon. It was stop and go. We had the locomotive on and off, or they would need to fix the track, or military trains had priority, and if it turned out that we had the better locomotive, it would get switched. By now we were sitting on benches in the cattle cars. We got bread and bacon from Zolti Varga to put something in our stomachs. At one point, when the train was standing, we heard a burst of machine-gun fire: stray soldiers would do this to frighten civilians. The usual rumour mongers said they were going from car to car looking for women. The women got lumps of coal from somewhere, and smeared their faces with these before the mirror, making them look wrinkled and ugly. Even aging ladies rubbed coal in under their eyes; my sister and I smiled to each other. I was standing in front of Évike, and was not going to let her out of that corner. Everyone pulled their kerchief down to their eyes and sat hunchbacked. Then came the crew for grand rounds, five or six soldiers. One of the soldiers must have found the face of one woman beautiful, even through the pitch. He spit on his finger and rubbed, and the black came off. The soldier got angry and spat in the woman's face. They left the car in a ruckus of dissatisfaction.

A jerry-rigged bridge spanned the Tisza where the Allies had hit the old one with a bomb. What was left of it had been blown up by the Germans, but a temporary solution was created, on stilts between the pylons. It would not have borne the train, but we crossed on foot, to where another one was waiting on the opposite bank, though it had no engine either. Then we were moving again, and stopped again, and sat through a February snowstorm at night, this time in the snowed-over bins of an open coal car. The wind off the Great Plain, unimpeded in its mad rush by any obstacle, slapped us wild. We could not feel our hands, and there were ice crystals on our eyelashes. Closed, our eyes transported us to a happy place, and the cold came close to rapture. We stood out on the open track, with darkness all around us.

We decided to strike out on a dirt road and ask for shelter at the first house we found. The wind practically knocked us on our backs as we made our way, dragging our awkward bags, until finally a faint light began to flicker on the edge of the blue-white plain. I was frozen to an anesthetic purple by the time my legs had gotten me there, stumbling through clods of ice. Obediently I stretched out on the straw that covered the dirt floor, and my goodwill was restored when a young maid servant lay down at my side and told me to snuggle up. To stave off my shivering, she pulled my hand onto her belly. I pressed up against her from behind and buried my face into her back to get her bottom completely into my lap. We were together entirely then. That is the moment I first felt that you can love someone whose face you have never seen, and respond to a stranger as you would to your closest loved one. I held onto her as if she had been the one I had chosen long ago. In the morning, with a bow of the head, I thanked the residents of the house for their lodging and kindness, and expressed gratitude to my sleeping companion of that night.

In the area in front of the station, where hansom cabs once offered their services to travellers coming from Budapest, there were now a few ox-drawn carts. We carried our bags. The first acquaintance we saw was my former teacher Sándor Kreisler. Everyone in our class had been killed—as in fact had all the other pupils of the Jewish school. We were the only ones left alive, and our teacher was naturally deeply moved to see us coming home. There he stood, a short, plucky man with a mustache, Sándor Kreisler from the former Jewish school. This was almost as unbelievable as seeing my father.

Sándor Kreisler was a good teacher: kind, but reserved and fair. In addition to elementary skills, I received from him a few slaps on the face with the cover of his pen case, generally because of Baba Blau. Mr Kreisler had been my teacher as early as first grade, when I was still studying privately. He came to the house and taught István and me in our living room, in the afternoon from three till four, which was all we needed of school learning, and the rest of the time was ours. Sometimes he would come down with us into the garden and once in a

while he gave the ball a kick. But he never got really involved in the game, being a young man and mindful of his dignity.

His father was a fine tinker and really went in for politics, a friend of my father's who came into our store every day in his working clothes, where they would stand around the oven and make clever jokes. I cannot recall his father ever coming to our home, and where the father was not a regular, neither was the son inclined to make himself too much at home. He told my father to send me to school, that it would do me good to be with the other children. I was a straight-A student, though I got a few raps on the knuckles. For instance, when we started the circle-dance that begins *The hare called his son out onto the green meadow*, for which we would squat, and I would rhythmically grab the bottom of the girl hopping in front of me. Or for the usual reason: my fighting. I gave as well as I got, so balance was maintained. We were three classes in one classroom. While the teacher was busy with the first graders, the second and third graders worked on a silent assignment. I still find it a good idea that we did not have to focus constantly on the activity of the entire group, but could lose ourselves in our reading, drawing, or writing.

Mr Kreisler had returned from forced labor. His parents and siblings had been taken to Auschwitz; he had heard that all of his pupils had perished. He was just as surprised as we to see us. He hugged us, and kissed us, something he had never done before. He listened to Zolti Varga's story and thanked him for bringing home his two pupils. He promised to testify to this deed should Zolti ever require it.

Eight months earlier, it had been a political scandal to take us to Budapest. Now the act of bringing us back conferred political credit, which was not particularly pleasant either. Soon thereafter we encountered a young man in a leather jacket with a holster on his belt, who said "Sanyi, turn these kids into good Communists." "Fine," said the teacher, and the three of us walked on. After the war, our teacher's career was distinguished, if not entirely illustrious: first he was a primary school teacher in Debrecen, retiring as an inspector of schools, then he passed into heaven. In those days in forty-five, on the day we arrived, he was primarily concerned with practical questions: where we would sleep that night, and who would feed us. He carried our bags, but could not tell us anything about our parents. Some sort of stubbornness drew us to our house. Our teacher did not particularly want us to go in, and recommended we wait until the next day. But why shouldn't we sleep in our own home, move back in there, and wait for our parents?

Then they accompanied us to our home. There was dirt and filth everywhere all over the house, from the attic to the cellar. Trampled books and photographs lay all over the floor. The bathtub was full of dried excrement, a latrine for the soldiers billeted there. The only furniture left was a large, white rococo

wardrobe with three doors, decorated with angels. Its mirror was still intact. It was an unbelievable sight, probably too heavy for them to carry off. At my feet lay a story I had written in school about a young fir tree that was made into the mast of a seagoing ship, engaged in conversation with the wind, an old friend from the mountaintop. There was a photo album scattered about in loose pages, vanished faces, ourselves among them, stained with something, and muddy. I turned around to see the three men standing behind me. We were beginning to understand that what had been would never be again.

Those Cossacks could not sit still for a minute. They were just like bad boys. They would come in with a big hunk of bacon, eggs, and onions, and ask us to fry them up. They would eat it all, then have a tumbler full of vodka, then munch on a whole red onion. They would get drunk and cry. We had to smuggle my sister out of the house through a side door.

Once Duci Mozsár, a pretty, buxom girl of barely fifteen, was standing outside in front of the gate, and a motorcycle with a sidecar came screaming by. The Cossack in the sidecar reached out for Duci Mozsár, and grabbed her just like that, and sat her down in front of him, and shot off. They only returned a year later, when the motorcycle once again came screaming into town, and the soldier in the side car set Duci Mozsár out with a baby and a suitcase, then shot off again as if he had never been there.

A whole squad of riflemen had their way with a peasant woman while two marksmen held machine guns to her husband on the porch to keep him quiet. There were cases where they shot the woman and her husband if they resisted too much. They would come by with a truck, bringing something, or taking something. You could trade things with them, and try to figure out what on earth they wanted. One of them just wanted us to look at a photo album he had found in the frozen mud. He carried it with him ever since, and would look at the unknown grandparents on its pages.

It was with wounded patriotism that I returned from Budapest to my home town. There were things you could not speak of. That one year had become like a bell jar of silence between me and my gentile friends, since they had been normal children even during that year.

"Why I Love My Country." That was the title for our homework in March of 1945. Am I supposed to write that I love it? Not so simple. I believe my country wanted to kill me. There have been cases where a parent has wanted to kill his child. But if it wasn't my country that wanted to kill me, only a few people, then all I want to know is what makes my country different from the country of those who ordained these things, and carried them out. They used to speak of their homeland, and I don't mean just once in a while. If I too am a part of the homeland, then what happened to me since last year's final exams is also a part of it. But this was something I could not discuss in that homework assignment.

I was particularly attached to a particular image of my homeland—our homeland—and the place that gave me birth: the good place, where I am safe and cannot be uprooted. But once you have lived through being driven from your home, and seen that everyone else is capable of accepting this fact (and indeed that some are even happy about it) then you will never again feel at home as you once had. Something has been destroyed, and your relationship to the place will never be as naively intimate as it was. My sister and I had wanted to feel at home again in the town after our week-long return trip, but the house was empty, our parents deported, and there I stood again, on the national holiday, March 15th, on the same square where I used to march in formation up to the national flag with my elementary school class.

There was a stone podium there with a railing, where the speaker stood, and behind it a flagpole where the red, white, and green tricolour had flown at half mast before the war, to indicate the painful fact that the country was incomplete, three-quarters of it having been taken away after the First World War. The flag would never fly at full staff until the lost territories had been re-annexed. We wore dark blue trousers and white shirts. I can remember bright spring mornings where short pants and short-sleeved shirts were warm enough. The Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish schools each stood in formation on the main square, side by side.

In my boyhood, I was just as unhappy as anyone else that the flag was at half mast, and did not consider it acceptable that the train would make a long stop at the Romanian border, after Biharkeresztes, when we went to Nagyvárad to visit my grandfather and the tangled network of our relatives there. One uniform replaced another, then passport control, and customs men making the rounds. Once we crossed the border, you could see concrete fortifications, as if they were expecting a war. From Berettyóújfalu to Nagyvárad is only thirty kilometers; it is seven hundred to Bucharest. So it was more mine than the Romanian king's.

The family's oral tradition mentioned a number of cities. In addition to Berettyóújfalu, there was Brassó, Kolozsvár, Debrecen, Miskolc, Budapest, Pozsony, Vienna, Karlsbad, Fiume, Heidelberg, Trier, Manchester, and New York. It was rabbi relations who lived in those great distant cities, but Nagyvárad was the real center of things with its cafés, theater, the pool on the Körös, the riverbank where, from the balcony of one of my great aunts, I would watch events unfold on the surface of the water through an opera glass.

If Nagyvárad was the sun, then the moon was unquestionably Berettyóújfalu, seat of Truncated Bihar County. We had a county hall, and a prison, and a District Commissioner, and balls held in the Levente youth military building that included a literary programme as well, sometimes organised by the gentlemen's club, and sometimes by the Jewish women's organisation. In elementary school, we first learnt the geography of Berettyóújfalu, then of Bihar County, and recited in wonder how everything was to be found in Bihar: plains and snowy moun-

tains, rivers, forests, mines, and there in the middle was the modern city of Nagyvárád, with eight hundred years of history behind it. I was a patriot of my region as well as my country, and would jealously weigh the urbanity of our town of Berettyóújfalu against Derecske, its neighbour in the district.

I walked through my room in a heavy overcoat. A cold, dry smell of excrement emanated from the bath. On the floor, in a thick layer of trash, were the assignments that had earned me the praise of my teachers. Also there were scattered pages from photo albums, summers in the Transylvanian Carpathians, the peaks of Máramaros, and my great aunts and cousins gassed to death since then. I did not pick anything up off the floor—and if I did, I put it back. My previous year's coat was not yet tight or short. I hadn't grown an inch in a year; indeed perhaps I had shrunk some. I looked at my astonished face in the surviving mirror as I stood amid that humiliated pile, and the mockery of homesickness, and nodded at that little fellow who had found his way home, after all.

A woman captured my gaze: a naked woman's body. A display-window mannequin. She was obviously a woman, with breasts and pubic hair drawn on with an ink pencil. Her eyes were stabbed out with a dagger and her entire body shot up with holes. If they saw that she was a woman, why did they shoot at her? There was a rustle behind my back. Gypsy children were looking to see what I was after, or what I had found, because there might be something in it for them too.

I would walk along the main street on late-winter mornings. Sometimes I would be invited into one store or another. March was ill-willed, muddy, gray, and inflexible. We were apprehensive about being halfway between destinations, but found it natural enough to be there, and that someone was providing for us. We grew quiet. Dreaming was out of the question, even though we were just a short walk from our house. This is the place we had longed to be, looking forward to taking over as adults; but that is where the fantasy grew empty, for we were just children after all. The wind blew about the letters in my old room, and sheets from the prayer books in the synagogue.

Our weakness was made palpable to us. We could no more begin a new life than clean out all this trash. It was cold in the room where we lived, and noisy in the kitchen, and the town had no library. I dawdled in the thinly-stocked stores of the men back from forced labor as I once had in my father's. Two or three of them would team up: one would procure, and the other would sell. They were friends from the camp. Having lost their families the same way, they could do nothing else. Money could still buy refined sugar, or flannel, or a hoe, but soon the only valid currency was eggs or flour. Still, the door would open and customers come in. The young widowed men began looking at women again, trickling back from the deportation camps, in addition to the gentile women of the

area, former typists, nannies, and housekeepers. If a wife had been killed, her younger sister might still be alive. A woman would enter the house, and the bed, and children were born by year's end or the next spring. The loss of the original family was no longer a nightmare, just a painful reality. If everything worked out, you could mourn the dead in the company of a new wife and new children, though more in silence than with words.

The forced-labor returnees slowly got on their feet again, getting a supply of goods to sell, furnishing their houses, filling them with families. But in 1950, the People's Government took over all shops, workshops, houses—everything. You could see it coming. This was the second blow, the one that put an end to the Jewish community in Berettyóújfalu. Before that happened, in 1949, some of the men hung a "Back Soon" sign on the store or workshop door, and went out to the edge of town and got on a truck. The shoemaker Jankó Kertész left too, for Israel, and continued telling his juicy stories on a three-legged stool in Naharia—in Hungarian, to his clients, whose native tongue that was. He had lost his wife as well, and two children.

My mother and father came back from a camp in Austria at the end of May 1945. They cleaned out the house and started up the business again. They did not give this a second thought, as it would never have occurred to my father not to pick up where he had left off. At first there were just four shelves of goods, then six, then twelve. It soon filled up, as there were five children to support.

Being a survivor, I owe my greatest gratitude to Providence, something I would not like to regard as mere coincidence. But this is the very source of my uneasiness with every case of providential mercy, for if the Lord of the Fates indeed willed my survival, then why not the survival of the other children as well, who were not a bit more guilty than I? I cannot be so generous as to hand over to complete oblivion Vera, Gyuri, Kati, Jutka, Baba, Jancsi, Gabi, Ica, Aunt Sarolta, Uncle Dolfi, Aunt Giza, Uncle Náci, Aunt Ilonka, Uncle Pista, Aunt Margit, Uncle Béla, Uncle Gyula and the rest.

In place of a childhood, there is an absence, a story that has not, and perhaps cannot be fully discussed. Now, after two generations have passed, I feel prompted to preserve the memory of the Jews of Berettyóújfalu of a past age. The synagogue is now a hardware warehouse. There was some talk of turning it into a musical performance hall, but nothing came of that. The Jews who go back to visit generally stop in to see Annus Lisztes, a sharp, eighty-something lady, one of the original inhabitants, who lives in the house of the former rabbi. "Come visit more often. It's your hometown after all," she said to me last summer after a gathering of writers and readers in a building that once housed the old military youth organization.

Last year, in 2000, I accepted an invitation to Berettyóújfalu, from City Hall. They wanted me to meet an interested audience of citizens of the city, no longer a market town, in the old Levente military youth organization's building. The reading, and the discussion that followed, were a little on the sombre side, though my hosts would have liked me to be more emotional in my nostalgia, to nurture warm memories, to love the old Berettyóújfalu. They wanted my heart to beat faster whenever I saw it rise on the horizon, this town that all three of my wives unanimously called a dusty hole, while I indeed felt my heart quicken, and found it beautiful, indeed saw it as the only possible town, the most intelligent arrangement of space. Now again I had the sense of being at home, approaching the former community building and national flag on the former Erzsébet utca, with the Calvinist church and school on the right, and our house on the left, somewhat taller than the others. So many times I had experienced this sight on sunny afternoons, heading home on my bicycle from the river or the pool. Now I was sad to see the artesian well gone and the movie house disfigured; at least the post office was its old self. There was a framed picture of the past inside me that overlay what I was now seeing, but I have not been able to present this past with anything like sweet reverie.

The deportation of the Jews, and the pillaging of the survivors through state appropriation, could not be veiled with any sentimentality in my account. The town deported its Jewish citizens and regarded all their possessions as its own; moving strangers into their houses and courtyards, and proceeded to manage this forced inheritance miserably. Today the town is coming to see that my father and the others did it proud, and were model citizens in their way. The vanished Jewish citizens are becoming a venerable tradition.

I found the tombstones of my grandmother and grandfather in the abandoned Jewish cemetery, though not that of my great-grandfather, which was probably taken away to have another inscription carved on it. The director of the hospital, a highly intelligent man, spoke exclusively of ties to Bihar County; it serves more than a hundred villages there. Sometimes older visitors come from Israel and walk out to the cemetery. Children of the emigrants are sober, naïve, cordial, and take an active hand in preserving the monuments there, as does the town itself. The black-haired women with their prominent cheekbones seemed familiar to me. The lady who is deputy mayor is a local who was very kind, and emphasised the town's anticipation of my arrival, mentioning that her parents knew mine, and knew me as a child. I was a Bihari myself on that day, taking a visual inventory. If something took my fancy, I felt the pleasure of one for whom the entire village is his own. They have filled in Kálló Creek; the garden where we played football among the cherry trees is gone, as is the walnut tree by my window—indeed the window itself is gone, long ago filled in, and the synagogue is still a hardware warehouse. ♣

Translated by Jim Tucker

Dezső Tandori

In Our Poems

On a Cue from Ottó Orbán

Translated by George Szirtes

*There's no such thing as free verse, because
as long as you write poems you're enslaved,
the simple fact is you are never free,
subject as you are to the rules of language,
the form and making of poems being as much
an act of slavery as the performance of the juggler
who ends his stage-act with the nine-ball trick,
balancing balls on nose and feet
while executing a neat somersault,
rolling one ball over nose and brow,
transferring another from feet to spine to nose,
while the other seven, if seven indeed there are,
slowly go on revolving in the sky,
through the clear air. And yet all this is freedom:
freedom, true, but just a consolation,
the slavery lies in freedom being this,
that not writing is, for some, such slavery
that they must write, and so on and so forth.*

*Terrible things have been justified by war,
occasioned by war, of which the end result
was torture, foaming lips, shin bones smashed by rifle-butts,
spattered with lye and salt water
so that our neighbours should also get some of it
in the dense crowd, and the windows broken in in the December cold:
was it my free choice to have earned my living*

Dezső Tandori

is a poet, essayist, novelist and translator whose copious output and indefatigable experimentation make him an important influence on the younger generations.

*translating this or that book, read such, say, and if
I did not read it, quietly, at twilight, the way
a French bank-robber, a survivor of Mauthausen,
a retired legionnaire, a one-time Gestapo officer,
immediately joined the forces of liberation, etcetera,
and is my reading also an act of freedom?*

*And would we conquer death in any case?
I doubt it. So I explain to the well and truly dead,
be they people or sparrows: "Nowadays, you know,
you no longer know anything, for here we are on earth,
this earth, and you demand to know its nature.
What do you mean? The only things you own
are where no earth is, nor can you define freedom or peace,
and the only reason I am nagging at you,
troubling you so, but see, you are no longer conscious
of being troubled—though who can tell? I say my piece,
we say my piece, our piece, saying: "You know" and I
no longer know what ends where, the quotation, the idea
(mine, ours, about yourselves), or whether it is you
I am addressing or simply the mouth of the funnel that leads
to my impending death, speaking into it, saying,
admit it, we are still the kind of people who think
that there are people whose names should not be mentioned
in the same breath, whose names are not to be mentioned with ours,
and we defend our freedom by declaring that we do not wish
to meet anyone, nor ever again settle anything,
nor wish that anyone should address us, prefer the mail
not to arrive, wish no success for our verses, for verse, in general.*

*Is that how it goes, in our poems? "But you no longer know,
are no longer capable of grasping, like the juggler
of grasping his ball, that we are, all of us here,
living dead, and not only in our verses".*

György Dragomán

House Searches

Short story

Mother generally used to talk everything over with me, often being in the habit of saying why something was the way it was, explaining things to me, sometimes even answering my questions, or if she didn't, I knew that was because she felt it was better for us not to talk about it since what I didn't know I couldn't blab out to others, and I had to admit she was right on that because I knew there really were things that it was dangerous even to mention, such as what exactly had happened during the civil war, or who could procure meat or coffee for how much, or who could be bribed for how much, or why the Party secretary-general and the commander in chief of the armed forces was a treacherous brute, or whom amongst the people we knew had been hauled off, or who had been subjected to a house search and why. Whenever I asked anything to do with that sort of thing, Mother would just say either that it was a serious matter and we ought not to speak about it or I should wait and ask my father as and when he eventually came home. Often, though, she didn't even have to say that much; I could tell from the way she looked at me that it would be better not even to start asking any questions.

That was also how it was when Mother came home one Thursday and asked if I had any money saved, and how much, for I could already sense from her tone of voice that she wasn't asking for fun, so I told her the truth, which was that I had two tenners, though I didn't say where I had got them because I knew she wouldn't be too happy to learn that I had got one from my grandfather whilst I had won the other playing cards, because in principle I wasn't supposed either to play cards or to accept money from my grandfather; but Mother herself must have realised it was better not to ask how come I happened to have such a

György Dragomán

was born in Transylvania but has been living in Budapest since 1988. He studied English literature at ELTE University and published a novel, his only book so far.

He is at work on a volume of short stories.

huge amount of money, because she said nothing, merely went into the living room, made straight for Father's photograph, took it down from the wall, and stuck to the back of the picture with insulating tape was an envelope that she opened to extract a bundle of bank notes then lick her index finger and swiftly count the money, having done which I heard her murmur quietly five hundred and twenty-five plus twenty gives five hundred and forty-five, which means one thousand four hundred and fifty-five have to be scraped together to bring it to two thousand, so I should go and scout around in my room for anything I could do without, she herself would pick through her own clothes and gather together the things she supposed she might get a good price for and we could get by without, and I shouldn't make any plans for Sunday morning because we would be going to the flea market as the money had to be found by Monday.

I just nodded at this, went to my room, opened the cupboard, pulled out my desk drawers, looked all through the bookshelf and round the walls, my posters over the bed, the bird trophies and the weapons, but my eyes lighted on nothing that I would have wanted to sell, so I perched on the bed, settled back and tried to run through in my mind all my possessions in order: my tin soldiers, my matchbox collection, my bubble-gum wrappers, my tennis racquet, my badminton racquet and table-tennis bat, my balls, the sculptures that I had made long ago as a Pioneer, the hand-painted cartoon-character badges that I cut out of plywood with a fret-saw, the French, German, American and Yugoslav comic books that I had been given by Father's old colleagues at work, my hunting knife, my tomahawk, my slingshot, my arrow, my toy revolver, the spent rifle bullets that I had dug out of the wall in the clay pit, my three shove-soccer button teams, the hand-carved chess set which was for checkers inside, all my posters in turn, the pocket diary of nudes that I stashed away under the lowest drawer, the thirty-six-colour stylo of which only the turquoise now wrote—there I sat and scrutinised each item after the other in turn, trying to imagine what it would be like if the item were not there, whether I would look for it or want to play with it at all, as I hadn't taken the matchboxes out of the drawer for at least a year, for instance, and as for badminton it had been a long time since I had played that, whilst I knew most of the comic books off by heart and only very rarely looked at them, yet no way was I capable of imagining what sort of feeling it might be to pull out the matchbox drawer and see it was completely empty, or to cast a glance over to the shelf and see no comic books at all on it.

Meanwhile I heard Mother in the living room, pulling open wardrobes and yanking out drawers, tossing out her clothes and other things, and I pictured that she was unhooking her old two-piece costumes one after the other and setting each of them out on the settee, so I leaned back against the wall, drew my legs up and just sat there on the bed, hugging my knees and listening to the swishing of clothes in the living room, after which Mother went out to the closet, with a squeak of the closet door, a big groan, and I knew she was lifting the

suitcase down from the top shelf, then there was a trundling of the wheels on the bottom of the suitcase on the kitchen flagstones as Mother hauled it into the room, which is when it occurred to me that it might even be possible she was not only picking through her own clothes but also looking at Father's clothes, his shirts, neckties, shoes, belts and suits. Before then we had never so much as touched Father's things, it was not permitted even to open his wardrobe or pull out the drawers of his desk, so that on his return he would find everything as he had left it the day they had come for him from the state security office and invited him for a little talk, since when many had been the times I had stopped before Father's wardrobe and gazed into the shiny polish of its door as if into a mirror, and I would call to mind the wardrobe's odour when Father opened it to produce a hoarded sweet or stick of chewing gum from behind the shirts, and I would try to imagine Father was standing there, behind me, and the only reason I couldn't see him was because the polish was too gleaming, and as I was perched there on my bed and heard Mother packing the suitcase I made another effort to review my belongings properly, one after the other, because I knew that I had to pick something out, come what may, but with each and every item what came to mind was when I had been given it or where I had procured it, as well as what I had done or planned to do with it, and I knew that this was going to come to no good, because I was again not going to scrape anything together, be able to select a single thing, and it was then that I distinctly heard Mother opening the door of Father's wardrobe, heard her let out a big sigh, and heard the swoosh of Father's suits as Mother tossed them in succession onto the sofa, at which I got to my feet, stood in the middle of my room and took a long, slow look around as if I were playing a game of house searchies or, say, I were a thief; as if this were not even my room but some stranger's; as if I knew nothing as to what anything was, where it came from or what its purpose was, but was simply looking for something and everything else was in the way, and from the living room I heard Mother quietly sniffing, from which I could tell for certain that she was packing up Father's clothes, and at that I bent down to pull out from under the bed the empty cardboard box that I had wanted to cut into a suit of armour for the fancy-dress party, then went over to my shelf and started taking the things off it, one after the other, tossing them indiscriminately into the box, the comic books, the model aircraft, my hand-painted tin soldiers, not even stopping when I took hold of my old stamp album but chucking that too into the box, then my catapult and pea-shooter as well, the books about Red Indians and hunting, systematically one by one, after which I went over to my desk, pulled out the matchbox drawer and tipped every single matchbox into the box, then saw that the red Ford with the opening doors had accidentally fallen beside it, so I bent down and put that too in along with the rest, then lay the drawer on the floor, stepped onto the bed and tried to detach my posters from the wall, except that couldn't be done so slapdashly because I was worried they would be ripped

as I didn't have drawing pins and so had glued them to the wall, the centre-fold spreads of football teams and the cinema posters of Wild West films being the ones I was most concerned about, together with that picture of the national team goalie whose autograph had been specially printed over the picture—those had to be pulled off with particular care, in such a way that it was better the paint peeled from the wall than the pictures were torn, so I leaned against the wall and slipped the palm of my hand under the posters at the side to prise them gingerly off, one after the other, depositing each of them on my bed, laying one on the other, then rolling them all up in one go before placing the whole bundle in one corner of the box, after which I went over to my desk and took down from the shelf over it the badminton racquets, then my genuine Vietnamese reverse-rubber table-tennis bat and my yellow match balls, all four of them, and laid all of those too in the box, after which I opened the cupboard and took out my shove-soccer box, containing the proper net goals that I had fashioned from copper wire and nylons and the three championship teams of buttons, and I chucked that too into the box, and I could hear the buttons scattering and knew that the teams were becoming mixed up but didn't care, and then I took out of the cupboard my artificial leather pistol holster with the two cap-firing plastic guns, and then I also fished out my straw cowboy hat with the deer-skin appliqué trimmings, and as I held it by the copper toggle of the chinstrap it occurred to me that one of the pistols must still be charged with the red phosphorus powder I had scraped off those match heads, and I was just about to grasp the pistol butt when I heard Mother slam down the lid of the suitcase in the living room, so I tossed the holster too into the box and on top of it the cowboy hat, and although the hat almost dropped off, because the box was now very full, the chinstrap snagged on the roll of posters and so dangled off that, and then I heard the suitcase in the living room first snap to then spring open again, because the locks were weak and it took two people to close it, with one pressing it to and the other locking it with the key, and I could hear Mother slamming the lid to over and over again and panting as she tried to snap the locks shut, and I knew she wouldn't call out for help, but I would go and help her anyway. ■

Translated by Tim Wilkinson

Gábor Kádár—Zoltán Vági

Rationality or Irrationality?

The Annihilation of Hungarian Jews

In March 1944, German forces occupied Hungary and a collaborationist government under Döme Sztójay came to power. On 17 May, during the ceremonial installation of a new prefect at Nagyvárad (Oradea), the Minister of the Interior, Andor Jaross, spoke openly about the new government's plans concerning Jewish wealth:

Let me emphasise, that all the assets and valuables that Jewish greed was able to amass during the liberal period, no longer belongs to them. It is now the property of the Hungarian nation... It must be used to enrich the whole of the nation. It must be incorporated into the circulation of the national economy, so that every decent, hard-working Hungarian can share in it.¹

Jaross, along with numerous other members of the political, economic and intellectual dominant section of the Hungarian far right, was aware that deporting the Jews could bring in a huge quantity of assets for the state, assets that had been accumulated rapidly in the aftermath of the 1867 Compromise.

The economic modernisation of Hungary in the 19th century, and the ever accelerating growth of capitalism offered good opportunities for Jews, who possessed commercial and financial expertise. The conservative-liberal state, governed by the traditional Hungarian elite, welcomed and supported them, indispensable as they were to the process of modernisation. Their role and significance was also bolstered by the hope, shared by many Hungarians, that with the addition of "Magyarised" Jews Hungarians would eventually be able to outnumber the Romanian, German and Slav ethnic minorities and would thus be able to ensure their numerical supremacy within the ethnically diverse Kingdom of Hungary. This is how the so-called "emancipation compromise" came about. Jews were

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willing to assimilate in increasing numbers in language, culture and identity, and their presence ensured numerical superiority to Hungarians, moreover, their expertise and capital contributed to the success of capitalism. In return, they obtained economic and financial positions that were advantageous to a degree virtually unprecedented in Europe. The traditionally urbanised German and Jewish minorities comprised a significant proportion of the emerging middle classes, while the Gentile Hungarian middle stratum developed at a much slower pace.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire was held together by a network of compromises though it had been growing weaker and weaker as the years passed. One of the strongest threads in this web was the compromise between the traditional Hungarian elite and the upwardly mobile emancipated Jews. Jews arrived at significant positions in industry, commerce and the liberal professions and, within these areas, at a presence well above their numerical ratio within the population. After 1900, the influence of the Jewish intelligentsia began to decline slowly but gradually. Nevertheless, in the first decade of the 20th century, Jews still made up a majority of those engaged in commerce and the professions. This tendency continued after the Treaty of Trianon in 1920. In 1930, 55.2 per cent of all physicians, 49.2 per cent of practising attorneys, 30.4 per cent of engineers, 59.4 per cent of bank officials and 45.7 per cent of salesmen were of the Jewish faith.² If Hungarian citizens who were Christian by religion but subjected to the anti-Jewish laws are included, proportions are larger still.³

Jews in Hungary were fundamentally an urbanised social group, with the middle-classes accounting for more than 60 per cent of them. Only 3 per cent of Jews were engaged in agriculture and 13 per cent were industrial workers.⁴ Nevertheless, Hungarian Jewry as a whole was certainly not outstandingly rich. Some religious communities at the time put the ratio of the poor within the Jewish population in 1930 as high as 90 per cent.⁵ This is clearly exaggerated. One-third of the entire Jewish community were the owners of small businesses.⁶ According to Viktor Karády, the anti-Jewish laws "discriminated against a social group whose members were relatively better off than non-Jewish people at the identical level within the social hierarchy."⁷ What is certain is that the majority of the Jews was not wealthy as such. The anti-Semitic notions of the interwar period concerning the miraculous wealth of Jewry as a whole were tendentious. The reason why Jews may have appeared to be wealthy to some was that millions of poor Gentile peasants were practically destitute. But the only way to redistribute property among them would have been the dividing up of the huge estates owned by the Catholic Church and the aristocracy. In the Horthy era, however, for a considerable time, the system was based precisely on the estate-owning Church and aristocracy. Therefore, comprehensive land reform was out of the question. An outdated social model explained why the modest wealth of the majority of Jews and the undoubtedly vast riches of some of them created the impression that, on the whole, Jews possessed wealth, whereas millions of Christians lived in staggering poverty.

Well-to-do Hungarian Jews, some 20 to 30 per cent of them, undoubtedly possessed considerable wealth. The total cultivated land area in post-Trianon Hungary amounted to 16,173,178 *holds*⁸ in 1933. Of this, 790,173 *holds* were owned by people of the Jewish faith. This amounts to 4.9 per cent of the total land area under cultivation. If we add to this the estates leased by Jews, we arrive at a total of 1,560,000 *holds* owned or farmed by persons of the Jewish faith. This constitutes 9.6 per cent of the total land area suitable for agricultural cultivation in post-Trianon Hungary.⁹ These numbers, however, also show that, in contrast to commerce and finance, Jewish capital did not play a dominant role in agriculture.

At the time of the 1930 census, 26 per cent of tenant-occupied housing in Budapest was owned by persons of the Jewish faith. However, of the total rent revenues of 187,797,856 *pengős*, owners of the Jewish faith obtained 89,287,392 *pengős*, or 45.1 per cent of the total. This clearly signals that those of the Jewish faith owned larger and higher quality, multi-storey buildings, which earned higher rents.¹⁰ This is also shown by the fact that in 1930, there were 343 flats and 631 rooms in 100 residential buildings owned by Jews, whilst the national average was 141 flats and 204 rooms.¹¹

Jews also occupied significant positions in industry. In 1935, 49.4 per cent of metallurgical and siderurgical works, 41.6 per cent of machine manufacturing, 72.8 per cent of clothes manufacturing and 65 per cent of spinning and weaving industry was owned by Jews.¹² These percentages do not include converted Jews, even though their number was considerable, as many members of prominent Jewish families converted to Christianity or were baptised as infants.¹³

There were two dynasties of special significance, the Vida-Perényi-Ulmann families centring around the Credit Bank and its interests, and the Weiss-Chorin-Kornfeld-Mauthner dynasties, who controlled the Commercial Bank and its subsidiaries. The Bíró, the Fellner and the Goldberger families were also connected to the latter. The Freund family controlled the petroleum industry, the Mauthner and the Wolfner families the leather industry; distilling was controlled by the Gschwindt and the Lederer families, together with the Fellners. These wealthy families of the high bourgeoisie accounted for a significant proportion of Hungarian industrial output.¹⁴

The wealth of the Hungarian Jews

The question of the actual collective wealth of Hungarian Jews is both ineludible for the purposes of our enquiries and impossible to answer with a sufficient degree of accuracy. In the absence of the required data, only a rough estimate can be ventured, and not something that purports to be a precise calculation. We will take the wealth of Hungarian Jewry and, in general, the concept of "Jewish assets" to mean the totality of the property of all citizens classified as Jews by the legislation in force at the time. In some cases, such as, for example, agricultural and other properties, the question of the size of the assets managed

or leased by Jews is also important, although these cannot be regarded as Jewish assets in the strict sense of the term.

Several statistical attempts were made to assess the wealth of Hungarian Jews. On the basis of data provided by the Jewish statistician Frigyes Fellner, Zoltán Bosnyák, a well-known anti-Semitic theoretician and editor of the journal *Harc*, the Hungarian equivalent of *Der Stürmer*, and the head of the Hungarian Institute for Researching the Jewish Question, established in 1944, deduced that 20.8 per cent of Hungarian national wealth had been in Jewish hands prior to the war.¹⁵ Bosnyák, however, made his often arbitrary calculations based on Fellner's figures from the 1930's. Another problem with the statistics is that they do not reflect the share of converts, or they only contain such data in part, though Hungarian anti-Jewish legislation classified most people in that category as Jews. Using the same parameters, Alajos Kovács, another anti-Semitic statistician, calculated that in 1938, Hungarian Jews owned 20–25 per cent of the country's total national wealth.¹⁶

There are other calculations which attempt to assess the total value of Jewish assets within the annual national income. In articles published in the journal *Magyar Élet*, Mátyás Matolcsy, the far right-wing economist, who studied the question in the greatest detail, estimated that in 1930–31, Hungarian national income amounted to 4,636 million *pengős*. Of this, Jews accounted for 1,112 million, or 24 per cent. In January 1935, László Nagyálnai Levatich published figures pertaining to the year 1934 in an article that appeared in *Budai Hírlap*: according to his calculations, national income in 1934 was approximately 2,300 million *pengős*, of which Jews accounted for 28.26 per cent. Of the two estimates, Matolcsy's figure can be taken as the more accurate. Levatich was a layman who used unprofessional methods such as arbitrarily deducting 100 million *pengős* from the figure relating to Hungarian Jews "in order to eliminate various errors."¹⁷

There are also attempts to express the size of Jewish wealth as an absolute amount, rather than as percentage terms. Based on Jenő Lévai's data, Randolph L. Braham estimates this wealth at 7–9 billion *pengős*.¹⁸ Mátyás Matolcsy, who discussed this issue in a professional manner, estimated the collective wealth of Jews in pre-Trianon Hungary to be 12 billion *pengős*. Alajos Kovács put the figure at 7–9 billion *pengős*.¹⁹ Articles published in far right-wing newspapers in 1944 set the total value of Jewish assets at 16–20 billion *pengős*, based on the preliminary results of the registers and surveys carried out as a consequence of anti-Semitic legislation.²⁰ These calculations, however, include assets owned by the hundreds of thousands of Jews living in areas re-annexed by Hungary from Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia between 1938 and 1941.

There are complex interconnections behind the revaluing of Jewish assets. The first surveys carried out after the war set national wealth in 1943 at 50 billion *pengős*, or 9.9 billion dollars.²¹ According to Kovács's 1938 estimate, quoted above, approximately a quarter or one-fifth of national wealth was in Jewish

hands. Therefore, based on the appraisal of damage in 1945–46, Jews owned 2–2.5 billion dollars worth of assets in 1943, which would be the equivalent of 20–25 billion dollars today. The events of the period from 1938 to 1943 altered these numbers in different ways. With the re-annexations of territories between 1938 and 1941, the absolute size of the collective wealth of Jews increased, but the ratio of Jewish assets was reduced, since the ratio of Jewish properties in Upper Province (*Felvidék*), Carpatho-Ruthenia (*Kárpátalja*), Northern Transylvania and Southern Province (*Délvidék*) was smaller than within the area of post-Trianon Hungary. Between 1941 and 1943, the enforcement of Jewish Laws grew ever more rigorous, which led to a rapid deterioration in the conditions of the Jewish community, both in terms of wealth and their share. In 1944, the occupying German forces primarily seized the properties of those Jews who were arrested and then deported, thereby transporting a huge quantity of Jewish assets out of the country. During the period of Arrow Cross rule (from 15 October 1944), almost the entire movable Hungarian economy was taken out of the country. This had a disproportionately detrimental effect on the nationalised, “Aryanised” Jewish industries. Jews who still occupied relatively strong economic positions in March 1944, suffered a disproportionately large share of the 22 billion *pengős* of war damage within the total national wealth of 50 billion *pengős*.

In March 1941, 100 *pengős* were worth 19.77 dollars, or one dollar was the equivalent to 5.06 *pengős*.²² Therefore, the various estimates (of 7–20 billion *pengős*) put the value of the assets of Hungarian Jews at 1.38–3.95 billion dollars. The value of the American currency, however, changed significantly after the war. Thus, a 1945 dollar was worth 8.9 dollars in 1997.²³ Taking the periods from 1941 to 1945 and from 1997 to 2001, the dollar was approximately ten times stronger during the war than it was at the start of the new millennium. On the basis of these calculations, taking the estimates of the time at 2001 value levels, Jews owned 13.8–39.5 billion dollars worth of assets. However, the calculations of far right wing laymen in 1944 (16–20 billion *pengős*) seem to be exaggerated. The data compiled by the experts (Matolcsy, the economist, and Kovács, the statistician) are probably more realistic. As far as the public was concerned, significantly larger, unrealistic numbers were widely believed to be the case. In 1937, for example, Henrik Péchy, one of the founders of the Arrow Cross movement, set the Jewish share of national wealth at 60 per cent. Despite its obvious falsity, many found this figure credible.²⁴

Having compared available data and taking into account the credibility of the calculations on which they are based, we estimate the total value of assets and properties (including movable property, real estate, cash, shares, personal belongings, clothes, bank deposits, etc.) of Hungarian Jews in 1941 at approximately 7–12 billion *pengős*. At 2001 value levels, the equivalent of 14–24 billion dollars.²⁵ However, the accuracy of our estimate is significantly influenced by the inconsistencies even in the work of competent statisticians. In the case of the wealthiest families, they classified as Jews those who had converted to

Christianity long before the passing of Jewish Laws. In the case of the lower middle classes and professionals, however, they relied on statistics based on religion. Therefore, at least some of the assets of Jews who had converted to Christianity were not included in the surveys. According to our estimate, even according to the most cautious calculations, the total value of the assets of the 825,000 citizens who were subject to Jewish Laws in 1941 must have reached or perhaps even exceeded 20 billion dollars (in 2001 terms).

The various approaches, however, all point in the same direction. In 1941 in Hungary, the 825,000 Jews amounted to 5.6 per cent of the population, but possessed about a quarter of the annual national income, and owned 20–25 per cent of total national wealth. Naturally, these quantities were not distributed evenly across society either geographically, or in terms of individual industrial sectors. The economic potential of Jews in post-Trianon Hungary was much larger than that of Jews in the areas recovered by Hungary between 1938 and 1941.²⁶ Jews owned or controlled approximately half of Hungarian industry, half or even as much as two-thirds of commerce and the banking sector. In agriculture, however, their share was a mere 10 per cent. The greatest wealth was in the hands of a small number of large industrialist and banker dynasties from Budapest, most of whom had converted to Christianity. These dynasties, no more than a few dozen, owned a high proportion of total Jewish assets, thereby acquiring a degree of highly concentrated economic influence coupled, for a certain period, with political influence that was virtually unparalleled in any other country. The economic and political significance of these numbers becomes clear if we consider that discriminating against 5–6 per cent of the population permitted the redistribution of 20–25 per cent of national wealth. Therefore, given the scale of these assets, the looting of Jewish wealth in Hungary offered much greater profits than anywhere else in Europe.

Economic annihilation: theory and practice

The German occupation of Hungary on 19 March 1944 and the creation of the collaborationist Sztójay government cleared the way for plans for the complete nationalisation and redistribution of Jewish wealth. The Hungarian government wished to use the confiscated assets of Jewish communities and individuals to steady the Hungarian economy, which had become destabilised due to ever-growing German demands. Seizing these assets would have enabled the government to ease intense social tensions and to build up a power base for itself. Minister of the Interior Andor Jaross, quoted earlier, said: "These assets form a part of national wealth, but legislation is necessary so the government can properly dispose of Jewish assets."²⁷ Minister of Finance Lajos Reményi-Schneller also labelled Jewish assets as "national wealth" in a speech he gave at the ceremonial installation of a new prefect at Baja.²⁸ (This approach was not confined to Hungary. Every collaborationist government in Europe regarded

Jewish assets as part of national wealth.) However, no comprehensive plan was drawn up for the distribution of the collected Jewish assets, only general principles were formulated. In addition, as regards specific decrees regulating properties, there was a perceptible effort made by the government to bear in mind social policy considerations.

In August 1944, the Regent, Miklós Horthy dismissed the Sztójay government and appointed Colonel-General Lakatos as Prime Minister. In many respects, this change resulted in a certain shift in policy in favour of the Jews. Deportation was stopped in July, and, although Hungarian officials never admitted as much to the Germans, the deportation of the remaining Jews was taken off the agenda. Thus the lives of the Jews in Budapest were no longer in immediate danger. The programme of economic annihilation, however, continued. Only minor modifications were made compared to the measures of the Sztójay government. Although the number of decrees issued diminished, the processing of plundered assets continued unabated, indeed this was when it really began in earnest. This was the most active period of the Government Commissioner's Office for Handling the Property and Financial Affairs of Jews. The Aryanisation of Jewish shops, the re-allocation of Jewish assets and the distribution of some of the collected clothes continued. However, the new government did not wish to carry out a comprehensive wealth redistribution programme.

The same could not be said of the Arrow Cross regime that seized power on 15–16 October 1944. Prime Minister's Decree no. 3840/1944 "on Jewish assets", which entered into force on 3 November 1944, provided the necessary legislation for the plans the Sztójay government had drawn up. Article 1. of the decree stated: "All the assets of the Jews are transferred to the state being part of national wealth."²⁹

It has to be underscored, however, that the long-standing dreams of the far right, concerning the confiscation and the utilisation of Jewish assets were not put into practice in a way and to the extent that had been imagined before 1944. There were three main reasons for this.

a) *The time factor.* Within a year of the occupation of Hungary by the Germans, the Red Army was in control of the country. The last third of this 12–13 month period was no more than death throes. Therefore, there were only 8–9 months available for the Aryanisation of Jewish assets in Hungary. It was impossible to confiscate, appraise and reintroduce into the economy the assets of more than 750,000 people (Hungarian Jewry had suffered losses of several tens of thousands by 1944) in such a short period. The puppet government failed to inject the majority of confiscated Jewish assets (the countless shops and small businesses, the thousands of tons of goods and chattels, the huge stock of real estate) into the Hungarian economy. There was enough time for the catch, but not enough time to "digest" it. As a result of the efficient cooperation between the *Sondereinsatzkommando* Eichmann and the "deportation trio" in the Ministry of the Interior

(Secretaries of State of the Ministry of the Interior László Endre and László Baky, Gendarme Lieutenant Colonel László Ferenczy), Jews from the Hungarian countryside were deported at a pace unique in the history of the Holocaust. The plundering of Jewish assets could not keep pace with the process of ghettoisation and deportation. It should not be forgotten that within 56 days of the German occupation of Hungary on 19 March 1944, the most important anti-Jewish decrees were promulgated and the entire Jewish population outside the capital was confined to ghettos and internment camps. Then, in another 56 days starting from 15 May, 437,000 people (everyone with the exception of 15,000) were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. This "feat" by the Hungarian administration and the law enforcement agencies, in cooperation with Eichmann and company, amounts to a record in the history of the Holocaust. The systematic removal of hundreds of thousands of people from their homes (including the herding of Jews in Budapest into designated "yellow-star" houses) began even before a central plan could be drawn up, coordinating the multitude of ad hoc notions and proposals concerning the seizing, the handling, storage and the subsequent fate of the enormous quantity of assets; that is a plan that would have overseen this huge task from seizure to redistribution. By the time the processing and the redistribution of confiscated Jewish assets could have begun in earnest in the late summer and the early autumn of 1944, the military situation of the Nazis had started to deteriorate rapidly. Hungary had become a battlefield and total collapse was only a few months away.

b) *Institutional rivalry.* No central government plan was formulated on how Jewish assets should be managed, since the ministries and the individuals occupying various positions all wished to remain in charge of the confiscated properties. The Ministry of Finance, headed by Lajos Reményi-Schneller, made the most determined effort to monopolise the handling of plundered Jewish assets, but with limited success. Significant legal measures were taken by the Ministry of the Interior (which often contradicted those of the Ministry of Finance). Frequently, however, these were well behind events in ghettoisation and deportation and only served to heighten chaos. The quiet, but all the more embittered wrangling between the different members of the government also paralysed the work of the two special commissions created to deal with Jewish assets. The Government Commissioner's Office for Handling the Property and Financial Affairs of Jews under Albert Turvölgyi, head of department in the Ministry of Finance, was supervised by the Ministry of Finance. However, the other ministers only gave their consent to the creation of the commission on condition that they were also given a say in determining its activities.³⁰ As regards its mandate, the commission headed by Turvölgyi should have been a key player, but, in practice, it ended up a marginal participant in the process of wholesale expropriation of Jews. The other relevant government agency was the Government Commissioner's Office for the Registration and Maintenance of the Confiscated Works of Art of Jews. The painter Dénes Csánky was appointed its head. The commission was responsible for seizing and

handling works of art owned by Jews and the decree establishing it provided a broad scope of authority for it.³² Once again, however, practice departed from theory and Csányi's commission regularly lost in the clashes of authority it fought with rival bodies (financial and military authorities).³²

c) *German intentions.* Although the Germans did not participate in the seizing of the assets of Hungarian Jews institutionally until October 1944, numerous members of the German armed and police forces had their eyes set firmly on Jewish property. In 1944, the Nazis used every opportunity to acquire Jewish assets "unofficially", from individual acts of pillage to the forcible take-over of one of the flagships of Hungarian industry, the Weiss Manfréd industrial works in Csepel. After the German occupation, various German men and organisations (members of the Sondereinsatzkommando Eichmann, SS-Obersturmbannführer Kurt Becher, certain Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS units, SD and Gestapo officials) pillaged huge quantities of valuables. While on the whole, Hungarian-German cooperation during the deportation of the Jews was smooth, ownership of the assets of the deported caused considerable conflict between the "allies". In May and June 1944, the collaborating government exhibited the greatest degree of resistance during its short history when it made a lacklustre attempt to reclaim the Weiss Manfréd corporation from the SS.³³ At the endgame, German-Hungarian rivalry in looting ended with the victory of the occupiers. Between the autumn of 1944 and the spring of 1945 Nazi authorities transported immense quantities of Jewish and non-Jewish assets out of the country.

