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84

- JOHN LUKACS on GEORGE KENNAN
- ISTVÁN DEÁK on his Police File
- GEORGE SCHÖPFLIN on What Europe Is About
- MARK RYLANCE on Mastering Shakespearean Space
- PAUL GRIFFITHS on GYÖRGY LIGETI
- Northern Air – A Hungarian Nova Zembla
  A poem by GEORGE SZIRTES
- Renaissance Architecture in Transylvania
- The Art of BÉLA KONDOR
- The Afterlife of the Treaty of Trianon
- Are Families Failing?

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HISTORY

BOOKS & AUTHORS

THEATRE & FILM

MUSIC

Cover: Béla Kondor: Wasp King, 1963, Courtesy Xantus János Múzeum, Győr.
Back cover: Béla Kondor: Cloister Foundation, 1966. Private Collection;
The Saints March in, study II. 1972. Private Collection.

Péter Nádas

A Swish Mansion

A chapter from Volume I of the novel *Parallel Stories*
Part 2

Anyone stepping through the doorway and passing beside the long line of rubbish bins, the lids of which were perpetually being pushed aside by cats, so that swarms of rats were able to tour them and feast themselves even in broad daylight, would not have readily noticed that the blotchily begrimed wall-faces were decorated by the same simple, lamellar mouldings as the façade. Due to a burst pipe upstairs that had gone unrepaired for months, the plaster had come off in large patches from the imposingly vaulted ceiling, and bare bricks, indeed electric wires, were now protruding from the fraying laths. The janitor, whom the aged Samu Demén had brought up from Jászberény when almost still a stripling, would look up in passing several times a day, because he was frankly betting on a disaster. It was to be feared that the loosened mortar from in between the bricks in the vaulting would not hold out, and the huge, slowly rusting light fitting that dangled from the ceiling would come crashing down.

First as deputy, then before long as regular caretaker, he had been looking after the block for more than thirty years now, and he had done it with a zeal so unstinting and passionate that it was as if he were unable to forget that, but for this job, his life could have taken a different course.

In full possession of his faculties, he was a belligerent, cunning, underhand character, but his physical impediments were severe; as a young child, in his own environment, he had started to be at acute risk of being carried off towards a quick end. He was somehow in everybody's way, could not be employed in normal work out on the fields, his siblings hit and kicked and knocked him over, even his own mother and grandmother did not spare him; so if an accident of providence had

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Péter Nádas

is a novelist, dramatist and essayist. He made his international breakthrough with A Book of Memories, *1997* (Emlékiratok könyve, *1986). His other works available in English include* The End of a Family Story *(1977) and* A Lovely Tale of Photography *(1995). His latest novel, the three-volume* Párhuzamos történetek *(Parallel Stories, 2005), from which the above extract is taken, is reviewed in* HQ 181, *pp. 151–58.*

not plucked him away from there, he would certainly have ended up an outcast in the corner of a stable. He had an exceptionally tight bond to animals. Since old Demén's death, he had lived as though he had to pay off providence for its generous loan by working on the lifeless object of the house.

In recent months, though, that passion unexpectedly had completely given way, or something inside him had worn out or become exhausted, snapped. There was no sign of any illness, but from one moment to the next he realised that the destruction was on a much larger scale than he could contain with his diminishing strength. All of a sudden, his revered daughters had become unmanageable, drinking, effing and blinding, not coming home at night. He was heading for a complete breakdown.

Ever since the rubbish was not collected every morning, but no more than twice a week, or indeed sometimes refuse collection was dropped altogether for some reason that could never be foreseen, he could not handle even that. Slowly, he was reaching the point of not being able to handle anything. He was not given extra rubbish bins, yet he had to store the house's accumulating rubbish in something, given that sometimes they did not come to collect it for a week. The hell with them. He too would use bad language. He laid hands on some rusted paint drums, soldered on handles with which he would drag them out onto the pavement. If the dustman did not come, then he would drag them back at noon. He contrived lids for them from the bottoms of other cans.

He did that, of course he did, but in the meantime thinking, the hell with it, if the lamp breaks away, then let it; let's hope it brings down the whole vault or house with it, for that matter. Let it all fall to pieces; everything has to go to pot some day, anyway. Once there had been a time when he would never have dared think that sort of thing; now it felt good to think it, quite liberating. He still kept an eye on everything, but his helplessness, and the anger he felt on that account, overwhelmed him all the more. Nor could he do anything to spare from the stench of rotting the entranceway that Samu Demén had designed with such care.

Back then a horse and carriage had still been the means of transport for the upper classes, and Demén designed a driveway that took account of even carrier's larger carts. The sensible, noble proportions of the ever so slightly cambered driveway, faced with outrageously yellow tiles, were still appreciated later on by those who did not get around with horse and carriage but by motorcar and tram, on foot or by taxi. It was evident that someone had thoughtfully factored in uninterruptedness and ease of likely movements, even anticipating that horses would no doubt make water, and that was yellow in colour and would somehow have to trickle away somewhere. The small gullies that served to carry water and urine away, which were concealed under broad stone ledges running on either side of the entrance, were now used by rats, which had just enough room. By dint of long years of work, they had chewed through the delicately fashioned brass grilles, thereby gaining inconspicuous access to the rubbish bins. In their time, though, the now obsolete stone gullies had served to allow people arriving at the

house to alight onto them from the steps of their carriage, and without having to jump for the next step either. By anticipating that it should be possible for the doors of carriages to be opened on both sides at once, without either the passengers or the coach drivers having to press themselves against the walls, that person had taken their dignity into account. It was a fair time since any kind of carriage or motorcar had turned in there, but the proportions of the space preserved that entitlement to dignity of behaviour.

The building greeted people arriving at it with a certain ceremony, and likewise the stairwell, which was separated from the carriage driveway by a gigantic windbreak. Anyone arriving would glimpse the amazingly well-proportioned stairwell, illuminated by natural light on every floor, through the enormous surfaces of the polished glass panes of the windbreak. The glass panes, too, weathered the war, but one of the four had broken as a result of a night-time scandal. Glass panes of that size could not be obtained, but the residents were livid about the draught, so the janitor had replaced it with a sheet of veneer. The beauty of the space still prevailed even so. Someone arriving there could enter untroubled, without having to worry about bumping into an elevator door the next moment. Sometimes a whole bunch of people might be coming just when others were leaving; that was the kind of thing that had to be reckoned with in a swish mansion.

Nor were horses uniformly patient creatures, so they should have comfortable room in which to turn with the carriage. Demén extended the courtyard by deepening it, but he was able to smuggle back the feeling of a square, optically speaking, by bringing the outer corridor further forward.

True, that first-floor corridor blocked the sunlight from the janitor's apartment on the mezzanine, but that did not make it dark or, above all, unfriendly, for the light reflected off the shiny, yellow tiles surfacing the courtyard filled its kitchen and two rooms. The sun's rays may never have reached it, yet it still caught strong light and sharp colour. The outrageous yellow would still now sparkle, now fade on the ceilings of the rooms as the clouds passed overhead, though it was not possible from down there to look up and see clear sky, even if one pressed one's brow right against the windowpane. That is what the janitor was doing at that very moment in the kitchen, because he was looking up most particularly at the roof, from which tiles kept on dropping as if they were being ripped up and hurled down by the wind. Most likely, one loose tile had tobogganed down the precipitous roof, followed by the next, after which each succeeding gust had an easy job. Through the missing row, it was able literally to feel the roof up and lift it, slamming the tiles at their weaker points. The janitor, who went by the name of Imre Balter, took another look, but could delay no longer; he picked up his peaked cap, picked up the keys to the attic, and went.

The tiles were slithering menacingly, protractedly, with a sharp scraping noise, then smacking onto the eaves and, not much later, smashing to pieces down in the courtyard.

On another occasion Balter might have made his mind up more quickly.

The hell with it all, he grumbled.

It was rather unlikely that he would manage to contain the ravages on his own.

For weeks now the lift had not been working either. With his congenital dislocation of the hip, it took a fairly long time for him to drag himself down the wooden steps from the mezzanine. Then he still had the perilous courtyard ahead, as well as the three floors up. The technician at the housing management department had claimed the lift was beyond repair, clapped out. Anyone could tell, though, not a word of that was true. The hell with them. By the time he had got down to the courtyard the plopping down was over, but it was now even more because of the torrential rain that he limped under the protective shelter of the first floor's outside corridor. As he passed, he looked in at the head of the cellar stairs, even called out puss-puss, because so far not one of his cats had shown itself that day, as if they weren't hungry.

He had been able to keep cats to his heart's content ever since he had woken up to the fact that the master of the house was no longer. For that to happen, it took ten years to pass following the state expropriations of private property, if only because the heirs were still living there to that day, on the second floor, and although not a word would be said, a look could still keep him in check whenever he took the law into his own hands or infringed one of the old house rules, a single glance being enough to impale him. At least that was how he felt. One could never tell what was going to happen. In 'Fifty-six, they had very nearly recovered ownership of the whole apartment block; it would have only needed the whole hoopla to last a bit longer.

His limping shuffle resounded in the entranceway. He carefully closed the windbreak behind him, passed by the apparently lifeless lift, from the claret innards of which the ground edges of the mirrors unfailingly glinted a rainbow of colours in his eyes; then, gripping the handrail, he slowly started to climb the stairs.

Since Samu Demén's death, his heirs had to some degree, in moderation and tastefully, but in definite hope of a higher income, reconstructed the house, with its prodigal use of space, making it somewhat more proletarian. They were of the opinion that the kitchens, pantries and servant's quarters could be considerably smaller, and out of what was knocked off two additional flats were fashioned on each floor on the courtyard side. The interconnected front of the building on the first floor, which Demén had originally constructed to meet the needs of a short-lived, small, National-Conservative party, then, when that folded, had leased to their still functioning weekly paper, was slightly modernised. Or vandalised, more like it. The dignified wainscoting was ripped from the walls, and the marble fireplaces were dismantled from all the rooms. Originally, the two heirs had not wished to occupy any of the remodelled apartments, as the building did not meet either their taste or their idea of up-to-dateness; but then, the way things worked out, Demén's favourite grandchild, Erna, moved into her grandfather's old apartment on the second floor, whereas Miklós, the other grandchild, who at the time was working for the Communists' then still illegal organisation, moved into a house in Aréna Street that had likewise been designed by their grandfather. This

had all happened back in the mid-Thirties, and apart from the fact that what had then been the Teréz Boulevard was now named after Lenin, and the Oktogon was restyled November 7th Square in honour of the Russian Revolution, virtually nothing in the mansion block had changed since then.

Even the residents had barely altered. Equally, since then stairwell, doors and windows had not been given a new coat of paint.

The stairwell had no other ornaments than its proportions. The conspicuously broad and conspicuously low, marble-smooth stairs on which the janitor was now climbing, from which the red coconut matting (along with the brass stair-rods, it goes without saying) was removed, on orders, several months after the state took over ownership of the building. The landings between floors were the stairwell's ornaments, the finely articulated wall-faces at the turns of the stairs that were likewise framed, section by section, with the Ionic mouldings already familiar from the façade and the entranceway. These framed wall-faces had still not been obscured totally; or to be more accurate, what was just visible was that the mouldings had originally been painted white and the wall-faces, presumably, pale yellow. Being careful thereby to retain a bit of the sun's warmth, which can be accomplished by mixing in a dab of red and black. One other reason for this, at the time, had been that it was meant unobtrusively to enhance the dazzling whiteness of the apartments' front doors, with the dazzling whiteness setting off the brass trimmings, hinges, stops, name plates, handles, burnished spyhole gratings and oval plates of the hand-turned bone bell-buttons.

The janitor kept on having to rest; he cast his deep-set eyes severely and swiftly around, striving not to pant as much as he needed to pant.

At times like this, two extreme poles of self-deception coincided.

He acted as though the continual traipsing up and down stairs did not tire him, although there were days when he was barely able to drag his lame lower body along, even without rubbish bins; then, on the other hand, he would stubbornly pretend that he was weighing up what he ought to do next, although that was by then of almost no interest, and anyway was not doable for one reason or another.

He reached the second floor at the very moment the telephone inside fell silent.

Since he had set foot in the apartment block, all that had changed on this door was that a second name plate had been screwed on next to the original one. On the one stood DEMÉN in splendid, large, New Roman lettering, on the second DR. LIPPAY LEHR. All the same, he did listen out just a bit. Not out of any curiosity; more the wholesome reflex of a natural laziness at work. If things had just so happened this way, then no need to carry on, and why not listen out for where it was they were calling from, and who picked the phone up. He knew who was at home, who had gone out, and he had a shrewd idea who would come back at what time. He had not seen the Professor for weeks, because he was being treated in the hospital on Kútvölgyi Avenue, whence his next stop would be the cemetery. The younger Lippay had left fairly early in a panic-stricken rush. He did not recall such a thing ever having happened before. He knew that every morning all the

doors between the rooms were left open, yet even so, nothing, he could hear nothing out there on the corridor. Drat.

No doubt on account of the wind, he decided.

Right then the professor's spouse, whom nearly everyone called Nínó, or 'Auntie' Nínó, for some strange reason that Balter had never understood, stepped out of the bathtub. The passing decades had barely changed her carriage, her waist remaining almost as shapely as in younger days, while her hips, thighs, backside and widely admired bosoms had filled out rather extravagantly. She had put on weight, put on so-called cellulite beneath the skin—that was the stark truth of the matter.

Seeing it almost makes me sick, she would say to her close woman friends, who well-nigh idolised her for her outspokenness. With which she still delineated no more than a tiny bit of the truth, of course.

She spent a growing amount of time on her silent and self-absorbed ablutions. She nevertheless had a growing feeling that all kinds of intrusive, totally foreign odours were being given off and emanating from her body that she was unable to combat. That, however, was something she spoke about to no-one. If a stranger with good taste had caught a glimpse of her standing in front of the bathtub, the first thing that would undoubtedly have crossed their mind was that she still had an imposing presence, for all that. She did not necessarily have a problem with the decay of appearances as with the insuperable odours.

What's become of me.

It was one of those questions that sound more like a statement. The smell of decay emanated from her mouth, her crotch, the pores of her skin—she did not know where it came from. This decay had become a fixation. On stepping out of the bath, driven by the pleasure of demonstrative torment, she could not help catching a glimpse of herself in the slightly misted-over mirror placed on the wall opposite: then neither statements nor questions were of any assistance. It was as if she were asking who have I become, though the answer, that's not me, I don't recognise that body, was ready at hand. She would sooner quickly snatch her gaze away. So as not to have to drag around in her limbs all day what she had seen.

She carried around with her the altered, unidentified smell that was concealed beneath her perfume. If, however, she forgot, or managed not to notice, her own mirror image, though she was inclined more to the latter, then she radiated a self-confidence as resolute and distinctly happy as in her girlhood years.

Her Italian-sounding nickname, incidentally, stemmed from the circumstance that for a long time her son, Ágoston, had been unable to utter anything else. He had tried, but there was nothing doing. This was his first and only word, which referred both to eating and to his mother. His mother, slowly, clearly enunciating, shaping her lips, almost putting the words in his mouth, would go: watch me, Ágó, sweetie, *ma-ma,* to which Ágó would delight in responding, just because, with a cussedly, archly triumphant *Nínó*. Not only did it become a nickname, it also became a private yardstick for the pleasure the young married couple attained.

How many *Nínós* was that for you, the young wife would ask, stretching out sleepily amidst the rumpled bedclothes.

A hundred and one, the young husband replied dazedly.

That's odd, because for me it was at least a thousand, the young wife would retort, and maybe she wasn't exaggerating, though a person might be inclined to do so, if only for the sake of future expectations.

There were times when they would hoist the child into their bed and practice with him for half an hour on end, because they would laugh so hard their sides would be splitting, literally writhing around in pleasure, which of course the child likewise enjoyed. That in turn would make them feel like dipping the wick all over again. He said it instead of mama, he said it instead of papa or *ka-ka, pee-pee, baba, nyum-nyum,* instead of everything. Ágó, sweetie, watch me, say it nicely now: *mama,* say it nicely: *papa,* say it nicely: *nyum-nyum*. The child really would watch, but more to see whether they were going to laugh again. Which was why he would always respond the same way.

Nínó.

Even when people had no idea of all that, which indeed they would not, they could not have said the nickname was not apposite. Within her circle of acquaintances, and in the family too, Madam Erna counted as a weighty individual, a person who had to be respected and could not easily be side-stepped. True, there were also certain features of her personality on account of which she could not be taken entirely seriously. Right then she happened to be just over an attack of angina, which each and every time, of course, would totally knock her sideways, physically speaking. She had every reason to be cross about the telephone. She rarely gave any visible sign of it, but she often groused or frankly raged inside; equally, however, she had to be careful not to get too worked up as that might bring on a fresh attack. Except it was precisely the small rages that could not really be controlled, as they never actually erupted. While she towelled herself exasperatedly, she glanced abstractedly at her own mirror image several times over, with that being the final straw. Her own carelessness.

What am I gawping at myself for.

The thing she found hardest of all to get used to was that her enormous, dark nipples, since who knows when, were perpetually pointed downwards. The one peeve increased the other, and before long she could rage at why on earth she was raging. Heavens above, how stupid, how utterly stupid of me. I'm a silly ass, she would tell herself under her breath, in the hope of being able to quell her agitation.

A complete ninny is what I am.

Whether she was angry or not angry, the attacks could be neither averted nor predicted. They came and went, and the symptoms were not the same, depending on which branch of the coronary artery was affected. There were times when she would feel the pain gripping her chest, but at other times the fingers of the left hand might go numb. There were times when it would grip fiercely, yet still not develop into a big attack, and other times when it barely hurt, yet it still laid her

out. At times she would feel such dreadful pain that it was as though her accelerated pulse was piercing through her bone marrow; at other times, not very different from when one has overeaten out of greed. There were times when it would almost do her back or shoulders in. Nothing, just bloating. If she were to cautiously let off little bursts of intestinal gas, it would be better right away, that would bring relief. It appeared she was sensing the internal pressure as pain.

However hard she disciplined herself, the pain was not tolerable; to be more accurate, she tolerated it but wished to be freed of it. Yet there was no wind in her bowels, nothing to release; just this slowly squeezing, tightening pain after all, the unmistakable prodromal symptom of an attack. Soon after which she felt as though it was seeking to snap her sternum from the inside. And the shortness of breath along with it. The sense of inhaling, but of there not being enough air for some reason. There might be elsewhere, but not here. An ice-cold sweat broke out through all her pores, above her lips, on her forehead, her whole face bathed in slaver, as if she were wearing a mask of ice. It did not even cool her. She ought to open the window.

There was no air in the room, no air; there was no air in the air.

Ouch! Her bones weren't going to stand it, she was about to burst apart. She could see others had air; they had what she didn't have.

How happy people are, for God's sake. They go about in the street, and they don't even notice they have air.

Oh, this was getting truly ridiculous; there was no place from which to breathe the air from the air. Or no oxygen in it.

She knew, could still see, that others had air, it was just she who didn't have any; they'd taken it away from here, there wasn't enough.

If she didn't notice what was approaching in good time, it would be too late.

That too late, however, always gave a slight reprieve, and on those occasions she would be battling not to be overwhelmed by the panic of being late, because then the too late really would come true.

Yet her body wasn't being held up all that well by her feet; it was too heavy, what was more, everything was in slow motion, growing dark, and there was no way of knowing if she would manage it at all before blacking out completely. What eternities go by as one leg succeeds in catching up with the other. Meanwhile, though, she felt her body growing lighter and lighter; her feet were barely touching the ground. And on top of all that, there was a strange person in there whose breath was whistling ever louder in her ear.

There was no way of knowing how much longer she could feel and hear it, even though she hated it.

At times like this, she walked blindly, searching with dead fingers in her handbag, the drawer, the pill box, the phial, in order to grasp the medicine with the edge of her nail at the moment after the very last moment. Sometimes that was, indeed, the only way she did it, with her long, blood-red, manicured nails. Her fingertips would no longer be sure enough to pick out a single tiny lozenge from among the many. However, it could be wedged under the nail, which helped

her to get it to the mouth, under the tongue, where it had to dissolve. There is a blood vessel running along the root of the tongue, the *vena lingualis,* and nitroglycerine, with its vasodilator action, is readily absorbed at this cosy site to infiltrate the capillary walls. After several long seconds, it would be at the heart, inside the coronary arteries, where it would dilate the passages that had been narrowed by the atherosclerosis brought on by high blood-cholesterol levels.

And then the blood would circulate still. The blood pressure decreases, the pulse drops, oxygen reaches the myocardium, the panic-stricken body relaxes.

There were times when it really did take effect immediately. At other times, it had no effect at all.

Yet other times when it was just a tiny bit, or she would kid herself that, yes, I'm better now, even though she was feeling worse by the second. Or it would work, and after a few minutes, when even the stranger was not whistling so horridly in her ear, and the icy mask on her face had pleasantly warmed up, then once again, suddenly, even stronger, along would come the next one. And as if there were no such thing as too many torments, the medicine produced a collateral excessive flow of blood to the peritoneal cavity, relaxing the abdominal wall and sphincters, as a result of which she would be taken short and, gulping from lack of air, entrusting the weight of her body to empty walls and furniture that slid about, she would have to fight her way, a prayer on her lips, across the entire dwelling.

If anyone tried to hasten to her aid at such moments, she would mutely brush them aside.

So far, she had always managed to reach the loo in time. There the stools would literally explode from the bowels. There being no let-up all the while, of course, in the pain, the squeezing, the tightness of the sternum. With her faculties fuming and cringing all the while from so much humiliation. With the wretched medicine, of course, having been left all the while back in the room, or her not being able to find it in the dressing-gown pocket. She would keep on repeating a single sentence to herself, well of course I'm going to curl up my toes here, this is how I'm going to peg out, as her hand groped around on the wall for the lavatory chain.

At least let her reach that, so she would not be obliged to end her life in this dreadful stench.

Sitting inside her, though, was an evil little girl, who meanwhile would be laughing at all this. Maybe it was her soul, or something of the sort that is referred to as the depths of the soul.

She also reminded her of her dead daughter.

This evil little girl would not be scared off by anything; she feared nothing, indeed was more likely to be amused by all her little vanities. Well of course this is how you're going to curl up your toes. Spinelessly, the way you lived. Lord above, how much more poop do you still have in your gut. How did you suppose they were going to find you: who's interested in shit at a time like this, do you suppose. Don't be so frightened; you're going to make it this time. And if you make it, then you're going to promise that you'll lose at least twenty pounds. You

wouldn't move your bowels so much if you pigged out less, that's for sure. But the wish to stuff yourself stays strong, however hard you promise. That's how it spoke with her, and naturally she swore, I swear, I swear, although she knew her pledge was worth nothing.

The false pledge sniggered inside her in the evil little girl's voice. And the idea that they were going to come across her in this dreadful stink, if she were not to make it this time, after all.

She was already past that this morning. And it sounded to her as if the telephone in the sitting-room were starting up for the fourth time.

No, that wasn't possible.

The towel in her hand paused; she pricked up her ears, thinking her anger and her ears were playing tricks on her.

This time, however, all three set off at once. One of the women jumped up from in front of the stove, taking along the poker with which just beforehand she had pushed the stove door to, while the second woman jumped lithely out of bed, and as she was unable to find one of her slippers with her probing foot, whereas her housecoat was lying on one of the more distant armchairs, she went as she was, barefooted, in nothing more than a short silk nightdress, one of those baby-doll nighties, that clung to her body and showed off her thighs all the way up.

The young man tore himself away from the windowsill, although just a moment before he had noticed an armoured truck from the riot police pulling up in front of the Opatija Coffee House. Policemen had spilled out of it like crazy from both sides. Which would have had the salutary effect of diverting his attention from the woman whom he had been keeping an eye on, secretly stalking, for months on end, and whom he would have liked to catch sight of that morning, whatever happened, although he would have had a job seeing her from there.

The wind was howling and the telephone ringing.

Madam Erna finally lost her patience and, slamming the towel down on the linen bin, slipped more or less still wet into her pink bathrobe, which suited her, despite its stridency. These were hurried, irritable, frustrated actions, both rushed and hampered by her anger. What a bunch, she muttered under her breath, what a hopeless, inconsiderate bunch. Her rebuke was addressed not just at the three of them there, but most of all at her son, who right at that moment was not even in the apartment.