To sum up, plunder did take place and there is no doubt that it was carried out to the limit. The confiscation of assets occurred simultaneously with the deportation of the Jews in the countryside and the concentration of the Jews in Budapest into designated yellow-star houses and then ghettoisation. The redistribution of Jewish assets also took place to various degrees, depending on the region and the type of property in question. This, however, rarely occurred according to a single, coordinated plan, more often on the basis of *ad hoc* notions, local proposals and a large number of micro-concepts.

The "lawful" measures of the collaborating government and its efforts at redistribution provided only one of the means by which those non-Jews who wished to get rich quick could obtain Jewish assets. There were other ways too. Many obtained some of the "unclaimed" assets "unlawfully" by breaking into Jewish homes, occupying them arbitrarily or by stealing from "the wealth of the nation" in some other fashion.³⁴ Many people who, before deportation and ghettoisation, had received valuables from Jewish acquaintances for safekeeping simply kept them, either because the owners did not return or, if they did, or their heirs called to collect them, they came to regard these objects as their own and simply refused to return them. Of course, there were numerous instances when survivors were handed back their valuables without any problems. Often, however, the new possessors were reluctant to return assets to their owners

since they had used Jewish property to replace their own which had been destroyed during the war. What is certain is that on the whole, the wealth of the Gentile majority was boosted by a large quantity of Jewish assets in 1944–45. Ultimately, whatever of Jewish wealth was not pillaged by the state, various authorities and individuals, was destroyed by the war.

The government dealt with Jewish assets in a pragmatical and cynical manner when it used confiscated properties to cover the costs of “de-Jewification” (ghettoisation, deportation). The collaborating political leaders were well aware that to collect, rob and intern 750,000 people from an area of 170,000 square kilometres would not only require considerable logistical efforts and the harmonious cooperation of the most diverse authorities (central and local administration, police, financial and transport authorities), but would also cost a great deal. The operation, the annihilation of Hungarian Jews, however, promised significant revenues for the state. Therefore, it seemed logical that the costs of deportation and ghettoisation should be covered by revenues derived from the same source, thereby effectively letting the Jews themselves finance the final solution of the Jewish question in Hungary. This idea appeared in the drafts of certain bills and decrees, in actual legislation³⁵ and, in several instances, in practice as well.³⁶ Thus, as in other European countries, the Holocaust in Hungary was “self-financing genocide”.³⁷

The “rationality paradox” of the Holocaust in Hungary

Minister of Industry Lajos Szász formulated the following principles in connection with the deportation of the Jews and the confiscation and redistribution of their assets: “The final and permanent resolution of the Jewish question will not and cannot be allowed to upset the Hungarian economy. It is impossible that it should since the government considers production and maintaining the continuity of production even more important than the solution of the Jewish question.”³⁸ Szász’s words highlight a serious concern, namely that “production” and “solving the Jewish question” were antagonistic in certain cases. In the space of a few weeks, more than 750,000 people were removed from the economy. Although their assets ended up in government hands, they were locked away uselessly in homes, bank safes, courtyards and warehouses. As we have mentioned, the redistribution of the assets by the government was carried out inconsistently, chaotically and deficiently. In addition, the rapid deportation of the Jews, and the confiscation of their entire wealth led to serious production and supply difficulties in certain economic areas and regions. Thus the elimination of the Jews did not improve the situation of the economy: in some cases it even hampered it.

A report by Gendarme Lieutenant Colonel László Ferenczy who directed deportation and ghettoisation on the spot, paints a rosy picture of the economic consequences of the ghettoisation of Jews from Carpatho-Ruthenia:

Despite the shortage of capital that has manifested itself, entrepreneurial spirits are high. Industry and commerce await the introduction of the stocks from seized Jewish plants, workshops and stores into the flow of the Hungarian economy with heightened expectations. Feasible ideas and plans are being formulated, which are dominated primarily by self-confidence and uninhibited, brave enterprise. The detrimental and depressing fear that used to stifle Hungarian industry and commerce in its minority position is no longer present.³⁹

Ferenczy's unbridled optimism is self-betraying. He unwittingly reveals that there was a shortage of capital but tries to compensate this with positive signs that are meaningless under the given conditions from an economic point of view, such as "heightened expectations" and "uninhibited, brave enterprise". The credibility of Ferenczy's evaluation is also undermined by the next paragraph of his report:

You can no longer see Jews gathered in the streets whispering to each other as they size up approaching non-Jews with sly looks, brewing the poison of rumours and propaganda.

If we add to this the fact that Ferenczy prepared his reports according to precise instructions given by László Endre, the Secretary of State of the Ministry of the Interior, then it becomes obvious that all this is no more than propaganda designed to justify the elimination of the Jews.

The board of directors of the Centre of Financial Institutions, whose members were clearly much better trained in economics than Ferenczy, saw the situation differently. At its meeting on 26 April, it was said that ghettoisation had resulted in "economic life being brought to a standstill" in the Kassa (Kosice) gendarmerie district (which included Carpatho-Ruthenia).⁴⁰ Jaross himself was forced to take note of the unfavourable developments. In a letter sent to Minister of Trade and Transport Antal Kunder, the Minister of the Interior admitted that:

with the closure of Jewish shops, there are serious disruptions in the supply of consumer goods to the population of Carpatho-Ruthenia, since most of the merchants in this area are Jewish.⁴¹

Economic difficulties resulting from the elimination of the Jews did not only arise in areas where large Jewish communities were deported. In Carpatho-Ruthenia, the proportion of Jews far exceeded the national average of 4.9 per cent.⁴² In Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county, however, Jews accounted for a mere 1.8 per cent of the population. Even if we consider only towns of county status, the ratio is 3.1 per cent. Nevertheless, the deportation and ghettoisation of the relatively small Jewish community resulted in considerable economic and production difficulties.⁴³ The elimination of the Jews soon created hold-ups in the food supply. In certain places (for example Kunhegyes and Dévaványa) there were not enough bakers left. Overnight, there was a grave shortage of technicians, engineers, watch makers, butchers, cobblers, shoemakers, furriers, tailors,

tinkers and locksmiths. The only printing press in the Lower Jászság district (which also worked for the administration) ground to a halt.⁴⁴ Crop yields were high throughout the country in 1944, including Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county. In order to get harvesting and thrashing work under way it was essential to service agricultural equipment. However, most of the mechanics qualified to carry out this work had been ghettoised.⁴⁵ The deportation of Jewish veterinary surgeons created a near-catastrophic veterinary situation in the predominantly agricultural county. By the end of the summer, there were only 28 veterinary surgeons available instead of the required 62. As a result, thousands of animals remained unattended in certain areas (for example in the region of Kunhegyes), whilst in other places (for example in Karcag), the compulsory vaccination of livestock was not carried out.⁴⁶ Traditional Jewish commerce was also hard hit by the deportations. There were hold-ups in the supply of fuel and building materials as well as in the trade in groceries, textiles, hardware and dry goods.⁴⁷

The government sensed the general problem. In the first half of April, the river surveying department in the Ministry of Agriculture proposed to Minister of Agriculture Béla Jurcsek, that "the notion of the 'economically valuable Jew' (*wirtschaftlich wertvoller Jude*) should be introduced in Hungary, following the German example."⁴⁸ The department mentioned the grave shortage of engineers as a result of army drafts and provisions excluding Jews from certain professions, which had led to the situation nearly getting out of hand.

In spite of these circumstances, the quantity of work expected of the water conservancy service is not decreasing at all,

added the author of the document. According to a note on the document, however, Jurcsek

did not accept the proposals and disposed that the Jewish engineers employed by the water conservancy service should be discharged in accordance with the intentions of Prime Minister's Decree no. 1240/1944, since the continued employment of Jews would contravene the public interest related to the resolution of the Jewish question.⁴⁹

The attitude of the collaborationist government is illustrated well by the circumstances surrounding the issuing of Prime Minister's Decree no. 1540/1944. This piece of legislation, which forbade the employment of Jews in intellectual professions, was published on 25 April. Article 3 allowed Jewish professionals

be employed for a certain period of time... if it is unavoidably necessary for the seamless flow of economic life or the process of production.⁵⁰

(The procedure was fairly complicated. If there were no "Hungarian citizens of non-Jewish origin available for filling the post", then the firm in question had to file a request to the commissioner for professional unemployment affairs. The commissioner assessed the case and submitted it to the competent ministry, which submitted it to the government.) On the next day, 26 April, the decree was

published once again. The only difference was that article 3 was simply omitted. According to the note of correction, the section in question had been "published by mistake" on the previous day.⁵¹ It is hard to imagine that any government would include an article in a decree by mistake. A different conclusion must therefore be drawn. In all probability, the cabinet, in hitherto unknown circumstances, changed its mind and decided that there were no Jews who are indispensable. Thus Lajos Szász's promise, mentioned earlier, that "the government considers production and maintaining the continuity of production even more important than the solution of the Jewish question" was not kept. The exact opposite was true.

This is all the odder as, according to the secret decree issued by the Ministry of the Interior on 7 April and intended to regulate the process of ghettoisation starting in mid-April, officials thought that:

skilled Jewish workers employed in plants, mines and large firms of strategic importance whose immediate replacement would impede production will be exempt from the purge.⁵²

The government had to contend with several other problems, such as, for example, a shortage of capital on the part of the non-Jewish beneficiaries. A (significantly reduced) amount had to be paid for the shop, industrial estate, stock, etc. they took over or wished to take over, and there was rent to be paid, insurance fees, wages and taxes. Per Anger, first councillor at the Swedish legation in Budapest responsible for trade and economic affairs, reported on this matter to the Swedish Foreign Ministry in Stockholm:

the financial assets needed are not available, nor are those required to meet obligations towards banks and other creditors. In most cases, the only cover provided for such obligations were the stock and the equipment [confiscated from Jews]. Concerning the question of whether the stock will cover all the debts, and whether there will be sufficient capital left after liquidation, well-informed people are not willing to comment.⁵³

The government was aware of the size of this problem. On 23 August, Minister of Finance Lajos Reményi-Schneller proposed to the cabinet the introduction of a large state loan scheme. He justified the proposition with the increased demand for loans arising from "the total exclusion of the Jews from the economy and the ensuing obligations of Christian merchants and industrialists." The cabinet approved the idea,⁵⁴ thereby shouldering a debt that also had inflationary consequences. Thus, in this respect, the elimination of the Jews created more economic burdens for the government than revenue.

Public administration, police and financial management bodies carrying out ghettoisation, deportation and the confiscation of assets were stretched to the limits and this extra burden didn't help the smooth operation of the state. In the summer of 1944, virtually the entire state apparatus was occupied with organising the elimination of the Jews. This prevailed over all issues, with the exception

of defence. The case of the city of Sopron was typical. Financial officials could not handle the job of processing confiscated Jewish assets on their own. Therefore, sixty members of the mayor's staff had to help. This, however, resulted in the mayor's office practically closing down. The military and the public supply departments continued to operate, but other than that, only the most urgent of matters were attended to.⁵⁵

In certain cases, government measures concerning the confiscation and redistribution of Jewish assets triggered conflicts. A good example is the case of the wine trade in Jewish hands. In early June 1944, the National Association of Hungarian Wholesale Wine Dealers and Wine Brokers wrote to the Minister of Agriculture Jurcsek and requested him to sell the approximately 300,000 hectolitres of wine confiscated pursuant to Prime Minister's Decree no. 1600/1944 (which "constitutes part of our national wealth") to the wholesalers.⁵⁶ The National Cooperative of Hungarian Vintners reacted with indignation to this suggestion by the wholesalers. They were afraid that the ministry would sell off the table wines produced on the Great Plain (*Alföld*) at 24 fillérs per liter, the price set by the ministry's commissioner for prices. The arrival of large quantities of cheap wine on the market would have led to a fall in prices, which would have benefited the wholesalers. "We consider Jewish wine as part of the national wealth," the vintners wrote, a view which they fully shared with the wholesalers.⁵⁷

A remark made by the representative of the Government Commissioner for Works of Art at the town of Losonc, shed light on a typical problem. Local painters had voiced their concern that "after eliminating the Jewish element, the market for objects of fine art will suffer a severe decline."⁵⁸

Removing Jews from certain professions, such as medicine, engineering and the law was an important means to the economic annihilation of Jewry. Of the three, it was especially the Aryanisation of medical practices which negatively affected the population. Loudmouthed racist ringleaders in the medical profession were present even before the German occupation.⁵⁹ Their organisation, *Magyar Orvosok Nemzeti Egyesülete* (National Association of Hungarian Doctors: NAHD), wished to do damage to Jewish doctors with scant regard for the interests of public health. After the revisionist successes between 1938 and 1940, NAHD demanded that in the re-annexed territories, Jews should be allowed to become members of the chambers of medicine—that is, practise their profession—only up to the quotas set by the Jewish Laws (20, and later 6 per cent). Under these laws, not a single medical practice was shut down. They "merely" stipulated that no new Jewish member was to be admitted to the chambers until, due to natural causes the number of Jews declined below the set proportion. Such regulations created an impossible situation for young, newly qualified doctors. In the re-annexed territories, however, the chambers were re-established, thus in principle there was no legal obstacle to the demands made by NAHD. In the Upper Province 80 per cent, and in Northern Transylvania 44.5 per cent of doctors

came under the scope of anti-Jewish laws.⁶⁰ For Minister of the Interior Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer, who supervised healthcare, it was obvious that if the number of Jewish doctors practising in the newly re-annexed territories was restricted to 6 per cent in areas already facing a serious shortage of medical practitioners, the entire public health system would collapse. He resisted the demands of the NAHD and nationalised the healthcare system step by step, thus withdrawing it from the competence of the chambers. He then reallocated the practices among doctors at his own discretion and in conformity with the rationale of public health.⁶¹ In the course of 1942, owing to targeted labour service drafts, the situation of Jewish doctors deteriorated rapidly. Probably under the pressure of NAHD, many of them were assigned to unskilled manual labour. As a result, by the end of 1942, there was an alarming shortage of doctors. Minister of Defence Vilmos Nagybaczoni Nagy, who in any event was intent on rationalising and humanising the forced labour service, decided that from November 1942 on, doctors were to be drafted only for professional service. Some 1500 Jewish doctors were subsequently reassigned to medical service.⁶²

After the German occupation and the formation of the Sztójay government, the NAHD thought that the time had come for eliminating Jewish competition once and for all. The racist medical organisation demanded that the Ministry of the Interior discharge Jewish doctors in labour service. Even the Jaross-led ministry realised that the dismissal of hundreds of doctors would have led to the collapse of medical care.⁶³ Jaross, however, showed his true self when, on 21 June 1944, he submitted a draft decree on the regulation of Jewish practitioners to the cabinet with the following arguments:

Successful medical treatment as is known, depends on a specific condition, namely the patient's trust in his doctor, while the doctor must display his expertise in conjunction with a certain ethical behaviour... There is no doubt that the said manifestations of trust and ethics cannot be satisfactorily expected towards and from doctors of the Jewish race.⁶⁴

The result of the draft was Prime Minister's Decree no. 2250/1944 "on medical practice by Jews and their membership in the chamber of medicine", which entered into force on 23 June.⁶⁵ Section 1 of article 1 prescribed that "a Jewish doctor may only treat Jewish patients." Section 2, however, shows that the administration, sceptical as it was concerning the trust in and the ethics of Jewish doctors, did display a degree of rationality, stipulating that the prohibition "does not apply to giving first aid as well as to Jewish medical practice required on account of defense labour service."

Thus the total exclusion of Jewish doctors did not take place, even though this was the goal of NAHD. But the racists ensured their powerful influence when, in early June, the government set up the "government commission for the utilisation of the medical workforce".⁶⁶ Although the commissioner was not accorded full competence in the area of health, he could exert considerable in-

fluence. The post was given to Antal Incze, a doctor and a prominent member of NAHD, Member of Parliament and a follower of former Prime Minister Béla Imrédy. His views are well illustrated by his June 1942 statement in Parliament that "in a short time" there would be no Jewish doctors in Hungary, since "there will be no Jews" in the country.⁶⁷

Nor did most members of the 1944 government think otherwise. The facts, however, did not favour their plans. According to a survey carried out by the national mobilisation department of the Ministry of the Interior, in all probability before the deportations, of the 13,771 members of the Medical Chamber, 4289 were Jews. In case of general mobilisation, a mere 2782 Christian doctors and "possibly a few hundred volunteer women doctors" would have been available for 6500 civilian medical posts.⁶⁸ Thus, Jewish doctors were indispensable. This was to be felt soon after deportations and ghettoisation began. According to a letter sent to Jaross by the Mayor of Nagyvárád (Oradea),

the moving of the Jewish doctors of Nagyvárád into the ghetto has temporarily aggravated the healthcare situation in the city, even though six Jewish doctors, having been granted permission to stay outside, and fourteen assigned for labour service by the Minister of the Interior have been employed.⁶⁹

According to the sub-prefect of Máramaros (Maramures) county, the "removal" of Jewish doctors and pharmacists performing labour service "has given cause for concern". More than half of the general practitioners' posts in the county became vacant, all the gynaecologists and obstetricians were removed. On top of everything, typhus broke out in the city.⁷⁰ On 22 May, Lieutenant General András Vincze, the commissioner for Carpatho-Ruthenia, sent a dramatic telegramme to Jaross:

All Jewish doctors and pharmacists are being removed from my area of operations. May I request their immediate and most necessary replacement, mainly on account of the outbreak of typhus?⁷¹

As a result of the deportations, a single general practitioner remained in the Kiszárda district, which had a population of 55,000 in 18 villages.⁷² On 4 May, the National Social Security Institute wrote to the Minister of the Interior, requesting that:

some 600-700 non-Jewish doctors be made available for the Institute nationwide to replace Jewish doctors removed or detained, otherwise the Institute will be unable to ensure medical care.⁷³

The deportation of doctors performing labour service was nonsensical not only from the viewpoint of public healthcare. Under existing legislation, Jews in labour service were not to have been deported at all. Occasionally, call-up papers even opened the gates of collection camps for Jewish men. Despite this fact, several hundred Jewish doctors in labour service, who were performing essential work for national healthcare, were taken away.⁷⁴

The Ministry of the Interior received similar calls for help in great numbers from various parts of the country, thus from Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok county⁷⁵ and Zala county.⁷⁶ In several places, the heads of local administration tried to get Jewish doctors exempted from ghettoisation. In reply to a draft proposal, suggesting that indispensable doctors and pharmacists should not be taken away, Secretary of State László Endre simply wrote: "On the contrary! To the ghettos and camps immediately!"⁷⁷ An apt example of the disregard for the elementary interests of the population was the case of the doctors in Szolnok. On 2 June, the town was bombed. Several hundreds of severely wounded lay scattered in the streets or trapped under the rubble. Despite the fact that, under the aforementioned Prime Minister's Decree no. 2250/1944, Jewish doctors were allowed to give first aid to non-Jewish patients, the authorities assigned the Jewish doctors to mortuary porter duties. The "interests of production" and "the solution of the Jewish question" came into conflict once again. Those in power again gave preference to the latter.⁷⁸

The reallocation of Jewish-owned pharmacies and medical equipment could not be carried out at one stroke. Prime Minister's Decree no. 1370/1944 withdrew the licence to operate pharmacies from Jews and stated that the Minister of the Interior would allocate pharmacies following tenders.⁷⁹ Pursuant to article 7,

the Jewish owner of a pharmacy is obliged to ensure further operation of the pharmacy until the new licensee or the representative of the local government takes over the pharmacy.

A month later, mass deportations began in the provinces. Thus the Jewish pharmacists were in no position to ensure operation stipulated by law. The re-licensing of pharmacies and the inventorying of medical equipment, however, progressed with difficulty. In Szolnok, ten surgeries were closed.⁸⁰ In Esztergom county, emergency hospitals and ambulance stations had to contend with a shortage of medical equipment, whilst the medical instruments of deported Jewish doctors were locked away.⁸¹ The Mayor of Újvidék (Novi Sad) did not wait for central instructions. He distributed the medical equipment to the German and Hungarian troops stationed in the city and to the local healthcare institutions.⁸² His was probably not the only case, which explains why, at the end of June, Incze ordered that all medical equipment formerly in Jewish ownership be locked away and re-allocations be frozen. According to his instructions,

as to the use of medical instruments thus appropriated and their re-allocation, the relevant measures will be taken at a later date.⁸³

Thereby, the commissioner dealt another blow to public healthcare in Hungary, which had already been shaken by the deportation of Jewish personnel.

In conclusion, it is clear that the deportation of the Jews and the pillaging of Jewish assets caused considerable disruption to the life of the country. Under peacetime conditions, the calculations of the anti-Semites may have been economically sound: the collection and the processing of Jewish assets, the central

reallocation of Jewish jobs and wealth or, in other words, the redistribution of one-fifth of national wealth may have resulted in an economic upturn. In the short run, however, in a country whose territory was continuously shrinking and which was plummeting towards defeat under increasingly chaotic conditions, the deportation of the Jews had a number of tangible disadvantageous consequences even for the Christian majority. In theory, the economically rational concept (of ransacking Hungarian Jewry, confiscating their personal and real assets and transferring their jobs and wealth to Christians) proved to be plainly irrational in the given conditions. Thereby, a scheme that was originally intended to produce economic benefits (ransacking hundreds of thousands of Hungarian citizens and sending them to their deaths) actually resulted in economic damages and problems in public supply. The given conditions must be taken to include the chaos and the confusion caused by the continuously deteriorating military situation, the truly "irrational", in some cases even pathological, anti-Semitism of László Endre and numerous other members of the government and the measures that resulted from this. This is what we can call the "rationality paradox" of the Holocaust in Hungary.

Even some government representatives were forced to admit to this, initially in private and then publicly as well. During a cabinet meeting on 1 June, Minister of Economics without Portfolio Béla Imrédy, pointed out that:

from a social policy perspective, not much has happened since the current government took office... but many people have grown rich recently. It would be expedient to investigate this increase in riches.⁸⁴

A month later, Imrédy said in a speech to distinguished guests, industrialists and merchants gathered in the town hall of Pécs:

Regarding the Jewish question, I have to admit that mistaken solutions have led to damage and the deterioration of some material goods that has affected the entire nation.⁸⁵

As far as the reasons were concerned, the Minister of Economics was pointing in the right direction:

The anomalies resulted from the fact that we were not prepared for this operation. The solution of the Jewish question was the biggest operation that has been carried out on the body of Hungary for decades. Such an operation cannot be performed clinically, sometimes blood must be shed.

Lest his words should be understood as they were meant, he hastened to add that:

naturally, the word blood must not be taken literally. I would like to affirm here and now that Hungarians do not have the blood of a single murdered Jew on their hands.

The disastrous consequences could not be concealed from the Germans, either. At the end of July, Veessenmayer reported to the Wilhelmstrasse:

Generally speaking, production figures have dropped due to the elimination of the Jews, to different degrees in the various sectors.⁸⁶

Publicly acknowledging the difficulties Minister of the Interior Jaross tried to play down the issue:

It is possible that there were temporary stoppages and minor problems in certain plants here and there in the course of the solution of the Jewish question. Such a significant issue, however, cannot be resolved perfectly from one day to the next.

He went on to add:

The evaluation of the problems is currently under way. We are already in a position to deny the notion that Hungarians cannot live without Jews.⁸⁷

The facts detailed above point in the opposite direction. ❖

NOTES

1 ■ A report in the daily *Kolozsvári Estilap* of 17 May 1944 on Jaross's speech. quoted by Jenő Lévai: *Zsidósors Magyarországon* (The Fate of the Jews in Hungary). Budapest, Magyar Téka 1948, (hereinafter referred to as: Lévai 1948), p. 138.

2 ■ Data quoted by Randolph L. Braham: *The Politics of Genocide. The Holocaust in Hungary*, Vol. 1–2.) New York, 1981, Columbia University Press (hereinafter referred to as: Braham 1981), p. 79.

3 ■ In 1939, for example, 18.5 per cent of lawyers were Jews who had converted to Christianity. Mária Kovács M.: *Liberalizmus, radikalizmus, antiszemitizmus. A magyar orvosi, ügyvédi és mérnöki kar politikája 1867 és 1945 között.* (Liberalism, Radicalism, Anti-Semitism. The Policies of the Hungarian Medical, Legal and Engineering Profession Between 1867 and 194.) Budapest, Helikon 2001, (hereinafter referred to as: Kovács M. 2001), p. 85.

4 ■ Iván Berend T.– György Ránki: *Magyar társadalom a két világháború között.* (Hungarian Society Between the Two World Wars) In Iván Berend T.– György Ránki: *Gazdaság és társadalom. Tanulmányok hazánk és Kelet-Európa XIX–XX. századi történetéből.* (The Economy and Society. Essays on the History of Hungary and Eastern Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries) Budapest, Magvető 1974, pp. 319–367. (hereinafter referred to as: Berend – Ránki 1974), p. 340.

5 ■ Braham 1981, p. 80.

6 ■ Ibid.

7 ■ Viktor Karády: "A magyar zsidóság helyzete az antiszemita törvények idején." (The Situation of Hungarian Jews at the Time of the Anti-Jewish Laws.) *Medvetánc.* 1985, Nos 2-3, pp. 41–90. (hereinafter referred to as: Karády 1985), p. 49.

8 ■ Hungarian unit of land measurement. One hold equals 1.42 English acres.

9 ■ Alajos Kovács: *A csonkamagyarországi zsidóság a statisztika tükrében.* (Jewry in Mutilated Hungary in the Light of Statistics) Budapest, 1938 (hereinafter referred to as: Kovács 1938) pp. 46–47. Concerning the total size of estates owned by Jews in 1942, Braham also publishes a similar figure (1.57 million holds). Braham 1981, p. 250. Citing József Nagy, János Gyurgyák calls this estimate excessive. János Gyurgyák: *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon.* (The Jewish Question in Hungary) Budapest, Osiris, 2001, p. 164.

10 ■ Kovács 1938, p. 50.

11 ■ Karády 1985, p. 49.

12 ■ *Az ipartelepek, a tulajdonosok és a bérlők 1933-tól 1935-ig.* *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv 1935.* (Industrial Estates, Owners and Tenants from 1933 to 1935. Hungarian Statistical Yearbook 1935). Budapest, Magyar Kir. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal. 1936, p. 130.

13 ■ For example, Ferenc Chorin, head of the Weiss-Chorin-Kornfeld-Mauthner group, which controlled the assets of Manfréd Weiss. He converted to the Christian faith on 30 May 1919. At that time, he had no idea that the anti-Jewish laws passed two decades later would define 1 August as the deadline. See Ferenc Chorin's notes on events concerning him and his family after 19 March 1944. In Daisy Strasser Chorin – András D. Bán: *Az Andrássy úttól a Park Avenue-ig. Fejezetek Chorin Ferenc életéből 1879–1964.* (From Andrássy Avenue to Park Avenue. Chapters from the Life of Ferenc Chorin 1879–1964.) Budapest, Osiris, 1999. pp. 143–169.

14 ■ Berend-Ránki 1974, pp. 328–329.

15 ■ Zoltán Bosnyák: *Szembe Judeával.* (Confronting Judea.) Second, expanded edition. Budapest, 1943, Centrum. pp. 212–213.

16 ■ "One-fifth of Hungarian land, a quarter of property assets in Budapest and of national income are in Jewish hands." *Függetlenség* (Independence), 17 April 1938.

17 ■ Matolcsy's and Levatic's calculations published by Zoltán Bosnyák: *Magyarország elzsidósodása.* (The Judaisation of Hungary) Budapest, Held János Könyvnyomdája, 1937, pp. 116–118.

18 ■ Braham 1981, p. 512.

19 ■ Jenő Lévai: *Fekete könyv a magyar zsidóság szenvedéseiről.* (Black Book on the Suffering of Hungarian Jews) Budapest, Officina, 1946, p. 75.

20 ■ "Twenty billion". *Függetlenség*, 23 April 1944., p. 5.

21 ■ *Magyarország háborús kárai. Összefoglaló statisztikai jelentés.* (War Damage in Hungary. Comprehensive Statistical Report.) Hungarian National Archives, hereinafter: MOL) KÜM Béke-előkészítő, Reel 12.425., Title 17., pp. 2–3.

22 ■ According to the last official exchange rate (March 1941), 100 pengő = \$19.77. Jürgen Schneider-Oskar Schwarczer-Markus A. Denzel: *Währungen der Welt II. Europäische und nord-amerikanische Devisenkurse 1941–1951.* Stuttgart, 1997, Franz Steiner Verlag. p. 503.

23 ■ Stuart Eizenstat (coordinated by)–William Z. Slany (prepared by): *US and Allied Efforts to Recover and Restore Gold and Other Assets Stolen or Hidden by Germany During World*

War II. Preliminary Study. Washington, 1997, Department of State. p. XXXIX.

24 ■ Henrik Péchy: *A magyar nemzeti szociális-politikai és gazdasági programja.* (The Political and Economic Programme of Hungarian National Socialism.) Budapest, 1937, Lőcsei Ferenc antibolsevista könyvesboltja. p. 15.

25 ■ Helen B. Junz has set the total value of the assets of Jews in post-Trianon Hungary before the war at 3.7 billion pengő. Her figures, however, are based on surveys by religious communities, which means that they exclude Jews who had converted to Christianity. Nor does Junz take into account the Jews living in the re-annexed areas, thereby simply disregarding the properties of approximately 400 000 people. (Helen B. Junz: *Where did all the Money Go? Pre-Nazi Era Wealth of European Jewry.* Berne, 2002, Staempfli Publishers Ltd. pp. 98–99.)

26 ■ Braham 1981, p. 80.

27 ■ Ilona Benoschofsky – Elek Karsai (eds.): *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen. Dokumentumok a magyarországi zsidóüldözés történetéhez 2.* (Indictment Against Nazism. Documents from the History of the Persecution of the Jews in Hungary. Volume 2) Budapest, Magyar Izraeliták Országos Képviselete 1960, (hereinafter referred to as: Benoschofsky – E. Karsai 1960) pp. 277–278.

28 ■ Jusztinián Serédi's letter to the episcopacy, 9 July 1944. Elek Karsai (ed.): *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen. Dokumentumok a magyarországi zsidóüldözés történetéhez 3.* (Indictment Against Nazism. Documents from the History of the Persecution of the Jews in Hungary. Volume 3) Budapest, Magyar Izraeliták Országos Képviselete, 1967, (hereinafter referred to as: E. Karsai 1967) p. 118.

29 ■ Prime Minister's Decree no. 3840/1944 on the Jewish assets. 3 November 1944. *Budapesti Közlöny.* (*Budapest Bulletin*) (official Bulletin of the government) 3 November 1944.

30 ■ Pursuant to point e) of section 1 of article 2 of Prime Minister's Decree. no. 3650/1944 on certain issues pertaining to Jewish assets, which prescribed the commission's tasks and scope of authority (*Budapesti Közlöny*, 23 July 1944), it is the duty of the commissioner "in general to perform all tasks assigned to it by the law, the ministry or individual ministers acting within their

lawful sphere of competence." Thus the various ministries could assign diverse tasks and competences to the commission at will. This was the direct opposite of the transfer of general competences that Reményi-Schneller had wished for. The various ministries succeeded in foiling the Ministry of Finance's plans and, in the end, the commission was set up with significantly reduced powers.

31 ■ Prime Minister's Decree no. 1830/1944 on the registration and the preservation of confiscated works of art from the Jews. 22 May 1944. *Budapesti Közlöny*, 25 May 1944.

32 ■ For details, see Gábor Kádár – Zoltán Vági: "Művészet és népirtás. A Műkincskormánybiztosság működése és a magyar zsidó műtárgyak elrablása, külföldre hurcolása, 1944–1945." ("Art and Genocide. The Operation of the Commission on Works of Art and the Plundering and Carrying Off of Works of Art Owned by Hungarian Jews.") In László Karsai – Judit Molnár (eds.): *Küzdelem az igazságért. Tanulmányok Randolph L. Braham 80. születésnapjára*. (Fight for Justice. Essays in Honour of Randolph L. Braham's 80th Birthday) Budapest, MAZSIHISZ, 2002. pp. 317–355.

33 ■ On the Weiss Manfréd affair and the role of Kurt Becher see Elek Karsai – Miklós Szinai: "A Weiss Manfréd-vagyon német kézbe kerülésének története." ("The German Capture of the Weiss Manfréd Properties.") *Századok*. (Centuries.) 1961. vol. 4–5. pp. 680–719. and Gábor Kádár – Zoltán Vági: *Aranyvonat. Fejezetek a zsidó vagyon történetéből*. (Gold Train. Chapters from the History of Jewish Assets) Budapest, 2001, Osiris. pp. 133–222.

34 ■ A few selected examples: Excise Commissioner Sándor Madarász, in Balassagyarmat reported 800 local residents to the police for looting properties left behind by Jews. (Árpád Tyekvicska (ed.): "Adatok, források, dokumentumok a balassagyarmati zsidóság holocaustjáról." ("Data, Sources and Documents on the Holocaust of the Jewry in Balassagyarmat.") In *Nagy Iván Történelmi Kör évkönyve*. (The Yearbook of the Iván Nagy Historical Society) Balassagyarmat, Nagy Iván Történelmi Kör. 1995, p. 111.) The Excise Commissioner in Csorna was forced to lock away the most valuable Jewish property in a separate warehouse "due to fre-

quent break-ins in the ghetto". (Report by Jenő Takács, the General Commissioner of the Excisemen from Csorna. 13 January 1945) Ágnes Ságvári (ed.): *Dokumentumok a zsidóság üldöz-tetésének történetéhez*. (Documents on the History of the Persecution of the Jews) Budapest, Magyar Auschwitz Alapítvány 1944 – Holocaust Dokumentációs Központ. Hereinafter referred to as: Ságvári 1994 (Győr-Sopron) p. 24) Uncontrolled looting in Beregszász (Beregovo) was conspicuous even to the Germans. The report sent to Berlin by Veessenmayer on 27 June 1944, which contained information obtained from Hungarian police sources reported that the local population had broken into and looted 80-100 of the 800 real estate properties owned by Jews in Beregszász. (Veessenmayer's Report. 27 June 1944. Randolph L. Braham (ed.): *The Destruction of Hungarian Jewry. A Documentary Account*. Vols. 1–2. New York, 1963, World Federation of Hungarian Jews. p. 615.) When stocktaking officials began to appraise Jewish properties in Munkács (Munkacevo), they often found empty rooms with anything that could be moved (furniture, bedclothes, furnishings and personal belongings) already taken away by neighbours. (Lévai 1948, p. 102.) In June, the notary from Huszt (Hust) complained that "staff numbers at the Excise Board are insufficient, therefore, inventorying and the emptying of homes will require at least another 6 months, during which time there will be a vast number of thefts and break-ins. A huge number of homes have been burgled already. The gendarmerie is continuously receiving reports of break-ins, but they are unable to respond due to insufficient staff." (Letter by the Chief Notary from Huszt to the Governor's Commissioner of Transcarpathia. MOL Reel I 11.)

35 ■ According to a draft bill prepared by Minister of Justice István Antal in May 1944, the "compensation" theoretically payed by the state for the confiscated Jewish assets should have been "repayed" by the Jews by financing the deportation from Hungary. In other words, the Jews would have been forced to pay the costs of their own deportation. (Draft Bill on the Elimination of the Jews from the Public and Economic Life of the Country. 19 May 1944. Benoschofsky – E. Karsai 1960, pp. 69–75.) The Arrow Cross

regime enacted this concept with the aforementioned Prime Minister's Decree no. 3840/1944, coming into force on 3 November 1944, which stated: "All Jewish assets are transferred to the state as national wealth. This wealth must be spent on covering costs arising from fighting the war, war damages and the execution of the legal provisions pertaining to the Jews." (Prime Minister's Decree no. 3840/1944 on the subject of Jewish assets. 3 November 1944. *Budapesti Közlöny*, 3 November 1944. pp. 2–3.)

36 ■ The state paid some of the bills run up during ghettoisation and deportation from account no. 157.880 at the Post Office Savings Bank, called "Jewish assets deposit account, Budapest". Confiscated cash deposits and money received for auctioned Jewish property were concentrated here.

37 ■ For further details, see: Gábor Kádár-Zoltán Vági: *Self-financing Genocide. The Gold Train, the Becher Case and the Wealth of the Hungarian Jews*. Budapest–New York, CEU Press, 2004.

38 ■ Material of Mátyás Matolcsy (without page numbers). Történeti Hivatal, V–117742.

39 ■ Ferenczy's report. 8 June 1944. László Karsai – Judit Molnár (eds.): *Az Endre–Baky–Jaross per.* (The Endre–Baky–Jaross Trial.) Budapest, Cserépfalvi, 1994, (hereinafter referred to as: Karsai – Molnár 1994) p. 515.

40 ■ Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Financial Institution Centre. 26 April 1944. MOL Reel 24.463.

41 ■ Jaross's letter to Kunder, 7 June 1944, Benoschofsky – E. Karsai 1960, p. 151.

42 ■ József Kepes (ed.): *A zsidó népesség száma településenként (1840–1941)*. (Jewish Population Numbers by Settlements, 1840–1941) Budapest, Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1993, (hereinafter referred to as: Kepes 1993) pp. 30–31.

43 ■ Kepes 1993, pp. 24–27.

44 ■ László Csósz: "Őrségváltás? Az 1944-es deportálások közvetlen gazdasági-társadalmi hatásai." ("A Change of Guard? The Direct Economic and Social Effects of the Deportations of 1944.") In László Karsai – Judit Molnár (eds.): *Küzdelem az igazságért. Tanulmányok Randolph L. Braham 80. születésnapjára*. (Fight for Justice. Essays in Honour of Randolph L. Braham's 80th Birthday) Budapest, MAZSIHISZ, 2002, pp.

75–98. o. (hereinafter referred to as: Csósz 2002) p. 76.

45 ■ Csósz 2002, p. 77.

46 ■ Ibid.

47 ■ Csósz 2002, p. 78.

48 ■ Proposition by the Ministry of Agriculture. 11 April 1944. Ilona Benoschofsky – Elek Karsai (eds.): *Vádirat a náciizmus ellen. Dokumentumok a magyarországi zsidóüldözés történetéhez 1*. (Indictment Against Nazism. Documents from the History of the Persecution of the Jews in Hungary. Volume 1.) Budapest, Magyar Izraeliták Országos Képviselőlete, 1958, (hereinafter referred to as: Benoschofsky – E. Karsai 1958) pp. 145–146.

49 ■ Ibid.

50 ■ Prime Minister's Decree no. 1540/1944 on the removal of the Jews from employment in intellectual professions. *Budapesti Közlöny*. 25 April 1944.

51 ■ Prime Minister's Decree no. 1540/1944 on the removal of the Jews from employment in intellectual professions. *Budapesti Közlöny*. 26 April 1944.

52 ■ Minister of the Interior's Secret Decree no. 6163/1944 on the designation of domiciles for the Jews. 7 April 1944. Benoschofsky – E. Karsai 1958, pp. 124–127.

53 ■ Per Anger's report to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Christian Günther. 7 June 1944. Péter Bajtay (ed.): *Emberirtás, embermentés. Svéd követjelentések 1944-ből. Az Auschwitzi Jegyzőkönyv*. (Genocide and Rescue. Reports by the Swedish Ambassador from 1944. The Auschwitz Protocol) Budapest, Katalizátor, 1994, p. 96.

54 ■ Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting. 23 August 1944. MOL Reel I 1.

55 ■ Letter from the Mayor of Sopron to the Minister of the Interior. 18 August 1944. Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives (Magyar Zsidó Múzeum és Levéltár) I. 7/2.

56 ■ Letter from the National Association of Hungarian Wholesale Wine Dealers and Wine Brokers to Minister of Agriculture Béla Jurcsek. 5 July 1944. MOL K 498 Fascicle 3.

57 ■ Letter from the National Cooperative for the Sale of Wine of Hungarian Vintners to Jurcsek. 24 July 1944. MOL K 498 Fascicle 3.

58 ■ Report by Lajos Sipos to Csánky. 29 June 1944. MOL Reel I 143, Document no. kb. 187/1944.

- 59 ■ See Kovács M. 2001.
- 60 ■ Kovács M. 2001, pp. 155–157.
- 61 ■ Kovács M. 2001, p. 160.
- 62 ■ Kovács M. 2001, p. 161.
- 63 ■ Kovács M. 2001, p. 163.
- 64 ■ Proposition to the Cabinet. 21 June 1944. Benoschofsky – E. Karsai 1960, pp. 285–287.
- 65 ■ Prime Minister's Decree no. 2250/1944 on the medical practice of the Jews and their membership in the Chamber of Medicine. *Budapesti Közlöny*. (Budapest Bulletin.) 23 June 1944.
- 66 ■ Prime Minister's Decree no. 2070/1944 on the commissioner for the utilisation of medical workers. *Budapesti Közlöny*. 10 June 1944.
- 67 ■ Quoted in Kovács M. 2001, p. 158.
- 68 ■ Survey by the national mobilisation department of the Ministry of the Interior. Without date. MOL Reel I 9.
- 69 ■ Letter by the Mayor of Nagyvárád (Oradea) to Jaross. 13 May 1944. MOL Reel I 11.
- 70 ■ Letter by the Sub-Prefect of Máramaros county to Jaross. 23 May 1944. MOL Reel I 12.
- 71 ■ Telegramme by András Vincze to Jaross. 22 May 1944. Elek Karsai (ed.): *Fegyvertelen álltak az aknamezőkön. Dokumentumok a munkaszolgálat történetéhez Magyarországon. 1–2 kötet*. (They Stood Unarmed in the Minefields. Documents from the History of the Labour Service in Hungary. Volumes 1–2) Budapest, Magyar Izraeliták Országos Képviselőtestülete, 1962, (hereinafter referred to as: Karsai E. 1962) Vol II. pp. 513–514.
- 72 ■ Letter by the Chief Constable of the Kisvárda district to Jaross. 27 May 1944. Karsai E. 1962, Vol. II. pp. 519–520.
- 73 ■ Letter by the National Social Security Institute to Jaross. 4 May 1944. MOL Reel I 3.
- 74 ■ Kovács M. 2001, p. 163.
- 75 ■ Csósz 2002, p. 79.
- 76 ■ Member of Parliament Elemér Kornis's letter to the Prefect of Zala County. 13 July 1944. Ságvári 1994 (Zala), p. 51.
- 77 ■ Endre's testimony, 17 December 1945. Karsai L. – Molnár 1994, p. 49.
- 78 ■ Csósz 2002, p. 80.
- 79 ■ Prime Minister's Decree no. 1370/1944 on the settlement of Jews' pharmaceutical licences. *Budapesti Közlöny*. 14 April 1944. pp 1–2.
- 80 ■ Csósz 2002, p. 81.
- 81 ■ Letter by the Sub-Prefect of Esztergom to Antal Incze. 1 July 1944. MOL Reel I 11.
- 82 ■ Letter by the Mayor of Újvidék (Novi Sad) to Antal Incze. 24 June 1944 MOL Reel I 11.
- 83 ■ Resolution by the Mayor of Hódmezővásárhely. 20 June 1944. MOL Reel I 79.
- 84 ■ Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting. 1 July 1944. Benoschofsky – E. Karsai 1960, p. 136.
- 85 ■ Imrédy's speech held in Pécs, published in *Dunántúl*. 12 July 1944. Ságvári 1994 (Baranya), p. 31.
- 86 ■ Veesenmayer's report to the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 29 July 1944. Gyula Juhász – Ervin Pamlényi – György Ránki – Loránt Tilkovszky (eds.): *A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország. Német diplomáciai iratok Magyarországról 1933–1944*. (Wilhelmstrasse and Hungary. German Diplomatic Documents from Hungary 1933–1944) Budapest, Kossuth, 1968, p. 895.
- 87 ■ *Pesti Hírlap* publishes Jaross's speech held in Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfintu Gheorge). 20 June 1944. Benoschofsky – E. Karsai 1960, p. 278.

Károly Kincses

Can One Speak of Jewish Photographers?

I started work on this article with considerable reluctance, having grown up and spent half a century of my life without paying much attention to the word "Jewish". Thanks to history and my personal good fortune, or pure chance I have never been obliged to profess my own Christian roots in such a way as to distinguish or differentiate myself from others. Thus the question has not entered into my thinking about photography—or much else; the uncovering and elucidation of other aspects has always seemed more significant and presented a more enticing challenge. Still, I do not wish to deceive myself. Sixty years ago something happened. Sixty years ago several million innocent human beings were exterminated by large-scale industrial methods. For sixty years we Hungarians, both collectively and individually, have been ducking the duty of confronting this and coming to terms with it. Though I myself was not alive at the time, and I neither had nor have the slightest personal involvement, the time has now come when I too can no longer dodge some kind of assessment of its implications for my own work. Let this article then be an honest facing up to the body of facts mustered in preparing and thinking the subject through, a modicum of contrition in light of a crime that burdens humanity as a whole. Each and every one of us can do at least that much.

As far as the question raised by the title of this article goes, I would say that in my heart of hearts, to my way of thinking, one cannot speak of Jewish photographers. Good and bad photographers, yes. Amateurs and professionals, yes. Photojournalists and art photographers, or nature photographers and passport photographers, again yes. But not people who take Jewish and non-Jewish photographs. Looking at two pictures side by side, I for one find it impossible to

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He is the author of several books on photography and photographers.

make such a distinction. Yet when it comes to the photographers and their relatives who were carried off and murdered in the Holocaust, it is equally impossible for me to assert that they did not exist; that, their senseless and unjust deaths, their murder and annihilation purely on account of their Jewishness, somehow did not take place. And if those photographers were murdered purely on that account—I underline: *purely* on account of their being Jewish—then those murdered photographers were indeed Jewish photographers. So, what I would say in answer to the question I have posed is that one can speak of there having been Hungarian Jewish photographers, but I hope that one will never again speak about Jewish photographers—that is to say, discrimination shall never again raise its ugly head in this field.

The justly celebrated achievements of Hungarian photography have been examined and analysed from many points of view, but quite certainly not in one respect, which is how many of its practitioners regarded themselves, or (generally with an intent to discriminate against or exclude them) were regarded by others as Jewish by faith or race. Nor has any attempt been made to investigate from a scholarly, art-historical angle in what way that fact shaped their lives, careers and work, their very existence, though I feel sure that certain facets hidden away in this would be instructive for us all. Although no one has ever produced any reliable statistics, the truth is that, relative to their presence in the general population, a disproportionately high number of individuals of Jewish parentage were to be found among the ranks of Hungarian photographers. I am using the term “of Jewish parentage” quite deliberately, because although they included some (not many) pious, Orthodox Jews, by far the greater proportion were assimilated persons who professed themselves to be Hungarians, indeed not infrequently converted to other faiths—Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran, Baptist, or whatever—but most commonly were atheists and did not differentiate themselves from others until forced to do so.

If one were to try and classify them according to what happened to them, they would fall into two broad groups. Some chose to leave the strongly anti-Semitic climate of Eastern Central Europe for havens in Austria, Germany or France and subsequently with Hitler's assumption of power and the rise of Nazism in Germany, further to the west, to Great Britain, the Netherlands or France, with many going on to leave Europe altogether even before the outbreak of the Second World War. Among these were André Kertész, Robert Capa, Márton Munkácsi and László Moholy Nagy, all of whom survived to consolidate the renown that they had already achieved.