He was chatting with his friends in a heated glass corridor of the Lukács Baths, two men of much the same age as him, though Madam Erna could not have known that.

In the end, it was the domestic servant who picked up the receiver, only just having time to announce in a hard voice who she was before the person at the other end launched into their message, tersely and firmly.

It was like a report from a battlefield.

It made the domestic servant gape slightly, and her features somehow froze on her face. She was gripping the receiver tightly in one hand; she needed to listen

very hard now, make a note of every word, but that made her forget about her other hand, from which the poker slowly slipped.

It dropped with a thud onto the carpet.

At the sight of her, the other two people came to a standstill, staying put in their alarm.

The person in question spoke steadily and fairly loud.

Ilona Bondor tried repeatedly to interrupt in order that she might hand the receiver over to someone else, more appropriate than herself, to a member of the family, to Kristóf, who had understood that from the faltering movements she was trying to make and who was standing like someone ready to take over at any moment. There was no point, however, at which the steady flow of speech could be interrupted. Twice in succession she readily responded with a yes, yes. After that all she could get out was a yes, yes, thank you very much. Madam Erna, too, was there to hear those final words, seeing her employee's telltale and, in point of fact, ludicrous features.

Above all the immobility, the body postures, the way all three of them were leaning stiffly forwards.

Slightly wet, in the shaggy pink, terry-towel robe that was barely belted together over her ample body, she stood imposingly in the sitting-room doorway on the platform of her high-heeled slippers, her dishevelled, bleached hair slightly matted by the dampness.

In a strange way, everything else ceases to exist at moments like this. All the same, she did glance up to take in Guinevere's lean, brown body. The effect it always had on her was as if she were hearing a snapping, a sound that, for an unguarded moment, arrested everything else in her mind. It was rare that she could see her so naked. She had to seize the opportunity.

She loathed the woman, didn't believe a single word she said, though she quite understood her son, because the woman's body had its effect on her too.

When it came down to it, the sight of the body cooled her down.

She was no longer in a temper.

As if she knew what had happened, and she was giving a clumsy nod of assent to it.

The domestic servant placed the receiver back on the rest and stayed like that, face turned to the wall. She felt a need to turn away, to look at no-one, at least for a second. So they would not be able to see her face. Everything that had happened between the professor and herself over the last year had gone well beyond what any ordinary human relationship recognises or can permit.

For a long time, that brief tinkle and the click were the last sounds in the room—or at least all of them felt that an unconscionably long time was elapsing. Outside, the sky had just brightened, though rain was still lashing the two windows. All three looked at Ilona, at the unnatural way in which her thin shoulders were lifted up.

They were waiting for her to speak. They would have preferred it if she had chosen to hold her peace for a while longer. Guinevere Mózes's teeth clicked

together a number of times, but fortunately that was not audible. In any case, she was not aware of what she was doing, the act being uncontrolled; she pressed her thighs together and clutched the short nightie with both hands, pulling at it as if concerned about her crotch.

The luxuriant darkness of her pubic hair shimmered through the flimsy material.

He's dead, Madam Erna asked cautiously after a while.

Even hours after an attack her voice would be still left feeble and husky, and now the words were sticking in her throat at the very first syllable. The young man was the only one to pick up from her question the sober calculations. Or to be more accurate, the dismay that her plans therefore lay in ruins. He saw it in his aunt's face, which without make-up always looked disagreeably bare. The nakedness horrified him so much that he literally had to tear his gaze off her. It was in any case his greatest problem, the nakedness of human sentiments. He didn't wish to hear Ilona's answer. And see the effect the answer had.

Not a word, nothing.

No, please don't be alarmed, please, the domestic servant stammered in a stifled cry. He came to half an hour ago. The consultant has passed on the message that they are not going to be able to keep him conscious for long. He can only say that, sadly, it will not be long; he gives no grounds for any hope. As far as anyone can anticipate these things, they said. But right now he is unusually lucid. He's asking for Ágoston and for Nínó.

And please be so good as to hurry.

But who did you speak with, for God's sake.

Ilona shrugged her shoulders a little hesitantly at this. She didn't know or understood, all at once, why that might be important or of any interest. Her next sentence in fact was going to be that she would like to accompany the mistress.

It was a man of some description, she answered, her voice trembling in the effort; he said the consultant had instructed him to do so, because madam had spoken to him about something important that would be absolutely vital now.

At that she turned away, unable to say anything more, and her shoulders shook mutely from her having been unable, after all, to declare that she would like to take her leave of him; now she would not even dare to declare, I'd like to see him one more time.

Though she did not wish to cry at all. What business could she have with him. I don't want to cry, she exclaimed to herself.

Where's Ágost?

I don't know, I'm awfully sorry, but I don't know, Guinevere responded, too loudly, to the ominously quiet question. I can't help it, she added, as though she had been caught failing to carry out some major duty and was now having to apologise. He jumped out of bed at daybreak, she mumbled; he dressed and rushed off without a word, it was useless my asking where he was going.

No doubt you were quarrelling all night again.

We did quarrel, that's true, unfortunately.

Ilona, bring me my dark-grey costume, please. Kristóf, you'll come with me. Someone order a taxi.

Into the place of the immediately preceding anger slid a cool, superior voice, used to issuing orders, that the three people present found almost impossible to ignore.

It was not her emotions or her weakness that it was hard to overcome. She really did have no time to waste, and anyway she was averse to big scenes. Fortunately, the others did not notice, but the corner of her mouth was quivering, her knees were shaking, and her exquisite, long fingers were trembling. Not so much from any distress of her own, for she had already got over the whole business a fair time before. It was more from something she had not reckoned with; that something to which, up till now, an end had seemed beyond reach was now finally going to happen.

She grew short of breath and needed to restrain herself.

Otherwise, everything had been got ready in an orderly fashion for the moment which, now it had come, nevertheless took her by surprise. She only needed to get out of the writing desk the contract of sale that the dying man absolutely had to sign. She knew exactly where to lay her hands on it. Then she would have luck on her side after all; her little marvels would be with her. A heart attack mustn't get in the way now. She was about to turn and go to her room.

It was not the three words that Kristóf tossed after her that stopped her. More the shock that there might be someone there who had an objection, or have a different opinion about something.

I'm going nowhere.

What do you mean.

I said, I'm not accompanying you anywhere.

Have you gone quite insane.

It was a thrust that she had no reason to anticipate.

She had no illusions about her son. With this boy, though, not only did she see her murdered younger brother all over again every day, which she considered one of life's exceptional gifts, but she hardly knew a human being who was milder-tempered and more attentive than him, so there had never been a time over the last six years when she had regretted having taken him in rather than dumping him back in some filthy orphanage. Everyone instinctively makes these selfish calculations. Who can I rely on when I'm in trouble. Will this person be of any use to me. Now, this person is someone I really can rely on. Neither her body nor her soul possessed the sensory apparatus with which she could have grasped what her mind failed to comprehend.

She didn't understand what was happening.

Nowhere, the young man repeated almost indifferently, and quietly rather than loudly.

But why, for God's sake, why are you telling me that, or what is it supposed to mean.

She couldn't understand where that voice was coming from. There was a long moment during which the other two were unquestionably shut out. A strange

situation. If objects had eyes, then they would look at each other just as impartially as these two, and that made them look similar, almost identical; or to be more exact, it brought out the common family features.

Their egomania contended with their love of justice, only for both of them to retire defeated to the cover of appearances.

For Kristóf as well it was not a convenient moment for going into explanations of any kind. He didn't even know what sorts of signals he needed to give for others to understand his intentions. They could not be understood; he himself did not understand them. Since a few of the old businesses in the row of shops next to the Opatija Coffee House, across on the other side of the Grand Boulevard, had reopened that January, a shop-assistant had appeared there with whom he had unaccountably and senselessly fallen head over heels in love. So much so that he had not dared to speak to her even once. There wasn't anything he could have said. That sort of thing happens almost regular as clockwork with young people; yet for all that, adventures of the instincts are not without danger. Though no-one had noticed, since he did nothing conspicuous, he had been tottering on the verge of genuine, clinically certifiable madness with his helpless and ever-darker passion. His aunt was not far from the truth. What had promised to be just a casual bit of flirtation in January had now silenced him, leaving his mind without a scrap of sense or a clearly-lit corner.

What kind of a carry-on was this, if you please, what sort of nasty escapade.

He couldn't move away from there.

That was his soul's one and only commandment. Yet he could not admit it, even to himself, for indeed what sense could there be to standing there for days on end. None. He was unable to transmit something very important to his own consciousness. He could not utter, either to himself or out loud, I'm very sorry, but I can't go with you to my uncle's deathbed, because I have to stand here on account of an unknown woman, whom I can't even see anyway. If he were to utter it, even just utter it out loud to himself, he would be making it obvious that his days made no sense at all. It was precisely his rationality that had come unstuck and his aunt had instantly questioned.

All that separated him from full-blown schizophrenia was that he had not yet uttered these sentences out loud, unfounded as they were from the viewpoint of the wider world, though the urge to do so was already there.

He was hanging on to an old, puerile sentiment of his. It was as though it was about things being cold, and their incommutable reality offending his sense of justice. Or his sense of morality. The two female strangers here could have known nothing about what his aunt had drawn up in secret. While your husband is at death's door, you are smoothing the way for the matter of your son's inheritance; then I'm supposed to go with you, and you talk about nasty escapades. Screw all of you, along with your inheritance. I've had it with you all, once and for all, I've had it with my entire family, it's over. That, in point of fact, was what he wanted to shout into his aunt's wet face, but he couldn't do that either. Right then, he felt

that what was a good deal more important than the truth of puerile sentiments, whatever might happen to anyone, was that he should not have to move away from there to anywhere. Though as to the sense of that, not only could he not rationalise it to himself, at that moment he had no option but to betray his aunt, which was unacceptable precisely on moral grounds. Common sense dictated that it would have been better to dig up some excuse as to why he could not go, a pretext, a reason, however lame, however fanciful.

All the same, he uttered something that horrified not only the others but himself most of all.

I've had enough of his death. Don't be upset, Nínó, I'm sorry. I don't want any more of it. I don't want more death.

This isn't about you, Kristóf. I need you to come with me. So as not to be on my own at such a difficult time, sweetie.

Her lips quivered uncontrollably in her confusion and agitation, while Kristóf looked dully and apathetically back at her, plainly without having understood anything of this genuine need.

His gaze remained so innocent that Madam Erna somehow felt there was good reason for her to gamble on it all being a slip of the tongue; perhaps he would see it, reconsider, retract his crazy words, then everything would be alright again. Kristóf, however, restrained himself no further and simply turned his back on everyone to just stare out of the window, as if nothing were more natural at that moment. Yet Madam Erna was no less unpredictable in her behaviour. Her own weighty sense of reality had already trained her more than enough not to do anything that would further complicate an already far from easy situation. On phenomena that were incomprehensible and disturbing she would expediently change the subject and thereby, as it were, expunge the mess from her consciousness. As if to say anything that may disturb me did not and does not exist.

Guinevere, you're not working today.

No, I'm not working today.

Then maybe you could accompany me.

I would have liked to offer to do that straight away, Guinevere responded, as if she could not get any air, though she would never have dared offer any such thing of her own accord. They had never gone anywhere together before.

I'll get dressed immediately.

As for you, Ilona, pull yourself together, please. As yet crying is a touch premature. Ring for a taxi, I say, and bring my costume. And get out the short Persian lamb coat while you're at it.

Outside the rain and wind abated for a few moments, but everything fell dark, as though dusk were already drawing in. In the meantime, the policemen had disappeared and the empty truck was slowly going round the big square as if it were only making a sight-seeing tour. It parked at the mouth of Andrássy Avenue, on the very spot where the Russians had set up their guns in November 'Fifty-six and blown the Opatija Coffee House to smithereens. Since then the coffee-house

had reopened. A door slammed inside the apartment, perhaps the bathroom door, cupboards creaked; the two women bustled about.

A few minutes later a taxi drew up before the house, a grey Pobeda. It had to wait quite a long time.

Guinevere dressed swiftly and was left tapping her feet in the hall as she waited for Madam Erna, who also slipped quite quickly into her clothes, but still took her time doing her make-up.

By then the janitor still had half a floor to go before the attic.

As if going up all three floors on foot once were not enough, blast it, now it was twice, and there's still this flight to go. To hell with it all.

He panted a little, then rammed the key into the lock, and as he turned it a gust of the wind that was howling in a roof that by now was holed in several places, literally battered against the heavy steel attic door. The door opened with a creak, then shortly after slammed to, because the wind was not only pushing but immediately sucking back. He staggered, having nowhere to step back, and the wind again opened the door, making him grab onto the handrail. An appalling sight was disclosed to his view. Never mind that many tiles were missing, the gaps were at points that he would not be able to reach without a proper ladder or scaffolding. The sky was yawning through the gaps. In the dark attic, sliced across by the incident lights, some strange rags or skins were swaying in the weird air currents. There was order here as well, no superfluous bric-a-brac, all clean as could be. When it came down to it, there were plenty of tiles to patch up the gaps. The tilers had left them there eighty years ago, lined up between the two chimney stacks, and they had constituted a reserve stock ever since. He needed to get to work as soon as possible, for it was not only light but rain that was driving through the openings.

Try as he might to pull the steel door to, the wind would blow it open again. He looked around for a small, flat object that might be used to wedge the door; however, he ended up not doing that but locking it on himself, as he was used to doing on other occasions.

It's time I took those brutes down as well, he grumbled to himself, setting off towards the street side. The long rags or skins, five in number, almost equally long, were dangling, closely packed together, on the longest main joist. He had to work his way round them.

They were neither rags nor skins, but cats that had mummified to bones. Which was no surprise at all to Balter, because it was here that he hung up cats that were surplus to requirements. ❧

Translated by Tim Wilkinson

George Szirtes

Northern Air
A Hungarian Nova Zembla

Like words congealed in northern air.
Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*

"*After much perplexity, I found that our words froze in the air before they could reach the ears of the person to whom they were spoken. I was soon confirmed in this conjecture, when, upon the increase of the cold, the whole company grew dumb, or rather deaf; for every man was sensible, as we afterwards found, that he spoke as well as ever; but the sounds no sooner took air, than they were condensed and lost. It was now a miserable spectacle to see us nodding and gaping at one another, every man talking, and no man heard. One might observe a seaman, that could hail a ship at a league distance, beckoning with his hands, straining his lungs, and tearing his throat, but all in vain.*

We continued here three weeks in this dismal plight. At length, upon a turn of wind, the air about us began to thaw. Our cabin was immediately filled with a dry clattering sound, which I afterwards found to be the crackling of consonants that broke above our heads, and were often mixed with a gentle hissing, which I imputed to the letter S, that occurs so frequently in the English tongue. I soon after felt a breeze of whispers rushing by my ear; for those being of a soft and gentle substance, immediately liquefied in the warm wind that blew across our cabin. These were soon followed by syllables and short words, and at length by entire sentences, that melted sooner or later, as they were more or less congealed; so that we now heard everything that had been spoken during the whole three weeks that we had been silent, if I may use that expression. It was now very early in the morning, and yet, to my surprise, I heard somebody say, 'Sir John, it is midnight, and time for the ship's crew to go to bed.' This I knew to be the pilot's voice, and upon recollecting myself, I concluded that

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George Szirtes

won the foremost British poetry award, the T.S. Eliot Prize, in 2005 for his book of poems Reel. *An outstanding translator of Hungarian fiction and poetry, he has also translated novels by László Krasznahorkai, Sándor Márai (*Casanova in Bolzano, *2004) and fiction by Krúdy and Kosztolányi. His version of Krasznahorkai's* War and War *was published by New Directions (USA) in 2006. He is currently working on a group of novels by Sándor Márai including* The Rebels *for Knopf/Viking–Penguin.*

he had spoken these words to me some days before, though I could not hear them before the present thaw. My reader will easily imagine how the whole crew was amazed to hear every man talking, and see no man opening his mouth. In the midst of this great surprise we were all in, we heard a volley of oaths and curses, lasting for a long while, and uttered in a very hoarse voice, which I knew belonged to the boatswain, who was a very choleric fellow, and had taken his opportunity of cursing and swearing at me when he thought I could not hear him; for I had several times given him the strappado on that account, as I did not fail to repeat it for these his pious soliloquies when I got him on shipboard."

'Nova Zembla', Journal of Sir John Mandeville, Knight, quoted by Joseph Addison in *Tatler* No 254, 1710

* **Sir John Mandeville.** The book of travels bearing his name was composed in the fourteenth century. There are versions in English, Latin and other languages; the original was in French. It was highly popular in the Middle Ages, largely on account of the marvels which it contains. It was not a genuine book of travels, but a compilation out of earlier writers. The author died at Liège in 1372 and was buried in the name of John Mandeville, but this is supposed to have been a fictitious name. **Novaya Zemlya** (Russian: "New Land"; formerly known in English and still in Dutch as Nova Zembla) is an archipelago in the Arctic Ocean in the Arkhangelsk Oblast in the north of Russia and the extreme northeast of Europe. Novaya Zemlya consists of two major islands, separated by the narrow Matochkin Strait, and a number of smaller ones. The two main islands are Severny (northern) and Yuzhny (southern). Novaya Zemlya separates the Barents Sea from the Kara Sea. The total area is about 90,650 km.

1. Seeking North

To set out with no compass but your nose
for the land of certainty and cool judgment,
past moral latitudes, on the back of the wind,
with a plentiful supply of warm clothes
and every spiritual accoutrement
is the dream of the voyager whose mind

seeks resolutions. The train I took was long
as night, as long as memory. It stalled
a little at starting. I looked out at the streets
of the railway suburb and felt strong.
I heard the winter rattling and recalled
the harsh winters, those terrible retreats

in the snow that stripped skin bare, but I
was heading north where everything would
finally be explained, and that gave
me courage to look the north in the eye,
because at the back of it I'd find the good
word, the good that everyone must crave.

The train juddered and we were off again,
the smokers huddled in the rear carriage,
old men at their papers, some women dreaming,
the odd child asleep or crying as if in pain
or out of boredom. As if north were a mirage
we could never reach. As if the land streaming

past the window were illusion. Europe
was our home, but it was an idea of place
that led us northward to its true origin
in the mind. We watched a hill drop
into darkness and I noted my own face
reflected over it, over those virgin

spaces we were now exploring. Had you
been with me then you too would have felt
the excitement. Ice hardened into light.
It was the land of explanations we were coming to,
the clear hard core of things that could never melt
or fade, that grew more brilliant with night.

Oh history, if you could speak the language
of the cold, if you could once head north
into your own frozen heart we might yet
sing from the same song-sheet, lose the baggage
you have made us carry back and forth
and begin, blissfully at last to forget,

because it was the north, however bleak
and strange or even alien to us its cold
might be, there where great whales sunk
and rose beneath the ice cap, I had to seek,
that was the story I wanted to be told,
so I could sleep or dream, or, failing that, get drunk

like all the rest of that northern crew who swarm
across the snowfields, insensible and warm.

2. Entering Nova Zembla

In entering the waters of Nova Zembla our words froze
so that however we opened our mouths no sound came,
the world stood still as iced-breath before the nose

like solid cloud, like an amorphous frame
for a lost world where echoes of living speech
might still be found, as if all praise or blame

or intimacy or harshness resided there, and each
of us in our enforced silence might contemplate
the mystery, and hope somehow to breach

some inner law of remembrance, however late,
to find what had been said in the very spot
we left it, our histories, our hearts, the precise date

of their breaking, when they were still hot
in our mouths. But there was terror too
and melancholy, because which of us forgot

the dead we had long stowed and carried through
the journey, the beautiful loved dead, the young
with their rifles and explosives, those who

stood on street corners, the quiet unsung
bodies under the rubble of war crushed
by houses that collapsed like a lung

when the air was sucked out of them, the washed
corpses laid out, the old still queuing for bread,
the leaders hanging in the concrete yard, the rushed

verdicts, the prisons... but what can you do with the dead
except store them in silence, in a cloud of breath
that freezes in front of you? Apprehension, dread,

hope and expectation... history is death
remembered in our country. Childhood is this
frozen cloud, this vanished Nazareth

where we began our progress. We feel the kiss
of that dense impenetrable vapour where
the voice is trapped within its icy ellipsis.

We came to Nova Zembla in good faith. The air
was crisp, the trade routes promising, hull and keel
in order, well-stocked with supplies, with rare

spices to offer potential partners in a deal
of our devising: saffron, cypre, our lives
if necessary. But here we are in our seal

of silence, frozen in, husbands, wives
and children, none of us daring to move.
Is it the voice or the cold air in us that survives

Nova Zembla? That still remains to prove.

3. *Imagining Thaw*

A crackling of consonants that broke above our heads
wrote Mandeville. I hear the crackling of machine-
gun fire, the crump of shells in a street. Our beds

are in the small room where we are in quarantine,
my brother and I. Our consonants ricochet
above our heads, mysterious, unseen

verdicts on the world outside, which is grey
with autumn, shifting into winter. Being ill
we miss the excitement not too far away

from us, right below in fact, in the shrill
whine we cannot explain with the consonants
at our disposal. My parents wait for the radio to fill

the spaces of anxiety. Who are the combatants?
Whose voices crackle at the world like guns?
Our flags of selfhood are tiny, mere pennants

we play with, only our toy soldiers carry weapons.
Out there a new language is being invented,
new aahs *and* ohs *of grief, new syllabic patterns*

out of which grows the peculiar-scented
abstraction of exile, the sour adjectives of defeat
and resentment, for ever defeated *and* resented,

and the strangest noun of all, a bitter-sweet
embodiment, somewhere between glory
and triumph embodied in the vast feet

of a statue that has fallen, in the memory
of its falling, and the noise, the terrible noise,
of all those consonants writing their own story.

But then we are nothing more than two small boys
recovering from scarlet fever on the third floor.
We cannot speak the language that destroys

the city we live in. Later we will learn more
of it. Only later will we grasp its still-raw
grammar and interpret the inchoate roar

of its history. Practice strengthens the jaw
of saying. And soon everything is crackling.
The vowels begin to flow, the consonants thaw.

4. North to South

We live in the north where the sea is not quite cold
enough to freeze the tongue to the roof of the mouth.
Here, the distant crackle of consonants is the fric
fric *of banknotes, a barely convertible old*
currency they only use in run-down places south
of here. Once upon a time before the electronic

wind began to blow, when news was a kind of sighing
in open courtyards, we remembered the sound
of voices that seemed to be stuck in the lift of time forever,
in a neglected tenement where the aged were dying
in rooms with high ceilings and would not be found
by considerate neighbours, or the untidy but clever

graduate on the same floor. We would run upstairs,
there in that southerly country, and make love
on the convertible settee, hearing the world cough
or sing or weep over its rarely mentioned affairs,
aware of the couple noisily talking right above
the bed, or the old woman turning her radio off

next door. What was frozen could remain that way,
like the white noise of the white fridge by the sink,
a vague comfort and nuisance at once. It meant
things were working. And then one extraordinary day
the ice began to melt and the fridge light to blink
and there was a certain agitation in the tenement.

We must learn to talk without allegories and codes.
We must try to make sense of the unexpected thaw.
The dead in the fridge have begun to sing
in a language we might understand, the roads
have been gritted. The traffic moves to the law
of traffic. There must be a time for everything.

Perhaps the weather has broken in Nova Zembla.
Perhaps the consonants now crackling will inform
the vowels they have been sleeping with. Perhaps
the punctuation of guns and breath resemble
each other more than we think, and the storm
of voices in the radio, those wheezes, taps,

knockings and screechings are ready to create
a past we can live with. Nineteen fifty-six.
A journey of half a century. A whole childhood
spent on a leaky vessel with a lying captain and mate.
Old names are subject to a changing physics.
A Cape of Hope somewhere is reckoned Good.

Mátyás Sárközi

A Bellyful of Byzantium

(Short story)

The students marched at the front. A blizzard of leaflets drifted down on them from a balcony in Marx Square. "The Hungarian People Declare: Ten Demands" said the typed and carboned copy.

1) Coca Cola to be made available!
2) Farming cooperatives on the Danish model!
3) Spats for the old reactionaries!
4) Wrapping paper in national colours!
5) Bring Switzerland to the Danube Valley!
6) Bowling greens for trade union veterans!
7) A Volkswagen for every worker!
8) State security thugs into the Foreign Legion!
9) Give the Café Hungaria back its old name of New York!
10) Replace the Red Star Officers Club with Red Light Frida!

I began to understand what was at stake, why we were protesting, why we were marching with such enthusiasm towards the statue of our Polish friend, the hero of 1849, General Bem. We wanted the jazz singer Anni Kapitány to return to the Royal Hall of Varieties, we wanted Ferenc Puskás out of the army team and playing again for Kispest, we wanted Cardinal Mindszenty to preach in the Basilica, Donald Duck in the newsreel cinemas, Tom Mix in the Roxy, and Comrade Rákosi, our smiling dictator, sent to Khazakstan to run a factory.

Our first demands would concern roughly this kind of thing.

Mátyás Sárközi

is a writer, journalist and broadcaster. He was nineteen when he left Hungary in December, 1956. After completing his studies at the University of London, he worked first for Radio Free Europe and then for the Hungarian Section of the BBC. Lately he has been reporting from London for a Budapest radio station. His books include The Play's the Thing *on his grandfather, the playwright Ferenc Molnár.*

At the People's Buffet in Buda we left the bridge, the crowd pressed on to the figure of Bem, who stood with arms open wide, ready to receive the whole procession. Apparently an actor made a speech: I can't be certain, for I neither saw nor heard him.

We made our way back across the rickety Kossuth Bridge, towards Parliament, where a red five-pointed star on the dome divided the sky like a half-sucked sweet. It was getting dark.

"Imre Nagy! Speak to us!" shouted a Communist writer standing beside me.

"Sing to us, László Aradszky!" some kid demanded.

It was a pleasant autumn evening, a damp-smelling breeze from the Danube sneaking about the square. Suddenly lorries appeared. Central depot lorries, at that.

"To the Radio Building!" screamed a moustached bus company employee. We trundled towards the Radio. All Hungarians together. A short man was clutching nervously at me. He told me he was a tailor in some co-op, and he was demonstrating because he would like to be tailor to the gentry again. He didn't want to make any more reversible suits: he wanted to stroll down the Corso, because he once saw an English gentleman there wearing a bowler hat and a perfectly cut jacket.

"You seem to want the old disgraced reactionary regime back," said I.

"No, no, no," the bent little man pleaded. "I want no more reversals, I want this world properly dressed. Magnificent shoes hand stitched and properly leather soled by shoemakers in King Street rather than Mayakovsky Street. And I want everyone—and I mean everyone!—lawyers, tobacco merchants and stock exchange dealers, tabloid journalists and warehouse buyers, lift-boys and blinds-makers—the people of Pest, in other words—to walk down the Corso to the music of the Metropolitan Police Band."

"Us young people, we want more than that," I told the tailor. "We want to stroll the streets of Vienna, ride in gondolas in Venice and climb to the peak of the Grossglockner. We want the Olympic Games here in our People's Stadium. Let's have Imre Nagy as prime minister, then we can get on with free elections."

The lorries braked sharply and loudly and we fell forward and crushed the tailor. An enormous crowd was seething round the Radio Building, some of them wanted to broadcast the Ten Demands from a studio. My coat was dragged off me by the crowd. We were being herded into a doorway in the narrow street, I went in. Right up to the fourth floor. I rang the doorbell at one of the doors.

"I beg your pardon," I apologized to the elderly dame who had hurried to the door. "May I please watch the demonstration from your window? People keep treading on my feet down there."

She shrugged her shoulders. "If you don't mind us having supper in the meantime."

There was a good view of the crowd from the darkened room. I could see them advance, then retreat in fright. Police wagons arrived, armed units of the state security.

Bang! The first tear-grenade exploded, lying on the ground, pouring smoke, exuding a choking smell. At this the elderly woman in the next room got up and came over, her napkin tucked into her belt.

"Heavens! They've started shooting!" she cried in terror. "Come away from that window or they'll start firing at us!" I went down to the rear courtyard where state security men were leaping over the low brick wall, pleading for civvy clothes.

I stopped a taxi on the Chain Bridge. Back home we kept fiddling with the radio. It looked like the Rákosi era was over. Early next morning I was hurrying down the Great Boulevard: I wanted to see Imre Nagy riding into town on a white horse. I wanted to see blue helmeted UN troops—from Iceland preferably—cruising the streets in jeeps. I wanted to see religious processions, fireworks and Zoltán Kodály being sworn in as President.

On the Lenin Boulevard people were chipping at Uncle Joe's bronze head with sledgehammers. It had began to crack like a chocolate bunny. Suddenly there was a burst of firing and everyone dived for cover. I ran towards Mayakovsky Street but stopped abruptly at the corner. A corpse was lying by the wall, the body of a tall moustachioed man, wearing a rumpled black suit and black boots. Quicklime had been poured all over him. He looked all the more terrifying for the fact that his moustache was splashed with it. It was the first time I had seen someone dead.

By then I had been joined by an old man with a horsey face. He took out a leather-bound notebook and a pencil from his pocket. By way of explanation he said, "It is important to establish the precise location of each victim. You know, I took part in a bridge competition in Paris in 1948. Every resistance fighter had a little marble plaque precisely where he fell when the fascists got him. I shall make sure we do the same for our resistance fighters. My grandson knows the Mayor of Budapest personally. He'll make sure there is a marble plaque for each murdered revolutionary."

The old man toddled off like some threadbare crow. ❧

Margaret Bridge, 23 October, 1956. Circled are literary historian Mátyás Sárközi and Miklós Vajda, former Editor of The Hungarian Quarterly.

György Ferdinandy

Hiatus

(Short story)

The refugee camp was situated out in the flood plain of the Rhine, among willow-trees that were paddling in stagnant waters, embankments and canals. One could walk over to the river within a few minutes along the dike. Here, north of the town, the banks of the Rhine were completely uninhabited.

We too used to stroll out there: where else was there for one to stroll at that time? We looked at the brown spume and the Black Forest on the far bank. Somewhere over there, opposite us, was the source of the Danube as well, and far away, under the span of the skyline, the pint-sized homeland that would bring tears to one's eyes as evening drew in.

Not that we had any wish to return. Barely a few months had passed since we had made it across the minefield separating barbaric East from cultivated West. All the same! We had begun to understand that sometimes there can be a well-nigh intolerable extreme not only of slavery but of freedom too. When a person loses so much that what is left is not worth it.

No, those of us who were there, by the Rhine, were longing more for the other, the German bank. In our eyes, at that time, Germany was the Promised Land. An earthly paradise. It was a fact that the neighbouring giant had by then been reborn from the ruins, barely ten years after the war. The Americans had first destroyed it and then reconstructed it. And could anyone fail to be aware how industrious the Germans are!

All we saw of it was how cheap petrol was over there, and the fact that one didn't have to swot up on the irregular verbs with which the French plagued our existence in the camp here. And then again, anyone with a German name who

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György Ferdinandy,

writer, poet and critic, was twenty-one when he left Hungary after the 1956 Revolution. He settled in Paris where he lived until 1964, doing menial jobs, writing stories in French and studying for a doctorate in literary history. In 1964 he moved to Puerto Rico, where he was invited to teach Spanish. He has published prolifically: collections of short stories, poems, essays and novels in Hungarian, French and Spanish.

He returned to his native Budapest in 1986.

gave their word of honour that their forebears were German would be granted citizenship—and very nearly every single family in Hungary could claim ancestors like that. Here on the French side, by contrast, an exile was given the third degree over even a lousy residence permit.

Is it any wonder, then, that there were some who swam across the Rhine? Even some who drowned in the attempt. But then we would eventually be granted one of the pale-blue passports issued by the UNHCR in Geneva.

By then I was the proud owner of a 125 cc motor scooter. And I had a job prospect: a Cologne-based publisher was looking for an editor. It stood to reason: I perched on the scooter, with my friend Babó awkwardly riding pillion. Rope dancer!—that's what our associates in the camp called him, because he had once been a ballet dancer in Budapest, but after a two-year break a ballet dancer was one thing he would never be again. Never mind. We scorched across the bridge over the Rhine and produced the two pale-blue passports at the frontier.

The Vespa merrily scudded along on the winding German roads, going from village to village as scooters were not permitted on the autobahn. We had planned to make a stop en route at Fulda to pay a visit on Babó's friend who was doing military service there, in Hesse. What did a little detour like that matter to a meteorite that could nip along at forty miles an hour!

It was dark by the time we reached the barrier at the entrance to the barracks. I remember trying to stammer out in English what business had brought me there.

"Ákos!" the guard yelled into the telephone.

At that time, after 1956, the American army was largely made up of Hungarians. Immigrants were called up to do military service as soon as they had been granted the right to settle down. If luck was on their side, they would be shipped back to the Old World. Eighteen months after the revolution had collapsed, it was they who were the occupying force for the Germans here in the Rhineland.

Little over a year ago, Ákos had been a French horn player in the Budapest Opera House; now, he said, he was a piano tuner. People weren't too hot on French horn players in America. In the army he was a trumpeter: he now played réveille and taps. He didn't have much else to do. As he said, he was the occupying force for the Germans.

I no longer recall how long we stayed in the state of Hesse, or even where we found quarters. I do recall, though, that the French horn player introduced me to a red-haired dreamboat who all but rewrote my travel plans.

She had silky skin as white as driven snow—that's what I remember most of all. I have dim recollections of sitting in a park on a velvet-smooth, sweet-smelling lawn. The girl was saying how she had been operated on not long before. No, she didn't remove my hand; on the contrary, she lifted up her colourful little skirt and showed me the long, pink scar in her groin.

As for me—how odd one is at the age of twenty!—a cold shiver ran down my spine. No more exploring for me, thank you very much! All the same, there was

something about even this fleeting encounter, something—how should I put it?—heart-rending. Though what it might have been, that I no longer recall.

In Cologne, we found a room in a workers' hostel. On the ground floor, right below us, was a beer house where there was raucous German singing. Babó insisted on waiting for me there, in the boozer. I made a tour of the city on my own in search of my workplace.

The full name of the firm was the American Hungarian Publishing Company, and it was run by a priest, a monsignor. Father Bükkösi Fuvaros's office was up on the first floor of the headquarters, but half of one's day might easily slip by before one was admitted into the good father's presence.

For starters, my particulars were taken down by the parish secretary, a scrawny man of priestly aspect. The Reverend Father did not arrive until noon, and until then I was provided with reading matter. If you wish to pray, said the secretary, I can lend you my rosary.

Priests must have had a really cushy number here, in Germany, by all accounts. I was seated in a fragrant leather armchair that on the left bank of the Rhine would have been fit for a minister. As far as the firm went, it published a mixed list of rigorous classics and woeful dilettantes. At the moment, a gold-embossed volume of poems about Petőfi.

"That's the only way we have of stopping the Bolsheviks from appropriating poetry," said the secretary.

He placed before me a critical edition of the works of Jókai that had come with the morning's post.

"There you are!" he exclaimed. "Now they're even daring to criticize Jókai!"

By then a volume of essays had already been published about Father Bükkösi, the author of the volume of poems about Petőfi. "The abbot with a maiden's lips," one person had written. And the Reverend Father did indeed have dainty, kissable lips—along with a bull neck, a crewcut and deeply set eyes. He carries a little camera under his white habit, the cover blurb gushed.

"You too should write about him, son," the secretary urged. "It will be a useful letter of introduction!" he added helpfully.

Oh yes! It was high time the—let's be frank—rather tacky poems about Petőfi were brought up to date. "The poet's heart is a scarlet pouch of virtue!" It was not clear from the text whether this assertion applied to Sándor Petőfi or to Cologne's faux-Petőfi.

After which Bükkösi Fuvaros, the author in person, made his arrival.

He had diminutive, chubby hands; I had time to notice that as he squeezed my hand at length.

"I want to start a paper," he breathed into my ear. A period, yes, a periodical." He was palpably carrying that little camera under his white habit. "After the revolution," he explained, "students were not the only ones to get out into the big wide world, but nobody gives a hoot about the others."

The periodical was to bear the title of Young Worker; this was where the editorial role adumbrated in the classified advertisement would be awaiting me.

No, the Reverend Father was certainly not a stupid man. The refugees from the war were slowly reaching pensionable age, so he was now starting to line up the next lot of taxpayers: the 1956 refugees.

When you're in your twenties, however, you don't use your loaf. Abhorrence welled up more strongly in me than ambition: I peeled Father Bükkösi's podgy fingers off mine and returned to him the recently signed Petőfi volume.

That is where my first trip abroad came to an end. Babó was waiting for me downstairs in the boozer. By the time I arrived, he too was singing. "There's a song, and no one is singing it!" he muttered drunkenly. When he reached the bit about "and all along the girl just giggles," he roared it out. Admittedly, I too had joined in by then: at this point in the old barrack song there was a three-syllable pause.

The Germans nodded appreciatively. Rests like that were also common in their marches: *Eins-zwei-drei!* Even ten years after the war, they too would still come out with the old marching songs when they had a few too many.

The workers' hostel was stranded desolately at the end of an outer suburban street. The outer suburban bit, of course, is merely supposition on my part. At that time, German cities had not yet been fully built up; there was still rubble on the streets, never mind inner and outer suburbs. In the evenings, cumbersome American automobiles were parked the whole length of the pavement, the glutinous strains of New Orleans jazz spilling from their radios.

"Hey, they're screwing!" remarked Babó, who had sobered up by then.

We took a peek, and indeed, there on the back seat, there would be a flaxen-haired fräulein with her legs in the air. Outside, hulking Negroes were lounging against their enormous automobiles, drinking bottles of beer. The atmosphere in that Cologne outer suburb was cosy, homely.

Well, what can one say? The Germans had lost the war. All the same, the two of us were indignant; down in the Rhine's flood plain we had got used to the girls opening up their legs for us.

"Back home," said Babó, "you never saw a single Russki in the street."

"But whenever we needed them," I countered, "they would always be there in a flash!"

"So are this lot."

But then the Germans had not risen up in revolt, had they? They worked from daybreak to nightfall, letting the "good ole boys" bang their girls.

I kick-started the Vespa and we sang at the top of our voices on the merrily chugging scooter. In Alsace they have a folk hero who goes by the name of Hansi, a cross between Johnny Hayseed and Huckleberry Finn. "Lucky chap!" as the song goes, to the rhythm of the trumpet's réveille call to which the residents of Fulda jumped out of bed. "What's at hand he'd rather forget. And what he needs, he cannot get!"

"We're such smart alecs!" Babó said. "Totally impractical."

We drove back over the Rhine bridge, leaving Germany behind. We had begun to understand that for us no such thing as paradise existed. Here in the free world, as we called it, a French horn player can at best be a piano tuner, and a ballet dancer, a rope dancer.

We didn't even get to look at the source of the Danube, though we really ought to have stopped it up: why else make the trip? So that the Danube did not flow for at least half a minute. And we ought to have photographed it too, but then with what? We carried something else around in our trousers in those days—not cameras. ❧

Translated by Tim Wilkinson

MTI PHOTO

Austria, 1956. István Kassai (on the right), an engine driver with his wife and two children and his sister and brother-in-law, next to the engine on which they fled to Austria from Szombathely.

Árpád Mikó

Stories Set in Stone

András Kovács: *Késő reneszánsz építészet Erdélyben, 1541–1720*
(Late Renaissance Architecture in Transylvania, 1541–1720).
Cluj (Kolozsvár)–Budapest, Teleki László Alapítvány–Polis Könyvkiadó,
2006, 215 pp.

It is rare, very rare indeed, that the second edition of a strictly scholarly work should arouse the interest of the general reading public, and even rarer for it to do so within such a short time. The first edition of András Kovács's book was published a bare three years ago and every single copy has been snapped up. This is not a coffee-table book: it is a serious treatise which delivers precisely what the title promises, examining the history of Late Renaissance architecture in Transylvania from the period immediately after Buda Castle fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1541 to the beginning of the eighteenth century, a slightly broader span than the near century and a half during which Transylvania existed as an independent principality. The profusely illustrated volume, printed on high-quality paper, undoubtedly appeals to the ordinary reader, with its many (300 in total) colour and black-and-white photographs and drawings which provide a clear back-up to the text. The extensive bibliography and detailed index will greatly facilitate its use by specialists. Finally, a long Romanian-language summary of the contents will give non-Hungarian-speaking Romanians access to the book's main theses.

Professor András Kovács, who this year celebrates his sixtieth birthday, was a student under Virgil Vătăşianu in Cluj (Kolozsvár). For many years he worked at the Institute for History of the Romanian Academy of Sciences in the city before taking up his position at the Babeş-Bolyai University, where his energies have been concentrated on the training of the Hungarians in Romania in art history. The bulk of his publications concerns Late Renaissance art in Transylvania and its Central European links. His wide-ranging knowledge of the sources allows him to survey authoritatively Transylvania's historic buildings, although his expertise extends to all the fine and applied visual arts as well as to architecture. To date he has around eighty publications or articles to his credit, virtually all in Hungarian or Romanian. It is largely thanks to this work that we are in a position to form an up-to-date picture of the arts in Transylvania in the Renaissance and the early

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Baroque periods. Kovács has been responsible for publishing many previously unknown written sources and unconsidered artefacts, and—most importantly—he has not flinched from advocating views that diverge from what has been generally accepted. He discusses the Transylvanian Renaissance unsentimentally and with an objectivity that is sometimes startling when compared with earlier scholarship. This degree of objectivity discussing the art of Transylvania cannot be taken for granted, even in Budapest.

Mention can only be made here of the most important of Professor Kovács's earlier works. Prince Gabriel Bethlen's patronage of the arts was the subject of his doctoral dissertation in 1984 (still unpublished); in 1998 he published the official records of the city of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia); in 2002 came Volume 1 of the *canonica visitatio* of the Roman Catholic diocese of Transylvania. For some time he has been engaged with the historical topography of what had been the seat of the princes. The book that is now offered is therefore a synthesis, based on several decades of the author's own research, that fills many gaps in our knowledge. He knows the buildings themselves inside-out (even bringing archaeological skills to bear), as well as the relevant written and pictorial sources, and what is more—and here I hope I shall be excused for putting particular emphasis on this, but sad to say, it is still uncommon—his whole approach is creative. What we have now is a new story of what was a vernacular Transylvanian Renaissance style and also its context, one fundamentally different from the established view. Earlier expositions reflected an unabashedly Romantic approach to history and took the line that this part of Hungary, cut off from developments and changes in the wider world, was able to sustain Hungarian literary culture and the visual arts in a state of near-pristine purity. It was considered that Renaissance forms and motifs preserved there lived on until, by the nineteenth century, they had thoroughly permeated folk art as well (a line of thinking that carried highly emotive undertones, especially after Trianon and the loss of Transylvania). Anachronistic it may be nowadays, but even current research is unable to dispense with the huge volume of data and sources—first and foremost in Jolán Balogh's many publications—that was amassed under the sway of this standpoint.

What, then, was the geographical and political context of this region's Late Renaissance architecture? This is not as simple a matter as it may seem. For one thing, the Principality of Transylvania is often identified with the lands that belonged to the pre-Trianon Kingdom of Hungary and are now part of Romania. Such is not the case. It was an entity with constantly changing borders, both historically and geographically speaking, that first came into being in 1541 with the fall of Buda and the tripartite division of medieval Hungary, and only gradually did it gain independence from what was left of Royal Hungary under Habsburg rule. The Principality was forced to survive as an Ottoman vassal for a century and half, only to be occupied by the Habsburg armies after the Ottoman Turks had been driven out of most of what had earlier been Hungarian territory. In the principality's

golden age, under Princes Gabriel Bethlen (1608–13) and George I Rákóczi (1630–48), its territory expanded northwards to swallow seven of the counties of neighbouring Upper Hungary (roughly modern Slovakia), including the major city of Kassa (now Košice). The territory then shrank substantially as a result of the catastrophic foreign policy pursued by George II Rákóczi (1658–60) after the incursions of Ottoman-backed Tartar forces. Nagyvárad (Oradea) fell to the Turks and Szatmár (Satu Mare) to the Habsburgs, while the northern frontier was pulled back to Királyhágó Pass (Piatra Craiului), which turned Kolozsvár, one of the principality's main strongholds, into a border fortress. The reign of Michael I Apafi (1661–90) marked a regeneration of the state though, as its artistic relics testify, the period could not compete with those preceding it. Transylvania's constitutional position was settled by the *Diploma Leopoldinum* of 1691, under which it ceased to be recognised as an autonomous principality and its territory was annexed to the Habsburg Empire. So much for the bare facts, to which it should be added that present-day thinking about Hungarian history breaks from Romantic nineteenth-century historiography by no longer attributing to the Principality of Transylvania a decisive role in the political evolution of the Kingdom of Hungary.

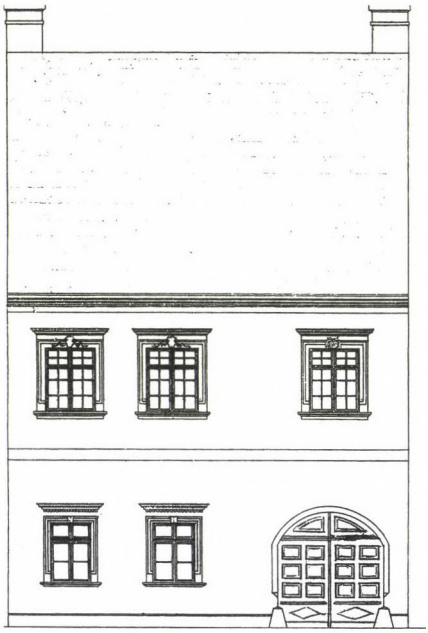
That cannot be said to be the case when it comes to culture, however. The princely court in Transylvania was not just a sanctuary for Hungarian opponents of the Habsburgs: it also became a major centre of far-reaching influence for the propagation of Hungarian—and primarily Protestant—cultural values. It was a uniquely important locus for Hungarian literature and art throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As far as architecture goes, the earlier literature tended to overemphasise the influence of Italian models; however, as András Kovács demonstrates—and this represents a huge shift in art-history perspectives on Transylvania —Italian designs did not arrive directly from Italy but, generally, by way of Austrian, German, Bohemian or Moravian intermediaries. He also ascribes a key role in the process of transmitting styles to etchings and engravings and imported items of applied art that had been previously overlooked. Broadly, he argues that Transylvania's peripheral position, and hence its relative isolation, accounts for Renaissance stylistic elements being preserved for so long in its arts. Indeed, conservative eclecticism dominated: Renaissance forms persisted in architectural sculpture and decoration until well into the seventeenth century and, conversely, Baroque stylistic elements did not appear in Transylvanian buildings before the eighteenth century. In this easternmost borderland of Western culture, the bulk of the constituent "nations" of its inhabitants professed the Protestant faith (the Hungarians being Calvinists or Unitarians, the "Saxon" Germans Lutherans) and therefore unresponsive to the Baroque. Clearly a scarcity of master builders trained in the latest fashions also played its part, a dearth that was evident throughout the seventeenth century.

Of the three "nations" that made up the body politic of Transylvania, the Saxons and the Székely were distinct from the Hungarians in, among other things, being granted their own separate administrative territories—so-called "seats" (székek)

—that retained their "ancient" (i.e., medieval) privileges in regard to self-government, the administration of justice, obligation to perform military service, etc. The Hungarians and the Székely shared a language, while the Saxons spoke a German dialect that, due to long separation from the German lands, preserved many archaic elements. So great were the inroads made by Protestantism that few outside the Székely lands were still Catholic by the latter half of the sixteenth century. The principality was in fact conspicuous for a freedom of religion that was uncommon in Europe at that time, with four "recognised" denominations: Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, Calvinism and Unitarianism. Of its princes, John Sigismund (d. 1571) professed the Unitarian faith, while among his successors those of the Báthory family were Catholic, while Gabriel Bethlen and the Rákóczis were Calvinist. (It may be noted that the serfs, though obviously not partaking of high art and culture to any great extent, were similarly diverse when it came to their religion; most of the Romanians were Greek Orthodox.) Such religious tolerance was a magnet for many foreigners, including intellectuals and artisans, who had been driven out of their own countries due to their religious beliefs. Transylvania, with its multilingual population, was also a flourishing centre of book printing. Pre-eminent among these printers was the firm of Hoffgreff-Heltai, which operated for a long time (until 1660) in Kolozsvár-Klausenburg and whose output included Hungarian-language books, and that of Johannes Honterus in Brassó or Kronstadt (Braşov), which even printed Greek texts. Kolozsvár was also the place chosen by Miklós Tótfalusi Kis on his return from Amsterdam (where he is now credited with designing a font, previously attributed to Anton Janson, that became widely used throughout Europe), to set up his own printing shop, which was active between 1693 and 1703.