The other major group comprised those who stayed in the country of their birth. They first became subject to the restrictions on the way they earned their living and their way of life that were imposed by ever more biting anti-Jewish laws, then branded, having to wear yellow stars, conscripted into forced labour battalions, and eventually concentrated in designated areas, initially “yellow-

star houses" and later ghettos. From those overcrowded clusters they were dispatched, during 1944 with escalating haste, in freight cars or on foot to perdition. Some did not make it that far, ending their lives in the clay pits of brick works or on river banks, where they were shot straight into the water. The chances of returning home once a person had been sent off on such a transport were slim; the Nazi death machine operated remorselessly until the very last day of the war. Many of the very best of Hungary's photographers perished in that manner, Imre Kinszki, Miklós Redner, György Krausz and Andor Sugár among others, but some did make it back, such as Ernő Vadas, by then a bag of bones whose hair had turned white even though he was barely thirty years of age. There were also some who—whether through sheer nerve, survival instinct and luck, or maybe thanks to well-intentioned non-conformists in their surroundings—managed to evade what the authorities commanded in spite of the sanctions attached to such commands, which include summary execution. Such people did not allow themselves be stigmatised and did not move into yellow-star houses but escaped the mass slaughter by hiding under assumed names and with forged papers. Among those who stayed alive in this manner were Marian Reismann, Klára Langer, Miklós Rév, Márta Aczél and Kata Kálmán.

Such was the lot of several thousand Hungarian photographers who were unable to document a pure Aryan ancestry at least back as far as their grandparents. One can form some impression of numbers by examining the data for just one city. From a study of records, statistics and licenses granted to practice the trade, it is possible to determine that the overwhelming majority of photographers who worked in Nagyvárad (Oradea, Romania) from the early years of the twentieth century were documented as being of the Jewish faith. Starting with 1941, the studio of every single Jewish photographer in the city was confiscated, and three years later, in the spring of 1944, the entire Jewish population of the city, including all the photographers, were concentrated in a ghetto. Some of them, rather than wait to be deported, chose to take their own lives, such as Jenő Róna and his wife. They had a fair idea what lay in store for them. Those who did not were deported to the extermination camp of Auschwitz or to Mauthausen concentration camp and its sub-camp at Ebensee. Surviving Jews from Nagyvárad were later to testify to the circumstances in which the vast majority met their death. Thus, it is known for sure that Miksa Goldstein, one-time proprietor of the Michelangelo Studio, died in the Ebensee camp, along with his wife and five-year-old son; another photographer, Jenő Salamon, was beaten to death in the same camp.

I have picked a few typical Jewish fates. All I ask is that in reading about them the reader bears in mind that each should be multiplied by two, or ten, or a hundred.

Dr Márta Aczél was the wife of a leading Hungarian historian of photography who was taken off for forced-labour service. *"At first, he wrote frequently to instil trust, to reassure and buoy me up too. He gave his fellows in misfortune English lessons, reading Dickens' Pickwick Papers. In the final weeks I sent him a large parcel, of winter clothing, and I know that he received this. At the end, he sent a message via one of his officers that he would try and cross to the Russian side at the first opportunity that presented itself. The place where he vanished is called Uspenska. Whether he froze to death or was shot and killed—there's no way of knowing."* Her husband, Dr György Kreileisheim, was the author of a slim volume entitled *Old Hungarian Photography*, which appeared in 1941. The wife who related the story, herself a photographer, a pupil of József Pécsi, was taken off to the Óbuda Brick Works in 1944 but later escaped from a marching column of deportees that was being driven westwards towards Vienna. She managed to stay in hiding until the war was over. After 1945, she worked in a factory owned by her father, then, after that was nationalised, she became a photographer for IPARTERV, the state project office for industrial buildings. She is no longer alive, her sole living relative is Tom Lantos, a Congressman in Washington, D.C.

A second memory is that of Marian Reismann: "I have spent, still spend and will continue to spend my entire life as a Hungarian. The fact that I am Jewish is something that was brought home to me by the Jewish Laws. And even more so when a number of my family and friends were wiped out and I found my own life too in peril."² One learns from these memories about the many twists and turns in the lives of those who opted to go underground. Marian Reismann finished her studies at the Staatslehranstalt für Lichtbildwesen (State School for Photography) in 1931, then worked briefly with her elder brother in Berlin before returning home to open a studio in Budapest: *"I worked there until the Germans occupied the country, after which I was obliged to move to a yellow-star house. There was a woman there by the name of Mrs Salamon who was later to be one of the first to join the Communist Party but at that time was a virulent supporter of Hungary's Arrow-Cross party. She once accosted me in the stairwell: 'How does a stinking Jew like you have the nerve to come back here wearing a yellow star?' After that, I didn't go back there for a while."*³ Then came the hiding: *"In April 1944 I called in on the Jewish Council, where there was a childhood acquaintance with whom I had been to a few parties but who was not a particularly close friend. I asked him how I might rescue my family in Szombathely. He told me about the gas chambers at Auschwitz. I came away thinking he needed psychiatric help or that he should be locked up in a lunatic asylum. And if I myself was unable to believe in Auschwitz in April 1944, how can I expect any non-Jewish Tom, Dick or Harry to believe it?"*⁴ This was despite the fact that the authorities were doing their utmost to impress on her the futility

and fragility of her life: "They posted up on the streets the decree that from tomorrow onwards anyone unable to document three or four Aryan grandparents was obliged to wear a yellow star or otherwise face internment. There was the yellow star first of all, followed by yellow-star houses being designated, which was when people had to move, then the yellow-star houses themselves were concentrated, and the people there were carried off... I myself moved first into a yellow-star house, then had myself transferred, still wearing a yellow star, to Csalogány Street in Buda and a place owned by an elderly couple, Gyula J. Pikler and his wife, who had been left completely on their own. It was from there that I went into hiding on 13 October... I had a piece of paper from the Red Cross to the effect that I was a refugee from the provinces, which I was given by Pál Szegi's wife in the course of my wanderings round the streets of Budapest. I used that to pull back to a place in nearby Trombitás Street, where I lodged with a colonel's widow. It turned out after the war that the colonel's widow herself was Jewish. Meanwhile someone found out that there was an empty house on Sváb Hill, so we moved there. On Christmas Eve that was still a sort of no man's land; we heard the Germans making use of the street front of the house as a gun post for a short while, but they quickly scarpered. Total stillness, desolation followed. A red fox bolted across the garden, then just five minutes later along came the first Soviet soldier. We pitched into cooking for the soldiers in the Soviet army kitchen, which was how we got provisions for ourselves... Where King Béla Avenue runs today there were many dead—that's where we brought the water for the kitchen from, and every time ten or twenty people gathered by the wells there to collect buckets of water, a German Stuka would put in an appearance and strafe the area. We were lucky. The corpses had to be buried. One of the Russians gave me a camera because I told him I was a photographer. So I took photographs there too, which meant I had to take photos of them as well, which we would develop at night by the light of a kerosene lamp with a red-painted cylinder..."⁵

The third fate is Eva Besnyő's. She left Hungary to work as a photographer in Berlin as early as 1931. She moved on westwards in 1933, but from 1941, as a Jew, she was unable to carry on working in German-occupied Holland. She acquired a forged document which purported that her mother had had an affair and her natural father was an artist named János Kmetty. Being half Jewish gave her a better chance of hanging on to life. This was the paper with which she took cover, seeking to scrape some sort of existence by taking photographs of farmers' children in the village of Broek in Waterland and producing passport photos in Rotterdam in exchange for food. She was lucky. Having lived a full life as a world-renowned photographer, she died in the Netherlands earlier this year.

The fourth is Robert Capa, whose name was originally Endre Friedmann. When he set off from Hungary, barely an adult, the Jewish community of Pest paid for his train ticket to Vienna, whence he travelled on via Brno to Prague and

then somehow onwards to Berlin. Having left in July 1931, it took him two or three weeks to reach the German capital. He studied journalism at the Deutsche Hochschule für Politik but in 1933 was obliged to leave a city that was becoming increasingly dangerous for left-wing Jewish intellectuals. He went back to Vienna and thence by boat to Budapest. There he again met up with his Worker Circle friends, making virtually daily calls on József Pécsi's studio in Dorottya Street, just off Vörösmarty Square in the centre of Pest, in order to chat and flirt with the female students there. Quickly realising that the political situation in Hungary boded ill for his kind, he left again—this time for good. His camera recorded many of the major conflicts of the next two decades: the Spanish Civil War; key phases of the Second World War, from D-Day to the final defeat of Nazism; the new Israeli state's early wars; and the struggle of the Vietnamese against the French colonial forces. It was there that he stepped on a mine and died having just reached his fiftieth year.

The fifth was called Gitta Carell. A Hungarian Jew, she led a chequered life, quickly making a name for herself as a photographer in Italy with her portraits of Italian aristocrats, high society, and the ambassadors and staff of foreign missions, including, in the 1930s, some of the best-known studies of Benito Mussolini himself. After the publication of Italy's first anti-Semitic measures in July 1938, magazines continued to publish her pictures but were not permitted to print her name under them. Fortunately, nothing worse befell her. After the Second World War she carried on her work, photographing politicians, industrialists, creative artists and other leading public figures. Around 1960 she completed a set of pictures of Pope John XXIII. Having presumably given up photography, she moved to Israel in 1969 to settle at a kibbutz near Haifa, where she died in 1972 whilst working on her memoirs.

Six. Having tried his hand at many things during his adventurous young life, Zoltán Glass worked solely as a photojournalist from 1931 on after obtaining a post on a daily newspaper, the *Berliner Tageblatt*. In 1930 he had founded the Reclaphot agency, which handled advertising material, and also Autophot, which specialised in pictures of cars. Being Jewish and thus unable to work for newspapers from 1936, he moved on to England, taking all his negatives with him, to join the Sackville Advertising agency. Setting a new life went fairly smoothly as he rented a studio almost immediately on arrival. During the Second World War, however, as an "enemy alien", he was not permitted to pursue his profession, indeed he had his photographic equipment confiscated and faced the threat of internment. He managed to survive nonetheless and in 1948 was granted British citizenship. Free to take photographs again, he rented a studio in London's fashionable artists' quarter of Chelsea, working for magazines such as *Lilliput*, *Picture Post*, *The Observer* and *Black Star*, as well as (from 1949) various foreign

magazines. During the week he pursued advertising photography and at the weekends "fashion shots" that featured little in the way of fashion but all the more nudity.

The seventh is Zsuzsa G. Fábri, a noted photographer living in Hungary: *"My father was a bank official, whilst my mother was a practical lady who raised both her daughters at home. I led an emotionally full, congenial and sheltered life until the age of ten, living in the village of Somorja Samorín, Slovakia, just outside Bratislava. In 1938 the area was re-annexed to Hungary. Since my mother was an incredibly fierce patriot, she was passionately devoted to the country; she had a huge influence on us emotionally. After 1943, though, family life was constrained. Not to bandy words, as it's no cause for shame, at least not shame on my part: I'm Jewish. My father was conscripted into forced-labour service, whilst my elder sister, who was in her third year at secondary school, was obliged to report for agricultural work, leaving me at home with my mother. As events turned out, we lost both my father and sister. With the help of Mother's family, we managed to escape to Pest, where we hid until the war was over. That required that everything which had until then been true in my life became fiction; I was not permitted even to utter my own name, I could no longer do what had been regarded as natural when I was a child: our clean, honest, unashamed life became false. I had to lie and tremble with fear every day. Barely in my teens, I now had to grow up, and it was I who kept my mother, that otherwise so strong-minded woman, going. We lived by never leaving one another's side for a moment; that was the only way we managed to survive. We kept our heads down in a boarding-house. We were given papers that were so utterly implausible that I can't fathom why they were ever believed, with Mother assuming the identity of a road-mender's wife."*⁶

Eight. Miksa Engländer, a member of the Budapest Guild of Photographers and Enlargers and one of those who presented their work at an exhibition mounted by the Photographers' Circle as far back as 1905, was carried off to the camps as a Jew but returned from Germany along with his wife. He took photographs in the prison yard of the executions of all of Hungary's fascist war criminals, without any official commission.

Nine. On account of her Jewish parentage, Kata Kálmán moved with her husband Iván Hevesy, an outstanding historian of photography, to the summer home at of his brother at Bódvarákó, in the Aggtelek Hills in the north-eastern corner of Hungary. They buried their cameras for safety, since there was not much chance of using them anyway except to photograph their two children. One daughter relates: *"Since our mother had grown up in a family of assimilated Jews, her only experience of Jewish customs and the celebration of traditional holidays had been in childhood, with only her grandmother, as long as she was still alive, observing the ceremonial family Seder meal on the first night of*

*Passover. She told us several times about that early experience, and I listened to it as if it had been a strange fairy-tale. I loved munching matzos, which for me was a natural part of the whole Easter feel. I would compete with my older sister to see who was the most skilful at nibbling the biscuit into some shape or other without its crumbling. Meanwhile we would paint the shells of hard-boiled eggs, using the coloured plate in Gyula Ortutay's book on Hungarian Folk Art as a guide. That was about all we learned about Judeo-Christian customs, though those things did sit comfortably alongside one another."*⁷

Tenth is Jutka Róna, younger daughter of Imre Róna, who left Hungary for Holland, and became well-known as a photographer there, working in photo-journalism, as a still photographer for Dutch cinema and in travel photography. The book *Walking on Tiptoe* is a recent work on what her life would have looked like if she had stayed in Hungary. The family was Jewish by birth, but her parents, she and her elder sister were all baptised as Lutherans whilst they were still living in Hungary. Her grandfather was a paediatrician of considerable repute, with his practice at 72 Andrásy Avenue. During the war, he was arrested and beaten to death when he hastened to the bedside of one of his patients during the curfew hours.

Eleven. Miklós Müller, better known as Nicolas Muller, died not long ago as one of the best known photographers in Spain. He was born into a well-to-do middle-class family in the eastern Hungarian town of Orosháza. His father, Jenő Müller, in addition to being a lawyer, with the rank of government counsellor and a covert freemason, was also the head of the local Jewish community. At the age of 13, the son was given his first camera by an uncle as a Bar Mitzvah present. At Orosháza the family celebrated Christmas as well as the Jewish festivals. Having attended a Piarist college young Miklós entered the University of Szeged to read law, sharing digs for a while with the poet Miklós Radnóti, who was shot on a forced march in 1944. In September 1933 he moved to Vienna to work for the Internationale Foto Service, getting to photograph the Austrian chancellor, Dolfuss, among others. Taking his law degree in 1936, he worked for a while as an articled clerk in his father's legal practice, meanwhile engaging in socio-photography as a hobby, joining the Group of Modern Hungarian Photographers in January 1937. The *Anschluss* in 1938, with Hitler's entry into Austria, was his signal to take off for the wider world, knowing that Hungary's future was likely to offer few rewards for young Jews of a leftist persuasion. For ten years he wandered around Europe with a small trunk, a suitcase and his camera. In Paris he was given some assistance by his compatriots, Brassai (Gyula Halász) and Robert Capa, but when fear pushed him to desert France, he ended up being locked up in the prisons of Salazar's Portugal.

The twelfth name brings yet another kind of fate. As a photojournalist in Hungary, Márton Munkácsi was one of the ace reporters for the magazines and newspapers of the Ullstein group, the biggest publishing house in Weimar Germany. Although Ullstein attempted to carry on after the Nazis came to power, and did what it could to resist the growing anti-Semitic pressures, the firm was expropriated in 1933 and the editor in chief, Kurt Safranski, was replaced by a Nazi sympathiser in 1934. Munkácsi, a Jew, was given just one assignment, which was to produce a series of shots for a feature on how to store fruit in winter, but the new editor instantly rejected five of the twenty submitted pictures on the grounds that they included bananas, and those were not an Aryan fruit. The story goes that Munkácsi gathered the pictures together from the editor's table, packed his equipment, sent a telegram to *Harper's Bazaar* to confirm that he was ready to accept their job offer, and sailed to the New World.

Thirteen. During the 1930s, Gyula Weisz must have been just about the only photographer working along the River Galga, for although his studio was in the small town of Aszód, between Gödöllő and Hatvan, he also went out to villages further up the valley. It is presumed that he was taken off to his death in 1944, along with the rest of the town's Jewish inhabitants.

Fourteenth and penultimate in this series is Ernő Vadas, one of Hungary's most distinguished photographers, whose pictures had been exhibited in fifty countries before the outbreak of the Second World War. The body of work that he published in the journal *Új Idők*, edited by Károly Lyka, is in itself worth a closer look. From 1930 on, Vadas' pictures appeared there with ever-growing frequency until there is a sudden stop in 1944, when just a single picture is found in the January issue and then nothing at all until 1946, when the same journal again is filled with pictures from Vadas as if there had been no break at all. Yet in between those dates Vadas had in fact been taken to Mauthausen concentration camp and then its satellite camp at Gunskirchen, only returning to Hungary in the summer of 1945. His non-Jewish friend and colleague, Tibor Csörge, wrote of him: *"He too was caught up by the monstrous tide of 1944, and all attempts to warn him were in vain... that he should do what others were doing and take advantage of the help being offered by his friends. He declared that the dangers threatening him 'had no basis in law' and 'the measures were immoral', so for him to seek to wriggle out of any consequences would be tantamount to acknowledging the Arrow-Cross perverters of the law. He chose instead to share the sad collective fate of his hundreds of thousands of his compatriots."*⁸

Summing up. In 1907, the journalist Sándor Tonelli passed himself off as a photographer's assistant to board a migrant ship heading for the USA in order to gain first-hand experience and gather facts about the earlier lives and motives of the hundreds of thousands of Hungarians who were leaving the country

at that time, as well as to gain some insight into how they made a start in their new home. On the ship, "my two bunk mates were of note principally because owing to them I myself was also thought by the bulk of the peasants to be Jewish. The other reason was my being a photographer, and a photographer could only be either a Jew or a German."⁹

NOTES

- 1 ■ Sándor Bácskai, ed., *Életünk. Dr Aczél Márta mesél férjéről, Dr Kreileisheim Györgyről* (Our Life: Dr Márta Aczél talks about her husband, Dr György Kreileisheim). *Fotóművészet*, no. 3 (1993): 44.
- 2 ■ Csapody Tamás beszélgetése V. Reismann Mariannal (Tamás Csapody in Conversation with Marian V. Reismann). Manuscript. Budapest: Hungarian Museum of Photography. Archive, p. 3.
- 3 ■ Károly Kincses, "Fotó Marian (Marian Photos)," *Fotóművészet*, no. 4 (1986): 47-48.
- 4 ■ Hanák Gábor interjúja Reismann Mariannal (Gábor Hanák's interview with Marian Reismann). Manuscript, 15 November 1989. Private collection, p. 48.
- 5 ■ Károly Kincses, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
- 6 ■ Marianna Kiscsatári: Beszélgetés Fábri G. Zsuzsával. (Conversation with Zsuzsa G. Fábri) *Fotóművészet*. no. 3-4 (2002).
- 7 ■ Hevesy Iván - Kálmán Kata könyve (Iván Hevesy and Kata Kálmán's Book). Budapest: Hungarian Museum of Photography, 1999, pp. 17-18.
- 8 ■ Tibor Csörge, "Fájdalmas epizód" (A Painful Episode), *Fotó*, no. 8 (August 1962), pp. 364-365.
- 9 ■ Sándor Tonelli: *Ultonia. Egy kivándorló hajó története* (The *Ultonia*: The Story of an Emigrant Ship). Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1929, p. 39.

Kata Kálmán

(1909–1978)

One of the great figures in socio-photography. In 1937 an album of hers documenting rural poverty in Hungary through 24 poignant portraits had a huge impact. Her portraits of artists are also important. After the war, she too was forced to provide illustrations for a fraudulent ideology.

Kata Kálmán:
Shoelace Vendor.
1940.



Kata Kálmán:
Child Eating Bread.
1931.



Kata Kálmán:
Child from the Slums.
1936.

Kata Kálmán:
*Girl at the Beach with the
Photographer's Shadow.*
1937.





Kata Kálmán:
Flower Seller in a Budapest Street.
circa 1936.



Kata Kálmán:
Woman and her Daughter Selling their Wares at the Egeregy Market.
1938.



Kata Kálmán: *Béla Bartók*. 1936.

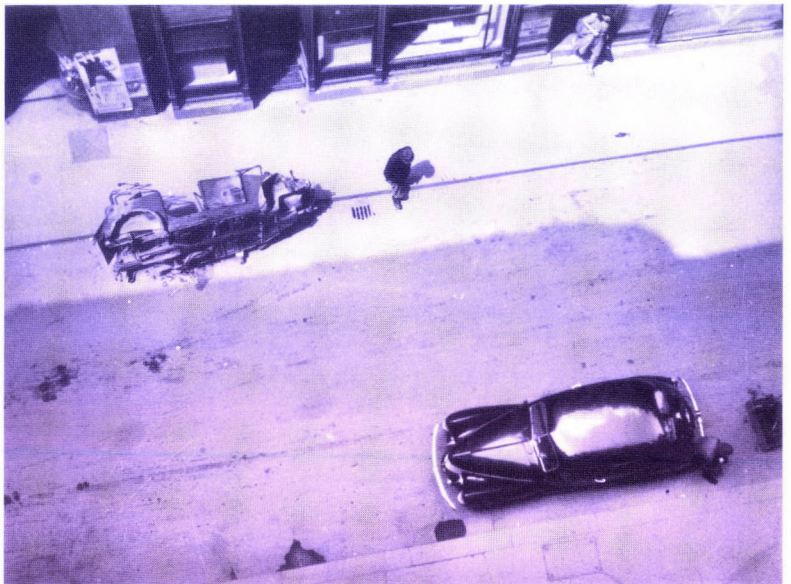


Marian Reismann

(1911–1991)

A black car with darkened windows stopping outside the front door: its significance is appreciated only by those who lived under the East European dictatorships of the proletariat. The car meant arrest, torture, deportation to an unknown place, sometimes disappearance and burial in an unmarked grave.

Marian Reismann:
*The First Spring of Freedom
in Budapest.*
1945.

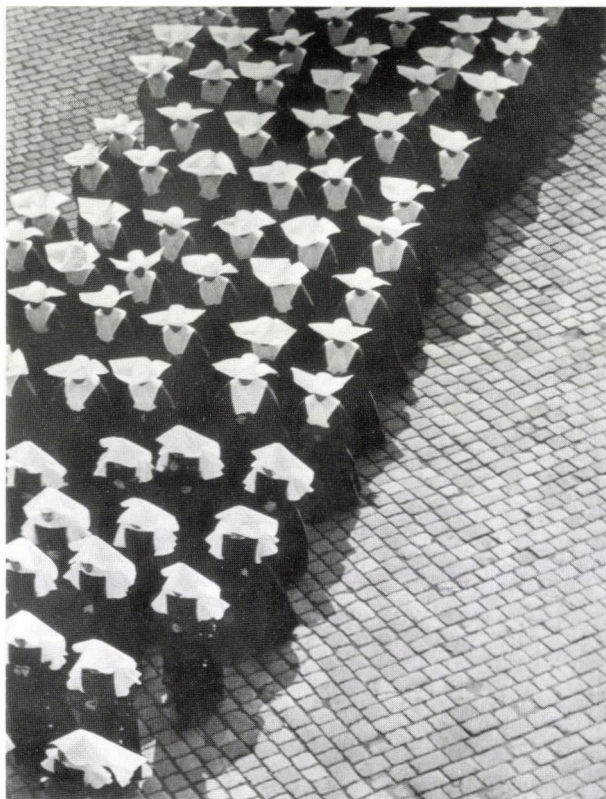


Marian Reismann:
Black Automobile.
1949.

Ernő Vadas

(1899–1962)

His *Geese* was awarded First Prize in 1941 in a contest run by the Swiss magazine *Camera*. His work appeared in *Picture Post*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Illustrated London News*, *Lillustration* and *Harper's*. A leading representative of the "Magyar" style and the most influential photographer of the interwar period, his well-composed pictures featured bold lighting and showed great verve. When these features were combined with the obligatory "socialist realism" in his post-war work, the photographs began to reek of phoniness. Even so, some of his later work includes masterpieces.



Ernő Vadas:
Procession.
1934.



Ernő Vadas:
Népakarat
(*The Will of the People*).
1957.



Imre Kinszki

(1901–1945)

Powerfully influenced by the international trends of his era, he consistently represented the “new objectivity” in Hungarian photography. There are probably more of his surviving pictures in the United States than in Hungary. He produced a new type of cityscape and genre image, and also shot nature and macro photographs. Philosopher, biologist and photographer, his life was spent working in an office. Included in the quota of migrants permitted to enter the United States, he failed to leave Hungary in time and was killed by the Nazis.

Imre Kinszki:
Transporting Paper.
1935.



Imre Kinszki:
Transport Workers.
1944.



Imre Kinszki: *Children in a Meadow.* 1936.



Imre Kinszki:
Stool.
1935.

Ágnes Gergely

POEMS

Translated by David Hill and Daniel Hoffman

Double Concerto

Kettős verseny

*There was an inn—do you recall?
A century and a half
since that old clock stopped on the wall
and unmade sheets were left*

*by one who flew a bed of feathers,
escaping with the wind
at sundown, making sure the other,
pursuing him, might find*

*no trace of him, and though the clock toll,
and though, without, within,
pistol be pressed to landlord's temple
in proper style and prim,*

*no wound might breach the Code of Law,
the horses' flesh no fly,
no pistol-ball the window or
the wine cask. Feathers fly,*

*and, while coach, threshold, horse are gone,
the candle flickers still.*

*It is a landlord whom I mourn,
his drama that I tell.*

Ágnes Gergely

is a poet, essayist, novelist and translator. She studied English and Hungarian, worked at Hungarian Radio, was an editor on literary magazines and taught translation at ELTE University. She has published volumes of poems, five novels, a book on W.B. Yeats and many translations of British and American poetry, including poems by James Joyce and Dylan Thomas.

Transcendental Etude

Transzcendens etűd

*That's where I always dreamed of loving—
Toledo in the twilit hour.
The twilight and our life's conclusion
are equally beyond our power.*

*I see him from afar: embarking,
yet hesitating in the grayness.
The clouds encircle the cathedral.
He can't imagine where I've vanished.*

*A love has never been, like this one.
All of Toledo's his supporter.
The minutes pass. His visage twitches.
A whirlwind's coming from Gibraltar.*

*And I'm embracing the cathedral
and him as well, though far he travels,
and, too, an olive tree that scatters
the dead's breath through its upturned tendrils.*

In the Ditch

Veremben

*Out of a silent sky descends my summons.
Its ultraviolet patched with clouds.
The spiral staircase splits into two sections.
Soot settles in the corners of the treads,*

*smoke builds up chin-high in the centre,
and calls, and calls the autumn hunting horn.
No porch I find to proffer shelter.
No one to guide me any more.*

Late Winter in Amherst

Télutó Amherstben

*The falling snow does not lack strength,
it's simply unopposed.*

*Pain's spasm pierces deeper where
cascading water flows;*

*snow is admired, and trampled down,
while bells ring, candles burn,
but it's the waterfall which knows
the crack within the stone.*

*The lake grows ice, folks stamp their feet;
the sun is threaded off;
the moon can sometimes leave untouched
the chapel on the cliff;*

*now logs must thud into the pyre
to end in sparks and flame;
the fire receives no answer from
mountain's or water's shade;*

*and silence, like a cloister-passage,
runs fleeing from itself;
they're independent of each other,
all these long-slumbering strengths.*

*Dawn comes. The row of lamps grows cold.
No boat is seen to sail.
Two lovers shake as they embrace.
The statue-well stops still.*

*A crow begins to loop the church,
the straw-man swiftly goes.
What things arrive do not lack strength,
they're simply unopposed.*

All four translated by David Hill

An American Story

Amerikai történet

*The stop on the prairie had a blacksmith's shop
a general store, a saloon
'The Highlands' Sadie & Gomer.' Mail
had to be left with the grocer. When
Indians burnt down the store, the smith became
postmaster for a while. Mary
the bartender who played the piano, smoked
dreadful thick cigars—got them from Chicago.
Twice a day the engineer stopped
on the open track, by daylight only,
so many violent hold-ups; they held court
three towns down the line
in the schoolhouse built of turf,
in the same place with an inn, a stable,
a drug store, two saloons, and in the evening
dancing, June weddings, platters heaped with food,
and as for prohibition, nobody cared. Benton,
the cowboy, in three years learned to read
and write, and after that forgot
about horses, took to drink—that's how
he noticed Mary who smoked and sang
at the "Sodom & Gomorrah." By then
the prairie stop had grown from Population 14
to 50, with a new sign over
the grocery's door, "The Indian Arsonist
Department Store" and a sawmill opened.
"What," the mayor asked, "are you good at? and
Benton replied, "I know how
to read and write." "Well, then," the mayor said,
"you'll be the teacher." Heinrich Mann himself
would have been flummoxed to see how proud
these prairie folk were that their teacher
hangs out at the S&G, curses, fights,
courts, and in spite of prohibition, drinks.
Within a year everyone in the district
knows how to read and write. The Prairie Banner
reported this small town produces
such "colossal progress" it's pointless to call
the place a village—already there's a church, a bank,*

*a mill, what's more look at its name: Grand Ville—
itinerant preachers denounced the Sodom
& Gomorrah far and wide, soon it became
a gambling parlor, rain or shine on every Friday
afternoon the players arrive at the airport. Grandville U—
the university, that is—grants degrees
in medicine and Ph.D.s and President
Benton starts his inaugural speech
with "Everyone knows I was a simple cowboy. . ."
A thermal spring wells up in Alhambra,
a spa-hotel goes up with European backing.
Mary opens a convent surrounded by palms
beside the S&G. President
Kennedy gives his speech about progress
at the city gate. And then, wouldn't you know,
the next town builds another highway,
better than the one through Grandville;
the excursion buses take the detour, the bank
shuts down, the hotels one by one are closed
and boarded, the sawmill burns, the campus
is deserted, an iron fence
surrounds the medicinal spring and from a window
of the last train stray pigeons fly
toward the prairie. The Indian Arsonist
Department Store is out of business
but its sign remains, as do those
on all the dankly gaping empty buildings,
and the stucco, multi-coloured grills, rockingchairs
on porches. For a long time now
Benton and Mary have been living
in Fort Theresa—they claim they're in
show business there. The storekeeper,
smith, the doctor and the rest are gone,
it's every man for himself. At the crossing
of Interstates 259 and 63
there's a Kennedy memorial.
On the plaque the letters read,
"Three miles from here stood the Prairie's
Sadie & Gomer in Grandville, a ghost town now.
There was boisterous life there once.
May God have mercy on us all."*

Translated by Daniel Hoffman

Tibor P. Sándor

Engineers of Light

Ibolya Cs. Plank – Virág Hajdú – Pál Ritoók: *Fény és forma. Modern építészet és fotó 1927–1950.* (Light and Form. Modern Architecture and Photography 1927–1950). Budapest, Kulturális Örökségvédelmi Hivatal, 2003, 304 pp.

This illustrated volume focuses on the work of some of the outstanding Hungarian architects of interwar Modernism of the last century (a term for the 20th century we seem to be getting used to). The photographs were taken by the best professional photographers of the period. One thing must be set straight from the outset, is this a “best of” selection as regards the architects or the photographers? This is not obvious at the first impulsive, and necessarily superficial, glance, while we are still engrossed in the beautiful images. The parallel studies introducing the two appear to suggest that they are treated on a par; the architectural explanations inserted across the blown-up photographic details and, to a lesser extent, the architectural plans convey the same feeling. After closer inspection and reading, however, I tend to agree with the editors’ foreword: the book “is primarily about the contemporary eye, the visual quality of architectural photographs and the architecture of the Modern Movement is only of secondary importance.” The selection pays homage to photographers who have since been half-forgotten, rather

than offering a review of the development of New Architecture or the International Style in Hungary. Nevertheless, the illustrated volume provides a fine introduction to an understanding of a controversial movement, which was precisely what the photographers aimed to do.

The literature on the architecture of the interwar years is indeed vast: in addition to monographs, a long list of essays, topographies and books on particular architects have been published. Or if you prefer a more mundane approach, the real estate market recognises the special value of the buildings described in the ads as “Bauhaus houses”. A publication that illustrates the best of the period satisfies a demand, both here and in the wider world.

It is especially welcome that the book is bilingual, Hungarian and English. With one or two exceptions, the pictures were taken in Budapest. The eclectic streetscenes of Budapest have always concealed from visitors the products of the architectural movement that emerged in defiance of such buildings, nor did guidebooks devote much space to redressing the balance. And so this

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book offers a chance to discover that other face of Budapest while documenting an era: the pictures were taken shortly after the buildings were completed and one can almost smell the fresh concrete. Once separated by ample space, the villas were subsequently surrounded with newer buildings: the hillsides of Buda gradually became developed. The orchards have disappeared and much of the empty courtyards and brilliant white walls has been covered with lavish vegetation. The passage of time has also left its mark on the buildings. After the ravages of war, improvised alterations, decades of neglect and rampageous restyling by new owners, some of them have changed beyond recognition. Residents of Budapest may find it illuminating to study this part of the city as it was in its former condition.

The title of the volume, *Light and Form* refers to the essential elements that architects and photographers both use to create space, it also refers to the title of the magazine which originally published these images. *Tér és forma* (Space and Form), the architectural magazine in point, was the most important platform for the movement, which set itself the goal of renewing Hungarian architecture between 1928 and 1948. This was also the magazine which presented modern Hungarian trends to a professional readership abroad. Virgil Borbíró (1893–1950), the magazine's most important editor, who sometimes wrote entire issues, defended the magazine's commitment to an international style of architecture against allegations of a lack of national feeling, hostility to the nation and even high treason at a time when Hungarian public opinion entertained rather a peculiar view of internationalism; he pointed out with some justifiable pride that his magazine had won recognition for Hungarian architects outside Hungary and that all the foreign architectural journals turned to *Tér és forma* for illustrations and information.

The early issues of *Tér és forma*, or to use the preferred lower case of the Avant-garde of the time, *tér és forma*, were proper artworks that carried messages. As the novelty of the format, the title page, the arrangement of the columns and the use of pictures readily demonstrate, a number of first-class Avant-garde artists helped develop the look of the magazine; these included the versatile Bauhaus architect and designer Farkas Molnár (1897–1945), who first designed it. Visual impression and content were in complete harmony. Initially, the magazine focused on theoretical articles, such as reviews of writings from abroad and the presentation of the work of architects such as Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and others. CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) was founded in 1928; the Hungarian branch was established the same year by Molnár, along with József Fischer, Marcell Breuer, Alfréd Forbát, and Gábor Preisich, who all published articles in the magazine. In the mid-1930s, when the larger building constructions started, which included a growing number of buildings in the new style, emphasis was shifted to the lavishly illustrated presentation of new buildings erected in Hungary.

The theoretical studies aimed at popularising the characteristics of the new architectural style, most notably the rejection of ornamental elements, the functionally designed plans, the efforts to take advantage of the possibilities offered by new materials and structural inventions, the flexibility of plans, the undeveloped spaces increased with the help of roof terraces and columns, the beauties inherent in simple, geometrical masses and asymmetry, the loggias, the delightful effects of glass surfaces, and so forth. However, in that turbulent period, the most dedicated pioneers were not satisfied with formal innovations. They sought answers to the problems of

the large populations of European cities; also, they hoped to produce radical changes in the life relations and ideals encoded in the architectural environment. The architect aspired to transform society.

Following the First World War, when refugees flocked to Budapest, a city already suffering from a shortage of residential dwellings and strangled by depression, all ideas aimed at remedying the unbearable living conditions of the lower middle class were particularly timely. Encouraged by the social housing programmes of the Weimar Republic, they pressed for the construction of affordable, standardised and mass-produced small flats, apartment buildings and housing estates, offering healthy homes with good air and plenty of sunshine. They demanded changes in building regulations, which stood in the way of progress. Their views were in radical opposition to the value system of the society of their time. Their ideas about building sites and determining the sizes of plots and flats clashed with the interests of speculative developers, driven by profit maximisation. By calling attention to poverty caused by the government's failure to intervene, they angered the authorities. The architectural plans envisaging a new type of collective lifestyle were not without utopian overtones and they certainly clashed with public hostility to even the suspicion of something collective.

Yet the years that followed the economic depression witnessed a breakthrough in the movement's history. There were favourable changes in building regulations and in taxation. Churches, factories, shopping centres, hospitals, office buildings, an airport, hotels and sport facilities, as well as apartment buildings and homes for workers were built in the new style as government or local government projects. A growing number of luxurious family homes and villas with gardens were designed. (It should be noted that none of the housing estates envisaged

originally was completed.) The book's first essay by the art historians Virág Hajdú and Pál Ritoók, highlights the most important events, providing an insight into both the preliminaries and the after-effects of the movement. The authors also cover the 1950s, when efforts were made to imitate the Soviet model, as well as the movement's dying days under the Kádár regime, when prefabricated apartment buildings proliferated like mushrooms, taking the story right up to the neo-modern present. The two authors display an impressive knowledge in guiding the readers through the intricacies of the subject.

In her introductory essay, Ibolya Cs. Plank, who looked at the subject from the viewpoint of the history of photography had to follow a path that was much less well trodden. Hungarian photography in the interwar years is both well known and highly esteemed by the world, largely through the accomplishments of photographers not immediately associated with Hungary, such as Moholy-Nagy, Capa, Brassai or Kertész. Fortunately, by now the oeuvres of the equally talented "resident" artists of contemporary Hungarian photography have also gained recognition abroad. However, the work of Tivadar Kozelka (1895-1980) and Zoltán Seidner (1896-1960), who were responsible for most of the photographs in both the old issues of *Tér és forma* and the volume under review, is not well known even to the broader Hungarian public. The quality of the pictures here published speaks for itself. But, in addition to praising the work of these photographers, the author has also taken it upon herself to discuss, through the work of these two, the complex interaction that existed between photography and architecture on the one hand, and between "modern" developments in the history of photography and photography documenting contemporary modern Hungarian architec-



***Kelenföld Power Station. Budafoki út 52. Architect: Virgil Borbíró (Bierbauer)
1927–1933. Control Room. Photo: Tivadar Kozelka, 1933.***

Boiler House III was a fine example of the industrial architecture of Budapest at the time. The completed wing was captured for architects and for the press by a host of architectural photographers, reporters and agencies. This photo emphasises the very peculiar spatial effect produced by a hall covered with a huge glass roof and, symmetrically composed, graphically renders the mesh of lines running over the walls as well as the imposing structure of the glass top.

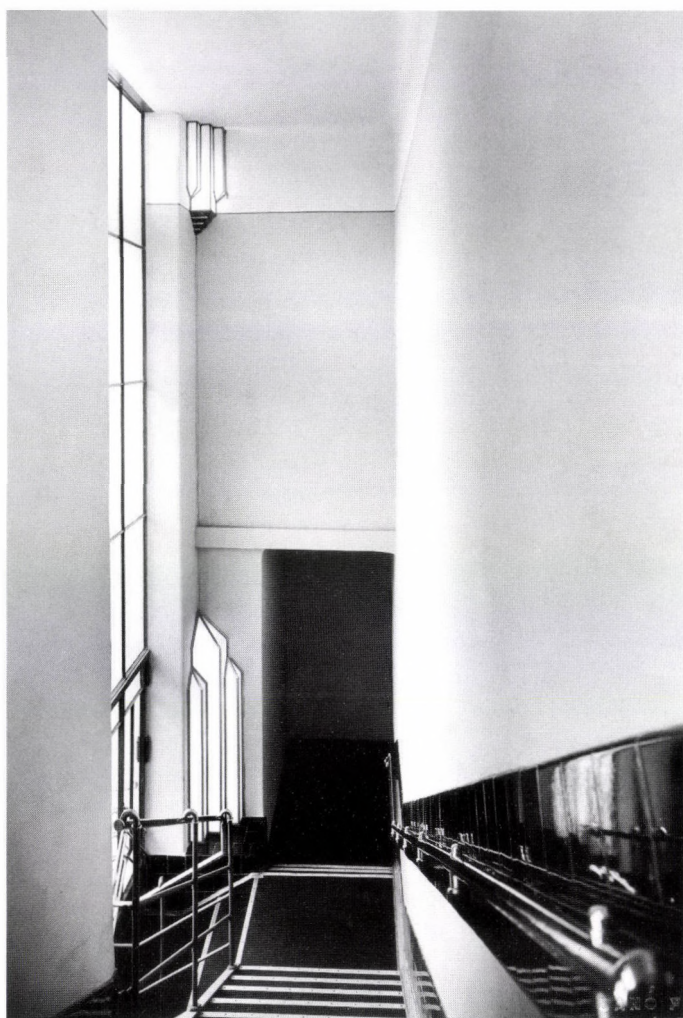


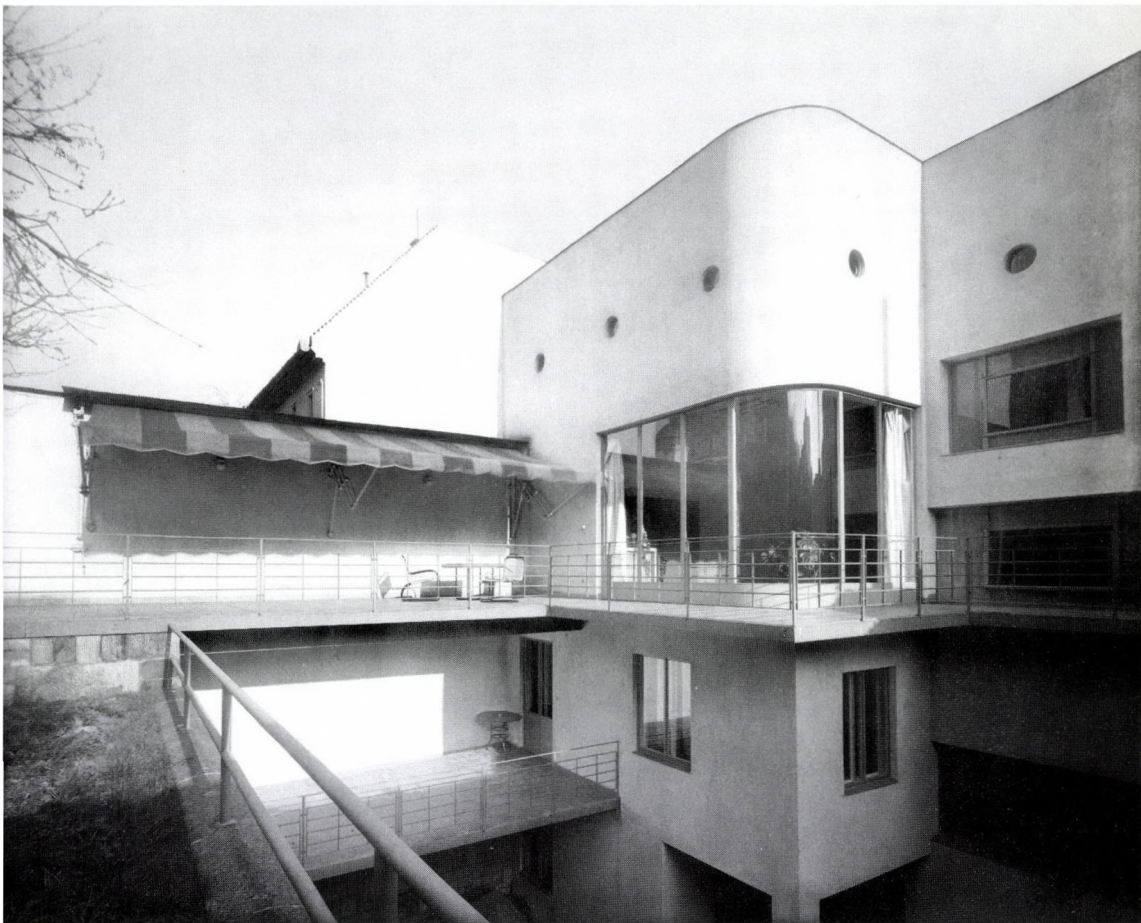
Kelenföld Power Station.
Budafoki út 52.
Architect: Virgil Borbíró
(Bierbauer).
Entrance from the Turbine
Hall to the Control Room.
Photo: Ernő Bánó, 1933.

The photograph conveys the same well-calculated proportions and pure harmony as its subject.

Kelenföld Power Station.
Budafoki út 52.
Architect: Virgil Borbíró
(Bierbauer).
Staircase from the Turbine
Hall to the Control Room.
Photo: Ernő Bánó, 1933.

This photograph, in the spirit of the New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*), may easily be taken for a Constructivist work, emphasising the planes, lines and surfaces that intersect in such a way that, with the help of light, every detail, every step in the staircase, every bar and window is allotted its proper place in the image.





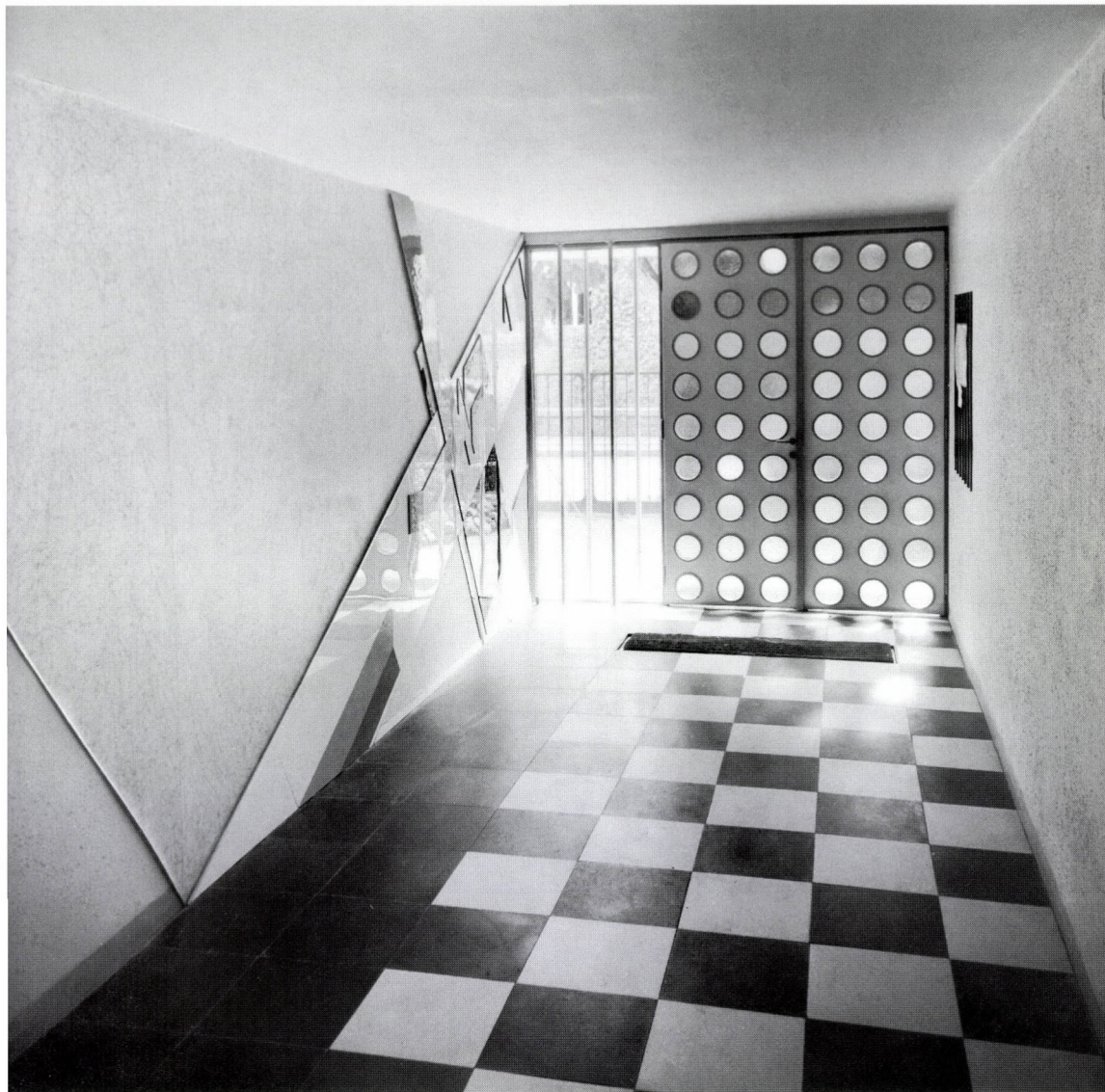
***Apartments. Iskola utca 2-4. Architects: László Lauber and István Nyíri, 1933.
Garden Elevation. Photo: Zoltán Seidner, 1933.***

The street façade of this apartment house at the foot of Castle Hill in Buda was built in a Neo-Renaissance style as prescribed by the Architectural Authority and the Council of Public Works. However, the courtyard façade, the entrance hall and the staircase were true to the Modern Movement. A curved glass wall opened to the large upstairs terrace of the court. The photo documents that the pull-down canvas sun-canopy was as much part of the sunny apartment as was the simple elegance of tubular-frame steel furniture.