Following a brief, but all the weightier, introduction on his guiding principles, András Kovács has organised his approach to the Late Renaissance buildings in Transylvania by type. He starts with a survey of urban architecture before turning to fortifications and castles (especially the fortified churches that are a local speciality), followed by châteaux and manor houses (this is the largest chapter) and, finally, church architecture, little of which remains today.

Urban architecture was of key importance during the period in question, not merely on account of the variety of the type of private dwellings and public buildings, town halls, fortifications and many other edifices, but also because most of the men who planned these buildings, up and down the land, were craftsmen such as stonemasons, joiners and cabinet-makers, who lived in towns. The inhabitants of most Transylvanian towns were German-speaking Lutherans. Their cultural horizons were firmly shaped by fashions in German-speaking lands. The foremost architectural centre was Kolozsvár, with its mixed population of Saxons and Hungarians. The city's walls and towers were reinforced and repaired many times during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Parish Church of St Michael there served as the principal place of worship for the predominantly



Kolozsvár-Klausenburg (Cluj).
The façade of the Wolphard-Kakas House.
Drawing (before 1894).

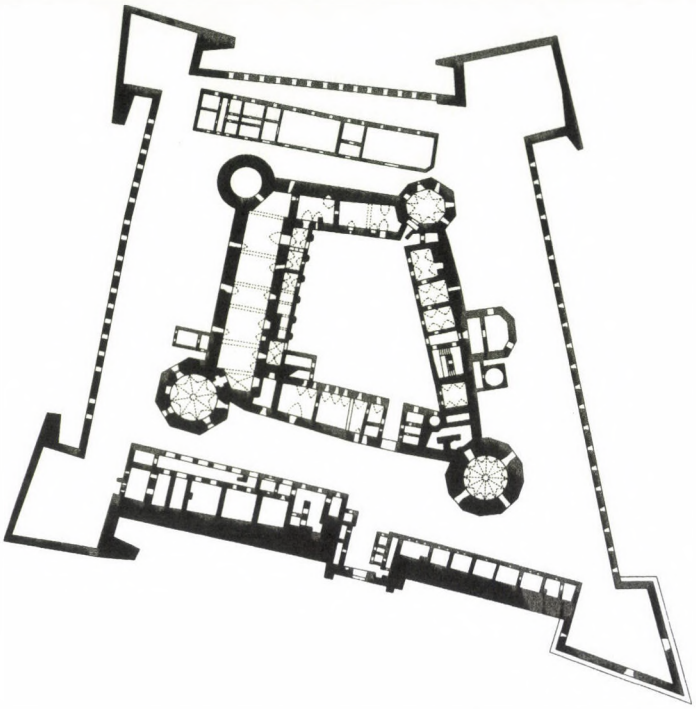
Unitarian local population. A church (and monastery) that the Franciscans relinquished was first granted to the Jesuits by Prince Stephen Báthory (1571–86), then, when that order was expelled, it passed into the hands of the Calvinists. This building, the Church on Farkas Street (Woolf Street, Platea Luporum), was then renovated in the early part of the seventeenth century, with George I Rákóczi ordering that it be refurbished and given new vaulting. The most characteristic new buildings in the town, though, were the dwellings of its burghers; in that era more than a few of these were constructed in a Renaissance style, usually incorporating the walls of the older building that had stood on the site. Up to the mid-sixteenth century, dwellings had just a single storey; only later did they acquire an upper floor. Since the narrow frontage of the plots was retained, the street façades tended to be planned on a 2 + 1 axis (that is, with two windows and a door opening on the ground floor, with three windows on the upper storey). The most obvious outward sign of Renaissance styling was the use of *all' antica* frames for the doorways and windows. We have little information about how the interiors were designed; the most renowned example still extant is the so-called "zodiac room" in what is now known as the Wolphard-Kakas House. This has a bayed, barrel-vaulted ceiling, the corbels of which are fashioned as signs of the zodiac. The house itself was originally erected (1534–41) for the town's last Catholic vicar, Adrianus Wolphard, who was also episcopal vicar in Gyulafehérvár; a zodiac room with carved decorations was installed by a later owner, István Kakas, former student of Bologna and Padova, who was a proto-notary at the princely court. Many of Gyulafehérvár's Renaissance houses were pulled down at the end of the nineteenth century, but most of their decorative stone carvings were passed on to the city's National Museum of Transylvania. Kolozsvár, by contrast, enjoyed its palmy days in the latter half of the sixteenth century, and very few new buildings went up during the seventeenth. The style of door and window frames was not modernised, however, so these conserved their earlier forms.

Another important settlement was the predominantly Saxon town of Beszterce or Bistritz (Bistriţa), which lay athwart the commercial highway that led to the northeast. One surviving Renaissance-style dwelling there is the Goldsmith's House (1560–63), which is distinguished because of the refined *all' antica* frames

of its door and windows on its façade. This suggests it might have been built by Petrus Italus de Lugano, who is known to have worked on the town's church. Many townhouses in Nagyszeben or Hermannstadt (Sibiu), the most important centre of the Saxons of Transylvania, likewise bear traces of Renaissance influence, the majority—the Haller House (1537) is a typical example—being conversions of existing Gothic-style dwellings.

The relatively few figural carvings that exist (e.g., signs of the zodiac) were produced with the aid of pattern books, and it may be assumed that the multiplicity of richly ornamented door and window frames also derived from similar graphic prototypes, as no truly significant differences are manifest in the stylistic features of frames from Kolozsvár, Nagyszeben and Beszterce. Kovács leaves until the end his analysis of Gyulafehérvár, which was the Principality's political and administrative centre. Before he undertook his own researches, very little indeed was known about this. Old details of several townhouses have only come to light through recent archaeological investigations, such as the uncovering of the remains of Late Gothic and Renaissance frames in the Apor House. The larger public buildings all came into being at the behest of a prince, such as the Jesuit College, built by the Báthorys, or the Collegium Academicum, which was erected during the reigns of Gabriel Bethlen and George I Rákóczi.

The frequent wars of the period lent considerable importance to the building of fortifications. A curious anomaly, though, is that all the large fortresses, with defences designed to withstand cannon fire, were built along the northwestern border with Hungary, not in the south, as the Porte would not permit fortifications in the Principality, which was under their suzerainty and thus their nominal ally. A strong defensive line would have hampered their ability to occupy territory whenever they pleased. At the same time, there was no sense in constructing fortifications in the interior of the country, because the mountainous terrain made it impossible to deploy the heavy artillery of the day, even though the sixteenth century was the heyday throughout Europe for the construction of fortifications *alla moderna*, i.e., with a symmetrical ground plan. The first signs of this being taken into account in Transylvania were to be found in the refurbishment of the medieval fortifications of larger towns like Brassó and Nagyszeben. The first modern castle to be given new Italian-style bastions was that of Szamosújvár or Armenierstadt/Neuschloss (Gherla), work on which commenced in 1538 on the orders of King John I (Szapolya) of Hungary and was then continued on the instructions of (Friar) György Martinuzzi (with a gate house built in 1542); its completion dragged on, as was generally the case with fortresses, into the seventeenth century. The most ambitious of the fortifications was the modernisation of the castle at Nagyvárad, or Grosswardein, which was remodelled to a pentagonal planimetric design. Work on this started during the reign of Prince John Sigismund (1558–71), with a certain "Julius Caesar" as the architect—most likely Giulio Cesare Baldigara, a military engineer who is known to have been



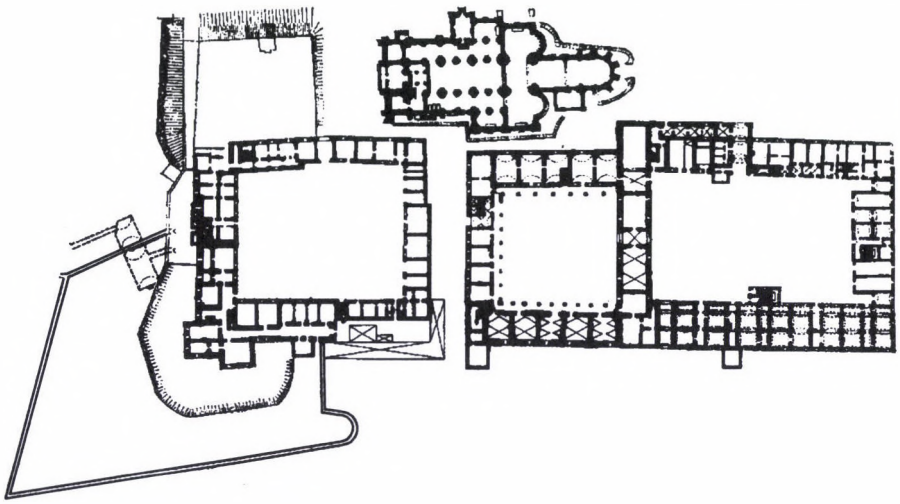
Fogaras-Fogarasch (Făgăraş).Ground plan of the fortifications.

employed by the Habsburgs. There were other instances of trained architects from Habsburg Royal Hungary being employed to pass on their expertise to Transylvania. Thus, active though Gabriel Bethlen was in pursuing building programmes, the work on Nagyvárad Castle was still incomplete at the end of his reign and was thus carried over into that of George I Rákóczi. It was also under Bethlen that a start was made on refashioning the walls of the princely residence of Gyulafehérvár to Italian specifications (with the construction of two of the eventual four bastions), but that too was suspended because the castle, located at the foot of several hills, was hard to defend. Bethlen was also responsible for commissioning Italian bastions for the fortifications at Fogaras (Făgăraş), a residence fortress which during the latter half of the seventeenth century became the principal refuge of Transylvania's princes.

Fortified churches were a distinctive type of architecture in Transylvania's smaller market towns, created by putting up a wall around the church and reinforcing it with towers and bastions, depending on what resources the settlement was willing or able to afford. The Saxons of southern Transylvania were the first to fortify their churches in this manner, as early as the fifteenth century, and extension of them continued (e.g., at Höltövény or Heldsdorf [Hălchiu], Prázsmár or Tarlau [Prejmer], etc.), the spur for which was given by the sporadic incursions of Turks from the South. The Székely areas, being further away from that threat, faced the same problem only somewhat later and did not start to fortify their churches until the sixteenth century. Fighting at the turn of the sixteenth into the seventeenth century prompted some communities, such as Nagyajta (Aita Mare) and Sepsiárkos (Arcuş), to beef up their defences with modern Italian bastions and towers, or at least fortifications that were reminiscent of these. The final stage in this series of developments is the fortified church at Kézdiszentlélek (Sianzieni), which was constructed early in the eighteenth century, though the defensive function of the peculiar polygonal star-shaped walls with four cylindrical towers had become completely obsolete by then.

In the next chapter of his superb book, Kovács goes on to look at châteaux, castles and manor houses. For the most part, we are dependent on written sources for any insight we may have into the kind of life that was led by the occupants of these residences and their associated cultural trappings. The most important of these sources are the inventories that were compiled to provide a provisional record, every now and then, of the contents of such a residence, from furniture and carpets to pots and pans, from the various parts of its main edifice to its gardens and farm buildings. Narrative sources, such as chronicles, travel accounts, letters and, in the case of the princely court, reports from envoys allow us to catch a glimpse of everyday life and, at times, the manner in which festivals were celebrated. So do the memoirs that make up one of the major genres of Transylvanian literature.

Pride of place in this chapter is given to the Prince's Palace in Gyulafehérvár. This complex of buildings, laid out around three courtyards, largely stands to this day, having been in the hands of a succession of military authorities until very recently. It started off from a kernel of buildings—the medieval Episcopal Palace and Dean's House—close to the Cathedral and reached its greatest extent

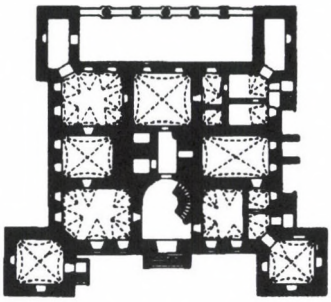


Gyulafehérvár-Weissenburg (Alba Iulia-Bălgrad). Ground plan of the ground floor of the Cathedral, the Episcopal Palace and the Military Barracks (formerly the Prince's Palace).

by the mid-seventeenth century. It was destroyed twice—first in the upheavals that followed Sigismund Báthory's abdication (1598), then in the sack of the city by Turks and Tartars in early 1658—and we have only written sources to turn to for what it was like at its peak, in the days of Gabriel Bethlen and George I Rákóczi. It was under Bethlen that it assumed an imposing presence, the most striking feature of which, from the outside, were the battlements crowning the cornice—another instance of just how decisive a role the construction work initiated by Bethlen had on seventeenth-century Transylvanian architecture.

Kovács disposes of one of the older legends of art history by showing that not a single château with a symmetrical ground plan was constructed within the Principality in the sixteenth century. The ground plan for the château built by István Bocskai at Egeres (Aghireş), which supporters of the earlier view used to cite as their prime piece of evidence, turns out to have been asymmetrical when it was originally built, and every last one of the country houses that went up in the final third of the century differs in its ground plan. Thus, János Gálfi's château at Bólya or Bell (Buia)—sadly, a ruin nowadays—was likewise constructed to an irregular ground plan. At Fogaras, the medieval fortress was transformed into a palatial residence, with the court façade of one wing being furnished with a loggia in which the arch of the vault seems to slip in a Mannerist fashion. The Old Castle at Szentbenedek (Mănăstirea) supplied the nucleus for the ensemble of buildings that make up the Kornis Château. Of special interest is the Veres Bastion at Marosillye (Ilia Eilenmarkt), which was originally a corner-bastion belonging to the outer defensive wall of a demolished older castle. Instead of being filled in, it was remodelled into a suite of rooms intended for formal functions, its walls in part decorated with murals.

The palatial mansions that date from the Bethlen-Rákóczi era arose during Transylvania's most glittering days. These were erected on regular ground plans, with exteriors that, like the princely palace in Gyulafehérvár, were enriched by windows topped by triangular pediments and italianate, crenellated cornices. The earliest examples of this made an appearance in constructions for the princely court. Alvinc or Winzendorf (Vinţul de Jos) was planned to be one of the very first, but work on it was never entirely finished. Here the single-storey wings were to have been set on a regular hexagonal ground plan of a huge area, with an Italian bastion at each corner, with the façade articulated in part by twin windows. When archaeologists excavated the middle of the courtyard, they came across the foundations of the medieval monastery in which Friar György had been murdered in 1551. The grandest of the two-storey residences was planned by Prince Gabriel Bethlen to be the centre of Nagyvárad Castle. Like the fortress, this would have risen on a pentagonal ground plan, but it too failed to reach completion. Symmetrical designs were also adopted by members of the princely entourage. Square mansions with corner towers were built by Simon Pécsi, a chancellor, at Radnót (Iernut); by Ferenc Mikó, constable of the seats *(székek)* of Csík, Gyergyó and Kászon, at Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc); and by Zsigmond Lónyai, high sheriff of Kraszna County, at Aranyosmeggyes (Medieşu Aurit). A substantial castle, also of rectangular ground plan but with round corner towers, was raised by George I Rákóczi at Gyalu (Gilău). The models for these types of construction were provided by country houses that had been built by the aristocracy of Upper Hungary, such as the square château at Tavarnok (Tovarníky, Slovakia) or the hexagonal castle of the Forgách family at Gács (Halič, Slovakia); their instigator was most likely Giacomo Resti, who went on from that part of Hungary to serve the princely court in Transylvania.



Bethlenszentmiklós (Sânmiclăuş). Ground plan of the Bethlen Château.

The buildings that went up after 1661 declined both in number and size; the golden age of construction had passed. The Bánffy family's château at Bonchida (Bonţida) was unfinished until work was finally completed during the eighteenth century. The greater part of the Bethlen Château at Keresd (Criş) with its famous arcaded loggia was likewise built under the the reign of Apaffy. The most famous of all the late Renaissance châteaux, that at Betlenszentmiklós (Sânmiclăus), was built between 1667–68 and 1683, commissioned and designed by Miklós Bethlen (also one of best known of the Transylvanian memoirists). This structure, with a two-floor loggia on its rear façade overlooking the Küküllő Hills, underwent major remodelling during the eighteenth century and brings the series of imposing Renaissance-style residences to a close.

The slimmest of all the chapters in the book deals with ecclesiastical architecture, simply because few new churches were built during the Reformation, the existing structures being generally satisfactory. The most notable Lutheran church was that at Beszterce, where the sizeable Gothic building was refashioned into a hall church (1559–63) by Petrus Italus de Lugano, who arrived there via Lemberg (Lvov). He had stellar vaults built over the nave and aisles, installed a balustraded gallery above the side-aisles, and gave the façade a high pediment with blind arcades. This is the only Renaissance church left to us. The Calvinist Church at Fogaras was built at the behest of Gabriel Bethlen, but only its pulpit survives. Extensive restoration work was carried out on various buildings in the period concerned. Thus, the upper, burned-out part of the southern tower of the Gyulafehérvár medieval cathedral was rebuilt. In Kolozsvár, George I Rákóczi ordered the installation of new vaulting in the former Franciscan Church and the Church on Farkas Street. From as far away as Courland in what is now Latvia, master craftsmen versed in the arts of Late Gothic vaulting had to be summoned. In 1646, Prince George also commissioned a new pulpit for the Church on Farkas Street (this was made by Elias Nicolai, a sculptor who lived in Nagyszeben, and Hannes Lew Rehner, a local stonemason) and this went on to serve as a model for pulpits in other Calvinist churches.

I should point out that the ground plans included in the series of figures at the back of the book are all drawn to the same scale, which greatly facilitates comparisons between the different buildings. Authors of histories of art have a tendency to disregard scale and size when establishing the evolution of types of buildings and they fall into the trap of reducing to a common denominator items known only from photographs. Professor Kovács, doubtless alert to this from his long years of teaching experience, has kept his readers in mind, and he has given similar attention to his choice of illustrations. Scholarly integrity demands the

inclusion of archive photographs of buildings whose state has changed in the meantime. Here another story emerges that will give no one any pleasure: that of the gradual and at present seemingly inexorable decline and destruction of the monuments of Transylvania's secular past.

To give a few dramatic examples. The aforementioned Kornis Château at Szentbenedek was a still largely intact complex of buildings before the Second World War, but it had fallen into a desperate state of disrepair by the eighties. It is now impossible to get even close to the walls of the Old Church, in part due to the shrubbery that has overgrown the site, in part due to the precarious condition of high walls, which could collapse at any moment. The tower of the gate house is more intact, having retained its roof; but on passing through, one is confronted by the sight of an appalling rubbish dump, while the unicorns placed on either side of the drawbridge can hardly be seen for bushes. A visitor can thus see signs of destruction at every turn. Restoration work on the fabric of the extensive complex of buildings that make up the Bánffy Château at Bonchida (Bonţida), which preserve the traces of all styles from the Renaissance through the Baroque to the Romantic, may be slow, but it is at least going ahead. The walls of the princely residence at Alvinc, by contrast, seem to be crumbling like a house of cards before one's eyes; and the châteaux at Aranyosmeggyes, Keresd and Egeres (still habitable before 1945) are now on their last legs. On the other hand, in the name of restoration, the Lázár family's castle at Szárhegy (Lăzarea) has had a brand-new, fairytale concoction built slap into its middle in a German Renaissance style that never existed there before.

The regime that was in power in pre-1990 Romania did not consider the Renaissance and Baroque castles of Transylvania as belonging to the country's past and treated them accordingly. Nowadays, this part of the world has been hit by the general scarcity of finances in Eastern Europe and by the parlous state into which protection of historical monuments has fallen, further compounded by local apathy or, for that matter, hostility. Old churches are in a somewhat better position because the communities that sustained them were still vital until very recently, though the fate of the architectural legacy (especially their medieval churches) of the Transylvanian Saxons, who have left for Germany over the last two decades, is now completely uncertain. Centuries of the Transylvania heritage are now at risk of vanishing forever and, to make things worse, we are learning time after time just how much previously unsuspected information is still bound up in the disintegrating buildings (e.g., the Veres Bastion at Marosillye)—so much in some cases that it would be possible to rewrite the history of entire art genres. András Kovács's book contains much that may be learnt in this respect.

One can only hope that this splendid treatise will help to spread knowledge of the Renaissance era—which was, in effect, the official style of the Principality of Transylvania—to a wider public. If it brings greater familiarity with the buildings, that can only boost their chances of conservation. Scholarly appraisals in the field will certainly rely on this book for decades to come. ❧

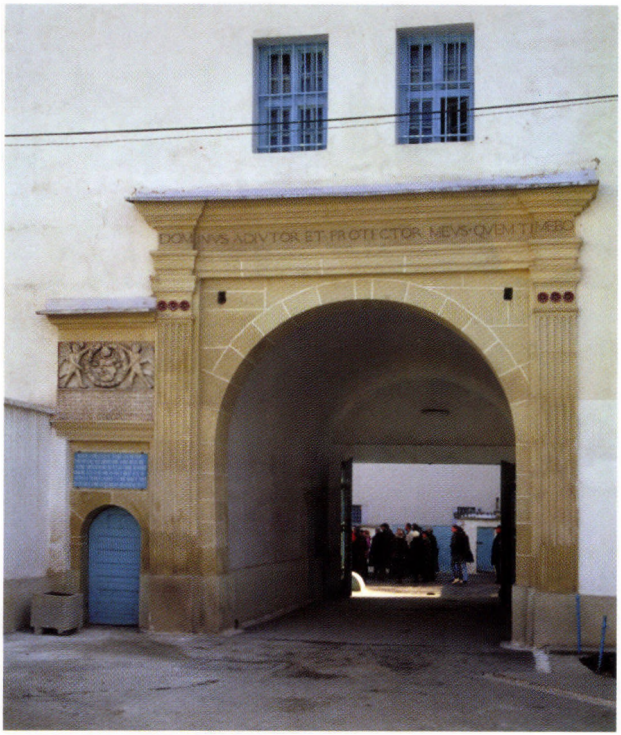
Kolozsvár–Klausenburg (Cluj). Inner façade of the Wolphard-Kakas House. Detail.

József Sebestyén

Beszterce-Bistritz (Bistriţa).
The Goldsmith House.

József Sebestyén

Nagyszeben-Hermannstadt (Sibiu).
Haller House, the gateway.



Szamosújvár (Gherla).
The inner gateway of the castle.

József Sebestyén

József Sebestyén

Fogaras-Fagarasch (Făgăraş). The castle from the southwest.

József Sebestyén

Fogaras-Fogarasch (Făgăraş). The loggia wing of the castle.

József Sebestyén

Gyulafehérvár-Weissenburg
(Alba Iulia-Bălgrad).
Gateway of the Episcopal Palace.

József Sebestyén

Radnót (Iernut). The château from the north.

József Sebestyén

Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc). Mikó Castle.

Gyergyószárhegy (Lăzarea).
The western end of the
principal façade
of the Lázár Château.

József Sebestyén

Bethlenszentmiklós
(Sânmiclăuş).
Bethlen Château.
The wing facing the Küküllő
(Târnava) river.

József Sebestyén

Virgil Pop

Beszterce-Bistritz (Bistriţa).
The nave of the Lutheran Church.

József Sebestyén

Kolozsvár-Klausenburg (Cluj).
The nave of the Calvinist Church
in Farkas utca with new vaulting.

József Sebestyén

Kolozsvár-Klausenburg (Cluj).
Detail of the pulpit of the Calvinist
Church in Farkas utca.

József Sebestyén

Sepsiárkos (Ărcuş). Fortified church.

József Sebestyén

Kézdiszentlélek (Sânzieni). Fortified church.

András Kovács

Szentbenedek (Mănăstirea). The ruins of the Old Château in 1998.

András Kovács

Alvinc (Vinţu de Jos). The ruins of the castle from the north in 1968.

John Lukacs

George Kennan, Hungary and Changes in Eastern Europe

Five years ago I gave a talk about another man whom I greatly admire, Winston Churchill—because, reading in preparation for a book, I found that Churchill had an amazing knowledge of Hungary and of Hungarian history going back to the eighteenth century. In some ways the same is true of George Kennan, whom I also greatly admire and about whom I wish to talk here, suggesting further subjects for research.

George Kennan (1904–2005) is best known as a diplomatist and as the man who drafted the so-called Long Telegram in 1946 and who wrote the famous "X" article defining "Containment". For these, he has been described, with exaggeration and imprecisely, as the architect of American foreign policy during the Cold War.

Two problems confront anybody who wishes to study George Kennan. The first involves something which is the very opposite to what historians normally have to face. Here the problem is not that the material available to the historian is insufficient: it is that the material is enormous. George Kennan was a man of the written word. He began to keep a diary at the age of 23; this, with occasional interruptions, he continued to do until the age of 96. These diaries are much more than schedules of his day. They are full of most brilliant and intelligent insights. So is his correspondence, which again is enormous. Much of it is still inaccessible in Princeton. Like other people in the past, George Kennan expressed his opinions, his insights, his worries, his forebodings in private letters—expressing them in the strongest way. For his future biographers, let me repeat, the problem will be that the material is both enormous and unusually rich.

John Lukacs

is a Budapest-born historian, living and teaching in the U.S. since 1946. His books include Budapest 1900 *(1988),* Confessions of an Original Sinner *(1990),* The Duel *(1990),* The End of the Twentieth Century—The End of the Modern Age *(1993) and* A Thread of Years *(1999).*

The above introduction to two letters from George Kennan to John Lukacs, first published here, is the edited text of a lecture delivered at the Central European University in Budapest on 6 June 2006.

The second problem is that Kennan, like many great minds, is difficult to categorise. Many have written about him so far; there are about ten biographies or biographical studies. Some of them describe two Kennans. The first of these was the Kennan who was worried about communism and the Soviets, who drafted the Long Telegram and wrote the "X" article; the second Kennan we find later in the 1950s, the Kennan who was much opposed to the ideological crusade against the Soviet Union and highly critical of several American administrations. By that time he had retired from the Foreign Service or, rather, was asked to retire because of the independence of his mind—which is why many who didn't know him well enough spoke of two Kennans. It is my conviction that there is no contradiction there. His integrity was such that his principles were always more important for him than his political ideas. Somebody once wrote that a political idea is like a fixed gun, a cannon that can fire in only one direction. A principle is a cannon mounted on a swivelling platform that can fire at mistakes, errors and dangers in all directions.

Kennan came from a very old American family. The first Kennans arrived in America in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. His grandfather and father were the first in the line to have a middle-class professional career. His father, who was born in Milwaukee in 1853, was christened Kossuth Kent Kennan; for this was the year when Lajos Kossuth made his highly publicised journey to the United States where he was received with great acclaim. It must be said that George Kennan was not very pleased with his grandfather's choice of name, considering it as a chronological or political oddity, which it was. One of the reasons for his displeasure was that George Kennan believed, unlike Kossuth, that Austria-Hungary was absolutely essential to the European balance of power. Very early in his life, in his twenties, he regretted and criticised the Paris peace treaties, as well as the propaganda that led to the break-up of Austria-Hungary. This he thought was a crime, not only against that part of Europe, but against the very order of Europe. In this, as in other matters, he was similar to Churchill, who in an article in 1927 also wrote that one of the two main problems of Europe requiring revision was the award of Transylvania to Romania.

But what Kennan wrote about Austria-Hungary before he was thirty, except for one diplomatic paper, was for himself. When he was thirty, he was appointed, since he had studied and spoke Russian, as First Secretary of the first American Embassy to the Soviet Union. What he saw in the Soviet Union, what he wrote and what he observed there is extremely interesting and important.

After his stint in the Soviet Union, he was posted as First Secretary at the American Legation to Czechoslovakia. He arrived in Prague on the day after the Munich agreement. He criticised that, as many in the West did. But he also wrote in his Prague dispatches that the creation of Czechoslovakia was in many ways artificial. This was an opinion that few people in the West shared, Czechoslovakia

having been not only supported but partly created by Woodrow Wilson. And Kennan, throughout his life, was critical of Woodrow Wilson.

Now Kennan was always interested, far beyond his duties as a professional diplomat, in travelling through and getting to know the country he was posted to. In February 1939, he travelled across what remained of Czechoslovakia. His Prague dispatches reported that this country would not survive, that it was an artificial creation and that Ruthenia should belong to Hungary. He wrote this in February 1939, which I think is interesting. Just as he was critical of Woodrow Wilson, he was also critical of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whom he respected. Another Hungarian connection was due to his posting to Lisbon in 1943. There (this is not in his papers, but a personal communication) he had some contacts with one or two Hungarian diplomats who were trying to approach the British and Americans in 1943. In 1944, he was sent to Moscow again as First Secretary. He was very respectful to the Ambassador, Averill Harriman. He wrote many long and in retrospect hugely interesting and hugely prophetic reports and analyses of the Soviet Union. He gave them to his ambassador. Kennan did not think Harriman read them at the time; he only found out years later that he had read them, but that they didn't go far in Washington. In these memoranda he said that the situation was now hopeless for Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union was going to rule a large portion of Eastern Europe and the United States could not do much about that; it should not have any illusions, it should not make declarations about Liberated Europe; they may go down well with the American public, but they actually made the job of the Russians easier. His view of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was similar to Churchill's. In 1944, Churchill said that the Soviet Union was now a hungry wolf in the midst of a flock of sheep. Still, after the meal comes the problem of digestion. Kennan thought that for the time being nothing could be done for Hungary and for Eastern Europe, but he also thought that in the long run the Russians would not be able to digest them.

Kennan was very often subject to gloomy moods. (Of great assistance to him was his wife.) He thought that Roosevelt, the American press, the State Department and American public opinion were intoxicating themselves with illusions about the Soviet Union. Here I can turn to those two important and best-known documents, the Long Telegram of February 1946 and the "X" article of July 1947. In February 1946, Harriman was back in Washington and Kennan was alone in Moscow, sick in bed, when a routine request came from the Treasury Department, which at that time was inclined to be fairly pro-Soviet, asking to know what the Russians were doing and what was driving their conduct. Kennan decided this was a good chance to tell them. From his bed he dictated the Long Telegram, in which he explained and analysed the sources of Soviet-Russian conduct.

The Long Telegram arrived in Washington at the right moment. It was immediately shown to President Truman. Overnight Kennan became famous. He regretted this. He wrote in his Memoirs that in a democracy much is due to political timing. Had he written this and dispatched the telegramme to Washington

six months earlier, people would have said, "it's George Kennan being gloomy again." Had he written it six months later, they would have said, "well, we know all that" and so forth.

He suddenly became important. He was recalled to Washington in January 1947. General Marshall, the new Secretary of State, thought very highly of Kennan and created a new position for him within the governmental hierarchy: Kennan was made head of policy planning staff. In all his long life (he lived to be more than a hundred) this was the period for which he is best known, indeed almost the only period for which he is known. There were two and a half or three years when he was a high-ranking officer on the bridge of the American ship of state. This was due to the Long Telegram in 1946 and to the "X" Containment article which was published in July 1947. This is why people say that he was the architect of an American foreign policy for fifty years, which is a vast exaggeration. The truth is he was never happy with the "X" article. He said that it was successful because it said what was obvious by then. He had not considered Eastern Europe. Containment meant that we have to contain the Soviet Union and prevent any expansion of Russian communism beyond the Iron Curtain. He did not say anything about Eastern Europe other than his insight that Eastern Europe is not necessarily an element of strength for Russia. In 1947 everybody else started to believe that after Eastern Europe had turned Communist, the Soviet Union was ready to spread communism to France and Italy and Western Europe; Kennan said that this was not the case. Here he was completely alone. He said that the Soviet Union had to be contained, he was in favour of things like the Marshall Plan, whose goal was to build up the economies and the social structure, the strength of Western Europe, so that there should be no danger of a Communist Party in France and Italy obtaining more than a small share of the votes. What he did not believe was that this policy of containment should lead to the militarization of the American alliance system, as a consequence of which there would be American military bases all over the world.

George Kennan's view of Stalin was also unique. In the 1930s, when he himself was only in his thirties, he knew Russia well enough. He was widely read in Russian literature. When he was young, he bought the 50-volume edition of the collected works of Chekhov and began writing a biography of Chekhov which he never finished. In 1937, in one of his dispatches, he wrote that Stalin has little or nothing to do with communism. He saw in the purges in Russia the substitution of a Communist and internationalist bureaucracy by a Russian security state bureaucracy. Stalin saw himself as a statesman, not as an ideologue. Stalin did not believe in Marxism, though he would not admit to this. Kennan saw Stalin as a combination of a peasant tsar and a Caucasian chieftain. Which he was. This is not the place to analyse Kennan's view of Stalin, but he thought that the West, especially after the Second World War, was misreading Stalin and putting an exceptional emphasis on communism as a doctrine, which even in 1940 he saw as

outdated. It may assist the Soviet Union to some extent, but it was less and less popular anywhere else in Europe.

Kennan believed something that I also happen to believe, that perhaps the entire Cold War largely came about because of a reciprocal misunderstanding. The United States believed that having conquered Eastern Europe and established Communism there, Stalin was now ready to expand into Western Europe, spreading Communism, or that he would militarily subdue Western Europe, which was not the case. Stalin believed that the Americans, who won the war with relatively little effort, were establishing themselves all over Western and Southern Europe and were now challenging his rule in Eastern Europe; which also was not the case. The United States, which had written Eastern Europe off in Yalta, was now making a lot of noise about imprisoned politicians, cardinals and so forth. Kennan thought that the Iron Curtain, the division of Europe, and within Europe the division of Germany, and within the division of Germany, the division of Berlin were artificial and wrong. They should not stand. And he believed that the time would come sooner or later when the United States and Russia would have to renegotiate the division of Europe.

As I said, Kennan's popularity and success in government circles was due to his early (but not premature) anti-communism, his early diagnosis of the Soviet Union. But by 1950–51, people who once kept reading Kennan's diagnoses turned against him. For a short time he was ambassador in Moscow, but he had to resign, because the Russians wanted him to go. On his return to Washington, Secretary Dulles told him there was no place for him in the State Department. "There is no niche for you," is how Dulles put it. Whereupon he resigned at the age of forty-nine. There then followed fifty astonishingly productive years during which he wrote perceptive analyses and great books; he discovered his talent as a historian; at least four of his history books have become classics.

Let me now return to his relationship to Hungary and Eastern Europe. The clue, the key, the thread, the pillar, whatever metaphor you prefer, was his belief that the division of Europe was unnatural, the division of Germany was unnatural, the division of Berlin was unnatural and that this situation had to be changed. He saw that Soviet rule in Eastern Europe would gradually begin to crumble. He recognized the first sign of this when he was still head of the policy planning staff, seeing the conflict between Tito and Stalin as the first crack in the system the Soviets had made in Eastern Europe. He saw that the Soviet Union would have to begin to retreat. And retreat it did, not only in 1989, but in the early 1950s. The Soviets, for whatever reason, decided to remove themselves from Austria. The Soviets made up with Yugoslavia. The Soviets removed their military bases from Finland. Kennan saw that these were the first signs of a Soviet retreat which would have to be supported and promoted. When the Hungarian Revolution came, he had long been out of politics, but he said in his private letters that these events were tragic for Hungary but that the Soviet Union, I quote him, would never recover from them. He wrote these words in December 1956.

In 1957, the University of Oxford invited him to take up a visiting professorship. While he was in England, the BBC asked him to give their Reith lectures for that year. (At that time Kennan's reputation in Britain and Germany was higher than in his own country.) These were six lectures that became famous later, two of which were devoted to Europe. The broadcasts drew an audience of millions. He said again that the division of Europe and Germany was unnatural and that after the death of Stalin, the Russians had enough troubles of their own, specifically citing Poland and Hungary. Looking at Europe geographically, he saw that between the American and the Russian spheres of Europe, a neutral zone had already begun to exist, including Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria and Yugoslavia. The fact, he said, that these countries belonged neither to the Warsaw Pact nor to NATO, was telling. And the time has come, he said bravely, to begin considering the withdrawal of Russian and American forces from Central Europe.

He was immediately attacked from all sides, by both Republicans and Democrats in the U.S., by Dulles as well as by Acheson, by the British and the French governments, by the West German government, who were content with the division of Europe. He saw signs from the Russians, certain indications from Khrushchev himself, that a demilitarisation of Germany might perhaps be negotiated through a partial withdrawal of Russian troops from Eastern Germany and a partial withdrawal of American troops from Western Germany. The United States Government, the British, the French and the West Germans were unwilling even to consider that. The Polish Foreign Minister Rapacki had proposed that Central Europe should be free of nuclear weapons. The only person who was listening was Kennan. These Reith lectures had tremendous repercussions, but officially they were condemned by the West.

George Kennan believed that a Russian withdrawal from Hungary and from much of Eastern Europe would not be achieved through increased American military pressure and hostility towards Russia. How it could be achieved, he believed, was through an improvement in American–Russian relations and through a mutually agreed partial withdrawal of American and Russian forces from the middle of Europe.

Today this may sound more sensible than it did at that time. Speaking personally, I saw things in much the same way, in contrast to my Hungarian friends all over the world. They believed that the hope for Hungary was more and more American pressure, more and more American hostility against the Soviet Union, that only through American pressure could Hungary ever be liberated. I thought that the hope for Hungary lay not in a deterioration, but in an improvement of American–Russian relations.

I was never involved in Hungarian émigré politics. But I thought that what Kennan had to say about Eastern Europe, particularly Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, was so important that I translated some of the Reith lectures once they were published in book form and sent the translation to a Hungarian

émigré publication in Germany. They rejected it, because they thought it was too pro-Communist. Eventually, as you know, American–Russian relations improved, and the withdrawal of Russian forces from Eastern Europe did take place—not because of increasing military pressure and hostility, but as a result of other factors.

After those years between 1957 and 1989, Kennan turned to the writing of history; his work was superior to many, if not all professional historians, and not only because of the brilliance of his style. The list of the articles and books he published in the last forty years of his life is formidable. With his warnings against this or that in American foreign policy, with his warnings against the undue trust placed in nuclear weapons, he gradually became recognised as a kind of national asset. In 1989, President George Bush awarded him the Medal of Freedom, the highest American decoration.

Often (and, as I have said, incorrectly) he was categorised as the architect of containment. Some, fewer in number but wiser, called him the conscience of America. This, in many ways, he was, since his concerns with his country and people went beyond foreign policy.

He foresaw the break-up of the Soviet empire years before the Central Intelligence Agency did. In 1986, he came to Hungary privately to have a bad knee condition treated at a spa hotel in Budapest. From there he wrote me long letters. He said that Soviet rule would not last, it was but a matter of a few more years. (He was also impressed with some of the Hungarians he met, although he was here in no official capacity.) His consistency was truly remarkable. Back in 1940, when it seemed that Germany was conquering Europe, he was in Berlin. He said that no state is powerful enough to establish its hegemony over the world. This is what he tried to say to his own people, to his own government, to his own country in the last ten years of his life. No state should think that it is powerful enough to establish its hegemony over the world. In 1996, when he was 93 years old, he was against the expansion of NATO, pointing out that it was not necessary to irritate the Russians, to aggravate them; and that such an expansion would do nothing for America and nothing for its newfangled allies.

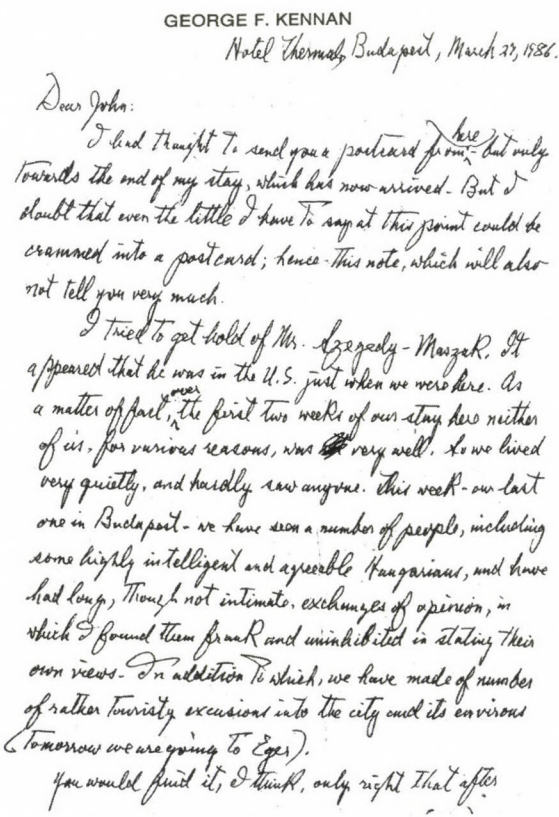
That is the last thing I want to say about the way he saw Europe and Eastern Europe and particularly Hungary, for which he had a sympathy and a knowledge of its history, rare among Americans. He lived to be over hundred and one years old, dying one year, one month and one day after his 100th birthday. ❧

Two letters from George Kennan to John Lukacs from Margaret Island

Hotel Thermal, Budapest, March 27, 1986

Dear John:

I had thought to send you a postcard from here but only towards the end of my stay, which has now arrived. But I doubt that even the little I have to say at this point could be crammed into a postcard; hence this note, which will also not tell you very much.



GEORGE F. KENNAN

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I tried to get hold of Mr. Szegedy-Maszák. It appeared that he was in the U.S. just when we were here. As a matter of fact, over the first two weeks of our stay here neither of us, for various reasons, was very well. So we lived very quietly, and hardly saw anyone. This week - our last one in Budapest - we have seen a number of people, including some highly intelligent and agreeable Hungarians, and have had long, though not intimate, exchanges of opinion, in which I found them frank and uninhibited in stating their own views. In addition to which, we have made a number of rather touristy excursions into the city and its environs (Tomorrow we are going to Eger).

You would find it, I think, only right that after

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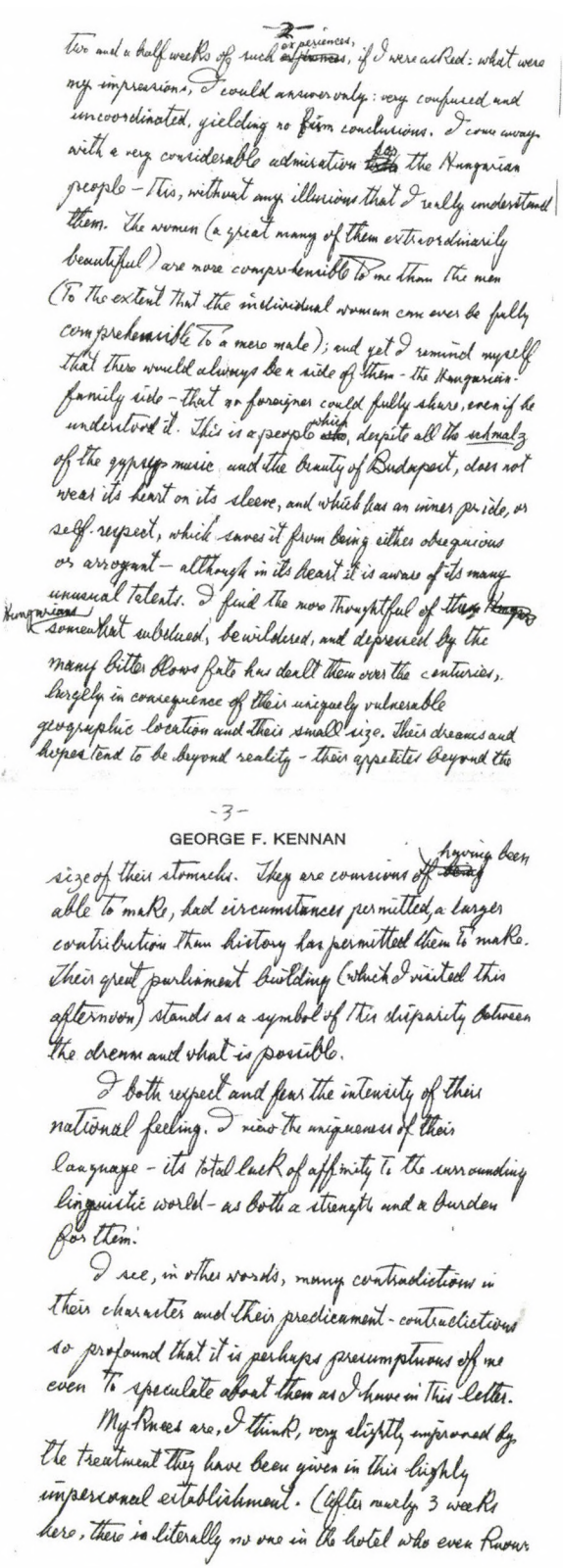
You would find it, I think, only right that after two and a half weeks of such experiences, if I were asked: what were my impressions, I could answer only: very confused and uncoordinated, yielding no firm conclusions. I come away with a very considerable admiration for the Hungarian people—this, without any illusions that I really understand them. The women (a great many of them extraordinarily beautiful) are more comprehensible to me than the men (to the extent that the individual women can ever be fully comprehensible to a mere male); and yet

* ■ Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, a literary historian.

I remind myself that there would always be a side of them—the Hungarian-family side—that no foreigner could fully share, even if he understood it. This is a people which, despite all the schmalz of the gypsy music and the beauty of Budapest, does not wear its heart on its sleeve, and which has an inner pride, as self-respect, which saves it from being either obsequious or arrogant—although in its heart it is aware of its many unusual talents. I find the more thoughtful of the Hungarians somewhat subdued, bewildered, and depressed by the many bitter blows fate has dealt them over the centuries, largely in consequence of their uniquely vulnerable geographic location and their small size. Their dreams and hopes tend to be beyond reality—their appetites beyond the size of their stomachs. They are concious of having been able to make, had circumstances permitted, a larger contribution than history has permitted them to make. Their great parliament building (which I visited this afternoon) stands as a symbol of this disparity between the dream and what is possible.

I both respect and fear the intensity of their national feeling. I find the uniqueness of their language—its total luck of affinity to the surrounding linguistic world—as both a strength and a burden for them.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GEORGE F. KENNAN

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I see, in other words, many contradictions in their character and their predicament - contradictions so profound that it is perhaps presumptuous of me even to speculate about them as I have in this letter.

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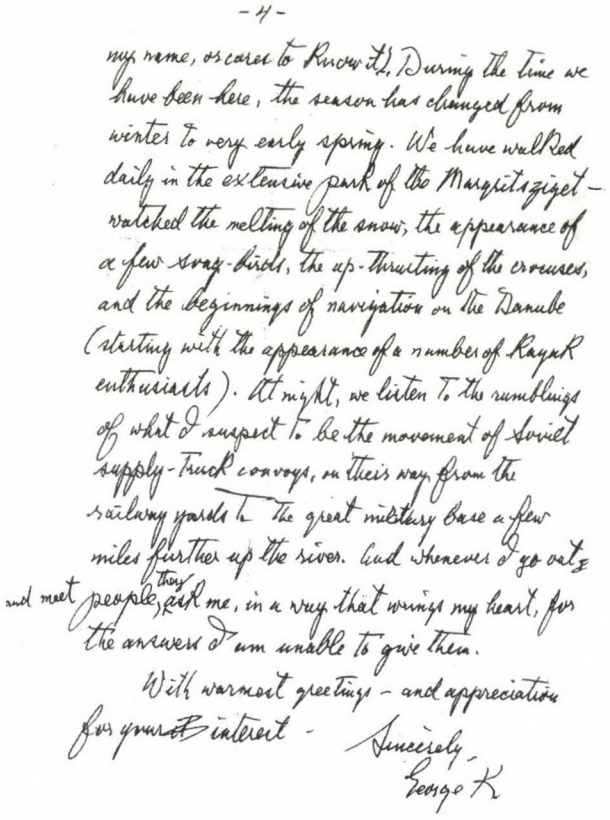

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my name, as care to know it. During the time we have been here, the season has changed from winter to very early spring. We have walked daily in the extensive park of the Margitsziget - watched the melting of the snow, the appearance of a few song-birds, the up-thrusting of the crocuses, and the beginnings of navigation on the Danube (starting with the appearance of a number of Kayak enthusiasts). At night, we listen to the rumblings of what I suspect to be the movement of Soviet supply-truck convoys, on their way from the railway yards to the great military base a few miles further up the river. And whenever I go out and meet people, they ask me, in a way that wrings my heart, for the answers I am unable to give them.