***Villa of the Architect Károly Dávid Jr., 1933. Somlói út 76.
Basement Entrance Hall. Photo: Zoltán Seidner.***

This villa on the steep southern slopes of Gellért Hill was built as his own home by Károly Dávid Jr, one of the Hungarian disciples of Le Corbusier. The free standing pillars accentuate the freedom of movement between the internal and external worlds, the white walls and up-to-date fittings (heating, lighting, etc.) are all visible, as is one of the pillars of the outer terrace through the horizontally striped glass wall. This terrace is generally considered to be an exact copy of that of Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye. What remains invisible are the living rooms and conservatories enlarged by sliding doors and windows. The villa did not survive the 1945 siege of Budapest.



***Apartments. Pasaréti út 7. Architect: Farkas Molnár, 1936.
Farkas Molnár's Mural in the Vestibule. Photo: Ferenc Haár, 1936.***

For the prism-shaped building articulated by loggias and strip windows, Farkas Molnár made use of designs for the mural and for the coloured glass and wallpaper he made in 1923 at the Bauhaus where he studied. From the double door in the background, the eye is led in the direction of the abstract mural by the coloured glass insets and the glass wall beside them, along with the entire perspective of the image.



***Villa Bajai. Trombitás utca 32. Architect: Farkas Molnár, 1936–1937.
Sliding Wall of the Staircase. Photo: Unknown.***

The architectural elements of this unusual interior include a circular sliding wall, a free-standing pillar, a strip window, a spacious living room and other well-known modernist features. The furniture, with the exception of the new-style lamp, is more old-fashioned than modern. The unknown photographer emphasised the modern elements for the mood of the picture.



Apartment House. Pozsonyi út 53–55. Architect: István Hámor (Hamburger), 1941–1942. Vestibule. Photo: Zoltán Seidner, 1942.

The apartments were organised around a winding staircase lit from the top in a fan-shaped plan on a triangular site. Unlike in more conventional shots, here the emphasis is neither on the main entrance nor on the upward staircase but on the space itself, on its components and connections.



***Mocca Coffe Bar. Teréz körút 5. Architect: Sámuel Révész and József Kollár, 1938.
Interior. Photo: Zoltán Seidner, 1938.***

The Mocca Coffee Bar was in its time considered to be the first example in Budapest of the Italian-type espresso bar. The architects had very little space for a service and consumption area, which was dominated, as the photograph shows, by the chrome coffee machine. The arched counter laden with machines and other objects acts as a dividing line, its liveliness kept in balance by order constructed on both sides of the counter.

ture on the other, neither of which had been widely discussed previously.

In the 1920s and 1930s, there was, indeed, an overlap between the modern movements in architecture and photography. The photographic movement labelled "New Objectivity" (*Neue Sachlichkeit*) turned its back on the earlier schools of photography imitating painting, just as new architecture turned against historicism. Photographers were searching for an autonomous vocabulary of forms that followed intrinsically from the laws of optical imaging, similarly to the way in which modern architects wanted to derive the ground plan from the building's function. Sensitivity to the geometrical abstraction of Constructivism and the beauties of industrial forms were shared characteristics of both art forms. Of the pictures of buildings, the editors evidently selected those that reflected the above mentioned joint features and shared formal elements.

Nevertheless, in architectural photography Avant-garde passion must be carefully kept in check. Basically, architectural photography is a branch of photography strictly regulated by professional norms. It is also an object photo, which cannot disregard the requirements of description and identifiability. In addition, it is an advertisement, or if you like, a fashion photo, the task of which is to proclaim the merits of the designing and construction work. Finally, it is also a press photo, in the most conservative sense of the term, a photo to be published for disseminating information. All these do not make for favourable conditions for finding unusual viewpoints and the power to recreate ordinary sights in the visual space of photos, which characterised the best works of the photography of the time. In addition, the question of "soft picture" versus "hard picture," in other words, the new direction in photography that was understood to be more than a fleeting fashion,

did not concern architectural photographers, whose subject-matter would never allow them to turn their back on the 19th-century convention of precise and technically correct recording of reality. Therefore, they could undertake neither the radical reformation of the formal vocabulary, nor carefree experiments with new tools. (For this reason, the photograph selected for the title page, with reminiscences of Moholy-Nagy, is slightly misleading and there is nothing to correspond to it in the book.

Then what was it that constituted the modernism of these proper professional photographers? Judging from the excellent selection of photographs here published as well as from Ibolya Cs. Plank's reasoning that illuminated the topic from several angles, the answer must have something to do with their ability to identify with the values of the new architecture and to understand the internal laws of the architects' intentions, the virtues of which they were able to pass on in their own detached and rational manner. The result was a fortunate mix of a visual approach affected by the new aesthetic experience, professional competence, technical ideas and business interest. In their choice of composition, focal length and light conditions, the photographers illustrated the novel ideas of the new architecture, along with the transparent and readily accessible spaces and the magic of surfaces opened up by balconies, windows and glass walls, with an effectiveness that no theoretical article could achieve. Thanks to the camera position, the use of wide-angle lenses and the reclining picture plane, the small studio flats seem to expand, which was exactly what the architects hoped to achieve with the help of cleverly designed ground plans. To emphasise the connection between the flat and the environment, the photographers had to handle huge differences in light conditions, both indoors and

outdoors. They have solved the problem. Through the windows and the terraces, the villas opened onto a panoramic view of the Buda hills. They were familiar with the technique of taking photographs in poor light conditions or at night; the buildings encircled by electric light or neon advertisement defined new spaces in the midnight city, just as the new generation, which already grew up in a metropolis, perceived them. They knew how to give life to surfaces and structures: the small pool in the confined courtyard of a downtown building, together with the droplets of water sprinkled on the stone slabs, bounced off thousands of tiny reflections of light beams, turning a rather ordinary sight into an exciting image.

Always calm and collected, the photographers achieved these effects with seemingly simple devices. Viewers less familiar with the tricks of the trade may not be aware of the precise causes, yet they, too, can perceive that the photographers sometime cross the limits of what may be described as the objective representation of reality. The parallel display of dazzling white walls in the scorching sun and the fine details of objects hidden in the shade appear as a surrealist vision. The strip of windows belonging to a department store bewilders us with its radiant blackness, while the curving glass surfaces of the Mediterranean terrace of an apartment or the open corridor of a bank building reflect an infinite richness of hues. The viewer begins to wonder about the actual size of the metal spout fitted to the office building's wall, just as he cannot help speculating about the number of people who could "really" fill the Café Mocca, leaning against its curiously curving bar. Shapes and spaces in these wonderful pictures are produced by the unity of building material and light. The control room of a power plant is elevated into a church interior, the cinema of an outlying district into an ocean

liner, and the lift of an apartment building into a sculpture of metal and glass.

This is the poetry of engineers and artisans, the lyricism of compromises. But the radiance is still there. The amazement we experience while studying these photographs is not lessened by the knowledge that this was as far as the photographers of *Tér és forma* could venture. And frankly, they are not quite in the same league as the world-famous Lucien Hervé (originally Frigyes Elkán of Hungary, 1910–), Le Corbusier's photographer. But we must not forget that he came to fame only in the 1950s. Initially, his photographs had a rather frosty reception, encouragement coming only from Le Corbusier himself; on seeing the photographs, Le Corbusier told him that "You have the soul of an engineer!"

At present, the photographs are held in two public collections: the Photo Archive of the Department of Cultural Heritage and the Museum of Hungarian Architecture. The authors themselves work for these institutions. They must have enjoyed studying these photographs, either in the original or through high-quality prints, for many years. They have done a great deal to make them accessible to a wider public, who previously had only been able to see them as illustrations to publications of various kinds, usually cropped for the specific purpose of the publication. Within an extended series of exhibitions, the photographs have been shown in Scotland and France, before they were displayed in the Budapest Kunsthalle and the HAP Gallery of Budapest; Zoltán Seidner's photographs were also exhibited in the House of Hungarian Photographers.

Although originally conceived as a catalogue for the exhibition in the Kunsthalle, it will be able to stand on its own as a book in its own right, too. Designed by Laura Márkus, it will appeal to everyone who is interested in either architecture, or the history of photography or urban history. ■

John Avery
Urban Icons

Nigel Warburton: *Ernő Goldfinger—The Life of an Architect*.
New York–London, Routledge, 2003, 216 pp.

The Hungarian born architect Ernő Goldfinger, who lived and worked in London for over 50 years, has received renewed interest and admiration since his death in 1987. After years of decay, his buildings are being rediscovered as fashionable urban icons. Goldfinger's own house is now a tourist attraction. Goldfinger the man, through his legendary force of character, powerful built work and his extraordinary life, has acquired cult status amongst architects. After all, in a profession which needs and breeds big egos, the man who gave his name to James Bond's most notorious foe deserves some serious respect.

Nigel Warburton's new biography *Ernő Goldfinger—The Life of an Architect* is the first book to review Goldfinger's career in depth, and it is appropriate that it focuses as much on the man as on his buildings. During his years of practice in London, Goldfinger developed a formidable, and enduring, reputation. Young designers worked in his fearfully exacting office for love, or perhaps curiosity, rather than money. Goldfinger rarely wasted time

sweet talking his clients, and his fees were not negotiable; indeed on one occasion an American executive who sought to change Goldfinger's design was literally carried from the office by his shirt collar. Combining an impeccable, avant-garde modernist pedigree with his formal classical education, Goldfinger was able to present himself as a progressive master architect, fiercely rigorous as well as fashionable, at ease with the discourse of the creative set which he inhabited during his formative years in Paris.

Born in 1902, Ernő Goldfinger's early childhood was spent within a comfortable household at Szászrégen in the Southern Carpathians. His father was a wealthy lawyer, and both parents had family holdings in forests and sawmills—a privileged, capitalist background which, in a typically rebellious gesture, Ernő repaid through a lifelong devotion to Marxism. Moving to Budapest in 1908 to begin his education, the young Goldfinger experienced the turbulent final years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, finally leaving Hungary with his family in 1919. In 1920, an educational

John Avery

was educated at architecture schools in Cambridge and Oxford, and works as a designer with Livesey O'Malley Architects in London.

holiday to Paris captivated him; in his own words, he 'went for a fortnight and stayed fourteen years.' Through his cousin, Hélène Bernheim, Goldfinger met influential figures in the architectural, artistic and literary avant-garde. Developing an interest aroused early on by his parents' reconstruction of their villa on Mount Gellért, he decided to set out on the lengthy architectural training at the Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts. The traditional Beaux-Arts education gave Goldfinger foundations in the exacting, timeless craftsmanship of architecture in the neo-classical style. After two years of the process, however, his attitudes were transformed by Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture*. Along with a group of fellow students, he rejected "the pompous projects... with names like a 'Governor's Palace in Annam' or a 'French Embassy in Central America' [which] were just so many exercises in the application of the orders". A breakaway studio was formed under Auguste Perret, an architect of modern, highly engineered structures in reinforced concrete; Goldfinger's progress in the Beaux-Arts system came to a standstill, and his formation as a modernist architect began in earnest.

Between 1923 and 1933 Goldfinger enjoyed a remarkable decade learning, working and fraternising amongst the progenitors of modernism. He associated with the likes of Walter Gropius, Robert and Sonia Delaunay, Lee Miller, Pierre Jeanneret, Alexander Calder, Georges Braque, John Cage, Oskar Kokoschka and Adolf Loos. Within this circle, Goldfinger continued to develop as a designer. Early work included a film set for the Delaunays, interior design for Dick Wyndham and a chair for Lee Miller. Of particular note was his early design for a cosmetics showroom in London's Mayfair. Stubbornly, Goldfinger forced through a starkly modern design which was to the taste of neither of his

client, Helena Rubinstein, nor of her customers, nor indeed of the builders who tried to add decorative touches to Goldfinger's drawings in the belief that he must have accidentally forgotten them. Although he struggled even to be paid for the project, Goldfinger succeeded in building 'the first modern shop in London' with a fully glazed façade which is today's standard treatment.

In 1933, Goldfinger helped to organise the legendary Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) aboard a cruise ship in the Mediterranean. This event, bringing together over one hundred leading architects, designers and artists sought to further the cause of modernism and published the so-called 'Athens Charter'. In my experience as a student of architecture, the congress is generally acknowledged as a significant moment in the history of modernism. According to Nigel Warburton, however, Goldfinger found it "perfectly disorganised" and entirely unproductive, although it appears to have been a useful networking opportunity.

As he completed his architectural training, Goldfinger's life changed more permanently with marriage to Ursula Blackwell, a British heiress. In light of the worsening political and economic situation in Europe, the Goldfingers moved permanently to London in 1934, where they lived in Berthold Lubetkin's new apartment building, Highpoint 1, in Highgate, north London. Interestingly, despite a grudging admiration for Highpoint, Goldfinger was apparently never close to Lubetkin, a contemporary who had also studied at the Perret studio in Paris. Lubetkin was the more successful architect during his early years in Britain, and Goldfinger appears to have been suspicious of his allegedly devious character. This background colour sets Nigel Warburton's biography apart from a straightforward architectural

monograph, and it is a story within a story that perhaps merits further exploration.

Goldfinger's main focus from 1936, until its completion in 1939, was the construction of his own house at Lawn Road in Hampstead. Funded by money from his wife's inheritance, Goldfinger was able to purchase a delightful site overlooking Hampstead Heath and drew up plans for a block of three modern houses; through Ursula's family money, he was fortunate enough to follow his own maxim that "a young architect ought to be made to build his own house first ... and at his own expense!" This was in many ways a hugely educational project for Goldfinger, not least in his struggle with local conservationists, who felt his modern, concrete houses would spoil the neighbourhood. Although he defeated the opposition, the episode served as a premonition of the controversy which surrounded some of his later work. An intriguing, individual design mixing the British terraced house with a modern, concrete framed apartment building, the houses at Lawn Road are finely detailed in brick, concrete, timber and steel. They combine extensively glazed walls with framed picture windows, orthogonal rationalism with lyrical spiral staircases and, in the living space on the first floor a flexible, open plan space which echoes Rietveld's upper floor at the Schroder House and prefigures the modern fashion for open plan living. This 'Piano Nobile', facilitated by Felix Samuely's structural design, can be transformed by folding walls from a study, dining and living room into a single space with views to the garden and the Heath, and it became central to the Goldfingers' life. In 1942 the room provided a venue for the remarkable exhibition *Aid to Russia*, for which the Goldfingers assembled work by Arp, Epstein, Ernst, Hepworth, Klee, Leger, Miro, Moore, Nicholson, Penrose,

Piper, Schwitters and others. The exhibition was widely reviewed, with praise reserved not just for the work on display but for the setting itself. In the midst of the second World War, with their two children evacuated to Canada, it must have been hugely satisfying for the Goldfingers to open their house, virtually brand new, to many hundreds of appreciative visitors alongside such a remarkable collection of art. The event is perhaps an indication of the kind of critical and popular success which might have been more common had the war not intervened.

Aside from a period spent with the slightly shambolic Industrial Camouflage Unit (run by a group of surrealists!), Goldfinger's design work was limited by the war. This left time to write a series of theoretical essays, which alongside his built work, form the clearest statement of Goldfinger's architectural manifesto. Defining architecture as the enclosure of space, which through its disposition creates a psychological effect, he argued that each element of a building's interior contributes to a multi-sensory, emotional effect and these combine to create the 'sensation' of a space. This was offset by a more distant, abstract appreciation of a building's exterior as plastic form, appreciated through the play of light and massing of volumes. Set against this phenomenological analysis of the *experience* of architecture, Goldfinger's view of a building's *purpose* was "to fulfil a social function with the best means of an up-to-date technology". This contrast of metaphysical and practical is a recurring theme in Goldfinger's work, reflecting his earlier exposure to the spiritual, utopian thesis proposed by Le Corbusier alongside Perret's focus on the moral value of rational, efficient, expressed construction. In a way, Goldfinger can be seen as a kind of bridge between early modernism and the evolu-

tion of rationalist, megastructural and ultimately high-tech, construction and engineering-led architecture.

During the period of post-war reconstruction Goldfinger was able to increase his workload, although he often struggled to have his work accepted by town planners. Whilst applications to build 'mock Tudor' houses were accepted without question, the 'alien' forms and materials, which Goldfinger was determined to use, routinely aroused suspicion. Ironically, despite this hostility, Goldfinger's key work of the mid 50s, a six-storey office building in Albemarle Street, was widely praised for being sympathetic to the Georgian streetscape through its proportion, rhythm and materials without being a slavish stylistic imitation. In the late 1950's, Goldfinger won his largest commission yet, to design Alexander Fleming House at the Elephant and Castle in south London. A major office development consisting of several large low and high-rise buildings linked with suspended bridges, the complex became the headquarters of the Ministry of Health. Goldfinger used this scheme to explore his language of geometrically sophisticated, rigorously proportioned concrete framed building, and it is his most formally ambitious work. Unfortunately, the offices were unpopular with early tenants, who suffered from leaks and poor heating, and the whole district became a byword for degraded, incoherent post-war reconstruction. Despite this, Alexander Fleming House has now been extensively refurbished and rebranded as 'Metro Central Heights', a fashionable residential development boasting swimming pool, gym and concierge facilities. Sadly, though, Goldfinger's nearby Odeon Cinema, often acknowledged as Britain's finest of the post-war period, was destroyed by developers in 1988.

Ernő Goldfinger's most distinctive and controversial buildings were developed during the 1960's, and brought together his lifelong interest in apartment buildings, high-rise structures and reinforced concrete construction. Balfron Tower in the East End of London and Trellick Tower in North Kensington were designed at the height of Britain's experiment with mass, high-rise social housing. Goldfinger's towers can be taken as the ultimate statement both of his character and of his architectural beliefs. Viewed from outside, they are incredibly muscular, masculine, abstract structures, with no concession to an architecture of domesticity. Indeed James Dunnett's analysis of Balfron Tower makes much of its warlike symbolism, describing the building as inspiring 'a delicate sense of terror'. By contrast the flats within both towers have often been praised for their light, spacious interiors, stunning views and good soundproofing. In order to prove his commitment to the buildings, Goldfinger and his wife moved into Balfron Tower for two months in 1968, holding champagne parties in their flat on the twenty-sixth floor in order to encourage a sense of community in the new 'streets in the sky', and becoming local celebrities in the process. At Trellick Tower, Goldfinger moved his office onto the estate, and so visited daily. On one occasion, in the lift, he asked an unwitting tenant how she liked the flat; she replied that it was "fine, but there's no broom cupboard". "You bloody women are never satisfied", replied Goldfinger with a twinkle in his eye. Sadly, as Warburton explains, Goldfinger was to witness the social and physical deterioration of 'his' estate during the 1970's. The public mood had turned against tower blocks following the collapse of Ronan Point, which killed five people. The absence of security measures and poor maintenance combined to unpleasant ef-

fect; Trellick Tower fell victim to crime and vandalism, and was eventually dubbed the 'Tower of Terror'. Warburton defends Goldfinger stoutly against critics who would blame the architect for every failing in a building. Indeed, he makes a spirited defence of the whole concept of high-rise living—having once lived in Goldfinger's Balfron Tower himself makes the author all the more persuasive.

In a dramatic change of fortune, Trellick Tower has now become almost comically fashionable. Much is made of its savvy population of young designers, desperately snapping up the few privately owned apartments in the building. This new reputation has robbed the tower of a little of its terror, but it still provides a gentle thrill as its distinctive concrete profile appears at the gateway to London. The Goldfinger House is now owned and maintained by England's National Trust, and in a snub to those who once felt it would 'desecrate' Hampstead, the house has become one of north London's most popular heritage sites. A careful archivist of his own work, Goldfinger transferred hun-

dreds of boxes of drawings and papers to the Royal Institute of British Architects before his death. These have provided a rich source of material for Nigel Warburton's entertaining biography, which succeeds in weaving Goldfinger's life story together with an in-depth discussion of his personality, working methods and influences. Hopefully in the future this book will be complemented by a comprehensive architectural review of Goldfinger's work, which could illustrate many more of his beautiful drawings.

Aside from his personality and his buildings, Goldfinger's name lives on as James Bond's foe in Ian Fleming's *Goldfinger*. Ernő was so incensed at giving his name to a villain in the book that he threatened to sue Fleming's publisher. The author in return suggested the character be renamed 'Goldprick'. Though Goldfinger relented, his family were plagued for years by late night phone calls from James Bond impersonators. It might seem bizarre, but in a life as rich and wide-ranging as Ernő Goldfinger's, nothing should surprise. ■

William Lee Pryor

Dohnányi at Tallahassee

A Personal Reminiscence

I remember very well the time of Ernst von Dohnányi's arrival in Tallahassee, Florida's historic capital. My roommate, also from my hometown, was to be a piano student of Dohnányi. He knew of Dohnányi's renown and his anticipation of studying with this great musician had inspired an excitement in me, who, though not a music major as I had been as an undergraduate, had come to The Florida State University to pursue graduate studies in English.

Dohnányi was late in coming to the campus for the 1949 fall semester because of difficulties in leaving Argentina, where he had fled from war-torn Europe and where obtaining proper exit papers was not easily or quickly accomplished. Thus it was a few days after mid-October when I first saw him. I was having lunch in the principal dining hall on campus, a large room modelled after the Refectory of Magdalene College, Oxford University, when my attention was drawn to a table a few feet away. There were a handsome, older gentleman and a beautiful, younger lady engaged in a spirited conversation with a man nearing middle age. I said to my luncheon companion, "I believe that is Dohnányi." As I later learned, my guess was correct. The lady was Mrs Dohnányi and the other man was an official from the School of Music.

It was, of course, the seventy-two year old Dohnányi who had caught my eye. I had never seen a photograph of him, but I knew that this distinguished, white-haired gentleman must be the Maestro. He had a large, well-formed head with a prominent nose and a strong chin. And his highly mobile countenance was often wreathed in smiles, accompanied by a hearty laugh. The thing that first caused me to notice him, however, was his carriage. He sat ramrod straight

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and his back never touched the chair. He was the only person in the room with such an erect posture. And I now know that this was a real clue to this remarkable man's character.

Not long after that the Dohnányis arranged for the showing of some sculptures by Juan Carlos Iramain, a prominent Argentinean artist who had followed them to Tallahassee and had become the proverbial man who came to dinner and stayed for months. It was at this opening that I was introduced to the Dohnányi family by Professor and Mrs Francizek Zachara. Zachara was another member of the piano faculty, and he and his wife were to become some of the Dohnányis' closest friends. Mrs (Helen) Dohnányi proved to be as charming as she was pretty. Her two college-age children, by a previous marriage, Helen and Julius, whom Dohnányi would later adopt, were enrolled at the University studying art and physics, respectively. I quickly became friends with these bright, engaging young people—a friendship that lasts to this day. Thus it was that I came to know the Maestro; thus it happened that I became an intimate of the Dohnányi household, close enough to the family that Mrs Dohnányi came to call me their son.

Happily, there were members of the music faculty who had previously had firsthand knowledge of Dohnányi's reputation in Europe and could help him feel more at home. It was Dr Karl Kuersteiner, Dean of the School of Music, who had procured Dohnányi's services through the offices of Dohnányi's manager and friend, Andrew Schulhof, another Hungarian. Kuersteiner himself had studied violin in Budapest when Dohnányi was the supreme figure in Hungarian music. Another member of the faculty, the distinguished music historian, Dr Warren D. Allen, had memories of Dohnányi from a still earlier time when Allen was a student in Berlin and Dohnányi actively participated in the musical life of that great cultural center. It was, however, the later addition to the piano faculty of his old student Edward Kilényi that meant the most to Dohnányi, for theirs was a very close relationship, personally as well as professionally.

Dohnányi's title at The Florida State University was "Professor of Composition and Piano," and he taught what in academic circles is termed a "full load." In addition to teaching a course in composition, he taught several piano students, and conducted a biweekly piano repertoire class. Later he also taught a course in conducting.

Dohnányi was, of course, world-renowned as a teacher. Among his students had been Andor Földes, Ervin Nyiregyházi, György Cziffra, Géza Anda, Tamás Vásáry, Annie Fischer, Miklós Schwalb, and Sir George Solti. Béla Bartók himself had studied piano with Dohnányi for a short period. His American students, who had studied with him in Budapest, included Mischa Levitzki and, of course, Edward Kilényi. Another American, the conductor Arthur Fiedler, studied chamber music with him in Berlin. In Tallahassee he taught his last student to make a name for himself on the concert platform as a pianist, Bálint Vázsonyi,

who would become Dohnányi's Hungarian biographer. And during 1951–52 Christoph von Dohnányi—destined to become one of the leading conductors of his time—lived and studied with his grandfather in Tallahassee.

Dohnányi's Florida State piano students spoke of his gentleness and understanding in teaching them. They were, of course, usually not of the caliber of the budding concert artists he had been accustomed to in Budapest; but this in no way seemed to detract from his interest in them. His method of instruction was not a particularly verbal one, although he often applied *le mot juste* at the right moment and this put things into their proper perspective. The word he used most often was "espressivo," seemingly the magical order of doing away with the mechanical and the dull. More often than not, Dohnányi would teach by example: he would play part or all of what the student was studying. This was inspiring but it was also sometimes frustrating. Boris Goldovsky, another of Dohnányi's Budapest pupils—who had also studied with Arthur Schnabel, once performed with his opera troupe in nearby Thomasville, Georgia, where we met. He told me that there was some ineffable quality in Maestro's playing which Dohnányi could not explain and which others could not copy. Goldovsky recalled that during a lesson on Schumann's Piano Concerto in A Minor he asked Maestro to play the opening for him. It was surpassingly beautiful, and Goldovsky asked Dohnányi to repeat it several times, but he could never quite figure out what Dohnányi had done to effect such a result. "Schnabel I could always imitate," Goldovsky exclaimed, "Dohnányi, never!"

Dohnányi's playing was not only inimitable; it was also unforgettable. His mastery was such that there was a fresh, almost improvisatory quality about it—as if he had composed it himself, even if he had not! He produced a big sound when required, but it was not effected by the exaggerated movements one so often encounters in some other pianists. The tone, moreover, was always beautiful, never strident or harsh. There was, in addition, no accompaniment of grunts and grimaces. He played with a minimum of physical movement, with simplicity and dignity; and there was, in addition, a serene expression of his countenance. Many observed, in fact, that years dropped away from his appearance when he was at the keyboard. His playing was always musical and fluid, never inflexible, and it provided a wide range of colors and many subtleties of phrasing. He used the pedal sparingly. For example, he never used the pedal when playing a Bach fugue, as he illustrated in class one day. His control was so great that he produced a singing line and, at the same time, the utmost clarity. There was both a sovereignty and a nobility about his playing that could only have come from a deep, inner repose. Goldovsky, who remarked that nobody could play the slow movements of Beethoven sonatas like Dohnányi, summed up his evaluation of the Maestro by saying that he was the only person he had ever met to whom music was a completely native language.

The first of Dohnányi's Tallahassee piano students of which there is record was Joan Holley, who did some concertizing before and after studying with him. She has written,

As a teacher he is ever alert with suggestions for improvement but never forces his own musical ideas on a pupil to the detriment of his own creative feeling. Rather, he encourages his students to develop their own individual style and musical personalities. It has been remarked that no two Dohnányi pupils play in the same manner.¹

Another of Dohnányi's Florida students, Catherine Anne Smith, then an Assistant Professor of Music at Eastern Illinois University, has the distinction of being the only one of his charges to complete the Doctor of Music Degree (in piano literature) with Dohnányi, and is thought to be the first woman to obtain this degree in the United States, where it had previously been an honorary one.

Dohnányi did not like to teach conducting in a large-class setting. He preferred to have a student conduct a score while he observed. Afterwards he would go over the score with the student in a private session, pointing out the things that he felt would enable the student to improve.

In a letter written to Dean Kuersteiner before he came to Tallahassee, Dohnányi, in a moment of candor that I have not seen recorded elsewhere, revealed his opinion of much modern music and also gave a hint as to what he would stress in his composition seminars:

There are nowadays very-very few composers in the whole world who should be allowed to compose. That there are so many is the "merit" of the so-called modern style, which allows you to write any kind of rubbish. Now I don't mind "modernity" if the composer knows his "business" but generally he knows nothing, generally he hardly can harmonize decently a simple melody, not to speak of his urbanity to solve the easiest task of counterpoint. Here most probably I shall want an assistant teacher; at least my demand will be that the student is well acquainted with the rules of harmony and the elements of counterpoint.²

After I got to know the Maestro, I asked him if I could audit his repertoire class, or masterclass as it would probably be called in most institutions. He graciously assented and I attended faithfully for a number of years. It was an experience I shall never forget. To this class came all of the majors in piano literature, often accompanied by various members of the faculty. Dohnányi presided over these classes in the most genial way. There was no formal structuring involved. Each time he would simply ask the students what they wished to play for him. After each one played, he would first note any technical flaws that he had observed and then he would comment on matters of style, etc.: "In such and such a passage, you played an A flat; it should be an A natural." Giving another specific reference, he would say, "I think you will find that is a dotted eighth note, not a whole note, as you suggested." He wrote down none of these comments; he re-

membered them. Nor did he use the score much of the time. He simply knew the music that well. I saw him close his eyes while a student played a Bach fugue, and if the student faltered, he would call out the next note or notes that the student had forgotten. Sometimes in such an instance he would reach over to the keyboard and strike the necessary notes. His memory was the most remarkable I have ever encountered. He could play all of the Beethoven piano sonatas at will, as well as many other works of the classical and romantic periods. Often, as it was with his private pupils, his primary comment on the interpretation of a piece would be his own playing of the work, and in this way his commentary was voluminous. Again, more often than not, he did this from memory. On one occasion, after a student had played Mendelssohn's Prelude and Fugue in E Minor, op. 35, Dohnányi then played it himself from memory. Kilényi, who was present, was flabbergasted. He knew Maestro's active repertoire well. Between the two of them, they figured out that it had been approximately twenty-five years since Dohnányi had last played it!

For the programme notes of Dohnányi's 15 March 1957 performance with Antal Doráti and the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, Donald Ferguson wrote, "His memory was phenomenal. I have heard, from William Lindsay, the story of his taking an [sic] MS. composition into an adjoining room, emerging fifteen minutes later and playing it by heart!"³

Dohnányi greatly stressed the importance of sight-reading in his teaching, and he himself was probably unequaled in this respect. Boris Goldovsky remarked to me that only two people in the world could sight-read like that; the other was Nadia Boulanger. It was nothing for Dohnányi to play at sight the orchestral part of a concerto for a student and afterward critique in detail how the student had performed the solo part. Once when a student—not Dohnányi's—who was to play Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto forgot to bring the full score and offered quickly to return with it, Dohnányi bade him stay and proceeded to play the orchestral accompaniment from memory! I might add that when he did sight-read it was without glasses! Further testament to Dohnányi's musical prowess came from a Hungarian musicologist, Laszlo Böhm, who related to me a fascinating episode that had occurred many years before in Budapest. Dohnányi and two other pianists engaged in a friendly musical contest to see who was the best sight-reader. Dohnányi won hands down when, after he had brilliantly played the new music put before him, he then offered to play it in another key to be suggested by the onlookers. Finally, he asked, "In what mode would you like it?"

Dohnányi's contract allowed him to leave the campus for short periods of time in order to accept performing and teaching opportunities elsewhere. Over the years, he gave recitals and masterclasses at a number of other academic institutions, including the University of Kansas, the Music and Arts Institute of San Francisco, and the University of Wisconsin. He had return engagements at several of these and he went every year to Ohio University, which awarded him an honorary Doctor of Music degree in 1954.

In Tallahassee in January of 1951 Dohnányi bought a comfortable red brick house that had a living room, dining room, library, study, and several bedrooms. In the back of the house was a terraced garden that gave the Maestro much pleasure, for he liked to do some of the planting himself. Inside, the walls were covered with pictures that he especially enjoyed. In this house the Dohnányis were gracious hosts; it was a home of warmth and love. Mrs Dohnányi and the children were most solicitous of the Maestro, and did everything they could to contribute to his happiness and his well-being. The Dohnányis had brought with them a housekeeper who was a splendid cook, and this was to the liking of Dohnányi, who very much enjoyed eating, although he always stayed trim.

On the surface life was very pleasant for the Dohnányis, but a cloud that had formed in Europe still followed them in the New World. When Dohnányi left Hungary in 1944, he was wrongly accused of being a Nazi sympathizer who had acquiesced in anti-Semitic activities in Budapest. This was highly ironic in view of the fact that he resigned as the head of the Franz Liszt Academy of Music when he was told that he had to dismiss a piano teacher, formerly his student, because he was half-Jewish. Similarly, Dohnányi had resigned his post as the Director of the Budapest Philharmonic, which he had disbanded rather than carry out strictures against the Jewish musicians. Thus, even though these charges of anti-Semitism were demonstrated to be completely untrue through careful research and documentation both by the American Occupation authorities and, later, by the American Civil Liberties Union, the rumors persisted. Even after prominent Jewish Hungarians, including the famous composer Leó Weiner, spoke out on behalf of Dohnányi, many people still believed these falsehoods. To compound Dohnányi's problems in his homeland, the new Communist government of Hungary, angry that as a member of the Hungarian Senate he had signed anti-Soviet legislation, branded him as a war criminal. These charges, along with the other falsehoods created by his enemies, produced a terrible aura that would accompany him to America. In this country an unofficial ban was placed upon Dohnányi appearances, especially with major orchestras. The result was that—in the early years especially—Dohnányi was restricted to performing on college and university campuses, where reason seemed to prevail over emotion.

This state of affairs greatly reduced the Maestro's earning power—and he needed the money. He was virtually without funds when he came to Tallahassee. All of his royalties had been held up by the political difficulties alluded to; and although he made a good salary at Florida State, he had many debts, acquired since leaving Hungary. He had a household of five people to support, and this number was enlarged by a stream of needy visitors, who came to live with him for varying lengths of time. He also regularly sent money back to loved ones in Hungary.

Throughout all of his troubles since leaving Hungary—and there were many—his family said that he never once complained. And sometimes he held unpleasant things back from them as long as possible while maintaining a

cheerful demeanor himself. This is borne out by an episode that his stepchildren related to me. While the Dohnányis were refugees in Austria, the Maestro learned of the death of Matthias, his favourite son by a previous marriage. He had been a captain in the Hungarian army fighting against the Russians and died in prison. Dohnányi kept this information to himself for days before revealing it to his new family, having never given any sign of his deep grief. Later he learned that his eldest son, Hans, a leading German jurist, was hanged in a Nazi prison for his part in the failed plot of Count Claus von Stauffenberg to assassinate Hitler. Again, Dohnányi bore this news with great control.

At a time when most men have retired, Dohnányi was sentenced to work continually to support himself and his family, for since he came to the University past the age of seventy, by state law he was not entitled to a pension. Without royalties and unable to get lucrative concert engagements, he had to continue teaching—but always without complaint. He told his adopted daughter, Helen, that once as a young man he had stayed at an inn where he could see animals being slaughtered from his window. He became very ill and turned away; but the next day he forced himself to watch this procedure, for he believed that one must develop the courage to face the truth. As I learned more about this man's extraordinary discipline, I remembered my first sight of him sitting in the University dining hall, his back not touching the chair. Revealingly, he once told me that he never saw his mother—who lived to an advanced age—touch her back to her chair while she dined. This attitude in him was more than an exercise of a kind of stoicism; it was an ability to dwell on a higher plane, to transcend the pettiness that plagues most men and to use his energies in a more positive and meaningful way. This kind of control did not, however, take from him the ability to commiserate with others and to give them warmth and affection, for his was a most engaging and empathetic personality.

He once confided to me what was clearly one of the governing principles of his life: "When I see something that needs changing, I do my utmost to change it; but if I cannot, I try to accept that fact with as much grace as possible." In every respect that I could observe or learn about, Dohnányi implemented this philosophy in actual practice. A good example of this comes to mind. I was in the Dohnányi home shortly after Dimitri Mitropoulos called the Maestro to say that he was obliged to cancel Dohnányi's scheduled three appearances with the New York Philharmonic because the Jewish members of the orchestra refused to play with him. Dohnányi said nothing and Mrs. Dohnányi exclaimed, "Sometimes I get mad with him because he won't get mad." The Maestro smiled and shrugged his shoulders. His stepdaughter Helen told me that she never saw him lose his temper or even raise his voice!

Dohnányi was essentially a kind person with very winning ways. And he admired this quality in others. He once told me that Béla Bartók was the kindest man he had ever known. It was Dohnányi's very positive attitude that allowed him to move forward in life, even when he was confronted with major problems.

He liked to laugh and his wit and humor, so much a part of his character, are readily apparent in his compositions as well.

Two examples of his wit in respect to the English language give insight into his humorous personality. Once while riding in my Buick convertible, he looked at the dashboard and saw two parallel rows of knobs. The top knob on the left read, "Lights." On the right, directly opposite, the inscription was "Lighter." "Ah," the Maestro observed, "the comparative form!" When I brought a photograph of him to be autographed, he said, "What shall I write?" I replied, "To my good friend, Lee Pryor." "No," he quickly responded. "To write 'to my good friend' implies that there is such a thing as a bad friend. You are either a friend or not. I shall write 'to my old friend, Lee Pryor.'"

My favourite Dohnányi humorous retort was relayed to me by the pianist Irving Laszlo, who had much earlier studied with him in Budapest, and, later, one summer in Tallahassee. The story had been told to Irving by the great violinist Misha Elman, who had gone to Budapest to play with the orchestra under Dohnányi. On the day before the concert, Elman admiringly recited to Dohnányi a long list of great Hungarian musicians, but when he returned to his hotel he realized to his chagrin that he had omitted the name of Dohnányi himself. The next day when Elman attempted to apologize, Dohnányi smilingly interrupted by saying, "When in Rome it is not necessary to mention the name of the Pope!"⁴

In respect to concertizing on a national level, a slight breakthrough occurred when Dohnányi appeared in the first concert given by the newly formed Atlantic City Symphony on 9 April 1953, playing his Second Piano Concerto. A reviewer wrote, Dohnányi "held his audience spellbound with the perfection of his technique and the artistry of his interpretation."⁵ This success seemed to lend to Dohnányi's return, after an absence of nearly a quarter of a century, to New York City's Carnegie Hall, where he had played to marked acclaim in earlier years. This time his engagement was with another relatively new group, the National Symphony Orchestra, made up of youthful players, many of whom had recently graduated from music schools and conservatoires, led by Leon Barzin. Dohnányi again chose to play his Second Piano Concerto, heard for the first time in that city. Both Dohnányi and his music were most enthusiastically received. Typical of the reviews was that of the well-known critic Paul Affelder, who wrote:

Not only did the Concerto turn out to be one of the most attractive new orchestral works to reach here this year, but it was performed with the vigor, the tonal wealth and the technical mastery of a man half his age... It is perfectly safe to say that few artists before the public today would be anywhere near equal to the technical and musical demands of this concerto, yet this remarkable septuagenarian dashed it off with complete ease... there is no doubt about it; Dohnányi is still the wizard of old.⁶

Although the audience and the critics welcomed Dohnányi back with a lengthy ovation and glowing reviews, he was not invited back to New York City except to

participate in a group concert for Hungarian relief some years later. For all intents and purposes it was his last major appearance in the city. A year later, 1954, he appeared twice with Fritz Reiner and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra—and again to rave reviews. Seymour Raven, for example, wrote, "Both as a pianist and composer, Mr Dohnányi goes forward in this concert to the prime of life, not back to it."⁷ But in spite of these successes, invitations for major appearances were few and far between. Great exceptions were his concerts at the Edinburgh Festival, almost two years later, in August 1956. Headlines of the British reviews of these appearances indicate his reception: "Dohnányi Gave a Great Lead," "Ovation for Composer," "Still Superb at 79," "Superb Playing By Dohnányi," "Dohnányi (79) the Great Youngster," "Dohnányi Sparkles," and "A Triumph for von Dohnányi."⁸ In spite of these most enthusiastic notices, however, he had to wait for more than a year for his next major appearance, this time with Thor Johnson and the Cincinnati Symphony on 1 and 2 November 1957. Shortly after this, on 15 November, he played with the Minneapolis Symphony, conducted by Antal Doráti. Both in Cincinnati and Minneapolis he received marvelous reviews (the lead of *The Minneapolis Star* review was, "As Pianist, Composer, Dohnányi is 'Giant'"),⁹ but it was almost two years before another orchestral invitation came. In February 1959 he appeared with the University of Miami Symphony Orchestra, guest conducted by Fabien Sevitzsky. One critic wrote, "At 82 he is still one of the world's great keyboard artists."¹⁰ Another observed that the audience shouted "bravos and compliments in the first spontaneous standing ovation we have seen in Miami Beach Auditorium in many years."¹¹ The following 22 and 23 October, Dohnányi appeared with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, both as a soloist in his *Variations on a Nursery Tune* and as a conductor of his Suite in F-sharp Minor. The beginning of the report in *The Atlanta Constitution* was "Dohnányi at 82 a Musical Whiz."¹² This was his final appearance with a professional orchestra.

Dohnányi, of course, gave many public performances on the campus of The Florida State University in solo recital, as a duo pianist with Edward Kilényi, with chamber ensembles, and with orchestra, as soloist and as conductor. I heard many of these concerts, but one remains indelibly stamped on my mind. It was on 27 July 1955, Dohnányi's seventy-eighth birthday. The featured work was his famous op. 1, the Piano Quintet No. 1 in C Minor, performed by the Maestro and a faculty quartet. The music began and all was proceeding beautifully when suddenly a tremendous Florida thunderstorm occurred and all of the lights went out. Dohnányi continued to play in the dark, but, naturally, the others could not. After a time candles were brought to the stage and the performance was continued and concluded. As I listened to the musicians play on a stage lit only by candles, I imagined that I was hearing it as it was performed when it was given its premiere in Vienna in November of 1895 in the Tonkünstler Verein. Johannes Brahms, who had said of this work when it had been played privately for him, "I could not have writ-

ten it better myself," sponsored this first performance and sat in the front row. Dohnányi played the piano part; he was eighteen. This was nearly sixty years before!

Dohnányi was not the only famous European composer to live in Florida. In 1884 the English master Frederick Delius moved to an orange-growing plantation outside of Jacksonville and two of his best works were inspired by that stay. Many years later the notable Czechoslovakian opera composer Jaromir Weinberger also moved to Florida, settling in St. Petersburg, where he died in 1967.

In Dohnányi's case, he was most prolific as a composer during his early years, especially during the first three decades of his creative activity. He remained active as a composer after this period, but concertizing, conducting, teaching, and administrating made inroads into the time he might have devoted to composition. After 1944, when his opus numbers had reached forty, he composed a remarkable amount when one considers the vicissitudes he endured and how hard he had to work. After coming to Tallahassee he completed the Violin Concerto No. 2 in C Minor, op. 43, which was commissioned by Frances Magnes and premiered by her with the San Antonio Symphony, conducted by Victor Allesandro, on 26 January 1951. Next came Three Singular Pieces for piano, op. 44, which Dohnányi premiered in Tallahassee on 21 March 1952. Dohnányi's op. 45 was a Concertino for Harp and Small Orchestra. In 1952–53 he wrote a Stabat Mater for six-part boys' chorus with orchestra, op. 46, commissioned by George Bragg, Founder-Director of the Denton Civic Boys' Choir of Denton, Texas, and premiered by these forces on 16 January 1953. An American Rhapsody for orchestra, op. 47, written in 1953, was commissioned by Ohio University and premiered by the Ohio University Symphony, conducted by Dohnányi, 21 February 1954. His last works, an *Aria for flute and piano*, op. 48, no. 1, and a *Passacaglia for solo flute*, op. 48, no. 2, were written for Ellie Baker, the young daughter of Dr. John Baker, the president of Ohio University. In 1954–56 Dohnányi revised his Second Symphony in E Major, op. 40, premiered by Antal Doráti and the Minneapolis Symphony, 15 March 1956.

Dohnányi also wrote a number of works to which he did not assign opus numbers. Two of these were composed in Tallahassee: *Twelve Short Studies for the Advanced Pianist* (1950) and *Daily Finger Exercises for Advanced Pianists* (1960).

In his composing, as in his living, Dohnányi was unabashedly romantic. In Tallahassee one of his colleagues, responding to one of his earlier works, once asked, "Were you in love when you wrote that?" "Yes," replied Dohnányi. "I am always in love."

In 1985 David Mason Greene wrote, "Dohnányi seems at last to be recovering his reputation—though even in the worst of times a handful of his works insisted on remaining popular."¹³ The role of Dohnányi's Tallahassee compositions (including revisions) has been very great in reestablishing his deserved place in music history. By 2002 nearly all of these works had entered the active repertoire and many have been recorded, including the Concertino for Harp and Small

Orchestra and a large number of piano pieces. Moreover, there are three recordings each of the American Rhapsody and the Second Violin Concerto, which a British commentator, Malcolm MacDonald, has called "one of the last great neo-Romantic violin concertos."¹⁴ Reviewing a recording (by Matthias Bamert and the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra) of Symphony No. 2 in E Major, Peter J. Rabinowitz wrote, "The Second Symphony turns out to be such an astonishing piece—so much more assured and more powerful than any of Kodály's orchestral efforts—that its forty-year hibernation seems inexplicable." He concluded his review by writing, "All in all, this is easily the outstanding orchestral recording I've come across this year."¹⁵

Dohnányi did not regard phonograph recordings to be a very good way of preserving how an artist performed. He thought that they did not adequately capture the dynamics, the subtleties, and the nuances of live performance. Additionally, for the first half of this century, not many recordings issued from Central Europe. For the most part, they were made in such centers as Berlin, London, and Paris. At any rate, Budapest did not become one of these recording centers, and since after the twenties Dohnányi tended to remain in his homeland, these factors no doubt contributed to his making few recordings. However, in his early years as a touring pianist, Dohnányi made a number of piano rolls and some of them have been newly manufactured for lovers of the player piano. Additionally, some have been recorded on LP records; and, still more recently, some have been issued in a compact disc format. Dohnányi also made a few 78 recordings, notably Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 17 in G Major, but his total recording output was small.

Interestingly, it was during his Tallahassee years that Dohnányi began—after a lapse of many years—to make records, perhaps the improvements made in recording techniques encouraged him to do so. For whatever the reasons, it was at this time that Dohnányi made more recordings than he ever had before. In the spring of 1949, Columbia Records issued his *Suite en valse*, arranged for two pianos, which Dohnányi recorded with Edward Kilenyi. Then, in the early 1950s, Dohnányi made a number of recordings for Remington Records, including some of his own piano music and his violin sonata. The latter he made with his old friend Albert Spalding, with whom he also recorded the three sonatas for violin and piano of Brahms. He also recorded Haydn's *Variations in F Minor*, Schumann's *Kinderscenen*, as well as Beethoven's *Piano Sonata No. 17, op. 31*, and *Andante favori in F Major*. In September 1956, after playing at the Edinburgh Festival he made his finest records: two LP discs of his own piano music (for His Master's Voice)¹⁶ and a third (for Angel) containing his *Second Piano Concerto* and the *Variations on a Nursery Tune*, with Sir Adrian Boult and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. The latter was chosen by a distinguished group of critics for inclusion in "The 100 Greatest Recordings of All Time," published by the Franklin Mint Record Society. About this recording Sedgwick Clark has written, "This is the kind of performance for which the phonograph was invented."¹⁷

In late January of 1960, Dohnányi, now six months past his eighty-second year, journeyed to New York City to make for Everest Records what turned out to be his last recordings: Beethoven's Piano Sonatas Nos. 30 and 31 and *Andante favori* in F Major, as well as an LP disc of his own piano music. In a subsequent review of the latter recording, the famous critic Irving Kolodin wrote, "That anyone at the age of eighty-two can play in the manner heard on this disc is little short of amazing."¹⁸

However, the strain of working in great temperature variations inside and outside of the recording studio took its toll. On 5 February Dohnányi was diligently making these recordings when he suffered a heart attack, followed by a bout with influenza. In four days he was dead.