With warmest greetings - and appreciation for your interest -

Sincerely -

George K.

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My knees are, I think, very slightly improved by the treatment they have been given in this highly impersonal establishment. (After nearly 3 weeks here, there is literally no one in the hotel who even knows my name, or cares to know it.) During the time we have been here, the season has changed from winter to very early spring. We have walked daily in the extensive park of the Margitsziget—watched the melting of the snow, the appearance of a few song-birds, the up-thrusting of the crocuses, and the beginnings of navigation on the Danube (starting with the appearance of a number of kayak enthusiasts). At night, we listen to the rumblings of what I suspect to be the movement of Soviet supply-truck convoys, on their way from the railway yards to the great military base a few miles further up the river. And whenever I go out and meet people, they ask me, in a way that wrings my heart, for the answers I am unable to give them.

With warmest greetings—and appreciation for your interest

Sincerely,

George K.

April 16, 1986

(Ah, my poor country, these people caused me to reflect: so much casual and occasional excellence, all so little appreciated—so poorly used.)

Taking advantage of the car placed at our disposal by our kind friends in the Embassy, we made two excursions: one, the usual tourist trek to Szentendre and Estergom and Visegrad; the other, to Eger. The first of these jaunts was on the coldest of winter days, but always interesting and not unpleasant. The visit to Eger

was on the only warm lovely spring day of our entire visit. The Sehenswürdigkeiten, on both these journeys, were indeed sehenswürdig, worth seeing; but we had no guide-book; the signs were mostly in Hungarian; and when, on very few occasions, the signs were translated into several foreign languages, the best, clearest and most illuminating of the translations were, incongruously, the Russian ones—don't ask me why. It was a strange experience, looking at these various architectural monuments—some still ruins, some restored, some of the newer ones extant in their original form—and trying to figure out, from this mere visual image, what their history had been. It was like watching a movie in the airplane without the earphones on and trying to guess at the plot. I was grateful for the little Hungarian history (three small books, actually) that I had read before coming. I was appalled at the ubiquitous evidences of great and repeated destruction: almost nothing now standing that predated the Turkish occupation, unless recently reconstructed; and I was impressed to realize how the small intense flame of Hungarian national feeling had continued to flicker and refused to be extinguished through all these vicissitudes. But I longed for a well-schooled and intelligent person at my side who could have told me a bit about what I was seeing.

On the visit to Eger, I marvelled at the excellent condition of the fields—even those that were obviously in the hands of collectives. Comparing them with what I had seen in other "Communist" countries, I was moved to recall Tocqueville's penetrating observation that it is not the institutions that are most important in a national society but rather les manières of the inhabitants.

I spent one afternoon and evening, at the University, with what I might call "think-tank" people, selected from all around, from the different institutes and offices, including, I should suppose, the Foreign Office. One way or another I talked with those people seven hours straight, and suffered, the next day, from the exertion. I found them highly intelligent, uninhibited by each other's presence, feeling perfectly free (so far as I could tell) to ask questions and voice opinions, more interested in my views than in my person (which I welcomed and found refreshing). I thought to detect in them a great restlessness and unhappiness—primarily over their restricted position under the shadow of the Russian tree, but also for a deeper reason, I thought: namely, that with their recent relative prosperity, which had brought them closer to the West, they had also begun to experience something of the empty dissatisfactions of a boring materialist affluent society, and did not know what to do about it. I felt for them. We, by comparison, are steeled, after a fashion, to this emptiness, and contrive to live in spite of it. For them, it was new.

Dear John, this is as far as I can go, tonight. I have already written, today, an address I must deliver a month hence (I shall send you the draft of it for your comments) and I cannot do more in a single day.

The above will not tell you much; but it will tell you how little I really saw, and why I am inclined to reserve judgment.

Faithfully,

George K.

István Deák

The Files

"Our contact man then asked Deák whom he had voted for [at the 1968 US presidential elections]; he replied that he had cast his vote for Humprey [sic]." The "contact man" to whom the police had given the cover name "Perényi", was an informer at the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and he reported to a police lieutenant regularly in a secret apartment especially maintained for the purpose. On this particular occasion, as in other cases, the lieutenant wrote out a summary of the conversation, with ample quotes, and sent it to his superior at the Ministry of the Interior who evaluated the report as "highly informative". (The department at which the report arrived was called "Interception of Internal Reactionary Behaviour and Sabotage—Field of Culture".) The superior then instructed the lieutenant to order "Perényi" to continue his observations of my behaviour at the Institute at which I was, at that time, a visiting scholar from the United States.

Needless to say, I was not the only one at the Institute whose "movements" the informer was expected to observe; nor was he the only one reporting. Among others, there was also "Vili", who observed me diligently whenever I appeared in Budapest in the 1960s and early 1970s. But whereas "Perényi's" identity is still a mystery, that of Vili is accessible to researchers at the Historical Archive of the State Security Services in Budapest, which contains my police files among thousands of others.

So far, seven hundred scholars and journalists have received permission to study the documents in the Archive, with relatively easy access to the identity of the informers. Meanwhile, however, former "target persons"—to use the Communist police's jargon expression—may see only their own files and are not told the real name of their informers. Being both a historian and a former target person, I am well aware of "Vili's" identity, but rather than being angry at him, I am somewhat grateful

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István Deák

is an American historian born in Hungary. He teaches modern Central and East European history at Columbia University. His books on Weimar Germany's left-wing intellectuals, the 1848 Revolution in Hungary, the officer corps of the Habsburg Monarchy and Hitler's Europe have appeared in English, German and Hungarian.

to this former Institute archivist, who must have been under pressure to come up with damning stories, yet reported only good things about me. Clearly, he was unlike many other police informers, among them some of Hungary's most famous pop musicians, actors, politicians, prelates, journalists and other professionals, who seemed to enjoy denouncing their colleagues. Their evil remarks are now the talk of the town in Budapest. The moral, legal and political debate that these discoveries have created is swelling with every new unmasking of a former informer.[1]

For "Vili" to observe me could not have been an easy task, for we never met in private; in fact, I barely remember his face. For lack of more exciting material, he fed the lieutenant such enlightening pieces of information as that one day, when he was standing behind me in line at the—appalling—Institute canteen, he overheard me discussing, in a "profoundly engaged manner", the revolutions of 1848 with a fellow-historian. Or that "as regards his political attitude, Deák clearly belongs to the more reasonable wing of the Democratic Party. He agrees with the views of the opponents of the Vietnam War, and he dislikes the American hawks." As Vili concludes, "in terms of his world view, Deák is a left-wing bourgeois,"—one of the kindest things he could have said about an imperialist enemy. All this did not prevent the political police from considering me, and all other research fellows and visiting scholars from the US, as agents of the American information services, sent to Hungary specifically to spread "diversion".

In 1973, when again in Hungary as an exchange fellow, and while doing research on the revolutions of 1848, I was suddenly called in to police headquarters where two polite men in mufti informed me, to the accompaniment of the inevitable minuscule cup of espresso coffee, that, being guilty of grave crimes against the People's Republic, I ought to be arrested and tried; but, in view of the somewhat improved relations between the United States and Hungary, I would only be expelled. When I tried to inquire about the nature of my crimes, I was told "to examine my conscience". This I was to do in vain for the next thirty-three years until I learned, only a few months ago, in a newly uncovered major police report to the Ministry of Interior, dated December 1976, that "according to irrefutable evidence" I had been working "for the intelligence service of the Pentagon".[2]

1 ■ The Hungarian name for those who reported to the security police is *rendőrügynök,* which means police agent, but informer is the better term in English because agents are professionals and are regularly paid, whereas the informers in Hungary worked for nothing or received such occasional compensation as, for instance, the right to go abroad for a vacation, or a permit to have a telephone at home. The police distinguished between three categories of informers: those who acted under duress; those who did their work out of "ideological conviction", for which the acronym *tmb* was attached to their name, and those who not only acted out of ideological conviction but were also ready to make great sacrifices for the cause, their acronym being *tmt.* Poor "Vili" was for several years only a modest informer until, one day, he was promoted to *tmb,* a position to which informers seemed to advance rather easily from the late 1960s on, during Hungary's late and relatively lenient Communist period.

2 ■ See: Révész Béla, "Hírszerzés, propaganda és ellenzék Magyarországon. Állambiztonsági jelentés 1976-ból a külső ellenség és a belső ellenzék viszonyáról" (Intelligence, Propaganda and Opposition in Hungary. State Security Report from 1976 Regarding Relations between the Outside Enemy and the Domestic Opposition), *Múltunk,* 2005/2, pp. 163–225. The relevant quotation is on p. 181.

Many questions remain unanswered in my relatively minor case. If I was a known enemy spy, why did the authorities allow me to spend so much time in the country, and why were the police looking for me not at my officially registered address but at a very old address? Why, when expelled for espionage activities, was I allowed to leave the country in my car, with all my research notes and microfilms left untouched? And why did the Hungarian ambassador to the United Nations call me on the phone a short time after my return to New York to invite me to lunch? There he assured me that the Hungarian academic establishment was prepared to continue co-operation with the small research institute at Columbia University of which I was then the director. And yet the 1976 police report described our research institute as a place "where Deák trains East European specialists for the diverse branches of the American armed forces."[3]

Following my expulsion, IREX, the American inter-university organization for cultural exchanges with Eastern Europe, suspended, in protest, the exchange of research scholars with Hungary. Hasty negotiations followed in neutral Vienna as a result of which I was asked by the American side to return to Hungary for a short time. This I did in 1974, in order, as the agreement stated, "to pay a visit to [my] sick old father." However, the visit turned into a miserable affair, because, unlike a year earlier, I was being followed during my ten days' stay by hordes of thuggish and highly conspicuous secret policemen and policewomen. At times, cars and plainclothesmen blocked both ends of the street where I was so that I had no doubt I would be arrested. At the airport, when leaving, I was made to undress, and the Swissair plane was delayed by an hour before the police let me go. Why the thorough search, when quite obviously, I would not be such a fool as to carry notes or microfilms on me?

Back in 1973, despite my anxious entreaties, the US embassy showed no interest in my case; a year later, a US diplomat was interested enough to vilify me to the Hungarian authorities. In a "strictly secret" report to the Foreign Ministry found in the archives last year, the deputy director of the Hungarian Institute of Cultural Relations described the visit to his office of the American diplomat. According to the report the diplomat announced that I had been totally unwilling to listen to his advice, "not to get in touch with the Hungarian Institute of Cultural Relations or any other Hungarian institution, but in this, as in any other question, he was unable to persuade him." In fact, this embassy official, whom I had seen repeatedly during my brief stay in Budapest, had made fun of my worries about being persistently followed; despite my repeated requests, he refused to accompany me to the airport. It is somewhat disconcerting for me to know that this diplomat is still in service at the State Department.

According to the Hungarian report, the US diplomat declared himself highly dissatisfied not only with my behaviour, but also with that of Allen H. Kassof and Ivo Lederer, two American scholars concerned with US–East European cultural

3 ■ Ibid.

exchanges at that time. Kassof was executive director of IREX, and Lederer worked for the Ford Foundation. Both had protested my ill treatment in Hungary. "Using excessively rude and obscene words in reference to Kassof and Lederer," the report said, the US diplomat complained to the Hungarian Communist official that, "rather than trusting the magnanimity and flexibility of the Hungarian side" the two Americans sent a protest note to the Hungarian Institute of Cultural Relations, without prior consultation with the State Department. According to the report, the American diplomat claimed that this was "a clear case of East Coast diplomacy" used "with a definitely provocative purpose".

Experts agree that the hundreds of informers publicly exposed in Hungary are only the tip of the iceberg, and that between the late 1950s and the 1980s, tens of thousands people regularly reported on their colleagues in schools, offices, factories and scientific institutions. In fact, it is estimated that 40,000 civilian informers worked for the police at one time or another, which is 0.4 per cent of the population. This is a small number when compared to East Germany, where the STASI, the secret police, used 300,000 informers, approximately two per cent of the population, and where the surviving files of that organization amount to 33 million pages.[4]

Yet these numbers do not include the denunciators who turned to the police voluntarily to report on the suspicious activity of one or another neighbour.

The existence of the informer files in Hungary has been known for years. I myself was given the first few pages of my file at the predecessor of the Historical Archive of the State Security Services at least eight years ago, but the search for the informers' identity and doings has only recently gripped the major liberal newspapers of Hungary and the Internet.

One of the great scandals erupted over the exposure of the police connections of István Szabó, the Oscar-winning Hungarian film director who, as a student at the Theatre and Film Academy, repeatedly denounced his classmates, some of whom later became celebrated actors and directors.[5]

What makes the Szabó affair so discouraging is that, when confronted by journalists, he at first claimed to have accepted the role of police informer only in order to save the life of a classmate who had been deeply involved in the killing of Communists during the 1956 Revolution. "To accept working for State Security was the bravest, the most daring act of my life," Szabó declared to journalists, and he changed this line of defence to "I had to act to protect myself," only after it was shown that his excuse of heroic self-sacrifice was poppycock. It is true, however, that, under Communism, only a handful of applicants were admitted to the Academy, and that the possibility of being thrown out of the Academy for non-

4 ■ The classic account of the East German police's spying on citizens and visitors alike is Timothy Garton Ash, *The File: A Personal History,* New York, Random House, 1997. The book's title inspired the title of this essay.

5 ■ In this article, I am naming only such former informers whose activities are the subject of an intense debate in Hungary which has spread into other European countries.

cooperation with the police may have struck Szabó as life-threatening. Those who managed to graduate from the Academy were guaranteed an outstanding career.

As a first reaction to the Szabó Affair, well over a hundred creative intellectuals published a manifesto expressing their love, admiration and respect for the man "who has been making superb and important films for us during the last forty-five years. And not only for us Hungarians. He has spread our fame to all parts of the world."[6]

The manifesto, written in the patriotic style of a small country's cultural establishment, fails to explain why great talent is a more valid justification for misbehaviour than the lack of talent. Yet the manifesto was signed by, among others, Árpád Göncz, the former president of the Republic who, after the revolution of 1956, spent six years in jail as a result of an informer's denounciation. The manifesto was also endorsed by some of the targets of Szabó's activities. Let it be noted, however, that none of those whom Szabó had described as enemies of socialism ever went to jail. (Being a committed artist, Szabó actually spent more time complaining to the police about his colleagues' lack of talent than about their "anti-people" activities.) In any case, Szabó is in no legal or professional trouble today, except for the unpleasantness of his personal situation.

Indirectly, the world must be grateful to the political police for having forced István Szabó into spying on his classmates for that trauma seems to have determined the thrust of his artistic endeavors: *Mephisto* (1981), for which he received an Oscar, *Colonel Redl* (1985); *Hanussen* (1988), *Sunshine* (1999), *Taking Sides* (the case of the German conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler, 2001), and other films less well-known in the West, are take-offs on the Faustian predicament of whether a person of brilliant intelligence and great talent is justified in selling his soul to those who wield absolute power.

Today's hunt for "the truth" is due to the initiative of several dedicated journalists and historians, among them Krisztián Ungváry, a youngish historian, whose excellent *The Siege of Budapest, 100 Days in World War II,*[7] has also appeared in English. Ungváry seems to have decided to awaken the Hungarian public to its past shortcomings and crimes whether they occurred under Nazi or under Communist rule. In many newspaper and journal articles, by hitting both right and left, at former nationalists and anti-Semites as well as at former Communists, he urges the culprits to come forward and confess.

Ungváry first established his international reputation by pointing out errors in the famous Wehrmacht exhibit in Germany, which convincingly demonstrated that not only the SS but the regular German army enthusiastically engaged in the execution of the Final Solution. Unfortunately, in its dogmatic zeal, the organizers

6 ■ See the first such list in "A magyar szellemi élet képviselői Szabó mellett" (Representatives of the Hungarian Intellectual life for Szabó), *Népszabadság,* January 30, 2006

7 ■ With a foreword by John Lukacs, translated from the Hungarian by Ladislaus Löb, Yale University Press, 2005. Lukacs's foreword was reprinted in *The New York Review of Books,* April 7, 2005. Another version appeared in *The Hungarian Quarterly* 176 (Winter 2004).

of the exhibit charged the German army with crimes that the Soviets or Germany's Hungarian, Croatian and Finnish allies had committed.

One of Ungváry's practices is to classify the degree of guilt of former police informers; I am certain that he would list "Vili" among those of relatively good will. Today there is, however, a growing backlash to Ungváry's activities; he is being accused of opening old wounds and playing the inquisitor. One must note here that many of the available police files contain few or no personal letters and signed statements by the informers; what one usually gets is documents showing what the informers' handlers were telling their superiors. Lawsuits for defamation are already on the horizon; the very legality of publicizing the names of former informers is being questioned. Hungarian law allows the publication of negative information only about a public personality, but it is unclear whether a young cleric or a student is to be considered a public personality just because later he became a cardinal or a world famous film director. And is it right to expose their names in connection with acts they had committed thirty or forty years earlier and which were not punishable by law? Nor are they punishable today. Yet let us also remember that, after World War II in Europe, thousands upon thousands of people were imprisoned, and many hanged, for having informed on their neighbours to the Gestapo.

Krisztián Ungváry's most shattering find has been to identify László Paskai, the former archbishop of Esztergom–Budapest, as an informer when he was still a head teacher in a seminary. Aware of the awesome significance of unmasking someone who, between 1987 and his retirement in 2002, occupied Hungary's foremost ecclesiastic position, Ungváry went out of his way to assure the public that Paskai's reports on his fellow priests were innocuous. Still, the import of the revelation is enormous; Paskai, after all, is a cardinal, and he headed a see that, after World War II, had been held by Cardinal József Mindszenty, the very symbol of defiance to Communist rule. In 1948, Mindszenty was arrested, tortured and, in one of history's most notorious show trials, was made to confess to trumped-up charges. The archbishop of Esztergom, now called Archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest, traditionally bore the additional title of "Prince Primate of Hungary" and was considered among the highest dignitaries of the realm.

Paskai served as a police informer between 1967 and 1974, eventually earning the distinction of the acronym *'tbm'*, an informer who serves the Communist cause out of ideological commitment and dedication. Yet even when he was no longer in police service, he made himself odious to many Catholics for cracking down on the so-called "basis communities", small assemblies of the faithful, led by refractory clergymen, who attempted to worship without taking cognizance of the regime and of the church hierarchy. Archbishop Paskai's situation resembled that of most other church leaders in Hungary where, unlike in Poland, the churches, whether Catholic, Protestant, or the Jewish congregation, were suffering from a decline in popular religiosity. As a result, the high clergy depended on the good will and the financial generosity of the Party. Having been ruthlessly crushed in the early years of Communism, church leaders readily took an oath to the Com-

munist constitution; and many among them became what I like to call the trained seals of the regime.

The Catholic Church has many defenders who point out that the clergy had to survive, and that Paskai and the other bishops, several among whom are today similarly incriminated, assured a continuity which allowed for the Church's revival following the fall of Communism. After all, in Communist countries, the government had the right to veto appointments to higher clerical offices. Yet the Church's critics are more than right in arguing that the churches should have shown a good example in the one-party state or, at least, the higher clergy should publicly repent today for its most un-heroic behavior.[8]

Few of the police informers have repented. One of István Szabó's former classmates, for instance, came forward publicly, although only following the publicizing of Szabó's misdeeds, to confess that he, too, had been a police informer. Most of the former agents who have been publicly exposed content themselves with such excuses as, for instance, those of a former director at the Hungarian National Bank, who claimed that it was a sudden outburst of anti-Semitism during the revolution of 1956 which had driven him into the arms of the police.

Somehow no one in Hungary was surprised that artists, journalists and clergymen figured high on the list of Communist police informers, but few expected the same of members of the great historic families. Aristocrats have been the traditional targets of envy and ridicule, but during Communist times they earned public respect for their dignity under adversity. Obviously, not all titled nobles, a few hundred families in all, acted dotty during the interwar years, nor were they all heroes under the Communism; nevertheless the popular image had become widespread of strange tall men and women with aquiline noses, who did not sound their *r*'s in speech, and who lived uncomplainingly with their large broods in the servants' quarters of their former estates or who worked diligently as gardeners and unskilled labourers. Of all the titled families none has been more exalted than the Esterházys, princes and counts, who owned one thirtieth of Greater Hungary. Recently, they produced self-respecting prisoners in Communist concentration camps, a famous soccer player, and one of Hungary's greatest novelists, Péter Esterházy, at least seven of whose major works have also appeared in English. In 1999, Esterházy completed *Celestial Harmonies,*[9] a major literary tribute to his father, and to all the fathers in the Esterházy family, in which the present and the past appear simultaneously in the strangest of combinations and whose hero is Mátyás Esterházy, the writer's incorruptible and long suffering father. On 28 January, 2000, however, ten weeks before the book's publication, a

8 ■ There now exists a committee within the Catholic Church in Hungary charged with examining the past actions of its prelates. It is a striking fact, recently uncovered by Tamás Majsai, a Protestant theologian, that with one exception, every single Hungarian Protestant bishop appointed after 1956 worked as an informer for the police, reporting regularly on fellow ministers.

9 ■ Translated by Judith Sollosy, New York: ECCO, 2004.

researcher put a large collection of documents in the author's hands, proving that Mátyás Esterházy, by then dead, had functioned as a prolific police informer all the way from 1957 to 1980. This, in turn, led to Péter Esterházy's *Improved Edition: an Attachment to Celestial Harmonies*,[10] which unfortunately does not yet exist in English and in which the writer settles accounts with his own naiveté and explains, but never excuses, the father's behaviour. Interestingly, the public seems more than ready to forgive Mátyás Esterházy, of whom his own son writes in *Improved Edition*: "My father betrayed us, himself, his family [and] his fatherland."

By the 1970s, when I was expelled from Hungary, the police often seemed hesitant to proceed against those it described as enemies. Five years after my expulsion, I became a member of the presidential delegation that took the Holy Crown of Saint Stephen, hitherto kept at Fort Knox, back to Hungary as a mark of President Carter's appreciation of Hungary's having few, if any, political prisoners.[11]

As I learned later, the security police were furious about the prospects of my return but were not permitted to refuse me a visa. They took their revenge by not allowing my name to be mentioned in the media; yet, thereafter, I was always admitted to my native country. Moreover, György Aczél, the Party's cultural plenipotentiary, sent me a note of thanks "for my patriotic behaviour"; or as a Hungarian political policeman later explained to an émigré friend of mine, "by helping to return the Crown, Deák has redeemed his sins."

In János Kádár's goulash communism, which followed upon the brutal persecution, by the same János Kádár, of the fighters and intellectual lights of the 1956 Revolution, the police gradually lost their independent status. They were no longer a state within the state as it had been the case in Stalinist times. By the 1970s, the police were largely subordinated to the minister of interior, as elsewhere in Europe. The minister himself was under the control of the Political Bureau of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party.

Let me illustrate the weakening of the political police's influence by citing the case of Sándor Szalai, a Hungarian sociologist, who was between 1966 and 1972 the deputy director of UNITAR, the UN's training and research institute. The major police report of December 1976 that I have already mentioned in this article described him as a sworn enemy of the Hungarian People's Republic and, incidentally, as a close friend of mine. Yet the same report stated casually that this enemy, who had caused

10 ■ Péter Esterházy, *Javított kiadás. Melléklet a Harmonia Caelestishez.* Budapest: Magvető, 2002.

11 ■ The Crown, bearing the name of St Stephen, the founder of the Hungarian Christian kingdom, was actually created a few decades after Stephen's death in 1038. In Hungarian constitutional theory the Crown occupies an extraordinary position, because the king and the nation (originally the nobility) are subjects to its power. Laws were often issued in the name of the Holy Crown. In 1945, the fascist Arrow Cross government transported the Crown and other regalia, together with much of Hungary's national treasure, to Austria and Germany where it handed them over to the American army. Whatever was not kept as souvenirs by US generals made it back to liberated Hungary, but the Holy Crown was taken to Fort Knox. Following its return to Hungary in January 1978, the Crown and other regalia have been publicly exhibited at first in the National Museum and later in the Parliament building. In truth, they are beautiful objects to behold.

so much trouble to the regime, was now back in Hungary, teaching at Budapest University. There was not even a suggestion that Szalai should be arrested, something that would have taken place automatically in earlier, Stalinist times.[12]

Or, there is the case of the "Historian," one of Hungary's most celebrated historians, whom the secret police report describes as a potentially superb source of information on the US and other countries but who, the police regretfully note, "refuses to co-operate with us." More than that, the "Historian" even complained to influential contacts in the Party Central Committee about his having been inconvenienced by the political police.

There is one more historical issue to agitate the intellectuals in Hungary; it is that of Endre Ságvári, a young Communist underground fighter, killed in Budapest in 1944, in a gun battle with investigators from the Hungarian gendarmerie. Public opinion has yet to decide whether to treat him as a hero of the anti-fascist struggle or one who, in a triumphant Communist system, might have become a vile oppressor. And as for those who killed him, were they murderers or mere representatives of the law? A recent supreme court decision in Hungary takes the position that the gendarmes were more in the right than the Communist fighter, and that the detectives were just doing their duty. If this view is widely accepted, it would mean that the few who gave their lives fighting the Nazis and, per extension, those who died fighting the Communists, were closer to having been terrorists than those who killed them in defense of an illegal, totalitarian regime.[13]

Similar to most of his comrades in inter-war Hungary's minuscule underground Party, Ságvári came from an educated and well-to-do Jewish family; he led the Party's youth section, and was very active in the resistance. On July 27, 1944, he was meeting with a comrade in a little pastry shop in the hills of Buda when he was surprised by the four detectives, who had come to arrest him. Rather than surrender, Ságvári grabbed his revolver, killing one of the detectives and badly wounding two others, before he himself was killed. This was one of the few incidents when a resistant fired a gun at the German occupiers or at their Hungarian allies.[14]

Because he had been a dedicated Communist and had died conveniently before the bloody post-war purges within the triumphant Communist Party began, the Stalinist regime made Ságvári a martyr of the people after whom public squares, streets, youth parks, camps and schools were named. The pastry shop itself, transformed into a garden restaurant, displayed a bust and a marble plaque

12 ■ For the Szalai case, see Révész, "Hírszerzés, propaganda és ellenzék Magyarországon," pp. 182–183.

13 ■ The gendarmes were rightly considered the most brutal and the most Nazified uniformed institution in Hungary, whose members had excelled in torturing and robbing Jews during the deportations. For this, after the war, the people's court dissolved the entire institution and declared its members collectively guilty.

14 ■ June–July 1944 was the time when entire gendarmerie battalions were brought to Budapest under the guise of some celebration in order to organize the deportation of the Budapest Jews, the last massive group of Jews who had not been deported from Hungary. Persuaded by anti-Nazi advisers that the gendarmes were there to overthrow him in a putsch—that wasn't true at all—Horthy ordered the gendarmerie battalions to leave the capital, which they did, and the 200,000 odd Jews in Budapest were safe for several more months.

commemorating Ságvári's heroic deeds. Then came the end of Communism in 1989, and a quiet movement began to rid the country of Communist monuments, statues and plaques. Ságvári's bust disappeared from the increasingly fancy and expensive garden restaurant, but the plaque is still there, alternately damaged by hostile demonstrators or decorated with flowers by latter-day admirers. Now enters Krisztián Ungváry who, in an unusually feverish article, argued that Ságvári merits no plaque at all. Just as no one deserves respect who, during the war, failed to show "an anti-fascist minimum", so Ságvári deserves no respect because he failed to demonstrate an "anti-Communist minimum". Among other things, he approved of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939. Although his fight against the Nazis was justified, Ungváry states, he belonged to a criminal movement which made it most likely that, had Ságvári survived, he too would have become a criminal oppressor. As proof of this brazen contention, Ungváry brought up the case of Ságvári's sister, who did survive and who did indeed become a Communist official.[15]

In conclusion, Ungváry suggests that if the former Communists, now dominating the Socialist Party, insist on keeping Ságvári's plaque in the garden restaurant, it is only fair to place another plaque next to it that commemorates the gendarmerie investigators, one of whom died there in the line of duty.

Ungváry's article caused more than even the usual storm in intellectual circles, especially because the family of one of the detectives asked the courts to rehabilitate him legally. This detective, named László Kristóf, was shot in the leg by Ságvári during the skirmish and thus, rather than firing his gun to stop the fleeing Ságvári, writhed on the floor in his own blood. At the end of the war, Kristóf managed to hide and spent the next fourteen years as a worker on the land and in a factory. Meanwhile in Hungary, the great revolution against Soviet rule came and went, and the new ruler, János Kádár, whom the Soviets had imposed on Hungary and who was himself a former victim of the Stalinist purges, temporarily engaged in a bloodbath to affirm his position. In an attempt to prove that the revolutionaries, whom the Kádár regime called counter-revolutionaries, were spiritual descendants of the wartime fascists, several of the latter were arrested. Acting upon the advice of an informer, the police tried to arrest Kristóf, but he fled and was again shot in the leg. Subsequently, he and several others were put on trial. Kristóf and another of the four detectives were hanged, in 1959, not so much because they had used torture against their mostly Communist prisoners, of which they were truly guilty, but for "having murdered Comrade Ságvári". Now, in 2005 the Supreme Court ruled that by 1959, torture had fallen under the statute of limitations, and that by trying to arrest Ságvári the detectives by no means committed a war crime, which had been the original charge against them. Rather, the Supreme Court decided that Kristóf and the others had only done their duty.[16]

The Court's argument is strange, to say the least. No doubt, Kristóf did not deserve the extreme punishment, but one cannot say that he had only done his

15 ■ Krisztián Ungváry, *Egy emléktábláról* (About a Commemorative Plaque), *Élet és Irodalom*, 49/31.
16 ■ See: A Magyar Köztársaság Legfelsőbb Bírósága. Bfv.X.185/2005/7, *Jogegységi Határozatok*, http://www.lb.hu/ehatarozat/ehatarozat11.html1

duty. In July 1944, when Ságvári was killed, Hungary had already been under German occupation for several months, its government having been imposed on Regent Miklós Horthy by the German occupier. Although formally appointed by the Regent and acting in his name, the government could have hardly been considered legal because it took its orders from a German plenipotentiary. This cabinet, made up of former right-wing members of the so-called Government Party that had governed counter-revolutionary Hungary since 1919, tolerated the Gestapo's arrest of a number of anti-Nazi parliamentary deputies and high-ranking dignitaries. Worse still, it was this government which engaged in the most massive deportation of Jews to Auschwitz in the history of the Holocaust. Within a few weeks, well over 400,000 Hungarian citizens of Jewish origin, mostly women, children and older men were sent to their death. Wasn't it the duty of every decent and patriotic citizen to oppose this government or at least to disobey its orders? The four detectives knew fully well that, by arresting Ságvári, they would expose him to torture and execution, maybe even death under torture. This means that, by using his gun, Ságvári acted in justified self-defence. By trying to arrest him, the detectives acted in the service of a murderous and illegal government.

The Nuremberg Court in 1945–46 categorically dismissed superior orders as an excuse for criminal acts, and well that it did: otherwise all the great criminals of the last century from Heinrich Himmler to Lavrenti Beria could have invoked that excuse. In Hungary, this recent legalization of the idea of superior orders means not only that Ságvári was guilty of resisting those representing the law, no matter how flawed the law, but that so were, for instance, the revolutionaries in 1956 who fought pitched battles with political policemen equally representative of the then prevailing law.[17]

Hungary is now a free and democratic country; for its citizens the major preoccupation today is the bitter confrontation between government and opposition. The unmasking of police informers excites a part of the public, but when asked, they judge the former policemen and the former informers indulgently. Yet the problems remain for this country as for the others. Is it right to work within an oppressive system to push for reforms or is it better to remain an outsider and thereby condemn oneself to political and professional insignificance? Was being an informer for the semi-hard conservative regime of Miklós Horthy between 1919 and March 1944, or for the semi-hard Communist system of János Kádár after 1963 less objectionable than collaboration with the hard-fascist regimes between March 1944 and January 1945 or the hard-Communist system between 1948 and 1963? Is it always contemptible to serve the police as a political informer or are there circumstances when informing is a patriotic duty even in a democracy? At what point must one take a stand against oppression even at personal peril? One day each one of us might be forced to make such a decision. ❧

17 ■ All this, and the opposite, is being amply pointed out in the pages of the Hungarian newspapers, especially in *Élet és Irodalom* (Life and Literature), an excellent journal to which everybody, including the journal's publisher, refers to simply as *ÉS* (and). The reason for this is that, when the journal was founded under the Communist regime, it made Communist propaganda prompting its critics to whisper that the journal dealt neither with real life nor with genuine literature.

Dear Madam—I was interested to read Miklós Zeidler's piece on English influences on modern sport in Hungary, especially on the role of Arthur Yolland (on whom I have written myself). Yolland was, of course, head of the English Department at the Pázmány Péter University of Budapest between 1908 and 1946, and his is the name on the first major dictionary of English and Hungarian to appear in the twentieth century. Despite some notable achievements, he could not have been responsible, "plainly" or otherwise, for anything at the Ilona Street grammar school in 1891–2 (as claimed by Miklós Zeidler on p. 39 of the Summer, 2006, no. 182, issue), for he was at this time a 17-year-old schoolboy at Rossall School. This is evident even from the (admittedly not wholly reliable) entry on him in Szinnyei.

Furthermore, in your translation of an extract from the magazine *Sport-Világ,* I was intrigued to see the name Mannó (p. 52). Yolland married one Kalipsza Mannó, the daughter of a Greek merchant, who—one might reasonably conjecture—was this footballer's sister. Incidentally, Yolland died aged 82, of natural causes, during the fighting in 1956 and was buried in one of the mass graves. No getting away from the big anniversary, I'm afraid.

Peter Sherwood
SSEES UCL, London

Dear Madam—I am thankful to Professor Sherwood for his remarks. Indeed, Arthur Yolland worked as English tutor in the Ferenc József Institute (the boarding school section of the Ilona utca Grammar School, now called the Ferenc II Rákóczi Gimnázium) from 1896 to 1907, and therefore could only help promote rather than initiate the students' affection for football. Instead, the laurels should go to Manó Szaffka, who was the Physical Education teacher in the Grammar School until 1893 (and the author of an early pamphlet on the rules and art of football in 1904) and his successor, Jakab Nendwich, who introduced "English ball" or "goal defence with foot-kick ball" in the programme of Gymnastics classes for fourth to eighth-year students.

As far as Kalipsza (or Calypso) Manno is concerned, Professor Sherwood is once again right on the mark. She was, in fact, the sister of Leonidas and Miltiades Manno, two well-known sportsmen of the turn of the century. Miltiades, the younger of the two brothers (1880–1935), was an all-rounder, a great wrestler, a world-class skater and rower, and Hungarian champion in cycling and football. Leonidas (1878–1941), though less talented, took part in the first Olympic Games in Athens as a self-supporting athlete of the Hungarian team. They both preserved their interest in sports after their competitive careers reached a more modest phase. Miltiades, a professional sculptor and an avid caricaturist, often took different sports and sportsmen as the subject of his works, and he won the silver medal for Sculpture at the 1932 Los Angeles Games. Leonidas was amongst the first to call for the building of a National Stadium in Budapest, for which he published an ambitious plan himself in 1921. Their father was an extremely wealthy man, the leading wheat merchant in the rich wheat producing region of Bácska in Southern Hungary (now Bačka in Serbia).

Miklós Zeidler
Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

Éva Forgács

Hands and Constructs

Commemorative Exhibition at the KOGART Gallery on the 75th Anniversary of Béla Kondor's Birth (19 May–20 August 2006). Catalogue in Hungarian and in English edited by Péter Fertőszögi and Mária Kondor. Budapest, Kogart House, 2006, 203 pp.

It might not be a stretch to say that Béla Kondor (1929–1972) was the most idiosyncratic artist of his generation and even of post-war Hungarian art. Rejected by the Painting Department of the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts, he switched to printmaking and created one of the most compelling etching oeuvres in Hungary to date. His art aroused controversy, partly because of his inquiry into the meaning of religion and partly because of his style, which was seen as blasphemous by some critics. Kondor was also active as a poet and published several volumes of poetry.

One most unexpected impression I had at this commemorative exhibition was an apparent connection between Kondor's works and those of Lajos Vajda (1909–1941). Vajda was a lonely, boldly innovative artist who combined surrealist vision with figurative style; he was retroactively acknowledged as the most important forerunner of the surrealism-heavy European School, an association of artists and art theorists between 1945 and 1948.

The similarity between the two oeuvres struck me mostly as one of gesture and style; that is, in the particular characteristics or 'personality' of the lines Kondor drew. However, I am not suggesting at all that there is a continuity of artistic tradition, or that there had been any influence of Vajda on Kondor that the latter was aware of.

There is, however, more to this connection than mere similarities. The significance of certain motifs—for example icons, the hand, or the raised hand in particular—and the palpable desire to rise above material reality mark a deeper relation between the two painters. When the late Lajos Németh referred

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to the presence of "both structured order and surrealist vision" in Kondor's art, he may not have realized that this was in sync with Vajda's "constructive surrealist thematic".[1]

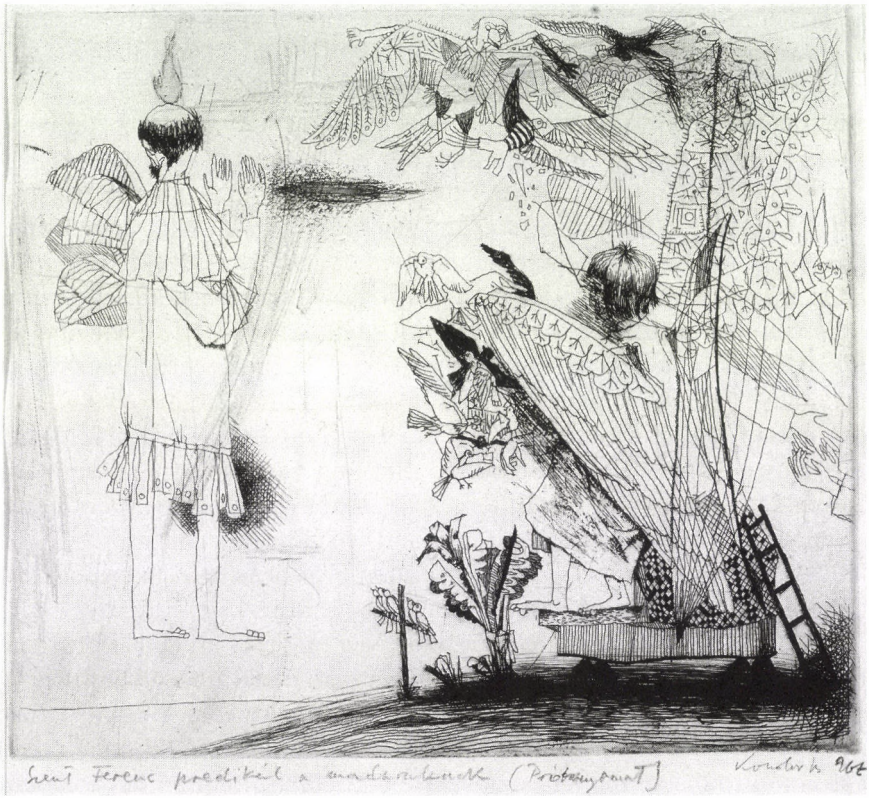
According to their early drawings, both painters had mastered the skills of adequate representation in their childhood, when they used precise, flexible lines and achieved verisimilitude. Vajda drew figures, horses, carriages; Kondor portraits, landscapes, still lifes. Starting, serendipitously, at the age of twenty-seven, each of the two painters found his own voice, which soon solidified into a personal style. They both invested their drawings with a particular character. They drew somewhat rigid lines which did not readily follow the contours of the objects; their characteristically brittle lines, rather, kept at a certain distance from precision and descriptive perfection. They both refrained from copying. Instead, they reinterpreted and recreated the seen in their drawings, which became increasingly self-styled and controlled. Shifting emphasis from the manifest features of the objects to the inherent ones, they both developed a slightly detached style which was both figurative and evocative.

Both Vajda and Kondor used motifs written over or written into other motifs, although they did so in quite different ways. The various layers are very clean and clear in Vajda's paintings, where each and every object is articulate and appears on its own plane; in Kondor's pictures, by contrast, there are a great many layers which flow into one another. In his 1972 painting *Attila József: Mother,* the title of which refers to a poem by Attila József, three figures are so combined that they are hard to disentangle. Kondor gave particular attention to the poems of József (1905–1937), another great loner of Hungarian culture, who radically broke from tradition while not giving up poetic forms, and who gave powerful expression to pain and solitude. In him Kondor apparently recognized another kindred spirit.

Many of Kondor's paintings include fragmentary elements which are thrown together in a collage-like, although painted composition, like his 1970 *Astronauts,* which is a chaotic image of planets, limbs, floating figures and various constructions.

One of Kondor's most frequently occurring motifs is the hand, which appears stylized and often enlarged. It frequently features a long bent thumb and extremely long and fragile fingers, spread out wide. The hand, consistently with its actual function, appears as a finely constructed instrument, a tool, where the fingers seem to be part of the mechanics of a machine. This is particularly clear in Kondor's most famous painting, the 1963 *Wasp King,* where the structure of the wasp's airplane-like wings and the construction of the hand holding the wasp seem to be parts of one and the same mechanical entity. There is hardly any

1 ■ Lajos Németh: "Bevezető Kondor Béla kiállításának a katalógusához" (Introduction to the Catalogue of Béla Kondor's Exhibition), Békéscsaba, 1977, quoted in the KOGART Gallery's exhibition catalogue, Budapest 2006, p. 11.



Béla Kondor: Saint Francis Preaches to the Birds,
1967, copperplate, 22 x 23.5 cm. Private Collection

Kondor painting where the hand is not particularly emphasized or even enlarged to become a particularly important vehicle of the painter's message. For example, in his 1968 *Construction Workers,* the hand is close to being a hieroglyph, with its contours already set and finalized.

Interpretation of the hand may span a wide scale. The hand most likely stands for that which is human: the humanly possible actions and limits, the latter powerfully evoked in his 1966 paintings *The Fall: The Temptation of Saint Anthony.* The hand, often directed upward, frequently occurs in Vajda's paintings as well, pointing to higher levels of reality. The always excited, gesticulating and detailed hands in Kondor's paintings mediate between the painter's classicist attempts and cosmic aspirations. For example, in his 1971 watercolour *Attila József: The Song of the Cosmos*, a whole choreography of raised hands appears. Many of Kondor's paintings, such as *The Passing of Time, Dante and Virgil (*1963), feature winged figures, airplanes, angels and astronauts, including some of his biblical images. This is indicative that Kondor had a universal, indeed cosmic perspective, like Kazimir Malevich and Piet Mondrian. Unlike them, Kondor did not paint abstract pictures, but his vision was no more limited than theirs.

Béla Kondor: The Temptation of Saint Anthony,
1966, copperplate, 24.5 x 29.4 cm. Private Collection

Kondor's 1966 painting *Man with Construction* confirms that the above connection between them, although far-fetched both in time and space, is well grounded. On the right of this painting there is a man's head, while on the left there is a pair of hands carefully holding a fine, complicated, opaque, geometric construction, as if it were made of glass. The transparent object is a metaphor of spiritual power paired with manual skills, and it brings to mind El Lissitzky's 1924 photo-montage *Self-Portrait,* where Lissitzky's face occupies the right, merging with the photograph of a compass next to the letters XYZ, all on the type of graph paper usually associated with engineering. This analogy, the most important element of which is its being coincidental—Kondor may not have heard of Lissitzky, since the rediscovery of the Russian avant-garde did not start in Hungary until the late 1960s—clearly shows that the dimensions of Kondor's art were no whit inferior to those of the classic avant-garde, which had believed in a grand future that mankind has the ability to design and turn into reality.

A more monstrous vision appears in Kondor's 1967 surrealistic painting *Phenomenon,* complete with fragments of stairs, trails, watermill-wheels, unfinished wooden structures and gigantic hands and faces. In the light of this and a few

similar paintings, Kondor's icons, series of icon constructions, and his frequent use of gold evoke a general desire to transcend material reality and the concrete reality of the present rather than have them carry a directly religious message, as many of his critics contend. In direct contrast to most of his contemporaries who encoded religious messages in metaphors in Communist Hungary, Kondor appears to have exploited manifest religious motifs in order to evoke an even more forbidden and radical message: his own rebellious desire for political freedom. It is this inherent political charge that made his representation of saints so relevant.

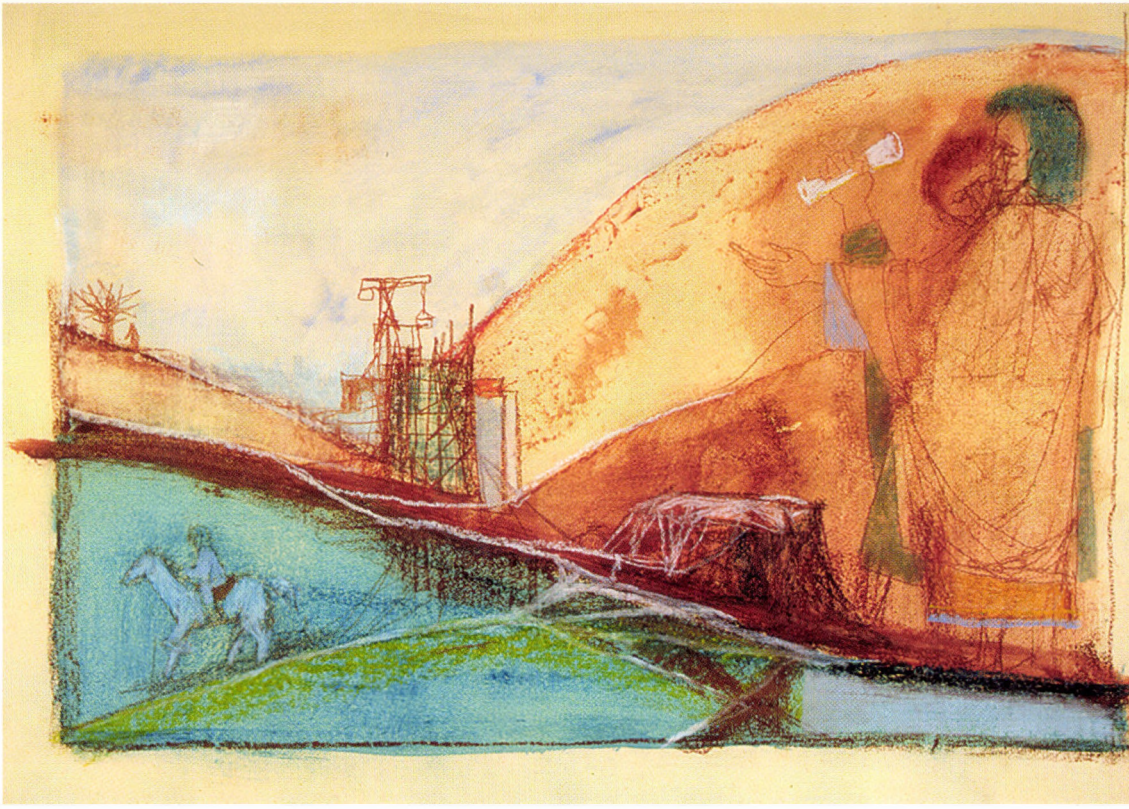
Kondor was bold and radical in expressing political dissent. He got away with it, his friends and critics seem to agree, because he remained a figurative artist, never crossing the line to abstraction. He was among the very few, however, who openly thematized the 1956 Revolution, for example in his 1959 painting *Revolution.* Although he was generally regarded as the last icon painter, he was, in a way unprecedented in Hungarian art, so intensely taken by the present that, in 1972, he responded to a current event, the massacre of the Israeli athletes in Munich in his painting *Murder at the Olympic Games.*

Similarly to Vajda, Kondor was also intrigued by photography and created photo-based works. Yet, while Vajda made dada-type and surrealistic montages, using images he had culled from illustrated magazines in the early part of his career, Kondor did the photography himself. Towards the end of his life, he photographed compositions that he himself had arranged and lit. With these photographic works, the artist transcended the style that he had developed, and which had already put brakes on his artistic freedom and expression. Besides featuring model-size spaceships, airplanes and musical instruments, the photographic work was a new opening for Kondor. It was the promise of a new visual language, a novel theme and an altered method, but he came to find it only in the year of his death.