Dohnányi's body was returned to Tallahassee where he was buried in beautiful Roselawn Cemetery, on a hill that is populated with large and ancient trees. On his marble tombstone, which is engraved with a lyre, are the two names by which he was known during his long and productive life: Ernst von Dohnányi and Dohnányi Ernő.

In the end he had survived long enough, in the words of Charles Osborne, "to become, in extreme old age, the Grand Old Man of Hungarian Music."¹⁹

Five years earlier Dohnányi and his wife had become American citizens. After his death, the governor of their adopted state, LeRoy Collins, proclaimed his next birthday, 27 July 1960, as "Ernst von Dohnányi Day." In 1961, the new governor, Farris Bryant, repeated this proclamation, "in recognition of the pride felt by our citizens that Ernst von Dohnányi chose to live among them for the last twelve years of his life and chose Florida for his final resting place."

Dohnányi had become a beloved figure in Tallahassee, where his memory and his influence are still very much alive. In 1987 a new building was added to the School of Music at The Florida State University, which thirty years earlier had awarded Dohnányi an honorary doctorate. In this new building is the Ernst von Dohnányi Recital Hall. In 1998 the School of Music established the Ernst von Dohnányi Collection in the Warren D. Allen Music Library and in 2002 the school hosted the International Ernst von Dohnányi Festival in association with the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Hungary. The School of Music also awards to outstanding students and alumni who have excelled in performance or composition the "Ernst von Dohnányi Citation."²⁰

Wherever Dohnányi performed, people commented on his youthfulness. A critic in Cincinnati observed, "I think this Hungarian-born composer must have stumbled upon Ponce de Leon's Fountain of Eternal Youth while teaching in Florida. It is amazing."²¹ And there were many others who wrote variations on that theme. Indeed, to those of us who were permitted to know him—who know that he would have been a great human being even if he had not been a musician—he seemed to have accomplished what Ponce de Leon never did: he not only found the fountain of Eternal Youth in Florida, but he also shared it with everyone he touched.

When I think of him in respect to his final resting place, I recall vividly a walk we made from the music school to his home on a lovely spring day. He commented on what a beautiful village Tallahassee was; and then very evenly, and very quietly he said, "This is the happiest time of my life." ❧

NOTES

- 1 ■ Joan Holley, "He Writes and Teaches in a New World," *Music and Musicians* (March 1955): 15.
- 2 ■ Cited in Marion Ursula Rueth, *The Tallahassee Years of Ernst von Dohnányi* (M.A. thesis, The Florida State University, 1962), 96.
- 3 ■ Donald Ferguson, "Program Notes," Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra (15 March 1957).
- 4 ■ See William Lee Pryor, "The Wit and Humor of Ernst von Dohnányi," *Clavier* 16:2 (February 1977): 20–22.
- 5 ■ "Von Dohnányi Wins Ovation," *Ventnor Crier* (10 April 1953).
- 6 ■ Paul Affelder, "Dohnányi Proves Revelation as Soloist in Original Work," *Brooklyn Eagle* (10 November 1953).
- 7 ■ Seymour Raven, "Reiner Baton Gives Life to Brahms' 3d," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (5 November 1954).
- 8 ■ "Dohnányi Gave a Great Lead," *Evening Dispatch* (22 August 1956); "Ovation for Composer," *Scottish Daily Mail* (22 August 1956); "Still Superb at 79," *The Bulletin* (22 August 1956); "Superb Playing by Dohnányi," *The Scotsman* (22 August 1956); "Dohnanyi (79) the Great Youngster," *Scottish Daily Mail* (24 August 1956); "Dohnanyi Sparkles," *Evening Dispatch* (24 August 1956); and "A Triumph for von Dohnányi," *The Glasgow Herald* (24 August 1956).
- 9 ■ John K. Sherman, "As Pianist, Composer, Dohnanyi is 'Giant,'" *The Minneapolis Star* (16 November 1957).
- 10 ■ Edward Ireland, "Dohnanyi Stirring in Concert," *The Miami News* (9 February 1959).
- 11 ■ Doris Reno, "Concert Brings Ovation at Beach," *The Miami Herald* (9 February 1959).
- 12 ■ Dick Gray, "Dohnanyi at 82 a Musical Whiz," *The Atlanta Constitution* (23 October 1959).
- 13 ■ David Mason Greene, *Greene's Biographical Encyclopedia of Composers* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 966.
- 14 ■ Malcolm MacDonald, liner notes to Dohnányi Violin Concerto No. 2, Janice Graham, violin, English Simfonia, John Farrer, cond. (ASV, DCA 1107: 2001).
- 15 ■ Peter J. Rabinowitz, "Dohnányi: Symphony No. 2 in E, op. 40; Symphonic Minutes, op. 36." *Fanfare* 20:2 (November/December 1996), 234.
- 16 ■ In 2003, an English company, APR reissued all of these HMV solo recordings (including some earlier ones) on two CDs (APR 7038).
- 17 ■ Sedgwick Clark, liner notes to "The 100 Greatest Recordings of All Time", Vol. 13 (The Franklin Mint Record Society, 1974).
- 18 ■ Irving Kolodin, "Dohnányi: Five Pieces from Rurália Hungarica, etc.," *The American Record Guide* (September 1960): 26.
- 19 ■ Charles Osborne, ed., *The Dictionary of Composers* (New York: Taplinger, 1977), 105.
- 20 ■ See James A. Grymes, "The Ernst von Dohnányi Collection at the Florida State University," *Music Library Association Notes* 55:2 (December 1998): 327–40.
- 21 ■ Henry Humphreys, "Angelic Voices in Music Hall," *The Cincinnati Times-Star* (2 November 1957).

Alan E. Williams

Dezső Tandori Set to Music

Settings of the poet Dezső Tandori are not particularly common in Hungarian music. Their number is dwarfed by that of the settings of Sándor Weöres, for example: in the 1989 edition of *Contemporary Hungarian Composers*—a canon in all but name—we can find references to 87 works setting, or containing settings of Weöres' texts. There are only 3 or 4 pieces setting Tandori, on the other hand. There are a number of pieces which while not actually setting texts by Tandori, take their form, or their inspiration from his poems. Nevertheless, there are plenty of other poets who would seem to be more significant in contemporary Hungarian composition—Pilinszky, for example. Yet sometimes, an odd flurry of activity can be more revealing of the currents of musical thought at a particular time than the steady presence of a poet, appealing across a wide range of musicians.

Such an odd flurry of activity occurred during the 1970's and early 1980's in the settings and references to the work of Dezső Tandori by Zoltán Jeney and György Kurtág. Another member of the New Music Studio, László Sáy, also clearly knew and enjoyed Tandori's poetry, deriving some of his titles from poems by Tandori. Kurtág not only acted as inspiration and father figure to the New Music Studio: he also gained a considerable amount from his contact with them. His son, György junior, was an active member of the New Music Studio and also a participant in avant-garde activities in other artforms, such as Péter Halász's theatre group. Kurtág senior's own music underwent some significant changes at the beginning of the 1970's, and he obviously found their activities refreshing and liberating. In Tandori they had an interest in common. This article attempts to account for the appeal Tandori had for this group of composers, and why that appeal was limited—more or less—to them alone.

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Dezső Tandori is an extraordinarily prolific creative mind; he has been active as poet, prose writer, translator and graphic artist. Perhaps as a result of this feverish pace of activity, he has a reputation for reclusiveness similar to that of Kurtág. His subjects are wide-ranging and idiosyncratic, ranging from translations of Adorno to children's stories, and his career has been accompanied by obsessive interests in horse-racing and birds. He has edited catalogues of visual arts exhibitions, and made significant contributions to the understanding of philosophers such as Wittgenstein in Hungary. Such wide-ranging interests give Tandori a connection with many creative artists and intellectuals.

Yet it is really in Tandori's first two volumes of poetry that we find the majority of his influence on composers. The first publication of Tandori's original work, as opposed to translation, occurred in 1968, with his verse collection *Töredék Hamletnek* (Fragment for Hamlet). One of the poems in this collection provides the title for László Sály's 1979 piece dedicated to Tandori, *Koan Bel Canto*; and Kurtág sets this same poem, as well as seven others from that collection in his opus 23 choruses to Tandori's verse. Tandori's next collection, which originally appeared in 1973, was *Egy talált tárgy megtisztítása* (Cleaning an Objet Trouvé), and it was this volume on which Tandori's early reputation as a poet is largely based. Jeney first came across *Egy talált tárgy megtisztítása* in 1971, when the volume was still in manuscript form. Jeney did not at that time know Tandori, but later, in around 1974, Tandori himself sought Jeney out.¹ It provides the texts for Kurtág's op.12 *Eszká-émlékszaj* (S.K. Remembrance Noise, 1975), as well as the form to Jeney's *Orfeusz kertje* (Orpheus' Garden, 1974), and *Arthur Rimbaud a sivatagban* (Arthur Rimbaud in the Desert, 1976). Further connections with Tandori's *Egy talált tárgy megtisztítása* can be found in a number of other pieces: Jeney's *Végjáték* (Endgame, 1973), which uses the idea of chess notation as structuring idea for music. His *A leaf falls—brackets to e.e. cummings* (1975), derives its title from Tandori's poem "Halottas urna két füle e.e. cummings gyűjteményéből" (The Two Handles of the Funeral Urn from e.e. cummings' Private Collection): the "poem" consists of this:

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And Sály's *Kotyogó kő egy korsóban* (Pebble Playing in a Pot, 1978) also takes its title from one of the poems in this same collection.

The musical results of all these settings and references are extremely disparate: Kurtág's *Nyolc kórus* (Eight Choruses, op. 23) for example, share the same dense emotionality of his Russian settings, such as the *Ommagio a Luigi Nono* (op.16) which immediately preceded the composition of his Tandori choruses. On the other hand, Sály's and Jeney's Tandori references result in pieces which avoid intentional expression altogether. Moreover, only one of Jeney's pieces – *Világnyelv*

1 ■ Interview with the author, July 2003.

(World Language, the second of his 1985 collection 12 Songs) actually sets a Tandori text in the traditional way, and this carries a dedication to Kurtág, suggesting a sort of homage to the older composer. The other Tandori references by Jeney and Sárosy either use the title of a Tandori poem as a poetic image from which to start, or borrow some structural idea, which allows the composer's individual expression to be minimised. Thus both the means and the end results of the influence of Tandori on Hungarian music in the 1970's are very varied, so the answers to the question posed above—namely why it was that there was such a strong, if short lived, interest in Tandori's work, in the mid to late 1970's, and why it was restricted to this group of composers—will also yield disparate answers.

Undoubtedly, Tandori's status as merely (or barely) "tolerated", unofficial poet, was appealing to the New Music Studio, whose members had a distinctly anti-authoritarian attitude. After the publication of Tandori's first volume, it took several years before his second was published. Tandori himself describes this period as his "prohibition".² Similarly, his experimental approach to language and to form must have appealed to a group predicated on the notion of experiment in music. But there are other reasons, connected with the philosophical content of Tandori's work which made his work appeal to the New Music Studio. On the other hand, the reasons for Kurtág's interest probably lie more closely with one particular strand in Tandori's work, the short, aphoristic forms. It is this aspect that I shall discuss first.

The aphorism, the fragment, the koan and the haiku

Anyone familiar with Kurtág's work will not be surprised at his choice of texts for his 1975 work, *Eszkák-émlékszaj* (op.12). These seven pieces, which predate the works explicitly termed "fragments" from the 1980's, have forms that could variously be described as "aphoristic" or "fragmentary", or a mixture between the two. The unfinished, asymmetrical quality of the fragment should be contrasted with the symmetrical balancing of opposites, or the "sting in the tail" form of the aphorism. In a previous article for this journal, I have described this as the contrast between Kurtág's "closed" and "open" forms. In the first of the set, *A damaszkuszi út* (The Road to Damascus), the text is a fragment:

Now, when it's just the same, as always,
It is high time that.

The music, on the other hand, is a closed form—in the sense that it reaches a sense of completion, with the opening chord on the open strings recapitulated at the end, and the chromatic line leading to a D/A open fifth.

2 ■ Tandori, "A szabadesés legyen hozzád hű, és isten irgalmazzon neked" ("Let freefall be faithful to you, and may God have mercy on you."), available at www.c3.hu/scripta

On the other hand, *Kavafisz-haiku*, the fourth of the set, leaves the tonality, at least, open, although there is an element of recapitulation of the opening diad (G sharp/A). The text, on the other hand, is a closed form, and with its sting in the tail, takes the form of an aphorism:

Already half past two!
How quickly a year has passed.

The third of the set, *Két sor a "tekercs"-ból* (Two Lines from "Tape") is closed in both music and text as I showed in a previous article, but these lines have been selected by Kurtág for this very quality from a much longer, and more disparate, poem. The search for formal balance, for the perfection of form with limited means that is in evidence in some movements by Kurtág is also the intention behind some of Tandori's early verse, called koans. A koan is a short story or epigram used for teaching purposes in Zen Buddhism, and is meant to unsettle and provoke further thought. Tandori's koans, on the other hand, which he wrote during the middle years of the 1960's strive for a formal balance between tightly controlled terms:

When I wrote my first koan in 1964, I did not believe that it was poetry. I even asked someone if it was. Here is *Koan 1* itself:

Further from you?
Closer to you?
Neither from you nor to you.
Neither near or far.

It was possible to bring this material (consisting of few elements) to a state of perfection, better than a chess problem.³

Traditional Zen koans do not reveal this formal balancing: the source for this is more likely to have been Sándor Weöres, many of whose works show this same kind of symmetry.

In Tandori's hands, the koan form resembles another Far Eastern form, the haiku. The closeness of the haiku form to the aphorism in Hungarian literature has been noted by Judit Vihar:

One of the basic genres of this poetry is *aphoristic haiku*, which has a philosophical message. Hungarian poets find, in the shortness of haiku, a trait similar to epigrams; consequently, this gives their original haiku-poetry philosophic content.⁴

There are two Tandori haikus in Kurtág's work: *Kavafisz-haiku*, from *Eszká-emlékzaj*, and *Ars Poetica*, the last song from his opus 22 *Seven Songs*. This haiku by Kobayashi Issa appears in a volume of haiku translations by Tandori, published in 1981 and under the title *Egy japán haiku versnapló* (A Japanese Haiku Poem-Diary).

3 ■ Tandori, *Keletbe-fült kísérletek*, 17.

4 ■ Vihar Judit, "Haiku Poetry in Hungary", available at www.worldhaikureview.org/3-1/

As these songs were written in 1982, it seems likely that Kurtág read this volume.

The title *Ars Poetica* is given by Kurtág himself, and the text seems to be an ironic comment on the slowness and difficulty with which Kurtág writes:

<i>Csak lassan, szépen;</i>	Slowly, steadily,
<i>Gondosan mászd meg, csiga</i>	Carefully climb, snail,
<i>A Fuji hegyét.</i>	Up Mount Fuji.

It is possible to see Kurtág attempting to portray something of the "twist" of the last line in the perfect fifth which Kurtág sets the first syllable of "Fuji", suddenly removing us from the painstaking chromatic climb the piece has been hitherto.

Kurtág's op. 23 *Nyolc Kórus Tandori Dezső verseire* (Eight Choruses to Poems by Dezső Tandori) move away from the structural principle of responding to the form of the koan or the haiku. While the first two choruses, which set Tandori's *Koans III* and *I*, reflect the form of the text quite closely, the third chorus, which sets *Koan II*, introduces a familiar technique of choral writing, the repetition of text. Lines such as "tükrökben jár a szél" are repeated over and over, while Kurtág extracts in other parts vowels from this line: "ü á ő é". This points to an interest in expansion of scale into a massed, rather than chamber medium. This interest in the textural qualities of the massed choir sound is more akin to his other choir pieces, which had Russian texts: *Ommaggio a Luigi Nono* (op. 16) and the *Songs of Sorrow and Despair* (Песни уныния и печалии, op. 18), which were both started around 1980, the year before the composition of the majority of the eight Tandori choruses.

Other elements creep in too: the fourth chorus is subtitled "*Hallgató nóta*", a style of dance or singalong music played at weddings. Here the rhythm of the first line of turns what in the original verse was a line of four stresses (anapaestic tetrameter) into a traditional Hungarian folk song rhythmic pattern that we find in songs such as "*Erdő, erdő de magas a teteje*" (Forest, Forest, how high your Canopy). Although this is by no means the most characteristic feature of the chorus, it is striking in a composer who only rarely makes reference to Hungarian folk music. It should perhaps be heard in the same vein as the references to other "earthy" musics in *Eszká-émlékszaj* (Eszká Remembrance Noise), such as the waltz in "*Kant-émlékszaj*" (Remembrance Noise, no. 2), or the "Blues style" in *Kavafisz-haiku* (no. 4). Perhaps there is a paradoxical tendency in Kurtág, which leads him to choose texts for their purity of form, and then introduces an "impure" element to them.

Critiques of the "self": Zen and postmodernism

While for Kurtág, the koans and haikus of Tandori are in themselves attractive for their terseness, undoubtedly their Zen associations made them attractive to the members of the New Music Studio who were already interested in the work of Cage. In this context, Tandori's work seemed to fit in both with the new US interest in the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Far East, but also

with an indigenous tradition of interest in the Far East stretching back through Weöres and Kosztolányi to figures such as Sándor Kőrösi Csoma (1784–1842), the author of the first Tibetan–English Dictionary. It was through Péter Eötvös, a member of the New Music Studio, despite having been resident in (West) Germany since 1966, that the other members of the NMS were able to get recordings and scores of the new music in the West. Eötvös also brought back Zen texts for the group to study, and even now considers himself to have been influenced by Zen thought.⁵ Other members of the group also avow themselves to be, if not followers of Zen, at the least, influenced by it: in interviews for *Hungarian Music Quarterly*, both Jeney and Sáros refer to Zen stories.⁶ Jeney also quotes an unfavourable review in the press of his piece *Alef* from 1971–2, which described the work as “the musical projection of fashionable Zen Buddhism”.⁷

Although *Alef* may have been seen as exhibiting Zen Buddhist tendencies, in other ways, the pieces Jeney derived from Tandori’s verse have stronger connections with Zen and Cage, in the form of the withdrawal from personal expression in the music. This date at which Jeney first came across *Egy talált tárgy megtisztítása*, 1971, is early enough to allow the original plan behind one of Jeney’s most famous early pieces, *Végjáték* (Endgame, 1973), to have been influenced by the chess poems in the Tandori volume. The inscrutability of *Végjáték* clearly reflects the dry humour of the Tandori chessboard poems: see for example *A Bethlehemi istállóból egy kis jószág kinéz* (A Small Farm Animal Looks Out from the Stable at Bethlehem), of which the entire content is “Hc3” (H=Huszár, or knight). The irony of the “poem” is that, for chess players, this single move has a wealth of consequences—it’s a well analysed opening—which Tandori makes the subject of the more “poetic” meaning of the title.

In *Végjáték*, Jeney translated the squares on a chess board into musical notes, and derived the sequence of pitches for the piece from the moves at the end of a game of chess. After an initial chord, the piece consists of a monody with no expression marks, a single dynamic of *piano*, and no phrasing. His purpose in this, and in the piece’s construction, was to avoid any intentional expressiveness, and while the performer is tempted from time to time to give the monody expressive phrasing, by shaping the dynamics through repetitions of notes, or as the tessitura of the line rises and falls, there can be no shape or logic to such arbitrary incidental phrasings. Any moments of expressiveness that do occur are the result of chance operations.

Jeney’s approach in *Arthur Rimbaud a sivatagban* is similar, but here the form of the piece follows strictly the form of Tandori’s original poem “A. Rimbaud mégegyszer átpergeti ujjai közt az ábécét” (A. Rimbaud Once Again Runs the

5 ■ Péter Eötvös, in conversation with the author, Huddersfield, November 2003.

6 ■ Sáros, *Hungarian Music Quarterly* (2001)

7 ■ Jeney, *Hungarian Music Quarterly*, IV/1 (1993), 13.

is a new questioning of the notion of personal expression. It was this questioning that led the members of the New Music Studio to attempt joint compositions, a technique that remained a feature of their work for the life of the group. In *Hommage à Kurtág*, for example Eötvös, Jeney, Kocsis, Sárosi and Vidovszky independently composed lines of music of different lengths without knowing what the others were writing. These were simply layered one on top of another, with shorter individual lines repeated until the longest had come to an end. It might be argued that each individual line constitutes an individual expression, but the work as a whole is governed by a form of chance, as Zoltán Kocsis, himself one of the composers, argued in an article for *Mozgó Világ* from 1976.⁸

While they may not have articulated it clearly, there is at work a critique of the conventional view of composition as individual expression. The collage—or perhaps collision—of styles and techniques to be found in *Hommage à Kurtág* undermines any sense of individual style, and this is perhaps influenced by Zen ideas questioning the Western notion of self. Tandori, in his second collection of poems *Egy talált tárgy megtisztítása*, also seems to have abandoned or avoided any notion of personal style in favour of eclectic experimentation. It is ironic that he was criticised for not continuing his former path in his third volume of poetry, *A mennyezet és a padló* (The Ceiling and the Floor), when what has been described as the “Classical” Tandori, has no common stylistic factor. Some poems are almost prose, in a stream of consciousness; some are more akin to the tightly constructed koans and haikus of two or three lines. Some consist only of a title. In a very Cagean response to this criticism, Tandori says that on the contrary, he did continue with what he had begun in his earlier volume, he just didn’t repeat what had already been done.⁹

Egy talált tárgy megtisztítása has been described as “the first postmodern Hungarian collection of poetry”.¹⁰ This description is probably derived from a number of features that subvert the traditional opposition between form and content in poetry, between the sense that is conveyed, and the means by which it is conveyed. Poetry is the literary form in which the second of these terms is not subordinated to the first, as is conventionally believed to be the case in “ordinary language”. Firstly, as in e.e.cummings, the playful use of typefaces and layouts focus the reader’s attention on the physical means of communication. Secondly, Tandori makes whole poems from the syntactic aspects of language, rather than their semantic aspects: the opening of “A. Rimbaud a sivatagban forog” (A. Rimbaud Shooting a Film in the Desert) is:

8 ■ Zoltán Kocsis “Néhány szó a legújabb magyar zenéről” (A Few Words about the Latest Hungarian Music), in *Mozgó Világ*, 1976/3 (June), 3–13.

9 ■ *A mennyezet és a padló* (Budapest, Fekete Sas: 2001 ed.), poet’s afterword, 194.

10 ■ Gyula Doboss, in *Új Magyar Irodalmi Lexikon* (New Hungarian Dictionary of Literature), article on Tandori.

(Kép)

(Picture)

helyett:
helyett—

instead of:
instead of—

*Most próbáljátok
teljes
életnagyságban*

*Now all of you try
in complete
life-size*

helyett—

instead of—

In this context, the postmodern idea that the "self"—the author's voice—is itself a fiction could well apply to Tandori. But perhaps more helpful in appreciating the connections between the thought of the New Music Studio and that of Tandori is another description of Tandori's work by the same commentator, Gyula Doboss: "Tandori is following that strand of modern art which operates between Zen and phenomenology."¹¹

As we can read in Joyce and Beckett, it has long been a tendency of 20th century literature for the narrative observer to become so self-absorbed that the self ceases to exist in relation to others.¹² Writing of this kind, and one could include many of the poems of Tandori in this tendency, is the literary form of phenomenology, the stream of philosophy dealing entirely with the sensory impressions as they register on the mind of the subject. Phenomenology is subjectivity in its most extreme form. Under such conditions, the idea of the self as a distinct entity defined in relation to other ideas or objects, breaks down. The common factor, then, between Zen and phenomenology is the undermining of the idea of "self". It is this tendency that results in the critique of the notion of personal style in the works of the NMS connected with Tandori.

Process and the visual arts

While for many Hungarian composers, Kurtág included, music's relationship with poetry is crucial, for the New Music Studio the visual arts were an increasingly important source of inspiration. This interest extended to collaborations on some instances: Vidovszky collaborated with Ilona Keserü on the installation *Hang-Szín-Tér* in 1980, and Jeney worked with the artist Dóra Maurer on a film, *Kalah*, produced at the Balázs Béla Film studio in 1981. Music by the New Music Studio—including Vidovszky's *Schroeder halála*, Sárosy's *Kotyogó kő egy korszóban*, Jeney's *Orfeusz kertje*, and the joint composition *Hommage à Kurtág* was played continuously at an exhibition in Wilhelmshaven, West Germany in 1978, which included works by the avant-garde artist Tamás

11 ■ Gyula Doboss, *Hérakleitosz Budán* (Heraclites in Buda), Bp., Magvető, 1988, 155.

12 ■ This is used by Lukács as an argument against modern literature in *The Ideology of Modernism*.

Szentjóby.¹³ Although Vidovszky has told me that he knew nothing of this exhibition, it shows how well known the work of the NMS was in the visual arts world. What these pieces in particular have in common is that they are based on the idea of process and pattern. This idea also featured strongly in the visual arts in Hungary during the second half of the 1970's, and can be found in several poems by Tandori. That Tandori was aware of these developments in the visual arts is made clear by the fact that he wrote the introduction to the catalogue for an exhibition by Ilona Keserü in 1982.

Process was an important idea in all of the composers of the New Music Studio, with the possible exception of Péter Eötvös. László Vidovszky's *Auto-koncert* (1972) and *Schroeder halála* (Schroeder's Death, 1975), the group compositions *Hommage à Kurtág*, and *Undisturbed* all have elements of process to their construction. The works by Jeney which take Tandori verses as inspiration also feature process in their construction. *Arthur Rimbaud a sivatagban* begins with a series of 25 different pitches, and repeats it, taking one from either end of the series at each repetition until only the note in the middle remains. Of course, this follows the form of the poem, but what is striking in the piece is the utter *sang-froid* with which this sequence is carried out. There is no fear of boredom: the process must unfold completely, because the process is the piece. In *Orfeusz kertje*, once again Jeney set up a process and followed it undeviatingly to the end. This piece uses a series of times for the rising and setting of the moon, expressed in four digits, that Tandori used in *Egy Kosztolányi vers* (A Kosztolányi Poem), and translates them into pitches. Thus the natural process of the waxing and waning of the moon determines the form of the piece. Once again, the composer's personality is sublimated to the process, which once begun, is pursued relentlessly.

There is a danger in exploring only one poet's work of overstating the importance of his poetry. There are, of course, other writers and poets who were equally important—e.e.cummings in Jeney's work, for example, and Kurtág's poets from the same period—Pilinszky, Attila József, Amy Károlyi. And if, for a while, the NMS and Kurtág were united in their admiration of the work of a fellow Hungarian, by the end of the 1970's this shared interest had waned: for the NMS, American music and poetry became the main focus of their attention, while Kurtág was increasingly gripped by Russian poetry. It's possible we may be due for another wave of interest in Tandori by Hungarian composers with the republication in 2000 of the first three volumes of his poems. It would be interesting to hear what a new generation hears—and sees—in his work. What characterised the New Music Studio's response to Tandori's work was their desire to re-forge the basic language of composition, using some tools borrowed from Tandori. Do composers in their 20's and 30's still feel this need to remake the musical material? ■

13 ■ Joachim Dietrichs, *Tamás Szentjóby: Künstler aus Ungarn*, 1981, exhibition catalogue.

Frank Cooper

Thirteen Days in the Death of Liszt

Alan Walker: *The Death of Franz Liszt based on the Unpublished Diary of His Pupil Lina Schmalhausen*, Cornell University Press, 2003, 208 pp.

After the deaths within one year of Beethoven and Schubert, playwright Eduard Bauernfeld's words were appropriately magnanimous: "Music's glorious reign is over." When Chopin died, painter Eugene Delacroix declared with deeply felt emotion, "What a loss he will be!" At Liszt's burial, the self-serving Mayor of Bayreuth, Theodor von Muncker, called his century's most comprehensive and influential musician "a master of sound, the devoted friend and promoter of the Wagner cause."

That single phrase was true but its public purpose could only have been to shift Liszt from the sunlight of his deserved fame to a place in Wagner's shadow, and it reflected the secondary position which Liszt was meant to have in Bayreuth—as first servant to the Wagner industry. His "employer" for this purpose, since Wagner's death three years earlier in 1883, was his daughter Cosima, Wagner's dutiful widow and eventual high priestess.

Stalwart and stubborn, Cosima single-handedly had assumed complete control

of the Wagner Festival for 1886 and, to boost its attractiveness, had insisted that her father—arguably one of the greatest living musicians in Europe and the most renowned—attend. Liszt's presence in itself would generate publicity, draw the curious and the serious, and help to sell the tickets. That the 75-year-old was nearly blind in one eye, could hardly walk due to dropsy having caused his legs and feet to swell alarmingly, had to eat only soft foods due to terrible gum disease and suffered from a lingering cold caught earlier in the year dissuaded Cosima in no way from her determination to capitalise on her father's magnetism. Thus, on July 20, Liszt obeyed his daughter's summons and arrived by train in Bayreuth. Eleven days later, on July 31, in the middle of Cosima's Festival and after having attended *Parsifal* on July 23 and *Tristan* on July 25, Liszt lay dead. He was buried in the morning of August 3. The story was circulated that he died peacefully murmuring the name "Tristan," thus serving Wagner's cause even at the moment of death itself.

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Those who knew the truth and how contrary it was to the fiction kept quiet—grief, respect, even fear perhaps contributing to their decision. History received its sanitised account. Wagner's posthumous fame soared, eclipsing Liszt's until the second half of the next century when, with laboured steps, scholars began wresting the facts from evidence of every sort to produce accounts of Liszt's life and assessments of his place in music's history that became clearer with each passing decade. The culmination of this work was Alan Walker's three-volume masterpiece *Franz Liszt*, the final installment of which reached the public in 1996—a century and a decade after the events of Liszt's passing.

Walker's research unearthed the unpublished eighty-one page "diary" of Lina Schmalhausen, Liszt's one-time student, attentive caregiver and close companion who, at twenty-two, was with her master, by invitation, throughout the ordeal in Bayreuth. Unearthed as well were the circumstances under which this document came to be written and to be placed under the embargo that kept its contents hidden. In the field of musical biography, no apparent parallels come to mind comparable to the story behind this document and its intimate, vividly detailed content.

Unable to attend the event of August 3 due to illness, Liszt's authorised biographer, Lina Ramann, wrote from distant Nürnberg to seek an account of the composer's last days from the only eye witness who was free to provide it, Lina Schmalhausen. The young lady's qualifications included her having been Liszt's pupil in Weimar, Budapest and Rome over a period of nearly seven years, her intimate access to the grand old man with whom she sometimes embraced and held hands (and for whom she did the personal laundry) as well as her being completely in his trust and the recipient of important holographs

as gifts (including the oratorio *Christus*). She, however, was disliked both by Liszt's male students (who were jealous of her familiarity with their Master) and by Cosima (who had heard tales which had roused her suspicions). Schmalhausen's presence in Bayreuth was welcomed only by Liszt. Treated as a pariah by almost everyone else (a fact that Ramann could not have known), Schmalhausen had no reason to participate in the posthumous cover-up and manufacture of another Wagnerian myth. Rather, she had every reason to write what no one else involved could. The resulting document, sketched, then finalised by February 10, 1887, must have hit Ramann with the force of a bombshell. She kept it, unused (for obvious reasons), among her mountainous personal papers which found their resting place in Weimar following her death in 1912.

The "diary" places its reader in the room with Liszt, sometimes privately but often in the company of Cosima and her children, Liszt's disciples, admirers, friends, servants and his doctors. Conversations and card games alternate with readings aloud as pastimes, which are punctuated by matters of health becoming more acute every twenty-four hours. Schmalhausen's record would be important enough for the mere sequence of events it contains, but is all the more compelling for the insight it provides into the personalities involved—and the disastrous results of their interactions and interventions. The following—derived from the lady's exceptionally detailed descriptions—outlines the succession of days and nights which took Liszt to his grave.

Thursday, July 22: Schmalhausen's account begins with Liszt's early morning greeting of her, their casual conversation, a garden stroll together (marked by Liszt's pronounced coughing), cautionary confidences about certain people who would be

arriving, the black-draped Cosima's haughty indifference to Lina's presence (despite knowing that her father had telegraphed Lina asking her to join him for a week in Bayreuth), the invalid's chair which elevated the old man's swollen feet, her description of his appearance as "deathly ill" and her chilling observation: "Four months ago, in Pest, he was still just like a god; now, he was completely broken." That night, a "terrible storm" keeps Lina awake.

Friday, July 23: Lina suggests to Liszt that, to avoid problems, she ought to leave Bayreuth (Arthur Friedheim's wife having told Liszt the absurdity that Lina meant to murder him), but the idea is rejected. Conversations ensue with the pianists Alexander Siloti, Bernhard Stavenhagen and Stefan Thomán (all former pupils), helping to distract the master from his fits of coughing. Cosima evidently provides no tickets to her father or his friend Lina, so Liszt, despite being guest of honour at the Festival, buys pairs of tickets to *Parsifal* and *Tristan*. Lina hears of pianist Marie Jaëll's disapproval of her.

Saturday, July 24: Liszt's appetite begins to wane. He drinks only water flavoured with a little wine. August Göllerich, another Liszt protégé, reads aloud to pass time while Liszt slumbers. Visitors fill the rest of the morning, tiring Liszt who wants to be alone until late afternoon. Lina, who was scowled at earlier by another woman for her help in dressing Liszt and combing his hair, is briefly brought to sit on his lap and to receive a few quietly spoken words of appreciation. In his frail condition, Liszt has trouble holding his cards during games, nods sleepily and rattles "terribly."

Sunday, July 25: Lina continues her practice of arriving in Liszt's rooms after Cosima's early morning visits (to avoid censorious glances), and finds Liszt "very fatigued." A day of calm, with only the

fewest visitors, is planned, but three of Liszt's Viennese relatives arrive. Their leaden conversation puts Liszt to sleep. An hour-and-a-half later, he awakens saying, "I feel horribly weary." Lina's efforts to read to Liszt are broken by the arrival of his local, uncomprehending doctor, who counsels fewer visitors, less talk ("It taxes the lungs") and bowls of broth. The pretty pianist Sophie Menter arrives and chats about Olga Janina, the wild Cossak who once threatened Liszt with a revolver. The only handkerchief which Liszt has had all day is filled with his phlegm. At the *Tristan* performance that evening, his prolonged, visible applause helps to put across the first Bayreuth production of the great work.

Monday, July 26: Friends and relatives say goodbye before Menter breezes in, wafting lilac, and gossips with her beloved former teacher about Stavenhagen, Thomán and Arthur Friedheim, who have behaved boisterously and badly in the past. Lina and Liszt share the same fork while eating some rice for lunch. Discussion centres on future plans for travel and with whom. Cards are played once more but Liszt's cough brings red spots to his brow. Eventually, he tries to write a few letters but is overcome by drowsiness. As the day drags on, sadness infects both of them. Lina almost falls trying to support Liszt's weight as he tries to walk to his bedroom. He eats only about a third of the rice and chicken he is given for supper, although Lina hands him each forkful. A high fever results in another useless house call by the doctor, who insists that Liszt only has a bad cold. To avoid scandal, Lina is sent away, although she desires nothing more than to sit holding his hand during the night.

Tuesday, July 27: After a sleepless night during which his fever raged, Liszt has been attended not even by Cosima. Liszt expresses his dismay at having fallen

ill amid the clamour of Bayreuth. Cosima spends ninety minutes with her father who, in his delirium, thinks he's speaking intimately with Lina. Cosima's ears burn. Lina and all others are banned, but Liszt's servant calls the departing Cosima "the crazy witch" and allows Lina to remain. After reading aloud for some time, Lina hands the book to Daniela, Cosima's daughter by Hans von Bülow, who continues while Lina leaves. Returning an hour later, Lina, on Cosima's orders, is denied entry. She despairs that she "would never be allowed to see" Liszt again.

Wednesday, July 28: Sent for at 6:00 a.m., Lina is told that her master has been forbidden to see anyone, that he greets her "very warmly," and offers her a sum of money with which to leave Bayreuth, but Lina will have none of it. Staying in the servant's room to be nearby and to follow events, she notes Cosima's comings and goings as well as the arrival of another doctor, Dr Landgraf, "the bungler of Bayreuth", who had been sent for to give a second opinion. The diagnosis is pneumonia and the prescription complete rest in isolation. Cosima's daughters Eva and Isolde are assigned to watch duty but pay little attention to Liszt, distracting themselves with the flirtatious, young Stavenhagen (who later responds smugly to Lina's queries by saying that he had not been "with the old man at all").

Thursday, July 29: Cosima establishes herself as Liszt's night nurse, sleeping in a bed in the next room but with the connecting door "tightly shut" from 11:00 p.m. on. This heartless sham, followed after her departure for Festival duties by the arrival of Eva, Isolde and their amuser, Stavenhagen, aggravates the household—no one is responding to Liszt's moans or coughing. They push the weak, old man back into bed when he tries to get up. Helpless, Liszt dissolves into tears. All of this is

heard by Lina who again has secreted herself in the servant's room, from the cracked door of which she can see much of what transpires. In the afternoon, when Lina returns to the house with the intention of finding Liszt unguarded, she looks through a garden window to discover Stavenhagen writing letters and is told that Cosima has locked him alone inside with Liszt, who is sleeping. Entrance is impossible because Cosima might return at any time. Miserable, Lina sits for five hours in the garden—until everyone but a sympathetic servant girl thinks she was gone. It is whispered to Lina that she might now steal into Liszt's room. With tender affection and restrained emotions they embrace, worried about the consequences should Cosima discover them together. Stavenhagen, witnessing some of the conversation, tricks Lina into leaving. At midnight, Lina discovers Stavenhagen, Thomán and others in a tavern making merry with jokes and beer, and is told that "the old man was still calling for you."

Friday, July 30: Crudely insensitive to Lina's pleading for entry, Stavenhagen and Göllicher (under threats from Cosima) prove obstinate. Lina learns that the Master is alone and unattended, unable to recognise anyone, suffering dreadfully and wracked by his cough. That "he will die tonight" is predicted. Around 7:00 p.m., Lina forces her way into Liszt's room to see his emaciated, shaking form (he has had no food and nothing but water to drink for days). Trying to absorb the dreadful spectacle, she makes a mental note that "the living Amfortas" is here, "struggling with death on his sickbed" while the Wagner family was at the Festspielhaus attending *Parsifal*. She slips out to establish her vigil in the garden where a narrow opening in the window blinds let her glimpse what was happening inside. Liszt's hallucinations grow worse.

By 11:30 P.M., Cosima and the doctor confer before she goes to sleep. Liszt's valet sleeps at his bedside, being awakened first to help Liszt use the chamber pot and again when "the Master leaped out of bed like a madman, clutching his heart and shouting" in the belief that "he was choking to death." After thirty minutes of this horror, Liszt falls over the bed. Cosima sends for the doctor, who arrives around 4:00 A.M.—and pronounces Liszt dead. But Liszt had not died. Vigorous massage warms him, drops are administered, and his unconscious form is placed again under the covers.

Saturday, July 31: The situation is so dire that Cosima, "for the first and only time," remains with her father all day, her children in attendance. The second physician responds to a cable and arrives in the late afternoon to prescribe that "the heaviest wines and champagnes" be poured into Liszt in anticipation of the critical evening ahead. Utterly docile and unable to speak, Liszt submits to these ministrations. At night, Lina takes up her previous station—outside, looking in. She sees both doctors in Liszt's room and notes that, at 11:15 p.m., two hypodermic injections are made in his chest. "Then," she tells us, "the Master's body *shook* violently as if an earthquake were taking place." Without emotion, Cosima kneels for long minutes... before falling into uneasy sleep in a nearby chair. As the hours pass, her wakefulness and glances toward the window make Lina anxious and she leaves for her rented room.

Sunday, August 1: Arriving nearly frozen at 4:30 a.m., Lina goes to bed for about an hour before her landlady awakens her gently with the words, "So Liszt is dead." In a frenzied few minutes Lina dresses and walks to Liszt's house where the valet confirms the news but will not permit her to enter before 10:00 a.m., after

the Master's body has "been dressed." Giving the man "a push that he will remember," she forces her way to the wax-yellowed shell of her Master, whom she finds "gaunt but very peaceful." Cosima, who is there, leaves for twenty minutes during which Lina holds her beloved's hand and prays. Returning, she kisses Lina, gives her Liszt's prayer book and places the blame for Liszt's death on the Hungarian family [the Munkácsys], at whose country home her father had caught his cold before coming to Bayreuth. Lina is permitted to cut a lock of Liszt's hair before leaving. At her rooming house, she picks some forget-me-nots to place in Liszt's hand (with Cosima's permission). None of the family sheds a tear during a quickly-arranged prayer service led by a local priest. With Wagner's bust over his head and a crucifix at his feet, Liszt is now to be viewed, his daughter and grandchildren in a half circle around the bed. The local citizenry file past, more curious than moved, while the former pupils Friedhein, Göllicherich, William Dayas and Alfred Reisenauer (who had arrived in Bayreuth hoping for some lessons from his teacher) were visibly in grief. At 1:00 p.m., Lina is sent to buy some muslin to keep the flies off Liszt. Photography and the making of plaster casts of Liszt's face occupy an hour or two. The local barber arrives to embalm the body. Lina's description cannot be paraphrased: *The good fellow... had never in his life embalmed a corpse and cut the whole cadaver apart. The head, as well as the body, were so bloated afterward, the face so distorted, that it was forbidden to remove the white gauze. Consequently no one was permitted to view the body...*

Monday, August 2: In its room, surrounded by bowls of chlorine to mask the odour of rapid decay, Liszt's body is to be viewed by no one. Lina tells us that, at the landlady's insistence, an annoyed Cosima

and a servant lift the body into a brown metal coffin then carry it themselves across the street to Wahnfried, the family residence. (One can only imagine the sight this made on a busy Monday morning in Bayreuth and the indignity of it all.)

Tuesday, August 3: At 9:00 a.m., Lina arrives at Wahnfried with a wreath of dark red roses inscribed *Auf Wiedersehen*, places it on Liszt's coffin and prays. Both the coffin and Wagner's grand piano are draped in black crêpe. The funeral of "Wagner's father-in-law" (as Bayreuthers referred to Liszt that day), after a procession through town, takes place but is not described by Lina, who writes only: *After the funeral I departed immediately. I had suffered enough during the past week, and each additional day spent in Bayreuth*

would only have increased my disgust with humanity...

Thus we learn the circumstances of Franz Liszt's final days and death, Lina Schmalhausen's account providing unprecedented access to events, motivations and consequences which appall the modern reader. Framed by a prodigious prologue and an equally remarkable epilogue (describing the funeral and memorial service) and annotated in revelatory fashion throughout by Alan Walker, *The Death of Franz Liszt based on the Unpublished Diary of His Pupil Lina Schmalhausen* is fascinating, essential reading in the history of one of the nineteenth century's most amazing musicians, the man who said of his predicament in Bayreuth, "If only I do not die here." ■

ERRATUM

In our previous issue the unpublished letter from Berlioz to Liszt was mentioned as a recent acquisition by the Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on p. 153; it was purchased by the Franz Liszt Memorial Museum, as discussed by Mária Eckhardt in her article on pp. 141-149 of the same issue.

Tamás Ungár

Maids Across the Ocean

CLOSE-UP

"I'm whirling around, I've been whirling around since Christmas!" says Bernadett contentedly.

The 27-year-old from Pécs arrived home from New York two days before Christmas Eve and has been enjoying herself ever since. Bernadett feels that discos, movies, shopping, friends and chatting away till dawn help her keep her head straight.

Bernadett often thinks back to when she first stumbled. She says it was in secondary school: she failed physics in her second year. She had been a top student in primary school and secondary school wasn't going badly but she just couldn't cope with physics.

"After I failed, everyone was so condescending and treated me like an idiot," she says without sounding a bit offended. "My mother and father and brother still think I'm no good at anything."

Bernadett matriculated from night school, learning shorthand-typing on the side; she worked first as a secretary and then in a café. Four years ago she ran into a girlfriend she hadn't seen in years. Kati had just come back from the US and told her how much she enjoyed it there and how well she was paid as a *bébiszitter* (child-minder) in the States. Bernadett decided she would go too. Getting her American visa needed a few tricky moves. Kati got a letter of invitation for her, then a relative falsified an employer's certificate from the firm where she worked, stating that Bernadett had a very important job and they could only let her go for two weeks at the most. And that her salary was several hundred thousand forints a month. After that she went to a bank with Kati, who transferred one and a half million forints to Bernadett's account. Ten minutes later Bernadett transferred this sum back to Kati's account. This allowed her to

Tamás Ungár

is the Pécs correspondent of *Népszabadság*, a national daily, which first published this article.

get an account statement showing that she had one and a half million in her account. She attached this to the visa application; all of this showed the American Embassy that Bernadett's career was running smoothly. In other words, she wouldn't be a potential illegal worker. She got the visa.

With money borrowed from her mother, Bernadett bought her air ticket and arrived in New York in June 2000. Robi met her at the airport. This 32-year-old was making a living by getting work for Hungarian girls in the New World. In return the girls had to pay him a month's salary. At the airport Robi took Bernadett's passport and returned it only when he had been paid his fee. Robi rented a house where, at that time, eighteen girls were living in three rooms. Every day he took the girls for an interview or an introductory talk with the families looking for child-minders.

The whole family was always present at the interview. The parents watched how the new girl got on with the children. The mother's word was decisive, so the girls tried not to look too pretty. Bernadette pinned up her long blond hair in a bun and didn't put on any make-up; she wore her very weak glasses, concealed her shapely legs beneath a long skirt and gave herself an ungainly walk by wearing flat shoes.

Since Bernadett's English was sketchy, at first she wasn't able to get a job as a child-minder, she was taken on to do the housework for a family with three children for \$325 a week. The father was a businessman, the mother didn't work. Bernadett escaped from them after four weeks.

"They never had a kind word for me, all they did was order me about," she explained her escape. "From seven in the morning till seven at night I washed, swept, scrubbed and did the dishes. The children had enough toys to fill a shop. They spread them around the floor ten times a day and it was always me who put everything back on the shelves. In the meantime the mother looked on, barking out orders, don't put that there, put it here, yes, here. My God, what a pain this Hungarian girl is!"

At the end of the fourth week, Bernadett paid Robi off and got her passport back. She called up a boy she knew from Pécs who was living in New York and asked him to let her stay for a day or two till she found a new job. He was earning \$1000 a week as a house-painter and took her in. Bernadett placed an ad in a newspaper: "Hungarian girl with experience and references seeks employment as a live-in child-minder." She was given the "reference" by Klári, a girl she met in a bar, who'd been living in the States for five years and spoke perfect English. When parents inquiring about Bernadett phoned Klári, she reeled off a load of claptrap.

"Oh, Bernie is a wonderful girl. Clean, hard-working and patient. She left me because my children are bigger now and we don't need a child-minder, just someone to clean, but she wants to work with children. It's her life."

There were several dozen applicants and Bernadett chose an Italian family whose home was 70 kilometres from New York. The man was a technician in the

Homesick and Lonely

Something around a thousand two hundred Hungarian university students travel to the US every year to study. They generally spend a year abroad and during that time they supplement their grants with the \$600 to \$700 a month they earn in work the college guarantees or offers them. Studying and working in the States for these students is completely legal. Zsuzsanna Nagy, who is the adviser on American studies for the Pécs University of Arts and Sciences, says: "However exciting and useful this year spent in the States is, our students often suffer from loneliness and homesickness."

Among the current and former Pécs university students several hundred have tried their luck working on the black in the New World. There's quite an aura at the university about the trans-Atlantic earnings and adventures. Zsuzsanna Nagy (unofficially of course) knows a lot about those working illegally in America. Those who return home say that virtually the only work they can get is whatever US citizens won't do. This means jobs like looking after children, cleaning, or a wide range of materials handling. Though the pay sounds good compared to Hungarian incomes, it's not enough to live on comfortably. Those returning almost always seem to save less than they had planned. Anyone bringing home two million forints after child-minding for a year or two counts as a record holder. They often start spending money sooner or later to compensate for having been so much at the disposal of other people.

On the other hand, Zsuzsanna Nagy says, "Most of the young Hungarians who work illegally in the US are entranced by the life-style, liberalism and affluence they find there. A third of those living abroad illegally do all they can to get a residence permit."

village and his wife a book-keeper in New York. They were a loving couple, making so much noise at night that even the neighbours tossed and turned. The manly-looking husband, fond of beer and swearing, bought Bernadett a 25-year-old Oldsmobile which had eight bulletholes on one side. In this she ferried the nine-year-old boy and five-year-old girl to school and nursery school. The wife came home at seven in the evening, when she grabbed a bottle of wine, lit a cigarette and beckoned to Bernadett to come and have a chat. Sipping wine and smoking they nattered on about what the kids had been doing. The little boy usually behaved beautifully, the angelic little girl was a devil: if she didn't like something she pinched and punched Bernadett.

"I had to put up with that and I couldn't even raise my voice," recalled Bernadett. "Occasionally I complained about the girl, but she denied everything and the parents didn't believe me. One day the little girl kicked me in the head and my glasses landed in the far corner of the room. I was so humiliated I cried. In May 2001 I got an unbearable headache and that was when I did a bunk from there too."

Bernadett didn't stop till she got home to Pécs. In three months she blew the one million forints worth of dollars she had saved in the U.S. It was as if she wanted to give vent to all that she had suffered abroad in the discos and shopping centres. As her money dwindled she tried to find work, but she couldn't find anything suitable—at the best all she could get was something paying the minimum wage. In December 2001, once again with a visa acquired under false pretenses, she flew back to America.

"I was employed by a Jewish family from Connecticut," Bernadett related. He was a successful lawyer of about 50, amusing and good-natured, who worked from dawn to dusk. His wife used to be a singer, but had retired and spent the whole day on the phone. They had a three-year-old son, David. Six months later she gave birth to another son. They were very good to me, I had a lovely room, with a separate telephone line. They also bought me a cell phone and a six-months-old Nissan. I didn't have to do any cleaning, another girl did that.

In the autumn of 2002, Bernadett found herself more and more frequently out of breath. She felt weak, she was afraid of getting into the car, her face was disfigured by spots. On January 1, 2003 she woke up to find that she couldn't move her left side. She was taken to outpatients, where they established that she had nothing organically wrong with her but suffered from a panic disorder.

"I couldn't stand the maid's lot," she claimed. I suffered from being at someone's beck and call all the time. I hated having to jump up at any moment. It was unbearable the way they spoiled David. Sometimes I had to prepare four or five kinds of breakfast for him because he just pushed away what he'd asked for. Once the younger one made a fuss because I pulled down his pants when I was changing his nappy and he wanted to pull them down himself. He whimpered for a whole hour, until on orders from his mother I had to go out to the rubbish bin, fish around for the dirty nappy, bring it in and put it back on him. He calmed down at that, then pulled down his pants so I was able to put his clean nappy on again. If David wanted something, he was always in the right. When I gave in my notice I cried. David's mother cried too. She understood."

Bernadett didn't take on any more live-in jobs. She hoped to become a daily help, and that the tensions of being at someone's beck and call would pass. She rented a room in a pretty scruffy location in the Bronx. Her neighbours were Hungarian girls. She went out to clean for an Irish family where she stayed five months. In all that time the two fifteen-year-old girls in the family didn't once return her greeting. The twins cut her dead. If they had their period they threw their pants in the laundry basket together with the bloody pad. Every gesture of theirs suggested that the Hungarian girl was there to tidy up.

Bernadett's anxiety got worse and she decided to come home for good. Her plane landed in Budapest on December 22. She says she'll never go abroad to be a maid again.

"It's only worth going if you've got definite plans. If, let's say, you plan to

work abroad for three or four years, living a secluded life; earning enough for an apartment and a car. Once you've got the money together, you have to go home. I didn't have that sort of aim in mind. So, although I was earning well, I was spending all I earned. My illness was very expensive: I had to pay \$300-\$400 for a check-up. I had my mother over to stay three times and a girlfriend twice. I spent a tremendous amount on phone calls. Every day I spoke for an hour with my mother, to be sure, when at home we hardly speak to each other. On the weekends I always went shopping and then I went out in the town. It took my mind off my loneliness. I never bought good quality things, my money went on \$5 to \$10 tops and cheap jeans. In the States I had about fifty Hungarian girlfriends, many of them lived just as I did. Saturdays they put on their shortest skirts, and tops that displayed their belly buttons and breasts to the best advantage and took themselves off to the noisiest clubs and discos.

Bernadett returned home with seventy kilos of clothes. Her suitcases were weighed down by four huge photograph albums. The photos show girls giggling with abandon and a few self-confident young men. Bernadett is happy to show the albums.

"That girl with the long legs is Emese. She's been cleaning for a family for five years, and she's been going to college for three years doing business management. The father of the family screwed her and he's paying her college fees in secret. Gréta went to an arts secondary school back home; she wanted to be a dancer. She's abroad legally, she studies history at college and the college guarantees her a \$600 a month job. She takes on occasional cleaning and ironing. She doesn't want to come home, she lives in Harlem, in a place where I didn't dare get out of the taxi. Andi is 36, she's been a child-minder for five years. She doesn't want to come back, she wants to get married to be able to stay on, which means she either has to marry someone who's doing well for love, or pay a guy \$10,000 for a marriage of convenience. I'm afraid she hasn't even got a thousand dollars to her name. I used to go out with Adam, but he went on holiday to Thailand and when he came back he told me we couldn't make love for a while because he had spent the two weeks screwing around, and once his rubber had burst. Alex is a successful lawyer, he wanted to marry me; he sent me my second invitation letter. He bought a Saab Cabrio for me but I didn't stay a minute with him. He wasn't attractive. In fact he was really ugly: like Frankenstein with a hangover. Mari works for a florist, she earns \$1,500 a month, her partner Gábor on the other hand earns four thousand. He's a scaffolder. He gets twice as much work done as anyone else because he doesn't use a harness. He got the job when a place became vacant: a guy fell from the fortieth floor. He wasn't wearing a harness. ■

Translated by Elizabeth Szász

Péter Granasztói

Count Sándor Teleki and Victor Hugo's "Fancy" Frieze Coat

The story of Count Sándor Teleki and his frieze coat came to our attention quite by chance in early 2001, when Mónika Lackner and I, as curators at the Ethnographical Museum in Budapest, set about preparing the catalogue for an exhibition of embroidered coats held in Paris as part of "MagyarArt 2001–2002", the year-long celebration of Hungarian culture in France.¹ We both felt that the time had come to depart from earlier ethnographic approaches and focus more closely on the history of the vogue for wearing this garment that arose during the nineteenth century. We wanted to show how the embroidered frieze coat of the peasantry came to be elevated to a national symbol, to the point that it was accepted and adopted by the cream of Hungarian society. In the absence of earlier research work on the subject, few facts were at our immediate disposal, so I am expressly indebted to Tamás Hofer for pointing me towards a 1931 review by Sándor Eckhardt that refers to a detailed account in Count Sándor Teleki's memoirs of an embroidered cloak which, through a convoluted chain of circumstances, ended up on the ceiling of Victor Hugo's room.² That nugget of information provided the starting-point for our own investigations.

Touching as it does on many issues, the story is open to varied interpretations. First and perhaps foremost, it provides a telling specific example of the attitudes that individual members of Hungary's nobility adopted towards certain elements of the country's peasant culture, and the depth of that knowledge and understanding, in the first half of the nineteenth century. What transpires is just how swiftly these articles of peasant culture were perceived as national symbols, archetypal expressions of Hungarian identity. Not least, the story breathes new life into a remarkably chequered career whilst also shedding unexpected light on the very early history of photography and, ultimately, has a bearing on issues of memory and the trustworthiness or verifiability of recollections.

Péter Granasztói

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The frieze cloak is one of the most-prized items of peasant dress, and certainly the one most commonly adumbrated in folk song.³ The word used for it in Hungarian—*szűr*—denotes both the frieze, or coarse cloth, that was made from the wool of sheep as well as a form of wide-collared, cloak-like outer garment tailored from the material. *Cifraszűr*, or “fancy” frieze coat, turns up during the nineteenth century as a designation for such garments when adorned with appliqué work and embroidery. This fashion first took root in the Transdanubian region of western Hungary, where mantles that not only had decorative hems and cuffs but were also more generally adorned with profuse appliqué and additional embroidery began to make an appearance in the 1820s. Such garments were exclusively worn by men, in part as the everyday wear principally of shepherds, drovers and other stockmen, but also more generally as an item of male festive dress in villages and market towns. They functioned most obviously as overcoats, though they were seldom donned fully but simply draped over the shoulders. Since the coat was rarely worn as such, the sleeves lost their original function and so were sewn or tied up and used to hold implements placed in sewn-on pockets. What mainly distinguishes a “fancy” frieze coat from any other topcoat is the broad square collar that folds down over the back: any coat lacking this is not the genuine article. The sheer voluminousness of such a coat militates against its being buttoned up, the two flaps would not even meet at the front unless held together. Having no buttons, all there is to secure the coat on the torso is a strap across the upper chest, and even that is seldom done and undone, but rather, the strap is left fastened and the wearer slips head and shoulders into and out of the cloak.

For Transdanubian herdsmen, the creators and first wearers of this item of clothing, and indeed the serfs of the wider rural community who subsequently copied them, the “fancy” frieze coat—and indeed other forms of topcoat, such as the long, plain or likewise embroidered cloaks known as *suba*—was their most valuable possession and the one best suited for formal wear. Despite its appearance in the west of the country in the first quarter of the century, it was not until the 1860s that the vogue for “fancy” frieze coats caught on throughout the country, propelled by a fashion for distinctively Hungarian-style clothing in general that got under way in the 1850s and 1860s.

The alacrity with which Hungary’s ruling classes, including the aristocracy, picked up on and, on occasion, came to wear peasant-style frieze cloaks, whether decorated or plain, was surprising. The phenomenon was very much bound up with the nationalist movement, and the associated passion for “national dress” that gathered pace during Hungary’s Reform Era in the 1830s and 40s. The various elements of this national dress, which came to be worn by a broad segment of the population across social classes, were assembled by the country’s trend-setters and stylists (notably the gentlemen’s tailors of Pest) from a multitude of sources, most particularly from aristocratic and gentry fashions of earlier cen-

turies. During the Reform Age itself peasant wear was only a tangential inspiration, donned on exceptional occasions (e.g. as costumes worn by a scattering of nobles at fancy-dress balls or while electioneering for seats in county or national assemblies), for the national dress styles that evolved in Pest. Baron Frigyes Podmaniczky, a dandy famed for the English-style elegance of his clothing, relates in his journal that for the elections to the country's Diet in 1847 he took to the stump in the town of Vác as a member of Kossuth's party, and for three weeks was not permitted to take off the frieze coat that he had purchased in advance. Beneath that he wore a metal-buttoned jacket, waistcoat, riding breeches and a hat with a crane's feather—all of which he referred to as his "costume".

That the frieze coat came to be adopted by the liberals of the anti-Habsburg Opposition party was a reflection of their nationalist aims, one important goal of which was the promotion and protection of domestic Hungarian industry against Austrian domination, which found expression in a drive to popularise the wearing of clothes made from domestic coarse textiles. Thus the embroidered frieze coat acquired an unequivocally "nationalist" connotation during the run-up to the 1847 elections for representatives to the Diet, with Kossuth, Batthyány and several other leading Opposition politicians wearing it for their ceremonial entry into Pest on election day as candidates to represent the county. To the general public's amazement:

Riding at the head of the procession, some in full, all-black Hungarian gala dress, others wearing frieze coats or black capes, seated on splendid mounts with glittering Oriental trimmings, were Count Lajos Batthyány, Count Kazmér Batthyány, Count Ödön Batthyány, Count Domokos Teleki, Count Gedeon Ráday, Ödön Beniczky, myself, and following us the principal election agents,

with three thousand canvassers in train.⁴ This event, according to Podmaniczky's memoirs, was memorialised in a lithograph (by Weis) with the title "Procession of Kossuth's electors in front of the National Museum."

Earlier research had shown that multiple factors accounted for the heightening of interest in frieze coats during the 1830s and 1840s. By the start of that century, Western styles of clothing had essentially supplanted domestic Hungarian fashions. Nevertheless, in court circles the wearing of Hungarian-style ceremonial dress never died out completely, with certain individuals evidently clinging to the traditional clothing either out of personal conviction or family custom.⁵ Sándor Teleki relates in his memoirs how someone invited him to attend the county assembly in Nagykaroly (now Carei, Romania), but he should first change clothes, so Teleki went off to his room to don his formal Hungarian wear.⁶

Count Sándor Teleki was a Transylvanian. He was born at Kolozsvár (now Cluj-Napoca, Romania) in 1821, and died at Nagybánya (Baia Mare) in 1891. He led an adventurous life, soldiering in Spain when a young man, becoming one of

Liszt's friends whilst still a student, even touring with him. He was also a close friend of the poet Sándor Petőfi, and it was Teleki's mansion in Koltó (Coltău) where the poet spent his honeymoon after marrying Júlia Szendrei in 1848. Teleki's political activism became significant on being elected as his local district's delegate to the Transylvanian Diet of 1846/47, where his lobbying skills gained him a leading role in ensuring that the municipal authorities for the Partium, the region sandwiched between Hungary and Transylvania proper, endorsed the Opposition party's programme. During Hungary's 1848/49 War of Independence, he served as a major and later colonel under General Bem.

Teleki was one of those aristocrats who no doubt attached particular importance to wearing traditional Hungarian formal dress, but that did not stand in the way of an enthusiasm for decorative items of peasant wear: "There is no finer item of folk dress than the frieze cape (*guba*), a fancily embroidered pelisse (*bunda*) or ornamented frieze coat (*szűr*)," he wrote in his first set of memoirs.⁷ That declaration also marks the start of the story of Teleki's own "fancy" frieze coat.

At some point during the 1830s or 40s, Pál Csúzy, a friend, arranged to have an embroidered frieze coat delivered by express coach—presumably from Hungary proper—to Teleki in either Kolozsvár or Koltó:

Intrigued, I undid the parcel to find a 'fancy' frieze coat the likes of which I had never set eyes on before—indeed such as one would have been foolhardy even to imagine. A flood of colour coruscated upon it in every hue of the rainbow, a thousand shades, like wild flowers on a fragrant meadow. The white frieze cloth on which the embroidery was revealed itself here and there, though even then only secretively; there was a large, scrolled and chased buckle of pale silver on it, dangling from which were two knee-length tassels in the national colours, like an ash-tree's melancholy boughs, and dropping out of which were a gleamingly polished steel and, on the other side, flint and tinder in a small bag embroidered with billing white doves, whilst the decoration on the front dazzled like the splendid robe of a celebrant at high mass, with breast-plates of palm-sized round mirrors set in gaudily multicoloured frames, on the square collar a carpet of tulips, forget-me-nots and violets, and sewn to the cuffs of two sleeves appliqué chevrons of blood-red, orange and ultramarine felt, the edges of which were fancily embroidered with cross-stitching, a flower-cluster border framing the whole; on the elbow of one sleeve the figure of a mounted bandit with an ornamental whip, on that of the other a sleeping swineherd, his head resting in the lap of his sweetheart. That was what the creation looked like."⁸

After the Hungarian defeat in the 1848/49 War of Independence, Sándor Teleki was obliged to flee Hungary, where he was later condemned to death *in absentia*. The escape itself was notable in several respects, not least because according to the count's own account he was assisted over the border to Belgrade by members of the gang of the celebrated Hungarian peasant-bandit Sándor Rózsa. He was to retain a keen interest in bandits in later life, not the only one who perceived a close link between them and embroidered frieze coats:

Can anyone picture Jóska Sobri, Milfait or Andor Pap except in a frieze coat? I only ever saw Viola thus, Sándor Göndör likewise goes about in one—indeed anyone claiming to be an outlaw dons one, because only under such a coat does a cambric shirt shine out truly white, and his wench can only snuggle up with comforting warmth against that; it is the variegated flower of the great Bakony hills, the jewel of Zala, Veszprém and Somogy counties.⁹

Via Belgrade, Teleki reached Paris and later London, before fetching up on Jersey and later on Guernsey in the Channel Islands. It was on Jersey, in 1852, that he met Victor Hugo, who was just beginning almost twenty years in exile, returning to Paris only in 1870 to be immediately elected to the National Assembly as deputy for the Seine. *Les Misérables* and many of Hugo's most enduring poems were written in exile, but one should not overlook his huge legacy as a journalist and pamphleteer.

Hugo lived with his family on Guernsey (Hautville House, his residence in Saint Peter Port, still stands today as a museum¹⁰) and other exiles, amongst which were a fair number of Hungarians who had been forced to flee the country due to their roles in the War of Independence (many, like Teleki, with death sentences passed on them by the Austrian-run courts hanging over them). Of all the latter contingent, the longest time on the island was spent by Sándor Teleki and Lázár Mészáros. The latter, who had been appointed Minister of Defense in early 1849 and then at the beginning of August of that year, commander in chief of the Hungarian National Guard battalions, eventually died in England in 1858, with Hugo himself recording his death in his journal. Mór Perczel, a landowner who had been a general in the Hungarian National Guard, likewise spent a short time on Jersey, as did the musician Ede Reményi, who had himself actively participated in the 1848/49 events, not least as General Artúr Görgey's favourite violinist. After leaving Hungary, Reményi went on to build a brilliant career as a matchless virtuoso in the Hungarian Gypsy style both in Europe and the USA, including several spells in London, where he was appointed solo violinist to Queen Victoria (1854). One of Teleki's closest friends was Balázs Orbán, to whom he gave lodgings in his own household. Orbán was later to make a mark as a collector of ethnographic material, best known for a monumental descriptive work on the Székely-inhabited region of Transylvania. They and other Hungarian émigrés crop up frequently in the memoirs and diaries of Victor Hugo and his family, with Mészáros and Teleki in particular becoming close friends and often socialising with them (among other things, Teleki taught Hugo how to shoot game).

After several years of living in considerable poverty in the Channel Islands, Teleki eventually left for Italy, where he served in Garibaldi's forces. He was sustained by small and very irregular sums of money sent from home, though Hugo helped him out with loans on more than one occasion. The "fancy" frieze coat—"this hungaricum unicum" as he himself called it—followed its owner into exile, first to Jersey and later Guernsey, where it did service as a bedspread. Quite how

it got there is unclear, though we know from correspondence that he certainly asked his family to send winter clothing and books. A hint as to the possible route by which the coat came out, to say nothing of the attachment that Teleki had for it, is given by a later incident, in 1862, by which time he was domiciled in Geneva. In a letter to his mother, he writes:

The *buda* [this was a style of dark formal Hungarian wear that gained currency during the 1850s], having arrived in the spring, is doing sterling service. I stroll in it proud as a peacock; it is brand-new, pleasantly warm and very dignified. A thousand thanks for that. Every Hungarian asks "Where was it made?" I reply with due self-esteem, "Mama sent it."¹¹

On Jersey and Guernsey, however, the "fancy" frieze coat attained significance as a symbolic and exotic Hungarian item that attracted the attention of those who came into contact with Teleki, admired by all who visited him. Victor Hugo in particular would inspect and finger it, whilst his son, Charles, actually photographed Teleki wearing the distinctive garment (see illustration). That picture was taken in 1853, in the very earliest days of photography. The negative as well as several prints survive in the collection of *Albums des proscrits* (Albums of Exiles) held by the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.¹²

Hugo and the circle around him took on close to 350 photographs, though the poet's role was confined to giving instructions as to what pictures were to be taken, the actual process being carried out by his son and, presumably, other exiles. Hugo was very early in recognising the potential of photography, seeking to use it, firstly, to illustrate his own works, and second, to portray the natural beauty spots of the Channel Islands for commercial purposes. Another portion of the images were portraits of the exiles themselves, for mounting in private albums, and indeed the majority of the photographs that are still extant are of this category, with copies of those albums preserved in the Victor Hugo Museum and the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, as well as in private hands. Sándor Teleki, Lázár Mészáros and Reményi are each seen in more than a few of the photographs. According to Lajos Erdélyi, who was the first to draw attention to the Hungarian connections with this early chapter in photographic history, Balázs Orbán may well have first picked up his knowledge of the technique whilst he was on Guernsey.

Teleki too became interested, and he seems to have played an active part in the Hugo family's photographic activities. He regularly sent prints to family and friends back in Transylvania, and judging from remarks in his letters may well have taken at least some photographs himself. Thus, in 1853, we find the following in a letter to his mother, Countess János Teleki: "Did you get the picture of our house? I am sending as an enclosure with this a portrait, which is the most successful of our pieces of work." And later:



Charles Hugo: Count Sándor Teleki in a "fancy" frieze coat.

*Black and white photograph
on p. 38 of the Album des proscrits.*

I am sending my portrait again. How did you like the group that I sent for Father's name-day; that was the best of those we have made. The picture of old Victor is particularly fine; I have also sent one of my house, or lodgings to be more precise, and I hope you have received that by now, Mother.¹³

For Victor Hugo, both the "fancy" frieze coat and Hungarians in general signified, first and foremost, the Far East of romance, the exotic, being closely bound up with the poet's passionate Orientalism. Striking attestation of this is provided by some remarks he made in a letter to Pierre Jules Hetzel in reference to photographs of Sándor Teleki (in the famous frieze coat) and Lázár Mészáros that he was enclosing:

I am sending you three photographs (unselected) that will give you an idea of what photography is capable of by way of illustration. Charles [Victor Hugo's son] made them of General Mezzaros [sic], Colonel Teleki and General Leflô [a Frenchman]. General Mezzaros is in his Turkish pelisse and Teleki in his Hungarian cloak. Imagine these two figures as an illustration of Orientals.¹⁴

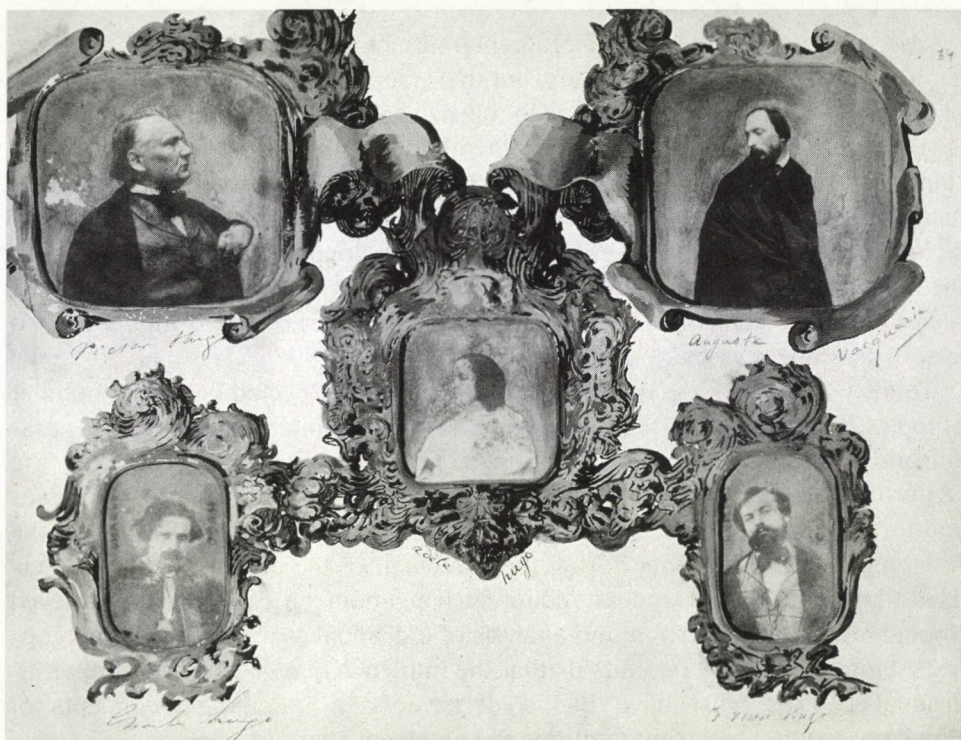
On one occasion when he dined at Teleki's place, along with Ribeyrolles, Bonnet-Duverdier and Vacquerie, Hugo asked if he might have the coat that was serving as Teleki's bedspread. Teleki refused to accept money for it, so in return for the gift Hugo made sketches round the pictures in Teleki's photograph album. In his memoirs, Teleki records the event in dialogue form, with Hugo saying:

"Thank you, I'll take it, but only on condition that you bring me your album and I draw around the borders of the pictures that are in it."

"Not a hard condition," I responded delightedly.

"This devil has more luck than brains! He frees himself of that moth-ridden thing, his ermine's cloak, and in return gets a bunch of drawings from Citizen Hugo," Ribeyrolles interjected with bantering levity."¹⁵

The Teleki album in question was later to become a well-known object in its own right. In one of his letters, the Count asked his mother to have his two albums forwarded to him. Thanks to Livia Görög, editor of Teleki's memoirs, we know that the National Széchényi Library's manuscript collection holds one Teleki album, though the catalogue description leaves grounds for supposing that its 39 pages do not represent the entire volume: "Memento pages from Sándor Teleki's album in exile, purchased 1932." Still, among the relatively few sheets were a number of those that Teleki referred to, photographs with border drawings by Victor Hugo. Teleki had collected the photographs and stuck them in his album. Several of them date from the time on Jersey and later Guernsey, with a number of dedications from Victor Hugo himself. One of the most extraordinary of these sheets is a group composition, also known from other albums, that shows Hugo, his son Charles, his daughter Adèle in the centre, and two fellow French exiles, Ribeyrolles and Vacquerie.



*A photomontage showing Victor Hugo's family
on p. 34 of the Teleki Album, National Széchényi Library
(Fol. Hung 1783).*

Some months after being presented with the "fancy" frieze coat, Victor Hugo conducted Teleki on a tour round his new residence of Hauteville House on Guernsey. He had spent more than three years furnishing this with a multitude of Oriental objects, carved Breton chests, wall tapestries, and pictures. The frieze coat itself, having been unstitched and with other embroidered textile pieces sewn on to it was now utilised—as Teleki recollects—to decorate the low ceiling of a square "look-out" that was fitted out as a bedroom-study (in it stood Hugo's plain iron bedstead, his writing desk, a steel box with his manuscript, and a few other items of furniture):

The ceiling was so gorgeous, original and individual, it is hard even to imagine. We gazed at it in wonderment, realising that it had been constructed from the Hungarian frieze coat.¹⁶

A separate piece of evidence corroborates this story: specifically an entry by Hugo in the journal that he kept of all his outgoings and the work relating to the construction of his house. On 28 May 1857 one finds the following:

"Paid by Marguerite [a servant] to Mourant's for 4 yards of white (woollen) cloth for the Hungarian [cloak] (2 francs per yard)."¹⁷

Also extant are fairly early photographs of Victor Hugo's bedroom, from the latter half of the nineteenth century, but these already show a very different type of ceiling. Though the house stands to this day as a unique monument to Hugo's Orientalist and Romantic inclinations, we know nothing about the fate of the "fancy" frieze coat.¹⁸ Nonetheless, recurrent references to the coat in Teleki's memoirs and correspondence are a sign of the symbolic importance that he attached to it. Having visited the Great Exhibition in London during 1851, he made the following comment in one of his letters: "All the world's curiosities could be seen in a single conglomeration, frieze coats from Miskolcz and Indian arrows as well as Chinese vases..."

To my way of thinking, this whole story throws unexpected light on a number of topics. Not least of these is the complex, two-way interaction between peasant and high culture, for the creators of peasant-pattern frieze coats in the 1840s and 50s that were evidently also produced explicitly for the upper-classes and for exhibition must in turn surely have had considerable influence on the fashions for such garments during the latter half of the century. It also underlines that spotting and understanding such phenomena can only be achieved through detailed exploration and analysis of individual cases, histories and contexts. Finally, the story reminds us that the influence of a great many similar individual choices must have had a decisive hand in shaping concepts of Hungarian culture and identity during the nineteenth century.¹⁹ •

NOTES

- 1 ■ Under the title "*Fiers Magyars: Splendeur des manteaux hongrois*," the exhibition was on display at the Musée de l'Homme, Paris, from 31 October 2001 to 30 June 2002.
- 2 ■ Sándor Eckhardt's article in *Magyar Szemle*, 31 (1931).
- 3 ■ István Györfly, *Magyar népi ruhahímzések. I. A cifraszűr* (Embroidery on Hungarian Peasant Apparel, vol. 1, Embroidered Frieze Coats). Budapest, 1930.
- 4 ■ Frigyes Podmaniczky, *Egy gavallér emlékei* (Memoirs of a Dandy). Budapest, Helikon Kiadó, 1984, p. 232.
- 5 ■ Katalin F. Dózsa, "A rendi nemzettudat szimbóluma, a díszmagyar (Hungarian Ceremonial Dress, the Symbol of Feudal National Identity)," *Néprajzi Értesítő* 77 (1996): 155–166.
- 6 ■ Teleki Sándor *emlékezései* (S.T.'s Memoirs), ed. Lívia Görög. Budapest, 1958, p. 57
- 7 ■ Teleki Sándor, *Emlékeim* (Memoirs), 2 vols. Budapest: Aigner, 1879–80, Vol. 1, pp. 206–207. He expanded on this in *Egyről, másról. Újabb emlékeim* [(On This and That: Further Memoirs), 2 vols. Budapest, Révai Testvérek, 1882.
- 8 ■ *Ibid.*
- 9 ■ *Ibid.*, p. 205.
- 10 ■ Jean Delalande, *Victor Hugo à Hautville House*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1947.
- 11 ■ Teleki Sándor, *Emlékezzünk a régiekről. Emlékezések és levelezés* (Let Us Remember Those of Old. Memoirs and Correspondence), ed. Elek Csetri. Bucharest, Kriterion, 1973, p. 478.
- 12 ■ See Françoise Heilbrun & Danielle Molinari, *En collaboration avec le soleil. Victor Hugo photographies de l'exil*. Paris: Editions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Editions des Musées de la Ville de Paris, 1998.
- 13 ■ *Ibid.*, p. 426–429.
- 14 ■ *Correspondance entre Victor Hugo et Pierre Jules Hetzel*, vol. 1, 1852–1853. Paris, Klincksiek, 1979, pp. 313–314: "Je vous envoie trois épreuves (non choisies) qui vous donneront une idée de ce que la photographie peut produire comme illustration. Charles a fait les trois choses d'après le général Mezzaros (ministre de la guerre en Hongrie), le colonel Téléki, et les enfants du général Leflô [un français]. Le général Mezzaros a sa pelisse turque et Téléki son manteau hongrois. Figurez-vous les deux figures dans une illustration des Orientales."
- 15 ■ Teleki, *Mémoires*, 1879–80, p. 206.
- 16 ■ *Ibid.*, p. 212.
- 17 ■ Victor Hugo, *Agendas de Guernsey de novembre 1855 à avril 1860*. Paris: Le Club Français de Livre, 1969, p. 1,406: "payé à 4 verges de drap blanc (de laine) acheté par Marguerite chez Mourant pour le [manteau] hongrois (2 fr. la verge)."
- 18 ■ I am indebted to Danielle Molinari, Chief Conservationist of Victor Hugo House and Hautville House, Guernsey, for her assistance in locating information regarding Teleki's frieze coat.
- 19 ■ Tamás Hofer, "Construction of a 'Folk Culture Heritage' in Hungary and Rival Versions of National Identity," *Ethnologia Europaea* 21 (1991): 145–170.

Károly Nagy

Hungarian Demographic Trends in the United States

Ancestry

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the United States Census 2000 found that 1,398,724 people in the U.S., that is, 0.042 per cent of the April 1, 2000 total population of 281,421,906 answered: "Hungarian" to question 10 of the long form questionnaire received by 1 in every 6 households: "What is your ancestry or ethnic origin?"

The question of ancestry has been part of the U.S. Census since 1980. *Instructions* offered guidance for how to answer this question and they provided some definitions as well: "Print the ancestry group with which the person *identifies*. Ancestry refers to the person's ethnic origin or descent (root) or heritage. Ancestry also may refer to the country of birth of the person or person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States. All persons, regardless of citizenship status, should answer this question. Persons who have more than one origin and cannot identify with a single ancestry group may report two ancestry groups, for example: German-Irish. A religious group should not be reported as a person's ancestry".

The interest in, and recognition of, ancestry, origin, and descent could be viewed as part of a relatively recent change in how the United States relates to its population's multi-ethnic heterogeneity.

The "Melting Pot" metaphor expressed quite well the basic assumption of the country's leaders, policy makers and opinion shapers regarding this issue until the 1950's. They maintained that the best way to integrate its very heterogeneous population would be to assimilate and homogenize the immigrating "huddled masses", the "homeless wretched refuse" by compelling them not only to acculturate, that is to acquire, to learn American culture, but also to discard, discontinue their original culture, language, customs, ethnic identities, as obstacles in the course of social advancement and upward mobility, and even as signs of insufficient loyalty to the "one nation indivisible."

During the past five decades the "Melting Pot" metaphor has been gradually replaced by the "Mosaic" metaphor, which not only tolerates, but encourages and assists the component parts of the mosaic picture to retain their original characteristics,

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because otherwise there could be no picture. Maintain, cultivate your valuable heritage, your unique original culture, teach it to your children and enrich our entire society with its treasures—the new trend implies. In an increasingly “globalizing” world, information about, and familiarity with a multiplicity of the world’s cultures is indispensable to us all. The importance of heritage preservation is increasingly recognized and translated into social policy, like subsidizing multicultural programs and maintaining bilingual education structures. This recognition is also confirmed decade after decade by the “ancestry” question of the Census.

In the past two decades the number of those reporting Hungarian ancestry in the United States exhibited a steady decline:

1980 Census: 1,776,902; 1990 Census: 1,582,302 (-194,600); 2000 Census: 1,398,724 (-183,578)

Language

The other Census question intending to acknowledge ethnic, cultural heritage preservation asked in 2000 (question 11 a and b) was the following: “Do you speak a language other than English at home? What is this language?” This was also a sample question in 1980 and 1990 as well, asked from 1 in every 6 households.

Instructions to enumerators and questionnaire assistance center staff stated that a respondent should mark ‘Yes’ in Question 11 a, if the person sometimes or

always spoke a language other than English at home. Also, respondents were instructed not to mark ‘Yes’ if a language other than English was spoken only at school or work, or if speaking another language was limited to a few expressions or slang of the other language. For question 11 b, respondents were instructed to print the name of the non-English language spoken at home. If the person spoke more than one language other than English, the person was to report the language spoken more often or the language learned first. Data were edited to include in tabulations only the population 5 years old and over. (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Summary file 3, Technical Documentation, February, 2003, pp. B-29, B-30.)

In 1990, 14 per cent, or nearly 32 million people, in 2000, 18 per cent, or about 47 million of the USA population aged 5 and older said they spoke a language other than English at home.

Of the 1,398,724 persons identifying “Hungarian” as their ancestry or ethnic origin, 117,973 (8.43 per cent) identified “Hungarian” as the other-than-English language they spoke at home.

In the past twenty years both the number of those reporting to speaking Hungarian in their homes and the ratio of people with Hungarian ancestry to Hungarian language users has declined.

There is no state of the USA which does not have a Hungarian population. The following table details the 2000 Census data

USA Hungarian Ancestry or Ethnic Origin and Speaking Hungarian at Home, US Census

Census year:	Hungarian ancestry:	Speaking Hungarian at home:	
		Numbers:	Per cent of those reporting
1980:	1,776, 902	180,000	10.13 %
1990:	1,582,302	147,902	9.35 %
2000:	1,398,724	117,973	8.43 %

of Hungarian ancestry and Hungarian language use state-by-state.

**Hungarians in the United States,
2000 Census
(Ordered by the size of the Hungarian
Population in Every State)**

State	Hungarian population	Hungarian language spoken at home
1 Ohio	193,951	19,231
2 New York	137,029	18,421
3 California	133,988	12,218
4 Pennsylvania	132,184	11,859
5 New Jersey	115,615	11,229
6 Michigan	98,036	6,166
7 Florida	96,885	4,851
8 Illinois	55,971	4,270
9 Connecticut	40,836	3,969
10 Indiana	35,715	2,140
11 Texas	30,234	1,763
12 Virginia	25,783	1,747
13 Wisconsin	23,945	1,744
14 Arizona	23,571	1,619
15 Maryland	22,941	1,592
16 Washington	18,590	1,369
17 Massachusetts	18,427	1,284
18 Colorado	18,411	1,093
19 North Carolina	16,100	1,041
20 Georgia	15,293	982
21 Missouri	13,694	912
22 Minnesota	12,279	852
23 Oregon	11,265	700
24 Nevada	10,285	665
25 Tennessee	8,323	564
26 South Carolina	7,953	465
27 West Virginia	7,477	433
28 Kentucky	6,499	396
29 Louisiana	4,625	383
30 New Mexico	4,331	350
31 Alabama	3,977	322
32 Kansas	3,903	305
33 Delaware	3,886	302
34 New Hampshire	3,784	259
35 Oklahoma	3,626	256
36 Iowa	3,366	251
37 Utah	3,306	242

State	Hungarian population	Hungarian language spoken at home
38 Montana	3,250	216
39 Vermont	3,058	192
40 Maine	2,906	185
41 North Dakota	2,802	176
42 Nebraska	2,740	174
43 Idaho	2,672	169
44 Arkansas	2,309	135
45 Alaska	2,238	113
46 Rhode Island	2,127	112
47 Hawaii	2,104	86
48 District of Columbia	2,048	77
49 Mississippi	1,843	36
50 Wyoming	1,561	31
51 South Dakota	982	26
U.S.A. Totals	1,398,724	117,973

In the American multicultural Mosaic which increasingly accepts heritage preservation of its component ethnic communities, the Hungarian population seems to exhibit declining numbers of those who report identification with, and even more of those who report language maintenance of their original culture.

Three considerations—among a number of possible others—may contribute to the understanding of this apparent contradiction and in the same time may also identify some possible areas for further research.

1. After Soviet military intervention crushed the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and restituted Communist totalitarian dictatorship, more than 200,000 people fled from the country, 35,000 of these refugees were admitted to the United States by 1958.

No Hungarian group of such size had managed to penetrate the Iron Curtain afterwards, or had immigrated into the USA. Since 1990 Hungary is, again, a free, democratic republic, the last soldiers of the Soviet occupying army left the country on June 19, 1991. There is no more desperate

pressure to escape from the Hungarian homeland.

Fortunately, therefore, not being "replenished" by historic catastrophes, the first generation immigrant U.S. Hungarian population is continually reduced by natural mortality.

2. The above-mentioned 1990 liberation of Hungary also ensured freedom of speech, of assembly, of publication there. A significant number of Hungarian émigré intellectuals repatriated from Western countries and began to publish their works in Hungary. The most important Hungarian émigré periodicals in Germany, France, Canada, Italy, Switzerland and the United States have also ended their mission of speaking up for their brutally muted countrymen and ceased publication.

Thus, Hungarian heritage preservation became much more difficult in Western countries. Hungarians in the USA no longer have all their former local intellectual forums and have less and less of their local writers, editors, scientists, publicists, teachers and clergymen available to them for assistance in the maintenance, con-

tinuation and transmission of their Hungarian culture.

3. Cultural heritage maintenance is, ideally, best achieved in compact, somewhat sizable communities. In Ohio, New York, California, Pennsylvania and New Jersey the Hungarian population is above 100,000 (see table: Hungarians in the US... in every State). In New Brunswick (NJ), for example, Hungarian churches, a Saturday school, two scout troops, a folk dance group, a large museum, a number of cultural and other organizations, stores and restaurants provide Hungarian programmes and experiences to those who want to participate.

As the cited state-by-state list shows, however, the largest portion of the US Hungarian population lives not in, or near Hungarian ethnic communities, but in archipelago and diaspora situations. If a family has to travel 80-100 miles one way to regularly participate in Hungarian church, school or cultural programmes to keep alive their and their children's Hungarian heritage, it may be just a matter of time for them to allow their dedication to diminish and to reorient their life style. ■

Miklós Györffy

In the Shadows of Márquez and Esterházy

Éva Bánki: *Esőváros*. (Rain City). Magvető, Budapest, 2004, 301 pp.
Gábor Németh: *Zsidó vagy?* (Are You Jewish?) Kalligram, Pozsony, 182 pp.

At the moment, it is still unusual in Hungary for a publisher to be prepared to lay out money on a full-blown advertising campaign to introduce an unknown writer's first novel. Even pedestrians were told about the forthcoming publication of Éva Bánki's *Esőváros* (Rain City) by posters in the streets and along the escalators at underground stations. In all of these the quote occurred, which also appeared on both the jacket and the posters: "The flavours of Márquez, Darvasi and Závada... a family saga set in the Felvidék (former Northern Hungary, now Slovakia) of the early 21st century".

Although Magvető, a prestigious and relatively profitable publisher in Hungary, has regularly published unknowns in the past, to the best of my knowledge it had never before taken such a gamble as on this occasion.

Although interesting and in many ways remarkable, *Rain City* is no masterpiece; one might say that other unpublished authors equally deserved the heightened attention that followed the publisher's media hype. In any case, it cannot be compared to Magvető's previous best-seller

(also mentioned on the jacket for obvious promotional reasons), *Jadviga párnája* (Jadviga's Pillow) by Pál Závada. Even less justified is any comparison to Garcia Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, regardless of the patent similarities that exist between the two books, similarities that are not necessarily to the credit of *Rain City*.

The novel is a family saga that uses the artistic perception and methods of magical realism. The story is set sometime between the First World War and 1989, roughly the period that Eric Hobsbaum described as the "short 20th century". The first chapter is about a proper explosion: on a "delirious, hot July day", a petrol-engined threshing machine blows up in front of a large crowd gathered there to see the demonstration, killing the designer, an ambitious farmer with a passion for engineering. This explosion may be taken as signalling the start of the First World War, which began roughly at the same time and which, besides all the other devastations it brought to the region, irrevocably destroyed the chances of modern farming by the then emerging class of wealthy peasants. To fur-

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ther aggravate the disaster, the victim, Béla Torma Sr., an aspiring engineer who entertained thoughts of emigrating to America, owned his considerable holdings in Felvidék, the region that was later allotted to the newly emerging state of Czechoslovakia under the terms of the Treaty of Trianon. From this point onward the main, and almost mythical, scene of the novel's subsequent stories is Duna-szerdahely (Dunajska Streda), a Slovak town with a large Hungarian population, the next home of the victim's family. It is impossible to say why *Rain City* is the title of the novel, even if the rain never seems to stop in this town: there is no explanation as to why this should happen in the climate that prevails in the Carpathian Basin.

As the family tree printed on the book's inside cover tells us, the "aspiring" Béla Torma Jr. is mourned by his widow and five children: three daughters and two sons—a third son had already been killed in the war. The two boys are the two main characters of the novel. Through marriage between the oldest boy, also named Béla, and Anci Bujdosó, of the mysterious Bujdosó family, another wealthy peasant dynasty enters the story. In stark contrast with the Torma family, which is practically and technically minded and with a passion for engineering that Béla Jr. inherited from his father, the Bujdosós are a family of idealists; they live in a fantasy world, so much so that they fail to make the distinction between the living and the dead: after a while we no longer know who is alive and who is dead; or if dead, when he or she died. The dead haunt the living in a spiritual form that is almost indistinguishable from the life form of the latter. Károly Bujdosó I, "the hero of Komárom", is a family ancestor. The family tree tells us that he was born in 1820, but the date of his death is unclear. He disappeared in the War of Independence of

1848/49 after the fall of Komárom (Komarno), but then he kept returning, with his last reappearance as late as the early 20th century, when our story starts. The dates of death are similarly unclear in the cases of Károly Bujdosó II and III, and we cannot be sure of the date when Béla Torma's wife, Anci Bujdosó, died, although her death took place far from the magical world of "Rain City", in the prosaic milieu of the Hungary of the Kádár regime of the 1970s.

It is primarily this ballad-like obscurity surrounding the Bujdosós that strives to lend a magic dimension to the novel, and not without some degree of success in places. A fine example of this is the way in which the spiritualist Anci Bujdosó, highly attractive in an erotic way in her youth, gave birth to six children in maturity (all of whom she neglected and treated badly), and then sank into depression in her old age, seems to be infecting the Tormas with the ill-fate of her family, and also the way in which the indestructible Béla Torma puts up a staunch resistance against this, without actually sacrificing or denouncing his wife. There is an even more touching and more haunting side-tale, the story of one of the sisters of the two Torma boys "kidnapped" by the Bujdosós in her adolescence. Kisanna is eventually written off by her parents as an incomprehensible "fatality"; however, one of her brothers apparently keeps on seeing her, living as the concubine shared by various male members of the Bujdosós. Another Kisanna, who is the daughter of Anci and Béla, "froze to death in a storm", because she had been left outside.

The intertwining story of the two wealthy peasant families related by marriage, a story that repeats magical/mythical patterns generation after generation, finally ends after the Second World War, when

Béla Torma and his family are expelled by Czechoslovakia to Hungary, and the Bujdosós, that is presuming they still exist, are allowed to stay on. The chapter "After the Mirrors I", one of the best in the book, describes how the younger boy, the unmarried Imre Torma who is also allowed to stay, finds refuge in the Bujdosó house, where past and present, reality and illusion, all become hopelessly confused as a result of the cataclysm. "We fed on the history of the house: on all that all the Mrs Bujdosós, a succession of Aunt Annas, had stored away in their larder: on their jams, lentils, pastas and beans, on all the food they had left on the shelves. When they discovered that their husbands were cheating on them, or when they got bored of staring out of the windows, the wives of the Bujdosós stockpiled food on a massive scale. They preserved the spring, the summer and the autumn in jam jars; they used dried bread to make rusks; they preserved pork in fat, just as if there had been a war on every year." A certain Aunt Anna is mentioned here for looking after one of the Torma boys, but as to the question of which one of the many Aunt Annas she might have been, we have no indication.

The first person singular narrator is Imre Torma. This is the primary source of the novel's faults and ambiguities. The author's probable intention was to entrust the task of telling the story of the two related families, the episodes and anecdotes of their history, to someone who witnessed their life as a relative outsider taking only a slight personal interest in their fate and who is a writer himself. Because Imre Torma is a writer of some sort; fortunately neither the author nor Imre Torma takes this very seriously. His "writings" play an insignificant part in the book. He lives the life of an ordinary man, who gets into all kinds of situations, but who is otherwise not a very interesting person. A drifter and

an awkward bachelor, he keeps on getting involved in messy relations with women. He is the narrator merely because someone personally involved in the family's affairs is needed to tell the story. When he talks about his own adventures, the novel turns hopelessly boring. But when he turns to the story of the family, we cannot quite understand the origin of the ballad-like obscurity and fragmentation of the narrative, the Márquesian magic, the erratic treatment of time, and the carnival-like cavalcade. The tone, captivating at certain times and contrived at others, seems to be ill-suited to the mediocrity and plainness of the narrator; but then, in certain chapters, for example in the treatment of the Kádár era near the end of the novel, the jovial and pedantic nature of the narrator finally gets the better of him, with the result that the magical and haunting streaks vanish from the narrative. Although giving evidence of much power and talent, *Rain City* is a defective novel. Its freeze-frames and anecdotes can at best be read as a string of short stories, whose quality alternates between the brilliant and the embarrassingly poor.

The last time Gábor Németh was mentioned in these pages was in 1998, when I reviewed his book *A huron tó* (The Huron Lake). Among other things, I made the point then that his book

contains personal notes, or "texts", in the manner of diary entries or short essays. In what he published so far, Németh has shown himself as an author of texts. His usual method is to paste together loosely connected fragments to produce a body of prose, in which he is able to create the illusion of an epical context only temporarily and only for short intervals; his works, as indeed the works of many of his colleagues of the same generation (Kukorelly, Györe, Parti Nagy, Darvasi, Garaczi, Hazai, Podma-

niczky, et al.), essentially serve to demonstrate the impossibility of story-telling. One of the epigraphs of *The Huron Lake* quotes Thomas Bernhard: "Nobody has ever invented anything, and nobody will ever do so." Bearing this in mind, Németh has no interest in inventions: what he writes about either happened to him or have something to do with him. He never tries to give the impression that the person who talks about himself in his writings is in fact somebody else. (...) In any case, Németh's reflections on himself will never add up to an autobiography, not even to anything resembling a story; at best, we get a highly idiomatic literary mannerism, full of digressions, insertions, omissions and interruptions.

It is almost uncanny how virtually everything that was written in my earlier review applies to his recently published *Zsidó vagy?* (*Are You Jewish?*). He is so preoccupied with his own self that at one point he goes on ruminating about his own name, both the Christian (Gábor) and the surname (Németh), trying to establish the precise relations he had with these names as a child. Németh's new book is a direct continuation of his earlier work, so much so that in *The Huron Lake*, there is already a passage (*zsídó vagy?*) devoted to the traumatic experiences associated with the school camp he attended as a boy; it was there that he saw a documentary about the concentration camps, which led him to ask "whether he was a Jew at all" and if so, "why he was not told". In his new book he turns to the same childhood memory and develops it into something like a short story: he describes the summer camp on the Danube bank, along with the torture of a frog found in a shaft; a meditation about faith and God; and a movie featuring Spencer Tracy, which they saw in the open-air cinema of Leányfalu, and which was preceded by a documentary about the Nazi concentration camps. While

the children were watching the "Jews", the woman teacher looking after them was probably having it off with the P.E. instructor in the toilet of a nearby café.

Are You Jewish? is made up of autobiographical episodes accompanied by the author's reflections and commentaries. Sometimes these are presented from the perspective of a child, whose reactions are either guessed or reconstructed from other memories, and sometimes from the current perspective of the author. The two perspectives are often superimposed, one ironically conflicting with the other—this is a familiar method, present also in *Tündérvölgy* (*FairyValley*), Kukorelly's book from which Németh has borrowed one of his epigraphs. The other thing that links the two perspectives is that a roughly similar voice is used for both. Familiar from the other text works, this fragmented and casual language, which is a stylised version of the spoken language, is the vehicle of a highly personal and self-ironic tone. It must be said that Gábor Németh has a masterly command of this language.

The central theme in this monologue of recollections is the metonymic question of the title, which really stands for the question of "Who are you?" But even this could be further refined to read as follows: Is it necessary that people's position in society should be determined according to primitive clichés and that they should be put in categories or even stigmatised? Do we really have to live in a world where people can be branded? The question "Are you Jewish?" generates vague feelings of guilt and intimidation in the boy. As the narrator refers to the corpses as "Jews", he uses this word "as if he were referring not only to the corpses but also to the reason why they had come to such an end (...) Jews, this means that this is how they ought to be treated." After that the boy keeps trying to figure out "why my parents have never

told me that we are Jews". It was absolutely clear "that we were guilty."

The issue of his name comes up in a similar context: there must be some reason why you have a particular name. Because of his surname, Németh (the Hungarian word for German), the children at school believed he was not a Jew but a "Nazi". True, he would much rather be called Captain Nemo, or better still, Pharaoh, because once in a museum the girl he was attracted to saw a resemblance between him and Tutankhamen and teasingly called him Pharaoh. But nobody ever called him Pharaoh after that and he also learned that he was not a Jew after all; on the other hand, he discovered that his parents were Communists and many of his relatives were Dutch. And that one of his grandfathers was a cobbler and the other a chef. Later on, as an adult, he was once mistaken for an Englishman, and at another time for a Spaniard. After a longer stay in Rome, he wanted to be an Italian. Pannónia utca, the street where he lived, was renamed László Rajk utca. László Rajk was a Communist, therefore, he was a good guy; so how come, he was executed by the Communists rather than the Nazis? The events of 1956 were later branded as a "counter-revolution", while the government formed by Kádár was described as "a revolutionary worker-peasant government." "I don't understand why revolutionary. What is worker-peasant? Is there such a thing as idle-peasant?"

Along with all the "Hungarian" members of his generation, Németh grew up in a milieu in Hungary where to all appearances everything had a very precise name; however, it gradually turned out that these names were extremely amorphous and rickety and that they concealed secrets. He discovered that the word "Jew" not only meant corpses and guilt, but it could also

be applied to classmates and Dad's friends, and it is in the latter context that it was especially offensive. He also found out that his appearance could lead him to be taken for a Jew, and mostly by Jews, but by then he knew that he was not a Jew, although by then he would have liked to be a Jew. It is the underlying, and sometimes unexpectedly and violently erupting, question of "who am I, what am I, where do I come from, where do I go", which constitutes the glue in Németh's book that holds together the selection of fragmented childhood memories within the "novel-like" layer of the book. Members of the writer's generation will find these distorted memories familiar.

Gábor Németh is one of those who always write about the same thing, and always do it in the same manner. This can be both praise and criticism. To some extent, every writer writes about the same thing and in the same manner. There are some, who variegate it endlessly, and there are others, who repeat it over and over again. The childhood traumas associated with people's initiation into the lies, the mediocrity and the cheap survival techniques of the Kádár era; the experience of witnessing the erosion of traditional values and the language; and the private sphere, introspection and irony as the only ways of escaping from it all—these are the fundamental experiences of Németh (and his generation). After reading Németh's new book, we come to the conclusion that, although his style and world continue to resemble the style of the writers of his generation, and most notably the style of their common forebear, Esterházy—so much so that we can single out this Esterházyan voice as the predominant literary style in the Hungarian literature of the past two decades—the book *Are You Jewish?* is the best effort Németh has made so far to come up with his own version of this voice. ■

Ivan Sanders

Out of Old Hungary

Margit Kaffka: *Colours and Years*. Translated by George F. Cushing.
Introduction by Charlotte Franklin. Budapest, Corvina, 1999, 242 pp.

One of the things that connects Margit Kaffka (1880–1918) to her Prague-born namesake is that she, too, had a fairly short life and, like Franz Kafka, produced within that short span a significant body of works in various genres. They were contemporaries living in different parts of the same empire. But whereas Kafka's work after his death became a touchstone of modernism, and he himself an iconic figure of Western literature, Margit Kaffka—though her importance as a pioneering modern writer was recognized in her own country already in her lifetime, and her place among the major figures of twentieth-century Hungarian literature has long been assured—is little known outside of Hungary. Few of her works have been translated, and non-Hungarians have had to accept on faith that she is a master of modern Hungarian prose. This may change now. *Colours and Years* (Színek és évek, 1912) is the second Kaffka novel to be translated into English in recent years. *Ant Heap* (*Hangyaboly*, 1917) was published in London in 1996. The focus on this particular early twentieth-century author may well be due to continued interest

in women writers and literature rather than the belief that here is an undiscovered novelist of enormous subtlety and depth. In any event, the publication of *Colours and Years*, generally considered Kaffka's masterpiece, should be especially welcomed, for it makes another slice of modern Hungarian prose literature accessible to English-speaking readers. For reasons I shall touch on later, the translation is not entirely satisfying, but then, many have felt over the years that to transfer Kaffka's idiosyncratic, "impressionist" prose to another language is not easy at all. Lajos Hatvany, who both as critic and patron played an important role in Hungarian literary life in the first decades of the twentieth century, pronounced *Colours and Years*, in a letter to a translator, a "minor classic" that is "untranslatable". And Charlotte Franklin, who is responsible for the English version of *Hangyaboly*, confesses in her translator's note that she felt it necessary to "prune some of [Kaffka's] piled-on-top-of-each-other adjectives", and adds that the opening "poetic" chapter of that novel, when first rendered accurately by her, "seemed silly in English".

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What is it about Kaffka's style that makes it so difficult to recreate in another language? After all, Margit Kaffka was a modern Central European writer *par excellence*, sensitive, sophisticated, conversant with the latest trends in art and the social sciences, a progressive who could understand people with ideas diametrically opposed to hers, a modern woman with strong intellectual leanings, who as a writer sought to give voice to the full range of human emotions. Perhaps the problem is that her language is at once sensuous and sober, hot and cool, stately and overwrought. Like many Hungarian writers, Kaffka first tried her hand at poetry, and some of these intensely personal, lyrical poems remain an important part of her oeuvre. But she soon realized that poetry for her was too limited—she wanted to paint a broader canvas and depict the world she knew in all its complexity. She switched from poetry to prose, but the intensity, the sheer energy of her poetic language she carried over to the new genre. In both mediums she made language work for her; she twisted and shaped it, coming up with bold compound words, unorthodox noun formations and other verbal innovations. It's this "experimental" aspect of Kaffka's art that Frigyes Karinthy parodied in his classic *That's How You Write* (1912).

Actually, very little of Kaffka's mature prose sounds mannered or artificial. The heroine of *Colours and Years*, Magda Pórtelky, chronicles the decline and fall of her class, the provincial gentry, illustrating through her own example the lot of women in that world. Though no writer herself (Magda's character was actually modelled on the author's mother), she does reflect Kaffka's own thoughts about the difficulties of narrating a story and the larger question of truth in fiction—something writers in our own postmodern age are preoccupied with. When, as an old woman, Magda be-

gins to reminisce about her youth, she wonders whether what she regards as her life story might not be "merely a picture of my life, shaped by my present way of thinking". Magda Pórtelky, like the author, is aware of the value of words. She knows that words can enchant and beguile and deceive; just how they do this is what she wants to delve into. Recalling wistfully the more gracious and inhibited times of her youth, Magda writes: "Nowhere have words so many shades of colour and perfume, nowhere so much hidden meaning, than when they spring, briefly and significantly, from a thousand repressed emotions." Words, she concludes at the end of her narrative, are "the greatest human gift".

Magda does tell her story impressionistically—she lingers for pages on a scene, a moment, then skips over long stretches of time; yet her story is complete—the colours are there, and so are the years. Hers is an unfulfilled, though by no means unexamined, life. She is courageous enough to recognize her shortcomings, honest enough to see through her own as well others' self-delusions. Most critics of Kaffka's novel have viewed Magda Pórtelky as a victim of the world of which she is a product. And to an extent she is a victim. Here is a capable, beautiful woman growing up in the late nineteenth century in the sleepy and convention-bound Hungarian provinces, leading the privileged life of the local gentry, though her family and social set are long past their prime. She learns early that for a woman like herself, the only opportunity for any kind of self-realization is through an advantageous marriage. Magda marries twice, but to her misfortune, both husbands prove to be weak, ineffectual men, the second one failing miserably as a provider. As the years wear on, the genteel poverty she has always known turns into humiliating penury. Bitter experience teaches her that in her society a

man, no matter how much of a misfit or a ne'er-do-well he may be, will make it, or at least scrape by, much easier than even a highly gifted woman. Yet she retains a measure of dignity to the end. She raises daughters who—we are at the dawn of the twentieth century—become self-supporting career girls in the capital, and see very little of their mother. Magda, as an old woman living alone in her native town, achieves if not happiness then at least a certain serenity.

The choices and opportunities available to Magda may have been meager, but she knows well that she also lacked the will and strength to defy convention. After her first husband dies, she tries her luck in the capital, but after a disappointing stay yields to the impulse to flee back to the mediocrity and fustiness of the place she knows. With a mixture of self-pity and self-knowledge she exclaims, "This was my fate in life: it was only by accident and never of my own volition that any great, critical thing happened to me. I had no courage." Later, when another man will have her, a man she has little respect for, she says yes to his proposal, if only because this will free her from the pitiable state of widowhood:

Once more I felt that the web of fate was being drawn tighter around me. Once again I was enslaved to it. My poor woman's life!... Everything I tried to do with my own human strength collapsed and failed. Maybe it was mainly my own fault; it appeared that I was not suited for struggle and independence. But instead I could only exist through someone else, through a man, whom I desired strongly. Yes, I had to become his wife, a married woman once again, a gentlewoman...

Interestingly, in both passages she speaks of inexorable fate, but also of her own lack of strength. Magda toys with the idea of becoming an actress in Budapest. Back home she considers taking a job as a postmistress. She knows deep down, how-

ever, that she will never go through with her plans. When a distant, aging cousin tells her that she is marrying a simple peasant who loves and appreciates her, Magda is intrigued, but also appalled. "How can you?" she asks incredulously. "Why, isn't it better for you as things are?"

Kafka's novel is a devastating account of the disintegration of a social class. One of Magda's brothers, a candidate for the priesthood, ends up in an insane asylum, and the other, an alcoholic army officer, in the gutter. Her second husband becomes a wreck of a man and lingers for years before finally succumbing to his many ailments. But *Colours and Years* is also an elegy, a tribute to a "hard-bitten little clan of gentry" that

never went where rank, unoccupied lands, alien elegance and important connections were distributed by the alluring patronage of old rival kings and princes setting up new courts. They remained at home here, encircled by the defences of untamed watery marshes, boggy streams and reed-thickets, on this rich little peninsula in the marshlands that was their inheritance; they were little monarchs and they jealously guarded their sovereign status as gentry. This was why they often turned eccentric or secretive, figures of overweening and fierce pride, whose peculiar doings engendered legends deeper in the country.

Though Magda always longs for change, she is also wary of the modern age. After her hometown is destroyed by a fire and is then rebuilt, she comments on the reconstruction:

Very soon an artificial and bogus town was built here with fine straight streets and neat, uniform homes.

Yet Kafka's heroine is no romantic; she idealizes nothing. What gives substance to her character and credibility to her perceptions is her imagination. Routine introductions, spiritless liaisons, cut and dried ex-

changes are not for her. "I could be moved only through my imagination," she notes. Which brings us back to her expressive words, the language of the novel, and to the English translation.

George F. Cushing, who died in 1996, had taught Hungarian at London University's School of Slavonic and East European Studies for many years. Throughout his career, both as a scholar and a translator, Professor Cushing helped promote and popularise Hungarian culture in the English-speaking world. He produced excellent English versions of Gyula Illyés's *People of the Puszta* and his luminous book-length essay, *Petőfi*. The clarity and precision of Illyés's prose come through admirably in these renderings. But they are works of nonfiction. His translations of belles-lettres are somewhat less successful. We have alluded earlier to the special problems of translating Margit Kaffka, whose language can be both self-consciously modern and quaintly old-fashioned. And she can indeed be wordy and overdescriptive. But there is a sweep and flair to her prose that are largely absent from George Cushing's rather plodding translation. His usages are sometimes either too colloquial or too literary, or simply out of place. Early in the novel, for instance, Cushing uses the word "chatchkis" for *régi holmik*. This Yiddishism, in a non-Jewish milieu, sounds odd, inappropriate. The word "cur" for *kutya* is also wrong in a modern novel, especially from the mouth of a child. At the same time, "neurotic" for *idegbajos* is too modern a term to be used by someone around 1900. There are also imprecisions. A minor character's *kemény, barna kuruçfej* cannot possibly be rendered as "his hard, dark royalist (!) head." Neither can *zsellérek* be "serfs" at a time when there were no longer serfs in Hungary. Naturally, a few examples of mistranslations don't really prove any-

thing. Even the best translators don't always find the *mot juste*. But it must be said that in *Colours and Years* George Cushing offers us a faithful, workmanlike, though less than inspired, translation.

Kaffka's life story and family history are also a slice of historical reality, and reveal something about the melting pot that was East Central Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On her mother's side Kaffka came from a venerable, though later impoverished "historical" Hungarian family, while her father, Gyula Kaffka, was of Slavic origin with "unknown ancestors," as one of her biographers put it. Her first husband, Bruno Fröhlich, had a German background. That marriage ended in separation. Kaffka then met and married the love of her life, Ervin Bauer, a Jewish-born doctor ten years her junior and the younger brother of the writer Béla Balázs, who would later make a name for himself abroad as a film theoretician. Bauer survived his wife and their little boy, both of whom died in the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918, became a Communist, fled Hungary in 1919, ended up in the Soviet Union and perished there in the early forties, a victim of Stalin's terror.

Margit Kaffka's importance as a writer was recognized early by her—mostly male—fellow modernists who, like her, were associated with the journal *Nyugat*. She remained important for the next generation, too, whose members were drawn to her regardless of their taste and orientation. The poet Miklós Radnóti, for example, who would later become a victim of the Holocaust, wrote his doctoral dissertation on Kaffka in the early thirties. Well-known populist writers like László Németh and Géza Féja also commented extensively on her work. It would be fair to say, in fact, that modern Hungarian literature would not be what it is if Margit Kaffka had not appeared on the literary scene when she did. ♣

John Lukacs

A Minor Classic

András D. Bán: *Hungarian–British Diplomacy 1938–1941:*

The attempt to maintain relations. London, Frank Cass (Routledge), 2004, 223 pp.

In the evening of 2 March, 2004, a somewhat extraordinary reception took place at the Hungarian Embassy in London. It was arranged in honour of the English translation and publication of András D. Bán's *Illúziók és csalódások. Nagy-Britannia és Magyarország 1928–1941*, that had been published in Budapest in 1998. The gathering in London was remarkable. It included a few eminent British historians, officials of the Foreign Office, the Lady Soames, Winston Churchill's surviving daughter, and of course members of the Hungarian colony. It was an appropriate encomium for a fine work and the memory of its author. For Bán, perhaps one of the most promising of young Hungarian historians, did not live to witness this: he died, tragically, in 2001, at the age of thirty-nine in Budapest, three years after the publication of his book that had received very respectable but, alas, not enough attention at the time. One of the men who was stunned by its merits then was a Hungarian architect living in London, Sándor

Váci. He (and his wife) took it upon themselves to bring about an English translation and eventual publication.

This was not easy; it involved hard work, but they succeeded. At their and their publisher's request I wrote an Introduction to the British edition, and spoke briefly about the unusual scope and quality of the book at the above-mentioned reception in London.

The very topic of this book is important beyond the standard monographic framework of diplomatic relations. The three years from 1938 to 1941 were the most important ones in the long, though fragmentary, history of British-Hungarian relations. But they were also the most critical years in the history of Europe, indeed of Western civilization, during the twentieth century. Few people recognized then, and not very many recognize even now, how close Hitler and his Great German Reich had come to winning the Second World War—with incalculable conse-

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quences, perhaps needless to say. Or perhaps not so needless at all: because the consequences of Hitler's victory then would have been immeasurably greater, more profound, more disastrous and more enduring than a German victory in the West in 1914 or 1918, or than a (necessarily ephemeral) Russian victory during the so-called Cold War. And during the three years 1938–1941 there was only one Power that stood athwart Hitler's astonishing march. This was Britain; and within Britain, Winston Churchill. Eventually Churchill and Britain would not be *the* winners of the Second World War: but he was the man who did not lose it. It is remarkable how few people saw this at that time (and not many people even now). In his original Introduction, written in Hungarian for Hungarians, András D. Bán quoted Johan Huizinga:

A historian must constantly put himself at a point in the past at which the known factors still seem to permit different outcomes. If he speaks of Salamis, then it must be as if the Persians might still win.

Bán added:

If a historian wishes to avoid the many slips and traps that will arise in the course of his study, he cannot take the "end result" as his point of departure. He must attempt to adhere to Huizinga's dictum.

Remarkable is this young (and, alas, prematurely deceased) Hungarian historian's knowledge and understanding of the British people and of the Britain of that period. In 1938 and thereafter Britain no longer had human and material and military resources comparable to those of the British Empire half a century before. Yet the confidence and the steadiness of the English public and of the men of the Foreign Office are impressive in retrospect. They appear in the language of their com-

munications to the representatives of a small faraway country, in the middle of a German-ruled Europe. Their statements illustrate many things: their understanding of that country's geographical situation and of its constraints (an understanding that amounts to careful consideration rather than to outright sympathy) and their admonitions, of course always subordinated to what these officials saw as Britain's principal interests. Their confidence is noteworthy, to say the least. While for us the prospect of a British victory and British considerations for a restoration of a European order in 1940–1941 alone makes this book worth while reading for specialists in British diplomatic history.

And now to its specific topic: Hungarian–British relations during those, so very critical, years. From 1920 to 1930 the principal aim of Hungarian foreign policy was "revisionist": to regain (at least some of) the lands that Hungary lost to her surrounding neighbours in 1919–20, specifically through the Treaty of Trianon, lands that for many centuries had belonged to Hungary, and where millions of Hungarians still lived. Hungary could count on no serious support for this from foreign Powers, except here and there from Mussolini's Italy. British opinion was relatively well disposed towards Hungary in the 1920s and 1930s but this had no practical or political weight or significance at that time.

Then, in 1938, Hitler's Germany occupied annexed Austria—and soon after that, Czechoslovakia. The might and the repute and the influence of the German Reich were now enormous; and that Reich had become a close neighbour, leaning on Hungary. There were Hungarian patriots who recognized that this was a situation entirely new. The main problem was no longer how to reclaim and regain this or that from Hungary's smaller neighbour

states; it was to preserve the very independence of Hungary. It is necessary to record that these men were a minority. The majority of Hungarians, and of their governing class, did not quite see things in that way. It was not only that the prospect of overturning the Treaty of Trianon, of recovering at least some of the territories lost in 1918–1920, remained their main preoccupation. It was their inclination to follow, or even to admire, the new Germany, including its ideology of National Socialism. An evidence of this was the result of the May 1939 election (the first with an inhibited and secret ballot) when outright National Socialist parties gained nearly one-fourth of all votes, and even more in the formerly Socialist working-class districts of Budapest. Against them stood diverse elements of the Hungarian people and society, ranging from Jews, Liberals, the remnants of Social Democrats, to committed conservatives, men close to the Regent Horthy, the remaining aristocracy, other men found within the top layers of the government, very much so in the case of the Foreign Ministry, and the (since February 1939) Prime Minister Count Pál Teleki. These men knew that their main duty from now on was to preserve the—relative—independence and sovereignty of Hungary. They knew, too, that they had to struggle not only against German power but also against waves of domestic public opinion and popular sentiment.

They also recognized, surely at the latest by 1939, that the only counterweight against Hitler's domination of Europe was Great Britain. It is therefore that the history of the relationship of Hungary within Great Britain, until December 1941, is especially telling and interesting.

Much, though not all of this, existed on the level of governmental, that is, diplomatic relations. Their record, precisely and carefully presented in this book, is signifi-

cant enough. We must keep in mind that this existed on a high, and in many ways confidential level. The staff of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry was conservative, old-fashioned, semi-aristocratic—not at all typical of the majority of the Hungarian official bureaucracy. A newer, populist, nationalist (as distinct from patriotic) and, by and large, Germanophile presence among that staff existed only here and there. Contemplating this more than sixty years later we have the sense and the climate of a vanished world—which should deserve at least some of our respect. Of course it was not quite as simple as that. Prime Minister Teleki understood, even more profoundly than Barcza, his envoy in London, the constraints of Hungary's situation; and also the fact that, even in the best of instances, Hungary could not expect much from Britain, indeed, from the English-speaking Powers. On the night of 2–3 April 1941 Teleki shot himself. This was a desperate act to demonstrate his and his nation's honour, a silent protest against accepting Hitler's demand that Hungary join in his invasion of Yugoslavia (a state with which Hungary had signed an accord of "eternal friendship" but a few months before).

Three men played a more than customary role in the relations of Hungary and Britain during those years. One was György Barcza, the Hungarian Minister to London, a man of great intelligence and insights and of old-fashioned standards, deeply opposed to what Hitler's Germany (and its supporters in Hungary) stood for, and consequently a European Anglophile *de vieille souche*. The other was Owen O'Malley, British Minister to Budapest, who was much more sympathetically inclined to Hungary than his predecessor G. Knox; so was his wife, who later wrote novels under the pen-name Ann Bridge.

(The Germans who followed O'Malley's every move, did not know that many years before he had been an assistant to Churchill.) The latter knew much about Hungary and its history (evident, among many other things, in pages of his *Marlborough*). Churchill's relative sympathy for Hungary was the source of his decision not to declare war on Hungary but only to terminate diplomatic relations in April 1941, after Teleki's suicide, despite Hungary's joining with Germany by invading what was left of Yugoslavia. (The British declaration of war, summarily requested by Stalin, came only in December 1941.)

From May 1938 to February 1942 the course of the Hungarian ship of state was largely set by three Prime Ministers, Imrédy, Teleki, Bárdossy. One of the most valuable portions of this book is Bán's special description and analysis of these three Prime Ministers, including their inclinations but also the dualities of their characters. This alone amounts to a departure from the habitual practices of mundane diplomatic history. To an other unique feature of this book I must now turn.

There is a difference between the history of diplomatic and the history of international relations. The former, largely restricted to the relations and communications of courts to courts, of governments to other governments, had its origins in the city-states of 15th-century Italy, when the rulers of Venice, Florence, Genoa, Milan, Rome, etc. established, for the first time, permanent missions (legations; embassies) in each others' courts. Such permanent representations then spread across Europe after the Thirty Years' War. The primary sources of diplomatic history were, accordingly, ambassadorial reports. This remained largely so as late as the early 20th century. Yet international, as distinct from diplomatic, history has been something else. It involves more than rela-

tions through the instruments and institutions of governmental foreign policy. (The very word "international" first appeared in English as late as around 1800; in Hungarian not before 1854). At that time international relations, including travel, trade, finance, affected only a tiny fraction of peoples. A Hungarian workingman or peasant was not likely to have ever seen an Englishman, while Englishmen had but a few notions or images of Hungarians. But then came a change. With the spread of literacy, with newspapers, photography, travel, still and moving pictures, etc. nations began to build up images of other nations. These images were often superficial, they could be manipulated, but their existence was real, and they affected the very policies of respective governments.

The French historian Pierre Renouvin was one of the first to comprehend and represent the difference between diplomatic history and the broader (and sometimes deeper) scope of a history of international relations. One generation later another French historian, René Rémond, exemplified this in two volumes of his *Les Etats-Unis devant l'opinion française 1815-1852* (1962), including research on and description of matters such as emigration, travel, foreign trade, translation and reception of literary works, the evolution of the press, of the reading public, etc. etc. Thus the breadth (and sometimes the depth) of matters involving international relations renders the historian's work more difficult: his main problem is no longer that of the relative rarity but that of a veritable profusion of sources.

This is what this excellent young Hungarian historian, András D. Bán (1962-2001) achieved in this book. In addition to the diplomatic and governmental records, his studies and reconstruction of relations of trade, of travel, of the press, of literary productions and of their influences of emi-

grés etc.—all of these more or less reciprocal—are included in his work. This is unusual and, in more than one sense, novel and pathbreaking. It illustrates the great maxim of Jacob Burckhardt, who said that history really has no “method” of its own, save for the overall condition: *Bisogna saper leggere*—one must know how to read. And we might add: how to write. These are absolute conditions of a craft that Bán has observed and fulfilled. (Independent of the merits of this English translation, the style of Bán’s writing alone demonstrates a broad and deep literary culture—alas, not too frequent among professional historians). And then, added to his mastery of a wide range of sources there is his under-

standing that the relations of entire nations—especially before and during the Second World War—are not only influenced but at times even governed by images of each other that involve more than superficial impressions or even political preferences; they involve sympathies and antipathies that are even more cultural than political. Such were, for instance, Anglophilia or Anglophobia, or Germanophilia and Germanophobia, and not only in Hungary but in very many instances throughout Europe and across the world. It is my opinion that this is but one element of the outstanding qualities of Bán’s accomplishment. It may merit the designation of this book as a Minor Classic. ■

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István Deák

White-tie Diplomacy

Tibor Frank, ed.: *Discussing Hitler: Advisers of U.S. Diplomacy in Central Europe, 1934–1941*. Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2003, 374 pp. Photographs, Appendix.

The hero of this story is a dairyman whom the peculiarities of the American political party system thrust into the heart of Europe at a time of that continent's fatal political and military crisis. As US Minister to Hungary from 1933 to 1941, John Flournoy Montgomery spoke only English: this restricted the circle of his acquaintances mainly to such Hungarians who spoke that language although even the latter had a hard time understanding his mid-western accent.¹ He knew nothing of Hungary when accredited to Budapest, and what he learned later was often naive and weighed down by misunderstandings. Yet, as Tibor Frank demonstrates in his brilliant, 70-page-long Introduction, Montgomery was genuinely liked in high society, and he had

access to the top-ranking Hungarians. The notes of the 182 official and semi-official conversations he held with the head of state, prime ministers, cabinet members, other politicians, businessmen, top bureaucrats, fellow diplomats in Budapest, and distinguished foreign visitors, show that his interlocutors were often no less wrong than he was in his analyses and predictions. At times, both he and his conversation partners, some of them outstanding experts of the Central European scene, proved to be prophetic, at other times both he and his partners engaged in speculations that today strike us as ridiculous.

Montgomery's conversations, which constitute the bulk of this book, formed the basis for his reports to the State

1 ■ According to a high-ranking Hungarian foreign ministry official, the polyglot Hungarian Foreign Minister Kálmán Kánya was often complaining that Montgomery spoke English with such a dreadful American accent that he [Kánya] could not understand half of what he said. On this, see András Hory, *Bukaresttől Varsóig* (From Bucharest to Warsaw), ed. Pál Pritz (Budapest: Gondolat, 1987), pp. 402–203, and Frank, *Discussing Hitler*, p. 51. Note, however, that Hory disliked Kánya and had a low opinion of Montgomery's capabilities.

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Department and his later memoirs. Both the reports and the memoirs were guided by one basic consideration: a steadfast affection for Hungary. He approved of the country's ruling elite, and he hoped that one day the injustices committed against Hungary following the First World War would be righted. The trouble was, of course, that Hungary's traditional political and social system was facing its final decline at that time, and in March 1941, when Montgomery went back to his condensed milk business in Vermont, the Hungarian leadership had only three years left before its humiliation, expropriation and partial extermination.

Even before the publication of Tibor Frank's book, Montgomery was quite well known both in Hungary and abroad, mainly because of the memoirs he published in 1947 recounting his diplomatic experiences. Entitled, *Hungary, the Unwilling Satellite* (New York: Devin-Adair), the book argues exactly what its title says, namely that the Hungarians were at all times reluctant to serve the German Nazis, whose system and ideology Regent Admiral Miklós Horthy and most of the Hungarian leaders despised. In view, however, of Hungary's total wartime encirclement by the German Empire and its willing satellites, fascist Romania, Croatia, Slovakia and even the collaborationist Czech Protectorate, the Hungarians had no choice, Montgomery argued, but to try to get along with the Germans. Nevertheless, they gave the Nazis as little in terms of goods and manpower as they could get away with. What makes *Hungary, the Unwilling Satellite* such useful reading is that it reflects not only Montgomery's opinion but, as Tibor Frank so well explains, it is also an *apologia pro vita sua* of the old Hungarian political and social establishment which inspired the book. Incidentally, a second Hungarian edition

of Montgomery's memoirs is about to be published, revised and edited by Tibor Frank.

The Unwilling Satellite, which also includes a brief history of Hungary, was absent from library shelves in Communist times, in part because of Montgomery's unbounded admiration for Regent Horthy and the wartime conservative elite, and in part because the vigour of his anti-Communism often surpassed that of his Hungarian counterparts. The memoirs show Montgomery as one of the earliest Cold War warriors. The book under review here revives the memory of this dedicated and hard-working amateur diplomat and his times.

Frank, who teaches American history and culture at Eötvös Loránd University, possesses vast experience in US affairs as a former visiting professor at the University of California in Santa Barbara, Columbia University, and at other institutions. He has written many books, foremost among them are those that deal with Hungarian exile intellectuals, whether of the post-1849 or the twentieth-century emigration. The inspiration for the book under review came to Frank from his chance encounter with members of the deceased Montgomery's family, who generously lent him the papers of their diplomat relative. These documents are now at the Hungarian National Széchényi Library, while another collection of Montgomery's papers is at Yale University.

Somewhat surprisingly for his Mid-western background and his residence in Republican Vermont, Montgomery was a Democrat who contributed mightily to Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1932 electoral campaign. As a reward, he expected to be appointed at least to head the legation in Vienna but was sent, instead, to Budapest. He went there with the blessings of the new US president, who had some vague sympathies for Horthy as "a fellow-sailor".

On December 31, 1937, Roosevelt wrote to Montgomery: "please tell him [the Regent] from me that we sailors must stick together!"² The sympathy was amply reciprocated: Horthy assured Montgomery that had the Hungarians been able to cast a vote in the US elections, they would have overwhelmingly endorsed FDR. Why this would have been so is somewhat of a mystery as, by temperament and political ideology, both Horthy and Montgomery were to the right of Roosevelt and his New Deal programme. Maybe it was simply that the Hungarians liked everything about the United States, a country which had refused to sign the ferociously punitive Trianon Peace Treaty with Hungary in 1920, and where more than a million Hungarian emigrants resided. There was also the memory of US General Harry Hill Bandholtz who, as US military representative in Hungary after the Great War, helped to rid Hungary of the Romanian occupiers and facilitated the entry into the capital, in 1919, of Horthy's minuscule counter-revolutionary forces.

While in Budapest, Montgomery could not but feel that he was among friends. Such members of the Habsburg family who were living in Hungary were invariably kind to him as was the Regent, and as were the Count Károlyis, Apponyis, Sigrays, Széchényis, Zichys and other assorted magnates with whom he played tennis and golf and who charmed him at their parties. Not that he never saw through them; some of his diary notes are quite sarcastic, especially regarding the Habsburg archdukes and their quirks but, inevitably, he felt enormously flattered by the attention showered on him. Here was a small-town Babbitt, in his late

fifties,³ wearing a white tie, a cut-away, or a tuxedo, whatever the illustrious event required.

Invariably, Montgomery gained the impression that hardly anyone in Hungary desired the return of the Habsburgs to the Hungarian throne; nor did he or his government want such a thing to happen. For a long time, neither Montgomery nor his masters in Washington understood how insignificant the "Habsburg Question" was in comparison with that of Nazi Germany. Besides, Otto, the Habsburg pretender, counted among the staunchest opponents of Hitler; Montgomery grasped this only after the war when he complained, in *Hungary: the Unwilling Satellite*, that even President Beneš of Czechoslovakia, personally a favourite target of the Führer, had preferred Hitler to the liberal and tolerant Habsburgs. According to Montgomery, Beneš deliberately hindered the Austrian leadership's effort to prevent the Anschluss in 1938. It is indeed remarkable to what degree Montgomery had become "Hungarian" in sharing the Hungarians' hatred for Czechoslovakia and their contempt for the Romanians, for instance.

Truly, it would have been difficult for Montgomery to see through the anti-Nazi protestations of his Hungarian interlocutors. Not that the Hungarians were lying, but today we know that their dislike of the Nazis did not always mean a dislike of the German alliance. Also, Montgomery did not always grasp that the Regent's hostility to the far-right Arrow Cross Party did not exclude an admiration for the German Army, for instance, or that the Regent's rejection of German racist anti-Semitism did not prevent him from approving of Hungary's anti-Semitic laws.

2 ■ Letter reproduced in John Flournoy Montgomery, *Hungary, the Unwilling Satellite* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1947), opposite p. 26.

3 ■ Montgomery was born in 1878 in Sedalia, Missouri. He died in 1954 in the United States.

What may have misled Montgomery were events such as the one in the Budapest Opera House, on March 15, 1939, where both Horthy and Montgomery were present and where some far-right Arrow Cross youngsters in a box loudly protested the imprisonment of Ferenc Szálasi, their charismatic leader. Driven by curiosity, Montgomery rushed to the area where the demonstration was taking place and where he witnessed the curious spectacle of a furious Regent bolting up the stairs, shouting invectives, and slapping the protesters; this, before any of his guards could have arrived to help. Forever after, Horthy was grateful to Montgomery of whom the Regent mistakenly thought that he had been rushing to his aid. What the Regent most disliked about the Hungarian Nazis was that they were demagogues and plebeians, who had the cheek to adulate their own leader. Hungary was to have only one head, the Regent, whom the press consistently presented as a semi-God. In the apt words of Tibor Frank, Montgomery himself "invested his hero [Horthy] with quasi-mythological strength." (p. 61). It is also true, however, and Montgomery himself is categorical on this: Horthy was no dictator but came close to being a constitutional monarch.

Today it is hard to believe that, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, Hungary's main domestic political preoccupations were less with the Nazi danger or with the general poverty and the crying social inequities than with the Jewish question. There seems to have been a general consensus that Jewish economic and cultural activities ought to be restricted; that much of the Jewish wealth should pass into "Christian" hands, and that many if not most Jews should sooner or later leave the country. Some envisaged a gradual and peaceful emigration after the war; others wished to use legal coercion, and again

others advocated violent, even lethal methods. Yet, if one is to believe Montgomery's memoirs as well as the notes he took of his conversations, his interlocutors were non-anti-Semites, almost without exception. When these political leaders adopted anti-Jewish measures, it was only to take the wind out of the sails of the Hungarian and German Nazis.

To give an example, Montgomery had a conversation, on April 7, 1938, with Philip (Fülöp) Weiss, one of Hungary's leading bankers and a member of the Upper House of Parliament, who was a Jew as well as with Viktor Bátor, a famous lawyer, also of Jewish origin. As Bátor recounted, he met with Prime Minister Kálmán Darányi and future Prime Minister Béla Imrédy, and together they went through the provisions of the first anti-Jewish Law. Montgomery noted that the unofficial Jewish representatives were content with the proposed law and the behaviour of Imrédy. (Mind you, Imrédy was hanged in Budapest in 1946 as a Nazi and a war criminal.) Montgomery argued in his *Hungary, the Unwilling Satellite* that the Hungarian government undertook only such measures against the Jews that were considered indispensable to prevent a forceful German intervention. In reality, however, the Germans did not ask for strong anti-Jewish measures until the year 1943, and Montgomery seems to have overlooked the fact that the alpha and omega of the Horthy regime's counter-revolutionary ideology was anti-Semitism. It is also true however, that more moderate members of the counter-revolutionary establishment, and often they were the ones to have the final say, were horrified by the popularity and fatal consequences of their own anti-Jewish propaganda. The Hungarians profoundly disagreed among themselves as to the severity of the anti-Jewish measures to be taken; Horthy himself and most of his

ministers would not consider allowing the Jews to die; not at least until after March 1944 when the German army occupied Hungary. And even then, many Hungarian leaders carefully distinguished between good Jews and bad Jews, something that was anathema to racist anti-Semites.

Tibor Frank gives a few examples to prove that Montgomery himself was somewhat anti-Semitic, probably in the same gentlemanly vein as Horthy and his friends. What I find more disquieting, however, is the absolutely detached manner in which Montgomery took notes on what he not very delicately called the Jew bills. On December 19, 1938, for instance, he took detailed notes, without a word of disapproval, of the second, much more draconic and racist anti-Jewish law. Yet the law marked, among other things, the beginning of the expropriation of businessmen and industrialists like himself. Did he not guess that within a short time the expropriators themselves would be expropriated?

It would be good to know what exactly Montgomery reported to the State Department and what action, if any, the US government took in response to Montgomery's reports. All we know from Frank's account is that the State Department analysts tended to evaluate favourably the Hungarian situation. If Hungary was a reluctant satellite of Germany, then the USA was a reluctant enemy of Hungary.

Contemporary Western impressions of Hungary are best summed up in an oft-repeated anecdote, the origin of which can probably be traced back to an entry in Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano's famous Diary on May 11, 1942, some time after the Hungarian prime minister declared that Hungary was at war with the United States. Ciano wrote:

Hungarian uneasiness is expressed by a little story, which is going the rounds in Budapest. The Hungarian minister declares war on the United States, but the official who receives the communication is not very well informed about European matters and hence asks several questions: He asks: "Is Hungary a republic?" "No, it is a kingdom." "Then you have a king." "No, we have an admiral." "Then you have a fleet?" "No, we have no sea." "Do you have any claims, then?" "Yes." "Against America?" "No." "Against Great Britain?" "No." "Against Russia?" "No." "But against whom do you have these claims?" "Against Rumania." "Then, will you declare war on Rumania?" "No, sir. We are allies."⁴

The trouble with this anecdote and with contemporary public opinion is, I believe, that Hungary was not really a satellite of Germany; nor were the Nazis' other allies, namely Italy, Finland, Slovakia, Romania, Croatia, Slovakia, and Bulgaria. These countries, or rather, their governments, were generally able to determine the extent of their collaboration with the German Reich. They entered the war if and when they decided to do so; they withdrew most or all their troops from the Russian front when they had enough of the fighting; they enjoyed considerable autonomy in the treatment of their own Jewish citizens, and every single one among the allied powers eventually turned against Germany, only that some, like Finland and Romania, were successful, whereas the Italian and Hungarian attempts to change sides in 1943 and 1944, respectively, turned into disasters.

When Montgomery arrived in Budapest, in 1933, Hungary had just begun to orient itself toward Hitler's re-born Germany that promised to become an increasingly im-

4 ■ *Ciano's Diary 1939-1943*, edited and with an introduction by Malcolm Muggeridge (London: William Heinemann, 1947), pp. 467-468.

portant political and trade partner. Besides, the Führer served as one of the inspirations of Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös's budding fascist ideology. But Gömbös's real model was Mussolini, and for several years to come the Hungarians expected assistance mainly from fascist Italy. Unfortunately for them, Italian help amounted to very little in terms of armaments, economic help, or support on the international scene, especially with regard to Hungary's territorial ambitions. Because the Western democracies were far away and unhelpful, whereas Soviet Russia was beyond the pale, Hungary's close relations with Nazi Germany became inevitable, the question was only how close these relations should be. Only in June 1941 did Hungary become Germany's military ally, and even thereafter it undertook repeated measures to mitigate the force of this alliance. All this Montgomery observed, although it does not seem that he understood the essence of the dilemma. Nor did his main conversation partners, the Italian, the Romanian, the Czechoslovak ministers, or the Hungarian prime ministers, or some lesser Hungarian politicians, such as the semi-opposition figure Tibor Eckhardt, indicate that they knew the country and the region were on the brink of the precipice. Eckhardt, a colourful figure, seems to have been informally delegated, or assigned himself the task to inform Montgomery. He himself was sent to the United States in 1941 to represent unofficially the Hungarian government, particularly in case of a feared German occupation. But in conversations with Montgomery, Eckhardt does not seem to have conveyed any dramatic messages intended for official American ears.

Some of the wisest Hungarian politicians, such as Foreign Minister Kálmán Kánya, gave Montgomery valuable information. For instance, in a conversation on

June 19, 1940, Kánya correctly predicted that the German-Soviet alliance would not last, and that Germany would go to war against Russia. But Kánya also said in the same conversation that this would happen only after England had been conquered, and he added that if the United States entered the war, then it would last 15 or 20 years. If some of Kánya's prophecies could be so wrong then how much worse the predictions of such lesser lights as, for instance, Kánya's successor, Foreign Minister Count István Csáky, whom Montgomery cordially disliked. It was indeed because of a quarrel or a misunderstanding with the unconditionally pro-German Csáky that Montgomery's situation became untenable in Budapest. He was recalled to Washington and left Budapest with his family in March 1941. We do not know how he travelled through war-torn Europe; nor do we learn much about his family either from the conversations or from his memoirs.

Following Montgomery's departure, his place was taken by Herbert Claiborne Pell, who had to evacuate the Legation after Prime Minister László Bárdossy stated, on December 12, 1941, that Hungary was now at war with the United States. We know that secret contacts between Hungary and the United States continued thereafter, and that by 1943 the Hungarian government was ready to surrender to the British and American armed forces. Unfortunately, those forces were nowhere near the Hungarian frontier. Instead, on March 19, 1944, the German army marched into Hungary. Despite Regent Horthy's and many other Hungarian politicians' confident assurances to Montgomery that, if attacked, Hungary would strongly resist the Germans, there was no armed resistance. Hundreds of Montgomery's former conservative and liberal interlocutors were immediately arrested with several among them ending up in concentration camps. Soon

thereafter, nearly half a million Jews were deported to Auschwitz and the Hungarian army was mobilized to fight the Russians who were now near Hungary. Only gradually did Horthy accept the idea of surrendering to the hated and despised Soviets. But all this is another story.

Tibor Frank's excellent editing and his Introduction, the Conversations, and the informative lists and tables in the Appendix wet one's appetite for more, especially for the publication of Montgomery's reports to the State Department; at least a part of his diaries and the more than one thousand Montgomery letters concerning Hungary that are also at Frank's disposal. One wonders what kind of information his subordinates were feeding him. Why did this

American Democrat want to associate only with high society Hungary and why did he meet only with such cultural figures who were favoured by the regime? What was the spiritual make-up of this diplomat who, in a poor country, seemingly never addressed a poor person, even if through an interpreter; who never inquired whether the ordinary people liked or disliked his own country, and who never wanted to know what was driving the right-wing and left-wing critics of the establishment. Yet, within a few years first the Far Right and then the Far Left would come to power in Hungary, both acting in the name of ordinary people. President Roosevelt could surely have sent a more inquisitive and more astute envoy to his fellow-sailor. ■

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Júlia Szabó

Showing Hungary Plain

Magda Czigány: *Magyar néző Albionban* (A Hungarian Observer in Albion).
Budapest, Kortárs Kiadó, 2003, 222 pp.

The first part of this collection by Magda Czigány, an art critic who has spent some fifty years in England, contains pieces already published in periodicals abroad or in Hungary, or delivered to gatherings of Hungarians abroad. The second part includes reviews written for the Hungarian sections of the BBC and Radio Free Europe about Hungarian exhibitions mounted in Britain. The third part contains recollections by Hungarian art historians interviewed by the author concerning their journeys made abroad at a time when such were only possible through the good graces of the then powers-that-be. Written in a lively, highly readable style, the book unfortunately contains not a single reproduction. The specialist will easily find the works of art discussed or referred to in libraries, but the general reader will have some difficulty, having to turn to old books and catalogues.

Magda Czigány's book discusses a number of memorable occasions and figures. One was an unforgettable 1980 exhi-

bition, largely of the work of Joanna Drew. The catalogue was also edited by her (*The Hungarian Avant-garde*, London, The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1980). Ms Drew, a brilliant organizer of exhibitions and an expert on Oriental art, died recently, in April 2003, at the age of 73. She was the director of the Hayward Gallery in London; Hungarian art owes a great deal to her. Joanna Drew was regarded as an exceptionally strong person with highly individual tastes by her colleagues, who appreciated her sound sense of proportion and social sensitivity. Her obituary in the *Daily Telegraph* (Peter Wason: "Joanna Drew, Director of the Hayward Gallery Who Championed Modern Art in Britain over Four Decades at the Arts Council", Tuesday, April 22, 2003), mentions that she gave a prominent place to Hungary, from where she imported an exhibition of Avant-garde art to London in 1980, at a time when such a show could hardly be expected to draw crowds in Britain. It was in connection with that exhibition that I first

Júlia Szabó,

who died as this article was being prepared for press, was chief curator of the Art Collection of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Recognised as a leading authority on 19th and 20th century Hungarian painting, she was the author of many important books and publications in this field.

met Joanna Drew and learned to respect her independence and original character.

Older art historians may still remember that this was not the first Hungarian exhibition in London in which Joanna Drew had a hand, the many-sidedness of which was, to a great deal, due to her. In May 1967, an exhibition of twentieth century Hungarian art was arranged at the Royal Institute Galleries in Piccadilly, London. The introduction to the catalogue of that exhibition (*Twentieth Century Hungarian Art*. The Arts Council of Great Britain) was written by the noted art historian István Genthon, who headed the Modern Department of the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts. The committee set up for the exhibition included Éva Visy, the *eminence grise* of the Hungarian National Gallery. Genthon's choices were József Rippl-Rónai, Károly Ferenczy, the painters of the Nagybánya School and the Gresham Circle, but the exhibition as well as the catalogue also covered Tivadar Csontváry Kosztka, László Mednyánszky, Lajos Gulácsy, Imre Ámos, Béla Kondor and László Lakner. Among the other paintings included in the show and the catalogue were Róbert Berény's *Self-Portrait in a Top Hat* (1907); *Walk at the Water Tower* (1934) by István Farkas and his *Madman of Syracuse* (1930); *Icon Self-Portrait* (1938) by Lajos Vajda, and Endre Bálint's *Miraculous Fishing* as well as some fine works by József Egry, Aurél Bernáth and Jenő Barcsay. The selection was equally broadly based in the plastic arts as well. Zsigmond Kisfaludy Strobl was represented by a bust of G. B. Shaw, Béni Ferenczy and Miklós Borsos by medals, and Tibor Vilt and Erzsébet Schaár by statuettes. The biographical material in the catalogue is also exemplary, with the single error of mentioning Béla Uitz among the members of The Eight, which he was not. It is highly likely that Joanna Drew herself had a hand in the selection, in the attempt at giving a

complete overview and in developing just proportions. "Modern art is something to be fought for," the obituary quotes her as saying in 1978, "but that is all right; a wound or two does not hurt".

The paths of Joanna Drew and Magda Czigány crossed occasionally. In her essay, Magda Czigány is critical of the catalogue of the 1980 exhibition because she thinks that it contained too much ideology, too much highly involved explanation, and too much György Lukács, and the pictures on the walls themselves had too little colour and too much tragedy. At another Hungarian exhibition, *The Golden Age*, a decade later, it was precisely the dark pictures that she missed, and she felt that Hungarian art as a whole was not properly represented by showing nothing but ornaments, a stylised lyrical worldview and Art Nouveau. That last show did not involve Joanna Drew; indeed, she would probably have curtly dismissed that exhibition and Art Nouveau symbolism in a few ironic words. Those who visited her 1980 London exhibition would have instantly bought the posters of the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic, the Cubist portraits and nudes of János Kmetty, the diabolically sizzling paintings of Nemes Lampérth and Dezső Czigány, or János Schadl's huge ink male nude. She did not really care about which Hungarian artist had already been known in Britain; the only thing she was interested in was the glow of the paintings themselves, and she only rarely remarked that it would be good to have a little more movement, a little more drama. That there must be more, either in Hungary or in other East European countries, could be suspected upon seeing Béla Uitz's dynamic composition, a 1919 water-colour by Sándor Bortnyik, or the early paintings of János Máttis-Teutsch, showing bent trees and mourning figures.

Joanna Drew believed that pictorial representation could not be approached and understood without written sources and explanations. She asked some of the best literary translators of Hungarian into English, including the late George Cushing, to translate theoretical texts by Lajos Fülep and Lajos Kassák. Her collaborator, Katalin Néray, then Director of the Budapest Kunsthalle gallery and currently of the Ludwig Collection, arranged for some 70 Hungarian books to be sent to London, including fiction, philosophy, art history and journalism, all of which, to the best of my knowledge, were sold mainly to Hungarians living in Britain. The uninitiated visitors of the exhibition, however, may have been confused by the work of The Eight and the Activists, who worked to a formulated programme. The brief chronological overview provided by the catalogue hardly helped to pinpoint deeper connections. Most of them would look at that mass of paintings, drawings and graphic pieces with a couple of sculptures cropping up among them in the same way as people without any knowledge of ethnology would look at a collection of tribal art or a set of objects regarded as inferior or "folk" art. The translated texts of the picture poems did contain some cryptic declarations but few would have believed the art historian Lajos Fülep, regardless of the quality of the translation, that Lajos Tihanyi, the deaf-mute portraitist from Budapest around the 1910s, was actually engaged by problems of portrayal similar to those on the mind of Oskar Kokoschka or Paul Cézanne. On top of all that, the subjects of his portraits were major figures such as the professors in Vienna or Berlin artists.

All that an average member of the public in London would have been able to perceive was that the Cézanne-like or Fauve-type Hungarian paintings seemed to carry dark shadows and heavy spiritual burdens,

that the Expressionists were not dismissive enough of the Cubist shaping of space, that only a few rose to almost Orphic circles of light (Imre Szobotka or, at times, János Kmetty) and that the futurist manifesto and paintings were made by negating and denying. Then, after a short silence, in the autumn of 1920, picture architecture (*Bildarchitektur*) began to evolve from basic geometric elements: painters had lost the solid ground under their feet; there was no more canvas, no more oils, only sheets of paper to paint on, prints and collages.

It would have sufficed to exhibit only the post-1920 Avant-garde, declared one of the outstanding students of the topic, Lajos Brendel, an art historian working in Poznań, who co-authored the catalogue. All that had gone before were merely antecedents anyway, he stated. The reaction to this suggestion was universal protest, coming, as far as I can remember, not only from Hungarians, including Krisztina Passuth, then in Paris, Tamás Aknai and myself, but the idea of a series of art objects rooted in expressive naturalism was also preferred by Joanna Drew. Then, at a certain stage of this show, the red circle, the black triangle, the title page constructed from pure colours made their appearance: "glass architecture", as it was called by László Moholy-Nagy; then already in Berlin from where he sent the item in question to Vienna, cut off from his Hungarian roots but hardly lacking Hungarian colours in his art.

Still, it would be wrong to view the work of these two fine women, two great promoters of art, focussing on a single exhibition. Magda Czigány's book begins with the nineteenth century, and with art from outside Hungary. The first essay in the book deals with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, subjecting his art, its inspiration,

the women he loved, to very subtle analysis. While providing a great deal of information on the mysterious female figures that the Pre-Raphaelites featured and the rebirth of Beatrice in the nineteenth century, the analyses anticipate another essay in this book, moving freely in space and time. This is the essay about the strange phenomenon of the Muses turning into artists in their own right, with eccentric female artists appearing on the scene in Moscow, Paris and Budapest.

Magda Czigány makes her contribution to a major topic here. Her line is not the emancipation of women. Czigány is not out to compose an anthology of women artists. She does refer to women artists of the Renaissance and the Baroque and of the Romantic period; still, the most exciting period for her is the century in which she lived herself, the twentieth. She lists the achievements of the legendary women artists of the Russian Avant-garde but looks for, and finds, distinct qualities. She also discusses the work of Anna Lesznai and Noémi Ferenczy from Hungary, along with that of Natalia Goncharova, Liubov Popova, Alexandra Exter, Olga Rosanova, Varvara Stepanova and others; as well as of Hungarian artists of the recent past and the present, Lili Ország, Márta Pán, Dóra

Maurer, all artists of the same rank, devoting the most detailed and also most passionate analysis to Erzsébet Schaár and Ilona Keserü.

Joanna Drew's exhibitions showed not a trace of gender being a criterion for selecting what was shown. She was as aware of the work of Valéria Dénes as of that of Sándor Galimberti, Elsworth Kelly or Magdalena Abakanowicz. Of the younger Hungarian artists, she took notice of Dezső Korniss and Ilona Keserü. There was just one woman artist toward whom she felt any special debt or obligation, her own mother, Sannie Drew, who died in 1969, and to whose memory she devoted a small album, published in the last year of her own life with the help of her friends. She edited part of it from her hospital bed.

The last illustration in the book is a photograph. It shows the respectable Englishwoman, the 1960 President of the International Alliance of Woman Artists and a regular exhibitor at the yearly exhibitions of the Royal Academy, on a camel's back.

Before she died, Joanna Drew created a memorial to the woman to whom she owed her strong and uncompromising character (*Sannie Drew*, London, The Maruts Press, 2003).

Gábor Ébli

Core, Periphery and Reciprocal Influence

Gyula Ernyey (ed.): *Britain and Hungary II: Contacts in Architecture, Design, Art and Theory during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Essays and Studies.*

Budapest, Hungarian University of Craft and Design, 2003. 291 pp.

Christian Hermansen's contribution to this book focuses on the architecture and interior design of exhibition buildings and fairgrounds during the first half of the twentieth century. He establishes similarities between Britain and Hungary in that neither "took up the pure and uncompromising functionalism coming out of Germany and France", welcoming instead the Scandinavian "version of functionalism, with its debt to Romanticism and the vernacular." This is a bold statement: it proposes to revise our current notions of the periphery versus the core of European modernisation and looks for multilateral contacts and affinities instead.

The mutual influence of cultures and scholarship, specifically between Britain and Hungary, lies behind most of the studies in this useful and enjoyable book. The Institute for Humanities of the Hungarian University of Crafts and Design joined the Glasgow School of Arts in the mid-1990s on the research project which inspired these essays and it is the Institute's director, Gyula Ernyey, who is the editor of this book. This is the second volume; the first,

published four years ago, presented papers of similar interest, if somewhat narrower in scope. In his review of Volume I, in the Autumn 2001 (No. 163) issue of this journal, Alan Crawford examined the advantages of such comparative research, along with the problems of using an overly generalising language, and subsuming individuals too often under the headings of states or institutions.

Volume I included papers on a broad spectrum of topics: in addition to art and architecture, photography and theatre also featured. In their time span, most papers looked at nineteenth century subjects, though a few examined British-Hungarian contacts in the interwar period, and even after the Second World War. Volume II further extends the scope. Porcelain, furniture and filmmaking are dealt with, as are a number of issues concerning art theory and intellectual history. In their time frame, a few essays guide the reader up to the present. As far as the concept underlying the two volumes is concerned, Crawford's considerations regarding Volume I indeed touched upon sensitive points in

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is an art historian with a special interest in the acquisitions policy of museums and in private collecting practice.

this British-Hungarian research project. How do we interpret "contact" between these (or, for that matter, any other) two countries; and why and how did the intensity of this complex influence fluctuate over time? Did "core" and "periphery" occasionally change roles? As we shall see, Volume II offers its most useful insights at points where the new essays enrich our understanding of these questions.

A few subjects have justly received attention in both volumes. The art historians József Sisa (Vol. I) and Géza Galavics (Vol. II) look at the architectural features and the political connotations of the spread from the early nineteenth century onwards of what Hungarians call the "English" (i.e. landscape) garden in this country. The rising popularity of the English garden indicated the desire of these Hungarian patrons to express in symbolic terms their opposition to Austrian and German hegemony. The Romantic and undisciplined liberty of the English garden also bade farewell to French cultural dominance, primarily to rationalism all over Europe, wherever it was established. Instead of forcing bushes, trees and artificial ponds into a pre-conceived structure, as the French did to express human domination over nature, English gardening allowed vegetation to follow its own lush and irrational course, thus heralding the right of human individuals, too, to live their own lives.

Budapest's pride and a masterpiece of British civil engineering, the Chain Bridge, inspired an essay in each of the two volumes. For the second study, the art trade, recently revived in Budapest, had supplied a "missing link". At an auction in the autumn of 2000, two water-colours turned up that are to date the earliest known plans for the bridge (1837), and that have now helped to reconstruct in more detail the co-operation of Count István Széchenyi and William T. Clark on the project.

The Hungarian reception of the work of a few key English figures at the turn of the century is also explored in both volumes. William Morris's arts and crafts movement had a direct impact upon the Gödöllő artist colony (established 1903). Aladár Körösfői, Sándor Nagy and other members of the colony looked at this movement as one affecting the whole life of their community and as one perhaps changing society at large. While idealistic, this stance led to practical steps, such as studying folk art as a source of motifs for a new, authentic culture. Many other East European and Scandinavian nations re-discovered their indigenous peasant culture at this time. With government support, these efforts yielded well-illustrated books, extensive museum collections of folklore, and the integration of these aesthetic patterns in the training of artists and in general education. As most of this institutional network of publishing, schooling and public collections followed British models in Hungary, we have a case here where inspiration and practical measures came from England even though their focus—peasant art—could not be described as English and characterised countries on the periphery of Europe.

Walter Crane is a figure whose influence upon Hungarian culture has been so pervasive that he is featured in both volumes. His illustrations appeared in a Hungarian edition of Grimm's fairy tales as early as 1882. In 1898, the Museum of Arts & Crafts in Budapest (founded 1872, built 1896) mounted an exhibition of prize-winning works in the English National Competition, of which Crane was a jury member. Two years later the museum devoted an exhibition to his oeuvre. Crane came to Hungary, gave lectures, travelled to Pécs, where he co-designed a few pieces of Zsolnay porcelain, and decorated the director's apartment in the museum with a wallpaper called Peacock Garden.

Whilst Jenő Radisics, the cosmopolitan director—of superb connoisseurship and managerial skills, by far the best among the museum's chief administrators to date—has still had no book devoted to his work, the wallpaper at least was restored in 2000. In 1902, Crane and Radisics served together on the jury of the International Art Exhibition in Turin, and a few items by Crane were exhibited in Budapest on two further occasions. His collaboration with the museum seemed so important in retrospect, that in 2001 the museum staged a commemorative show of Crane's links with Hungary, his grandson being present at the opening.

Both volumes include biographical essays. The art critic Pál Nádai, the painter Philip de László and the architect Ernő Goldfinger (all in Vol. I) were talented figures who relocated between the Anglo-Saxon world (first mainly in Britain, yet in the twentieth century increasingly the US) and Hungary several times during their lifetime, and readily accommodated their skills acquired in one of the two countries when in the other, even though their relocation was not always voluntary. The lives of the lithographer Miklós Szerelmey, the art historian Frederick Antal and the film producer John Halas suggest, however, that not all itinerants and migrants were successful. Some of them were given the cold shoulder on their return (Szerelmey), perhaps because of jealousy of the more sophisticated view of the world that the much travelled had. Antal suffered from incomplete recognition abroad, even though his leftist position and interest in the interrelation of art and society were welcome in the England of that time. Among these papers, the most helpful are those that come closest to intellectual history proper. Beyond the piece on Antal, the essay on Nikolaus Pevsner's reflections upon those Hungarian buildings that he saw on a field

trip to this country is especially helpful because it attempts to give reasons for, and even criticise, Pevsner's choices and judgements. Likewise in Volume II, we find an account of Herbert Read's contacts with Hungarian artists and scholars, within and outside Hungary.

A number of other papers, though of undoubted high scholarly standard, would benefit from a more critical attitude and a broader theoretical apparatus. Footnotes occasionally also hint at further figures to be examined, such as the sociologist Karl Mannheim, who lived in London from 1933 until his death in 1947. Another figure to look at could be the one-time avant-garde artist László Péri, whose career poses a challenge to research, as his work declined, rather than improved, after his move to London.

Volume II introduces some new subjects as well. An appreciation of the architecture of the Gresham Palace in Budapest (built by the London insurance company in 1907) could not be more timely, as the building is now being renovated after long decay and re-furbished as a hyper luxury hotel. Beyond the architectural achievement, many details of the decoration of this vast building merit attention. Miksa Róth, a pioneer of his craft, produced the stained glass and the glass mosaics; Géza Maróti did the frieze overlooking Chain Bridge (and thus facing the Royal Palace); Gyula Jungfer executed the blacksmith works.

Certain issues of design education, taken up in the essay by George Rawson, are of high relevance today, when the classic concepts of applied arts and the modernist trends of design appear out of date, and students of design orient themselves towards radically new ideas of visual culture and the media. In Hungary, additional interest fuels research into the training of

artists, which scholars regarded for many decades as a subject of only secondary importance. Belief in the autonomy of works of art was so strong that the lives of the artists were neglected or at best were considered biographical details. Today, as the interrelation of art and society has become evident to Hungarian scholars, too, researchers rediscover the importance of studying the formation and training of artists. A very useful volume has been published in Hungarian on the history of the Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest: some of the essays included indicate areas of teaching where Hungary was ahead until as late as the 1920s; and these studies might well find a readership abroad, if translated into English. A volume of similar enquiries is overdue on the history of the Academy of Applied Arts as well. Essays on training in the arts and crafts in Budapest promise to be interesting in particular because it succeeded in retaining some of its creativity even under Communism. Fine arts training was subordinated to political slogans after 1949, but the crafts and design were handled by Party apparatchiks with more indulgence. Artists working with textile, glass and other materials were thought to have a less direct impact on the public than future painters or sculptors at the Fine Arts Academy. Thus, their training was allowed to be more experimental and the teachers were more liberal than those of the fine arts classes. As a result, exhibitions in the 1960s and 1970s in Hungary featured the more avant-garde works often in the applied arts sections, rather than in painting or sculpture, which were paralysed by Socialist Realism.

Ray Mackenzie's close-up on public sculpture in Budapest (and, partly, Glasgow) offers Hungarian readers a sensitive outsider's view of their urban monuments. As the author is free of the Hungarian na-

tional bias towards public sculpture reconstructing dramatic versions of the country's past, Mackenzie's look at the interplay of aesthetics and politics in these works serves as a sophisticated and impartial tour guide for visitors. The comparison with Scotland is most valuable in identifying a key contradiction of public sculpture in Hungary. This is a country with a prolonged paternalistic past, where leftist and rightist autocratic politics—different as they were—always (mis)used the arts to legitimise their power. The "support of the state" for the embellishment of public space implied an uneasy combination of providing funding for, yet also controlling the message of public art. Governmental funding has always been at a dear price: most of the monuments erected this way have an ideological message. In contrast, the Scottish case suggests that raising public sculpture by private initiative and subscription requires more financial and organisational effort on the part of individuals and produces fewer items, but these will then reflect the values of the community, rather than of those in power.

This lesson could be applied more generally to the whole of culture and thus light the way for intellectual life in Hungary, now freed of the direct political interference that lasted almost a century. Culture is a public good, yet it is better nourished from the grass-roots, from the bottom. The task of the state is to help make it widely accessible, without actually defining its content. As a traditional Anglo-Saxon pattern, this might be one of the most important messages of this British-Hungarian research project.

Juliet Kinchin's essay on the Hungarian Exhibition in London in 1908 confirms this: it also proposes that public projects may need to involve not only a sound balance of private and state engagement, but

market mechanisms as well. She points out clearly that the relative failure of this large-scale show was due to the unwillingness of the Hungarian Government to delegate organisational authority to a private individual with entrepreneurial skills who would have satisfied the "popular appetite for novelty, spectacle and entertainment," by that time long accepted as a principle of public life by the British. In fact, the British Government had an ex-Hungarian, Imre Királyfi, run shows of this kind, which were immensely successful. This hints at a second conclusion: civic and market forces combined may animate public culture, with less ideological bias and more efficiently.

Among the new topics in Volume II, the examination of private art patronage points to cases in Hungary where private initiative greatly promoted the public good, and did so more rapidly, at less cost and with more good taste, independent of the official artistic canon of the day. An essay on Pál Majovszky points out that his graphics collection is thus actually more important from this point of view than his collection of English works (Gainsborough, Bonington, Burne-Jones, Rossetti and a few others), since his graphics collection focused upon French masters. He assembled his collection mainly between 1908 and 1914, with the help of Simon Meller, Head of the Graphics Department of the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts. All these works were bequeathed to the museum. Their relevance is such that the recent *Monet and His Friends* exhibition at the museum, the best attended show ever in that building, was based upon them.

A similarly pioneering study sheds light on the Hungarian contacts of Charles Robert Ashbee, whose Guild of Handicraft received ahead-of-the-times orders from the economist Gyula Mandello from 1899 onwards. When, on the invitation of Josef Hoffmann, Ashbee exhibited at the eighth

Vienna Secession in 1900, nearly half of the items on display were works produced for Mandello and his wife. As Ashbee noted after their first meeting, "anything out of the ordinary conventional lines" was of interest to the Mandello couple. Like Hungarian private art collectors (Adolf Kohner, Marcell Nemes, Ferenc Hatvany and a few others), whose purchases in the European art market until the First World War paralleled, and sometimes even preceded, those of the most modernist buyers in Munich, London or Paris, Mandello was one of those East European private patrons whose collecting proved crucial for the development of various Western artists.

The contribution of private patrons in Hungary is best shown in the enrichment of museum collections, as the provenance records that supplement the essays on the British furniture and glassworks holdings of the Budapest Museum of Applied Arts testify. A mahogany writing cabinet of the late eighteenth century was donated to the museum by one of the major collectors, Mór Herzog, in 1911; another—with decorations citing poems by Pope—came with the legacy (1935) of the furniture manufacturer Miksa Schmidt, whose bequest also included a whole building for the Budapest History Museum. A Chipendale armchair from circa 1760 was purchased from a private collection as late as 1979. Among the British glassworks of private origin, an acquisition (1951) by the György Ráth Collection stands out. Ráth, the first director of the Museum of Applied Arts, was a Supreme Court judge and continued collecting privately when Radisics took over the museum. He bought the dish designed by Crane at the exhibition in 1900.

As preparations for Volume III have already begun, this interest in the relationship between the public and the private spheres might be explored further usefully,

especially with regard to post-Second World War issues. "Never did Britain enjoy such influence in Hungary as in the period from the 1950s to the 1980s," to quote the editor in Volume I. So far, the two volumes have only commenced to look at this. What is certain, though, is that never in modern times did the political system and the social fabric of Britain and Hungary differ more than in this era. What patterns can be adopted from each other's system in culture is a vital subject for research. A highly interesting conclusion lies at hand should the hypothesis on the intensity of contacts be found compelling: despite political divergence, mutual fertilisation in art and culture may continue, and even increase.

While this awaits exploration first, the case studies surveyed so far point to the riches in the contacts between the two countries. Overcoming the stereotypical approach of looking at "Hungary on the periphery" as adopting from "Britain at the core", a discussion of material and intellectual progress could be one of the most

long-lasting returns of this research. It is thus hardly surprising that the partner of the Hungarian initiators is a Glaswegian rather than a London institution. It is also helpful that the papers address art, architecture and other areas of creativity, in which the prowess of Hungarians is well established internationally. Indeed, in matters of culture, in the last two centuries, both countries often had to look at third nations for a model to accommodate. For this reason, French, German, even Scandinavian examples, followed by the British and/or the Hungarians, appear in these two volumes, but only occasionally. American and Russo-Soviet patterns—from the classic avant-garde to the functioning of the "culture industry"—could also be usefully looked at in their impact on British and Hungarian artists, designers and theorists. Comparative methods of research might actually be applied to their full advantage in examining how British and Hungarian figures and institutions reacted to a given impetus coming from a third place. ■

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Tamás Koltai

Classic Hungarian Drama: Reality and Illusion

THEATRE & FILM

Mihály Vörösmarty–György Spiró: *Czillei és a Hunyadiak* (Czillei and the Hunyadis) • Gergely Csiky: *Buborékok* (Bubbles) • Dezső Szomory: *Györgyike, drága gyermek* (Georgie, Dear Child) • Mihály Vörösmarty: *Csongor és Tünde*.

In discussing classic Hungarian drama, three plays come up inescapably, each of which was written in the 19th century and each is in the permanent repertoire, and regularly restaged. These are Mihály Vörösmarty's *Csongor és Tünde*, József Katona's *Bánk bán*, and Imre Madách's *Az ember tragédiája* (The Tragedy of Man). But there are several other plays from the 19th century or the early 20th century which are also part of that heritage, which are occasionally restaged. The directors are motivated by the hope of sparking off a rediscovery, or by a sense of duty, or by the urge of a cultural mission.

Following his appointment in 2002, Tamás Jordán, the new general manager of the National Theatre, selected three Hungarian dramas for his first season. (My review of the theatre's production of Sándor Weöres's *A holdbéli csónakos* (The Boatman from the Moon) has already appeared in this magazine. At the time of writing this article, two more premieres are still ahead this season.) Mihály Vörösmarty's historical drama *Czillei és a Hunyadiak* (Czillei and the Hunyadis) has been reworked for this occasion by the

novelist and playwright György Spiró. Keeping the storyline and some of the characters, Spiró has essentially written a new play. Vörösmarty was a towering literary figure in the first half of the 19th century, often described as the poet of the Reform Age and Romanticism, although he outgrew those labels. (He produced an excellent translation of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, still favoured by many directors.) Meant to be the first part of an unfinished trilogy, *Czillei és a Hunyadiak* (1844) was also his last play. In the 15th century the Hunyadis played a prominent part in Hungarian history. János, who is already dead at the start of the play, distinguished himself in the war against the Turks. His most famous victory at the battle of Nándorfehérvár (Belgrade) is commemorated to this day by the tolling of the angelus bell at noon throughout Europe. His younger son, Matthias, is still a child at the time; he went on to become the legendary Renaissance king. It is his brother, László, who is the central character of the play. He falls victim to intrigue in the power struggle between the king, Ladislas V, and the barons, most notably the king's

Tamás Koltai,

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uncle, Ulrich Czillei. The intricate plot is driven by "cabal and love", although the dramaturgy evokes Shakespeare rather than Schiller. After setting a trap for László Hunyadi, Czillei is exposed and killed by the Hunyadi faction. After granting a general pardon, the king orders Hunyadi to be imprisoned and beheaded. There are plenty of side stories, which sometimes tend to overburden the audience.

Spiró wants to meet the expectations vis-à-vis Vörösmarty's text and the contemporary audience. He retains only a few lines of the original, replacing the florid and convoluted sentences with short, succinct dialogues. In both dramaturgy and poetry, his ideal is Shakespeare (on whose role-doublings he wrote an interesting book years ago). He incorporates the popular elements of the iconography and a 19th-century opera based on the story (Ferenc Erkel: *László Hunyadi*, recently performed in Britain with a Hungarian cast), along with the tableaux of contemporary painting. In some places he pastes literary quotes into the dialogues; elsewhere he uses puns and limericks, as well as some alienating effects. He peppers the text with riddles, some of which refer to his literary predecessors, while others are contemporary catchphrases. The play's political message is summed up in the two words of "plotting and conspiring". Ulrich von Cilli is the most authentic character, a modern-day villain: cynical and clever, nonchalant and arrogant, without principles or moral scruples; callously calculating yet lethargic, he despises both the world and himself. With a few exceptions, the other dramatis personae do not have so fully-developed characters.

The result is a hybrid, combining the historical pathos of romanticism and alienating irony. This duplicity is reflected by the performance. Pathos is not the forte of the director, László Babarczy, who is

also the director of the Csiky Gergely Theatre of Kaposvár: as a result, he is compelled to produce operatic *tableaux vivants*. The design takes full advantage of the theatre's technical state of the art apparatus: monumental and swiftly moveable, the stage sets nevertheless are in an eclectic style. At the director's suggestion, which Spiró reluctantly accepted but later came to regret, the same actor plays László Hunyadi and Ladislas V, the Hungarian hero and the sovereign who could not speak Hungarian. The victim and the murderer. The idea only works on paper; in the play it has neither a function nor any consequence. When the two characters are on stage together, a double must stand in. The lesson this particular production teaches is that it is difficult to satisfy both what is ordered from the outside and your inner self.

The Kaposvár company is named after Gergely Csiky, a playwright whose works are set texts in secondary schools, regardless of the fact that he was not an outstanding dramatist. Literary historians think he could have been one: a Hungarian Ostrovsky. A priest, he held a doctorate in theology and worked for the Holy See as an advocate in matrimonial cases. Then he decided to become a playwright; he left the priesthood, got married, wrote a play modelled on the classical Greek tradition and won the Academy's prize with it. From then on, he churned out plays in quick succession, which surveyed the characters and typical conflicts of contemporary Hungarian society in the last quarter of the 19th century. Authentic as they are, Csiky's characters and view of society are not sharp enough. He is more of a comedy-writer than a satirist: he lacks the necessary ruthlessness in passing judgment. Unable to invent an original dramaturgy, he follows an outdated for-

mula for his message. He offers the audience a pleasant evening, not a stirring experience.

From a purely technical viewpoint, *Buborékok* (Bubbles, 1884) is rightly regarded as Csiky's best piece. Originally performed by the National, it enjoyed only one revival throughout the 20th century, which is telling. The current production is in the hands of the National's director, Tamás Jordán. The title is the most poignant part of the play. The central characters are a landowner on the verge of financial disaster and his spendthrift wife, who watch helplessly as their illusive schemes to come into money burst like bubbles one by one. When they give a reception in their home, their children, married or single, attract a large number of suitors, meddlers and corrupt officials, all seeking their own ends at the expense of everyone else. After a series of farcical situations, the outcome is a compromise. Although the couple's dreams do not materialise, they nevertheless manage to steer clear of complete ruin: they are able to maintain their former lifestyle, albeit in more provincial conditions.

Underneath the surface of this well-made Hungarian adaptation of a French salon comedy, we are expected to find a middle-class moralist who not only ridicules the typical figures of the nouveaux riches, the title seekers and the dowry-hunters, as well as the emptiness of upper-class society and their affected manners, but also rids us of our illusions about them. But the truth is that Csiky enjoyed success just as much as his audience enjoyed not applying the criticism to themselves. Author and audience mutually satisfy each other's needs. This is what entertaining theatre is about and the present National Theatre continues this tradition. The studio theatre, which originally was meant to be an experimental theatre and

apparently was so equipped technically (two years has not been enough to discover the potentials of the stage and lighting, because they were never put to the test), actually offers a home to an average and completely traditional band box theatre. The troupe is mixed: in the leading roles there are a few popular actors who successfully divert the audience. But at least no one can now say that Gergely Csiky's plays have not been performed in the 21st century.

Alongside Ferenc Molnár, Milán Füst and Ernő Szép, the other great figure of early twentieth-century Hungarian drama is Dezső Szomory, whose first major play, *Györgyiike, drága gyermek* (Georgie, Dear Child, 1912) has also been restaged by the National Theatre. Szomory was an eccentric. As a young man, he ran off to France to escape military service, living there for seventeen years in appalling conditions, to put it mildly. Within a short time after his return with a royal pardon in 1906, he had become a celebrated playwright, whose plays were billed in several theatres, including the National. Instead of presenting the under-developed Hungarian middle classes and their defective self-conscience either with a lyrical identification or through realistic characterisation, he used a highly stylised language and exaggerated emotional and sensual effects, which, in such doses, became charged with ironic and grotesque effects. Szomory's heroes seem to live in ecstasy: they speak in a cantabile manner and have a larger-than-life character. The author himself was known to lead an irregular life: in some sense, he cast himself in the role of one of his characters. He lived in an elegantly furnished attic of a downtown apartment building, where he had a church organ fitted into the wall. He received his visitors posing in various roles—in costumes or, in

some cases, in the nude. His earlier successes did not save him from the Nazis' brutal persecution. Being of Jewish origin, he was forced to move into the Budapest ghetto. He indignantly rejected every scheme to get him out of harm's way. He died in the ghetto in 1944. The brave new world had no need for his plays. A Szomory renaissance had to wait until the late 1960s.

The play *Georgie, Dear Child* is about an emotionally deprived and naively sensual seventeen-year-old aspiring actress whose experience of growing up was tainted by insecurity, stubbornness, disappointment, lost illusions and revenge. Within two months, this budding rose turns into a tough and cold-hearted femme fatal. A veritable *fleur du mal* surrounded by a menagerie of greedy characters. The story thus somewhat resembles Frank Wedekind's *Lulu*, although it takes place within a much shorter period and does not have a tragic end. Unless one considers it a tragedy that the girl renounces her true love and marries a porcelain manufacturer, who worships her and in return she is unfaithful to him even before the wedding day. At the end of the play, by way of a farewell speech, she flaunts the possibility of further marital infidelity.

The tone of the play is frivolous and sardonic; the play itself is dull and boring. The director Attila Béres, who created a static and poorly lit stage set within the huge space, is unable to hit on an appropriate style or even the right pace for the play. The actors are left to their own devices, meaning that the more seasoned ones draw on their experience and the younger ones go through agonies. Thus the sour conclusion at the end of the play, when the precocious bitch pronounces sentence on both the disingenuous world and herself, and cynically decides to play the game, just fizzles out.

Instead of a set school text, we are treated to a real sensation by the Katona József Theatre, easily the best Hungarian repertory company but not much of a champion of old Hungarian drama. On this occasion, however, guest-director Sándor Zsótér, who happens to be among the heavyweights of contemporary Hungarian theatre, decided to stage-produce one of the three canonical classics, Mihály Vörösmarty's *Csongor és Tünde* (1830).

Csongor és Tünde is a fairytale and a philosophical poem written when its author was thirty years old. He had just got over the first disappointments of youth and the first fright of cosmic despair. This is the period in life when the unsettled mind feels an urge to provide an interpretation for the universe. The horizon of the imagination is boundless. For inspiration, Vörösmarty turned to the treasure house of Hungarian folk tales, although he probably also drew on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and on Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. The philosophical drama of Man chasing an unattainable ideal makes this piece a close kin of Goethe's *Faust*. (The second part of *Faust* was completed in its final form in the year that Vörösmarty finished his fairytale.) The hero is a romantic youth, who has travelled half the world but has not found love. In the series of adventures, Tünde, his virtual pair, is kept away from him by magic. (The girl's name conceals a twofold allusion: she is the supernatural fairy and also the phantom that either keeps disappearing or remains invisible; on the rare occasions when she does neither, Csongor sleeps through the brief intervals when she is by his side.) It is the story of a long quest. The hero and the heroine both have company: a peasant couple who act as their servants, the man is a simpleton and the woman thinks of herself as a fairy. The four of them wander around, continuously searching for one

another. Their meeting up is prevented by the witch Mirigy, the spirit of destruction. She directs three mischievous devil-cubs (enchanted creatures half man, half animal) their way. Csongor and Tünde arrive in the kingdom of the Night. Their path is repeatedly crossed by three vagrants: the Scholar, the Prince and the Merchant, who all set out on their journey with high ideals to conquer the world and return home in rags, disconsolate and disappointed. Mirigy's aim is to deprive the young couple's encounter of all hope, making their despair irreversible. However, the two young people do meet up in the end and their last dialogue discloses the ultimate purpose of life: love.

The play in verse, which combines frolic with philosophy, abstract poetic rhetoric with the world of fairytale, was long considered to be unfit for the stage. It was not until twenty-five years after Vörösmarty's death that the National Theatre finally performed it. Since then it has become part of the permanent repertoire, regardless of the fact that the directors, save for a few exceptions, were unable to make up their mind whether to emphasise the philosophical message or the scenic aspects: they simply could not reconcile the two.

Zsótér went for the radical solution. As in all his most recent productions (within a short period he has gone through Brecht's four great plays, as well as Hans Henny Jahn's *Medea*, Sarah Kane's pieces and Euripides's *Bacchae*, the last in two versions) the characters hardly move at all: they practically remain seated throughout the entire performance, with only music and light effects resolving the static atmosphere. In the Kamra, the Katona József's studio theatre, he puts the characters into a prefabricated flat, making them sit by seven prefabricated tables. The tables are lit by dim lights that keep blink-

ing. Rectangular desktop lights, worksheets of light, come up and fade away in front of the dazzled characters, who stare into the yellowish will-o'-the-wisp as if they were in a trance. From time to time, when it is their turn to speak, they briefly come to life, before sinking back into their former state of complete apathy. They appear to have emerged from the dead. Their costumes, which are colourful, although most of the time they seem grey as mould due to the light, evoke the 19th century Romantic style. Stagnation on the scene reminds us of waxworks. Left alone in the midnight silence, some exhibits from the collections of Coppélius or Madame Tussaud's come to life. Artefacts of the past, they are revived and locked up in a prefabricated flat. A Vörösmarty relic recovered from underneath the dust. The sculpture park of Csongor and Tünde.

Mortal thoughts, spleen, allegories of love and death, Schopenhauerian introspection, experiencing the world merely as the whims of willpower and imagination: so far all these have made up a terrain that, although theoretically thoroughly analysed, remained inaccessible for the theatre. A faulty background in philosophy, which was manifested in the dramaturgy as a lack of dramatically digested thoughts and philosophical developments transplanted into life phenomena, prevented literary historians and theatre directors alike from discovering the play's close relationship with the Faustian problem.

In Zsótér's version, Tünde never appears on stage; she is substituted by a delusive counter-tenor, who comes on in the dialogues as a dreamy tune. This seems a logical choice, in light of the fact that Tünde never does anything apart from disappearing or going through transformations and metamorphoses. For Csongor, she is only an apparition. In this arrangement, Csongor is cast in the role of lan-

guishing with love; sitting at the table perplexed and bewildered, he seems completely helpless. It is only at the end of the performance that he stands up and walks out of the door, into nothingness or into another barren room in the prefabricated building (this is the most extreme, almost wildly reckless move during the play), to be united with his lover as another ethereal voice. If there ever was a view that interpreted the play as the poetic rendering of the "Hungarian tragedy", which tends to take refuge in the realm of fantastic desires while missing out completely on happiness on earth, then Zsótér's direction, with its abstract allegorical character, would come tantalisingly close to it.

There are two characters sitting at the middle table, *Mirigy* and *The Night*. They are the super-natural figures. The former is played by an actor wearing an evening gown that bares his shoulders; his character completely lacks any transcendent magic. Like the fairytale's narcissistic witch, he keeps checking himself in the mirror. *The Night* is presented as a rather bizarre phenomenon; the usually majestic figure of the "poor woman of gloom" has a skinny body here; haunted by terrible hallucinations, she almost seems disgusted as she whimpers her vision of the Apocalypse. At the start of her soliloquy, she rises "out of the dark void" with the help of colourful neon floodlight. As she finishes, she collapses back into her white tulle. There are two tables with three characters. Customarily presented as an unruly gang storming through the stage, the devil-cubs

here are seated around one of these tables, plotting great adventures. The other table is for the three vagrants, who discuss their failed life strategies. All the adventures are merely narrated in words, through the text, which—with all its fairytale playfulness—is the greatest strenght of the play. Here the scope of acting is a function of internal shifts. Just as in his other directions, Zsótér has dispensed with any identities concerning gender, age or physique; in other words, wherever possible, he creates a distance between actor and character: this is what provides the room for playfulness. This is a somewhat novel situation for the troupe of the Katona Theatre, whose familiar milieu is one of relaxed realism. They find it difficult to do away with physical contacts and gesticulation, which they substitute with an internal intensity. The most they are allowed to do is to take a couple of steps towards their partner in order to enter their field of gravity. It is impossible to break out of the islands of solitude. "Cosmic purposelessness is aggravated by internal purposelessness," thus Antal Szerb, the writer who also distinguished himself as a literary historian, captured the essence of the play. This is also the essential point that the production makes. The other point is that the theatre is not a shrine, which people visit to say a prayer by the light of a lamp. Nor is it a crypt, where we unbury the corpse regardless of the fact that we cannot revive it. It is only worth digging up the national memorial ground if we can give new life to its "inhabitants"—our classic plays. ■

Erzsébet Bori

War of Worlds

Attila Janisch: *Másnap* (After the Day Before) • Károly Makk: *Egy hét Pesten és Budán* (A Long Weekend in Pest and Buda) • Miklós Jancsó: *Mohácsi vész* (The Battle of Mohács) • Ferenc Török: *Szezon* (Eastern Sugar) • Benedek Fliegauf: *Dealer* • Szabolcs Hajdú: *Tamara*

Take in all the movies made in a particular year and you will soon be confronted with the question of generations. Of course, it would be possible to classify the year's crop along other lines too, such as awareness of audience expectations or response to societal problems. However, most films aim to show the world from a viewpoint a generation has established. Most often, the environment of the generation is depicted and the generation itself always.

On this occasion, films made by different generations came face to face with each other at this year's Hungarian Film Festival. This is partly due to the fact that a year or two ago, Hungarian filmmaking suddenly realised that it has a future. This realisation came as quite a surprise, since the idea up to then had been to live only for the day and the devil only knows what tomorrow will bring. The coercion imposed by fleeting opportunities does not favour artistic aspirations.

Strangely enough, this startling realisation did not evoke a sense of relief, as one would expect. On the contrary, many directors were alarmed, and not only the seniors, those who regarded themselves as

having made it. Young directors were forced to recognize that they are this future, and if they had not come to this recognition by themselves, the growing interest of audiences led them to it. Critics were also pronouncing it all over the place. This new-found status of responsibility, however, also brought an end to freedom from care, in effect the end of youth. Therefore, directors making their second full-length feature films began work in a clearly perceptible state of shock. This feeling of panic was only strengthened by the general notion that one's second film is the make or break point, which may decide how far a director will go in the business. Anyone is capable of coming up with one good film, or the enthusiasm of debutants may conceal or allow shortcomings to be overlooked. But the second time around there is no mercy. Therefore, this group of directors, rather sizeable in terms of Hungarian filmmaking, came up with some mighty ambitious plans. They all wanted to make it big and this really showed in their work.

The older generations reacted to this in their own ways. The great maestros with

Erzsébet Bori

is the regular film critic of this journal.

the extensive oeuvres, including the two doyens of Hungarian filmmaking, Miklós Jancsó and Károly Makk, turned to the theme of death. After all, they thought, nobody knows more about death than they do and it is a topic that interests everyone.

Meanwhile, the middle-aged generation just looked on dumbly. The best that the brightest of them managed was to carry on with what they have been doing up to now, with varying degrees of success. Some were successful, since the main prize at the Festival was awarded to Attila Janisch's *Másnap* (After the Day Before), which also received considerable interest from audiences in addition to the official acclaim. Looking at it from another perspective, however, we can say that this middle generation achieved only modest success, since, with the exception of Janisch, works by directors in their forties and fifties were rather mediocre.

Másnap is a somewhat fatalistic piece with a concentric mosaic structure. It is about the inscrutability of the world, both in the wide and in the narrow sense, and, as such, it is an excellent illustration of the utter perplexity felt by the middle generation of filmmakers, a manifestation in cinema of the mid-life crisis. During his endless journey, a lone wanderer (a photographer, as it turns out) takes shelter from the elements in an isolated village and falls captive to the inhospitable surroundings there. There are fierce daily battles fought in the village, centring around a local Lolita. The stranger, who also happens to be middle-aged, becomes involved to such an extent that he gets entangled in the events without noticing it. He becomes the protagonist of a story that is, strictly speaking, none of his business. But once the die is cast, there is no way back. This is precisely the message, that this point of no return is pre-ordained. It is so natural for him, that his only option is to keep going all the way—all

the way to the end, until death. Janisch portrays this masterfully, with beautiful images, which seems to contradict the helplessness radiating from the film. For the audience, this contrast becomes perceptible—primarily due to the lack of a clear-cut story line. It is also difficult to decide whether the deficiencies of the narrative arise from the clumsiness of the message or the brutal depiction of the impossibility of cognition. This, of course, does not make the film any more convincing.

Janisch comes to the theme of death gradually, that is his business. For others, however, it is the starting point. Károly Makk turns again to the protagonists of what was perhaps his best movie, *Love*, made in 1970. This is probably the last time that these characters will appear on the screen, since the original movie was set in the 1950's, based on stories by the novelist Tibor Déry, who died long ago, and they have aged together with the era in which they lived. This time they take a sad retrospective look at their lives, and ask the usual question: where did we go wrong? Makk does not keep the answer to himself, it is manifest in every shot, wherever possible. There was simply no alternative in such a day and age. In the second half of the twentieth century in Eastern Europe, people could only make things worse for themselves. *A Long Weekend in Pest and Buda* is an admission: we tried everything. This "everything", the best that we were capable of, naturally means a love that started off strong and beautiful, but did not stand the test of time. It was defeated by history and the process of aging. Whether this is really due to the horrific circumstances, or, God forbid, solely to ourselves is what the director ponders on for a while. Then, to his credit, he gives an obvious and clear-cut answer. Death merely means the end of the game, it does not change the score.

Characteristically, Miklós Jancsó's answer to death is much cheekier. His message is that there is another chance—all you need for it is the right state of mind. If we are capable of laughing at something, even at the circumstances that have determined our lives, then we will always have another chance to laugh. The mere existence of *The Battle of Mohács* is proof of this, the utter absurdity of its being the fifth part of a trilogy. The protagonists build a primitive time machine and return to the scene of one of the tragic turning points of Hungarian history, the great battle against the Turks in 1526. Their goal is to right that catastrophic wrong (with Kalashnikovs), but they bungle the opportunity. Of course, they are not in the least bothered by this—maybe next time. This is the film's main message: stick out your tongue at the Reaper. If you are free, nobody can get the better of you.

Jancsó is free, nobody can doubt that—he has worked for his freedom. But this is precisely what depresses up-and-coming young directors the most; the feeling that they could lose their freedom. All the more so since, for obvious reasons, not even the fact that they have already tasted this freedom once will serve as a guarantee that they will taste it again. They only have a faint notion of what it is like. But one thing is for sure, they are trying their best. Ferenc Török, whose first film (*Moscow Square*) received considerable critical acclaim and decent success at the box-office, has devoted his second work, *Szezon* (Eastern Sugar) to the search for a good, wealthy and free life. A bunch of lads from the Hungarian provinces set off for the legendary but somewhat tarnished tourist area of Lake Balaton, in search of "Life". They think of themselves as shrewd and determined, they are confident they will succeed. In fact, they are full of uncertainty and prejudice, ill prepared to make their

dream come true. Of course, the fault lies with them, but it is buried so deeply, it is so pre-ordained, that they have no chance of noticing it. The very dreams that they nurtured had been based on illusions. They are naive and ill-informed. In every adventure that they have at Lake Balaton, they end up losing out. On top of it all, they never even understand what has happened to them. All they know is that things have not worked out, but they are unable to react to that. The thought of "maybe next time" does not even occur to them—they are not free enough for that. They are captives of stupid stereotypes, at the bottom of a money-based society. Török tries to transpose the virtues of his moody debut piece into his second work. But he strikes a sadder and more serious tone this time, to the extent that he does not even refrain from drawing some rather extreme conclusions. The fragmentation of the world, in his view, is unquestionable. To make matters worse, the dividing lines lie along fake values. Therefore, people can only earn a brief moment, a mere taste of joy, and even that is an illusion.

But even in such a worthless and god-forsaken world, people will still not give up, because that is human nature, that is how man was created. This is the message of Benedek Fliegauf's second film, *Dealer*. People are searching for something that could make them better if they adjust their lives to it, searching for this opportunity in various ways and places. Fliegauf provides numerous examples, but focuses primarily on drugs as the most common substitute for God in the 21st century. Thus, his dealer is a priest in the service of this deity, who merely conveys the heavenly message to the believers. This, however, is by no means a sacral act, since it is obvious to him that he is shepherding his flock towards certain death. But he does not believe that he has a real choice, so even

when he has the chance to quit, he simply carries on. He is buried beneath a fake ideology that he knows (or once knew) to be false. Perhaps he is just weak. Weak, because he draws the strength he needs for his day-to-day survival from the weakness of others. We can never be sure of the supposed missionary zeal of a Stalker, since it is possible that it was the material value of his lifestyle that made him what he is. It is possible that there are only erroneous ways in life, but most people need to be led even to find those. And this is a frank though somewhat frightened listing of the doubts surrounding the artistic future.

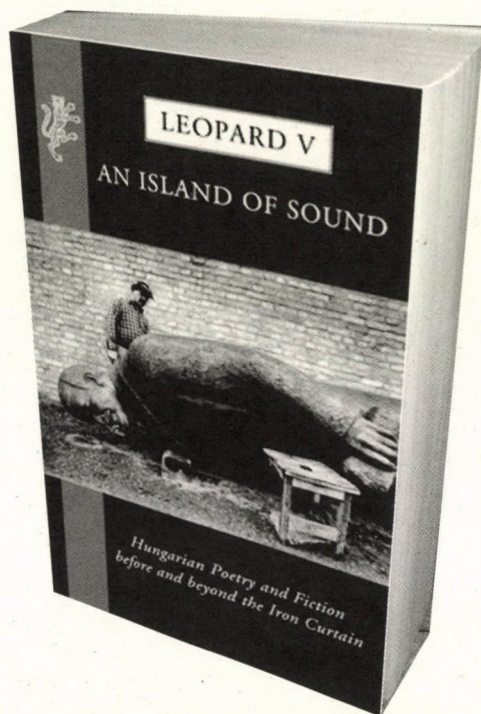
Szabolcs Hajdú, also coming up with his second film, has a much more definite view on the possible paths one can take in life, although this may also be interpreted

as a sort of escape. *Tamara* introduces viewers to the highest degree of intimacy. Well, introduces is perhaps not the right word, since it does not even make the slightest effort at guiding us through this world of intimacy. On the contrary, it merely immerses itself in it, namely in love affairs. What seems certain for the audience from this love story is that it completely preoccupies Hajdú, both as a person and as an artist. This means that his life is full of problems, but he does not mind. He regards it as a constant engagement. At times, he manages to delight outsiders with it, and, at its best moments, even has audiences worried for his characters.

Thus we have ended up at the point where Károly Makk started off: love. Let us hope that this time it will end differently. ■

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second half of the twentieth century

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I opened the boarded-up entrance door. Dr Erdős hopped inside. I wanted to shut it quickly and lock it before the tall young man with an armband pursuing him could push his way in. The two of us, a child and an old man, pushed from the inside, but our besieger, maybe 25 years old, managed to get a running start and push us back enough to get the tip of his boot in the crack. The game was his. He stood before us with a pistol in his hand. He was taller than Dr Erdős, and his lip was quivering from wounded pride. These Jews slam the door in my face, just like that?

A little smile – the smile of the vanquished – flashed over Dr Erdős's face. The young man held the pistol to Erdős's face and fired a shot into his temple. Dr Kálmán Erdős fell, and his blood flowed over the muddy, imitation pink marble stone. Now the young man in uniform took aim at my forehead.

I looked at him more in amazement than in fear. He lowered his pistol and headed out the door.

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