What kind of a conclusion, then, can we draw from the fact that two artists, not united by a similar programme or artistic kinship, happened to create oeuvres which, at certain points, were connected by identical motifs and the closeness of their respective artistic idioms?

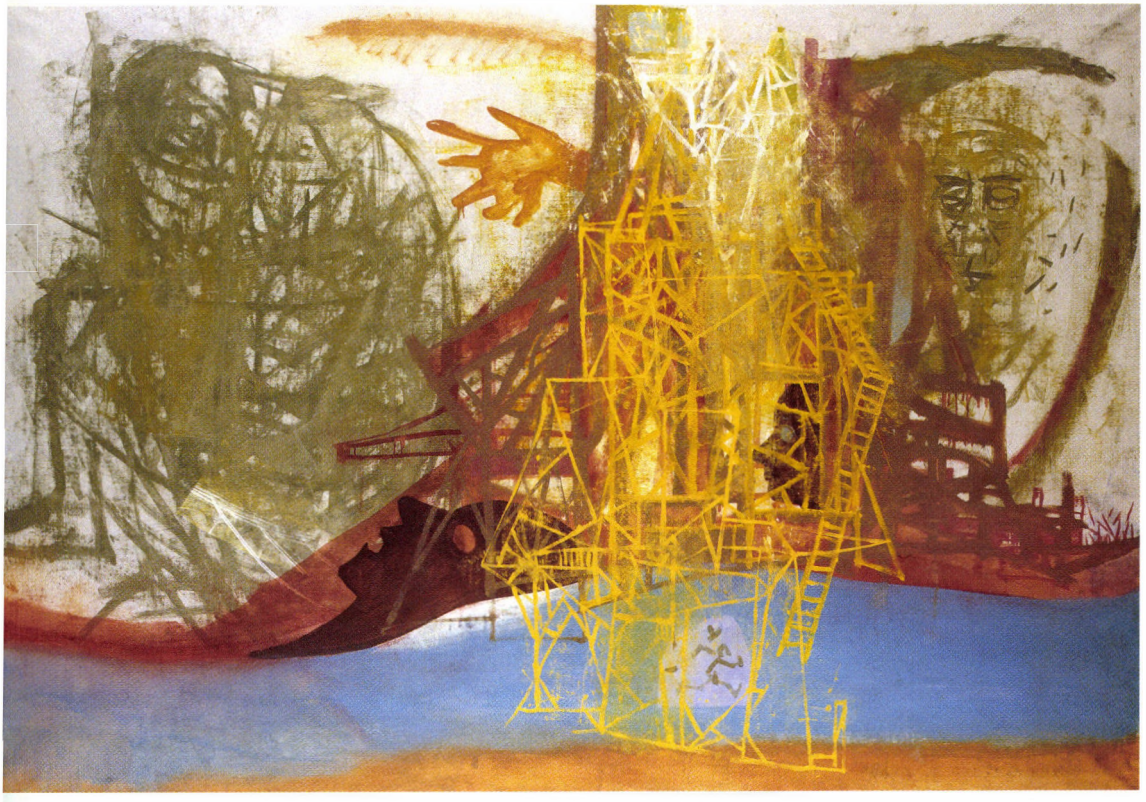
Apart from their possibly similar artistic inclinations, it might have been their respective historical eras which prompted similar responses. Both lived at a time when independence in thought and artistic pursuits was blocked by overpowering social indifference and political prohibition. Under such circumstances, each and every aspect of their work was in the frontline of the struggle for intellectual and creative freedom, and the two artists had to emphasize their own artistic truth and that truth only. It was solitude and confrontation with the overbearing powers that Vajda and Kondor shared more than anything else. ❧

Béla Kondor: *Wasp King,* 1963,
oil on canvas, 34 x 27 cm.
Xantus János Múzeum, Patkó Imre Collection, Győr

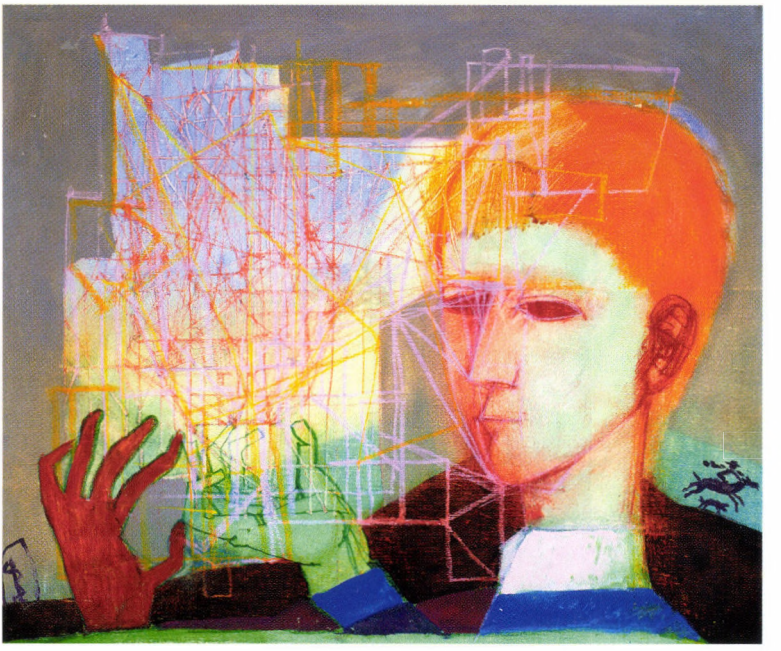


Béla Kondor: *The Passing of Time, Dante and Virgil,* 1963,
oil pastel on paper, 62 x 88 cm.
Szent István Múzeum, Székesfehérvár

Lajos Vajda: *Northern Landscape,* 1938,
pastel, charcoal, 29 x 88 cm. Private Collection



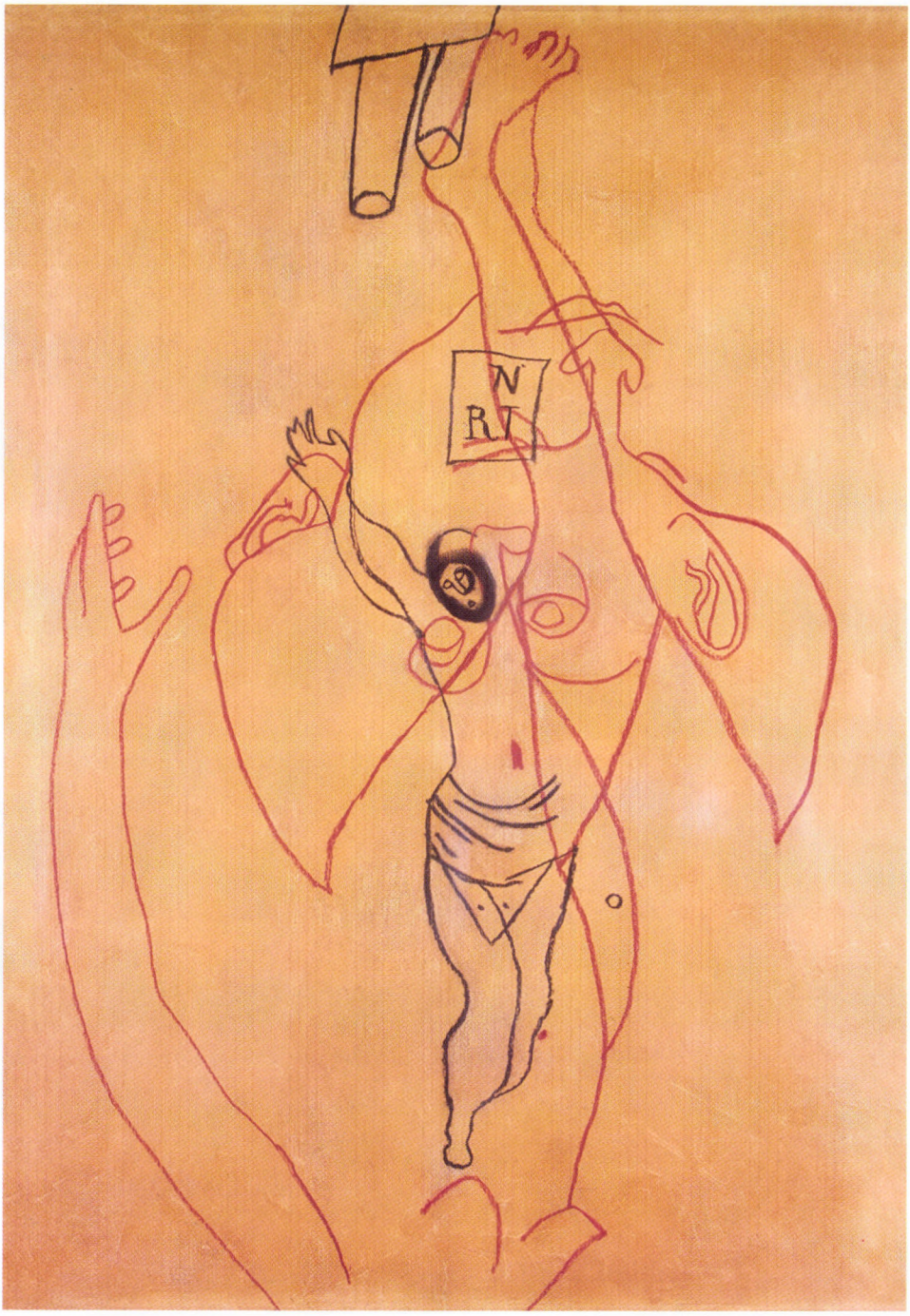
Béla Kondor: *Phenomenon,* 1967,
oil on canvas, 160 x 234 cm.
Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest



Béla Kondor: *Man with Construction,* 1964, oil pastel on paper,
71 x 83 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest

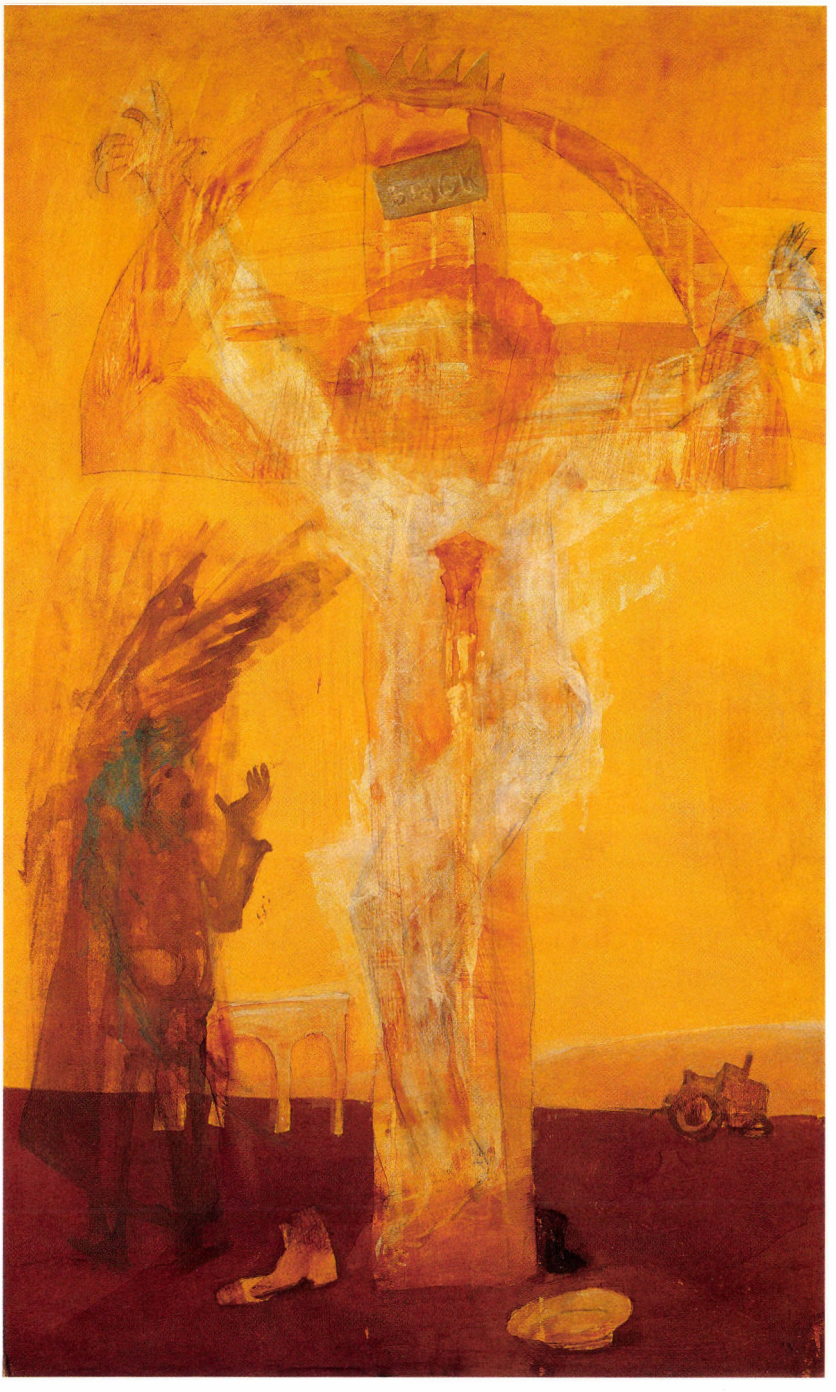
Béla Kondor: *Astronauts,* 1970, oil on canvas,
195 x 216 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest

Béla Kondor: *Attila József: Mother,* 1972, oil pastel on wood,
200 x 100 cm. Rippl-Rónai Múzeum, Kaposvár



Lajos Vajda: *Montage of Drawings with Black-Faced Christ,* 1937,
coal and red chalk, 76.8 x 52.8 cm. Vajda Múzeum, Szentendre

Béla Kondor: *Attila József: The Song of the Cosmos,* 1971,
watercolour and crayon on paper, 98 x 69 cm. Petőfi Literary Museum, Budapest



Béla Kondor: *Christ II.,* 1971, oil and crayon on masonite, 99.4 x 60.8 cm.
Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest

You Cannot Integrate Everything

George Schöpflin on the Dilemmas of Diversity

The process of European integration has created new forms of political power on a supranational level. The resultant institutions are either accused of concentrating too much power, or they face the opposite criticism, that they are not powerful enough to represent Europe as a unified entity.

I agree that there is a kind of dual power in Europe. The European Union has brought into being a form of autonomous institutional power. This power is independent of the nation-states and to a certain degree, sometimes to a considerable degree, detached from the citizens and hence—I don't want to exaggerate this—free-floating. This is the basis of all the talk about democratic deficit. Power is being exercised over the citizens of Europe, who have no democratic control over that power, because control is only obtained through the European Parliament, through the European Court in Luxembourg and, of course, through the member states.

Now, ironically, the member states constitute a major obstacle. The citizens try to influence either the way in which the European project is constructed or how it is actually administered, but the member states themselves have their own interests, their own perspectives, their own discourses, and so inevitably, the pressure from citizens gets diffused as it is conveyed by the member states. It doesn't really get through to the European level because it is the member states' interests which actually get through. So what you have is this very awkward

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The Hungarian version of the above interview was conducted by ***Orsolya Gergely,*** *who teaches Sociology at the Sapientia University in Csíkszereda (Miercurea-Ciuc). It appeared in the April 2006 issue of* Korunk, *a monthly published in Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár). The English version was made for* The Hungarian Quarterly *by* ***Gábor Buzási,*** *who teaches Hebrew and Classical Greek at the Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Piliscsaba.*

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construct, with a contest for power between the European Union and the member states. Nobody likes to talk about this. But we all, I think, recognise that the European Union has been given autonomous powers. And whatever power the European Union may have, it has received that power from the member states. So any further integration is conditional upon the agreement of the member states. Of course, we know that people and states don't like to give away power.

What makes the European Union unique is that its power didn't result from a contest, but from the political will of the member states at the time of its foundation in the 1950s. There was a strong sense that there should never be another war between France and Germany, that European nations should prosper in peace and democracy. This wish is a very solid and worthwhile foundation. Two things stand in the way, unfortunately. One is that these discourses or narratives of Europe are pretty much exhausted. For us in Central Europe, the ideas of peace and democracy may retain some resonance, but if you are French or German or Italian and under 35 you take these things for granted. And secondly, there is no agreement on whether further integration is beneficial for the citizens of Europe, or whether we have now reached, if you like, the natural limit of integration. Now, that's not my position. I think that further integration is both desirable and inevitable.

Could you mention a few areas where control on the European level is the only rational way of arranging or organising?

For example, the environment. Environmental protection is not viable at the state level, and least of all in a small country. Thus, water pollution is a major problem for Hungary because the headwaters of just about every river are in another country. Vas county presents a classic case. If you have a look at the River Rába, which flows into Hungary from Austria, you see foam on the surface. For a long time the Austrians claimed that they didn't know anything about foam. Really?! Foam?! Well, it starts in a suburb of Szentgotthárd, which is in Hungary, but its outer suburb is actually in Austria. So it obviously comes from Austria. But the Austrians blindly denied this. Well, finally, this matter has now been resolved. There is a leather factory that releases its wastewater into the Rába. They agreed to address the issue, I believe by installing filters. And there is a similar problem which hasn't been solved yet, on a tributary of the Rába, the Lafnitz (Lapincs) in the Burgenland.

Issues like this are best regulated at the European level. At the inter-state level, it doesn't work. Just think of air pollution. For a long time the United Kingdom was regarded as the dirtiest country in Europe because it belched out huge quantities of carbon dioxide, which then got blown over Scandinavia and came down as acid rain. It was really the EU clean air regulations that finally persuaded the Brits to do something about this. And in fact, things have improved a great deal.

Much the same is true for organised crime, not to speak of terrorism. We know that organised crime can only be fought at the international level. And this means

serious transfers of sovereignty to allow the police forces of member states to exchange information, which in turn creates real problems for civil liberties. It is a series of interlocking problems.

And energy policy. Hungarians don't have to be reminded of their dependence on Russian energy. If you're British, you are going to think, what's this got to do with us? But obviously, if you have serious energy problems in one part of Europe it will inevitably affect other parts of Europe. And here, I think, it was actually Tony Blair who came up with the idea of a common energy policy. We are a long way from that. We're just beginning to think about this.

Another area worth mentioning is food safety. I think it is a good idea to have a single set of regulations against food contamination, determining the permissible levels of various additives, preservatives, colourings and so on, which do have a serious impact on health. I don't see a problem with regulating these at a European level.

How can the traditional diversity of Europe be maintained among homogenising tendencies like these? Or should it be maintained at all? What is the role and future of multiculturalism in Europe?

There are strategic areas where a high degree of European integration is desirable, but I think it is important to bear in mind that Europe is an extraordinarily difficult place to comprehend, with something in the order of thirty-five high cultures confined to a space that is very small in global terms. Think about the quite astonishing variety that one encounters on a putative journey between Lisbon and Helsinki. It seems to me that you shouldn't regulate this diversity. To some degree, each culture tries to establish a cultural monopoly for itself. Whether one likes it or not, this tendency seems to be universal. Still, at this level it is important to recognise that we have things in common. From the outside, the differences don't seem so big. I've always found that outside Europe I have much more in common with Europeans, however different they are from me, than I do with, say, Americans, with whom I sort of share a language. At the end of the day I do think that there is a kind of Europeanness; it's quite hard to define, although I could take a stab at it by talking about shared European narratives—forms of European discourse. These are pretty thin in the political realm but much stronger in the cultural realm. It seems to me that you can talk about a shared cultural space even in trivial matters such as fashions. Fashions are really extraordinary. Think about fashions in Budapest fifteen years ago and compare them with fashions now. We've adopted Western—Western is perhaps too homogenizing a term—a particular form of Italian, German, and to some degree Austrian, fashions and created something which is a) Hungarian and b) European. Our dress doesn't differ very much from the standard European dress code. Look at any of the women's magazines, whether they are in Hungarian or German or French or English or Latvian or Finnish—they are almost the same. If you go around Europe, most people, certainly those below a certain age, have little problem communicating with each

other, given that the people who go round speak some kind of English. English as a second language is a different language. It's international English but we talk about much the same things. Young people listen to the same pop music, they all watch the same football, they all watch the Eurovision song contest. At this cultural level there is a family resemblance. Certainly the possibility of communicating at this level is much stronger now than it was fifty years ago.

How is this specifically European unity-in-diversity mirrored on the administrative level?

The problem with European integration is that it has not occurred to a sufficient degree outside the political sphere. I think it is fair to say that most people only have a vague idea, "Oh, yes, it's those people in Brussels." Brussels has become a kind of symbolic anti-capital where all sorts of terrible things go on and regulations are passed in the face of which we are helpless. The regulations, however, are almost always agreed on by the Council of Ministers, in which each and every member state is represented with a right of veto.

When the European Union elaborates a directive, it uses the special language of the EU. Why is that important? A directive is a framework law issued in Brussels. The details concerning its implementation are filled in by the local bureaucracies of the member states. If a state over-regulates (meaning that it expands the framework law consisting of, say, a hundred articles to maybe fifteen hundred), then it basically gets a free ride, because it can pass regulations without accountability to its citizens. The divergences among different EU countries are quite remarkable. What is crucial for the citizens is that there are regulations in the EU that are unchallengeable or very difficult to challenge. Still, very often they are challenged, not by the European Union but by the member states.

I can give you a concrete example of this. Very recently there was some kind of a health regulation calling for the replacement of organ pipes containing lead. And the British press made a huge song and dance about this. "Here is the wretched EU, doing it again. Why can't we be free to do what we want?" Now the only thing the British press didn't look at was that Britain was the only country where this problem arose. It was the Health and Safety Executive in Britain which said, "Let's get rid of the organ pipes with lead because they are a health hazard." The whole thing had nothing to do with the EU; it had its origins in Brussels but was the doing of a member state.

What I've argued in a working paper I wrote recently was that in order for the citizens of Europe to become acquainted with the EU, there must be a stronger European Union presence in all of the member states. The European Union—whether it's the Commission, the Parliament or the Court of Justice—should be able to scrutinise the way in which EU legislation is actually being put into practice. This is something that citizens can engage in, not just national governments and administrations. This would allow the EU to become more accountable to the

citizens and to acquire more of a reality. And clearly, there is going to be some local variation. Since heating problems are going to be different in Sicily and Lappland, you can't have a one-size-fits-all solution. I think Hungary is in some ways an extreme case, because at the time of enlargement, Hungarians were so introverted politically that they were barely aware that the outside world exists. Unfortunately, that's still the case, but there are special, local reasons for that.

I think it was actually a good thing that the Hungarian government did not always take the stance on certain items of EU legislation that the citizens of Hungary wanted. In some cases the government simply had to say, "I'm sorry, there's no argument, it's EU legislation, you can't touch it". Still, I believe that the EU should do something about this and allow citizens' views on the local implementation of EU directives to be heard. Of course, if we try to follow this route, the member states will most likely hate it because it clearly means a derogation of their own power.

And this leads us to the problem of the Constitutional Treaty. There are those who say: no more grand projects, Europe is fine as it is. I think that the European Union does need the inspiration that it gains from grand projects. The Constitution is important in that it provides a powerful focus for Europe. Technically, the Constitution reinforces the dual legitimation of the European Union, which means that the legitimacy of the European Union derives from the member states and the individual citizens. In principle, each and every European citizen could have an influence on the institutions of the European Union, and if there is a serious conflict with their own member state, they can have recourse to dual legitimation as an instrumental challenge—what citizens of the nation-states are already doing. And we all know that some of the nation-states have systems which are democratic, but they may not be entirely consistent in their respect for democracy.

I think that when political parties in these states pursue policies that really are at variance with fairly universally accepted democratic criteria, there comes a point when even Europe has to listen. European integration is, among other things, a way of ensuring that democratic standards are maintained.

Do you think that the tendency towards unification and homogenisation might prevail over diversity, resulting in a Europe that is a world power like the US or China?

Europe is a major player in terms of trade and conflict resolution. The question is whether a European superstate with an imperial or superpower status will emerge. And this question remains open because European integration is completely consensual, without any coercive elements. This is the heart of the whole European project, what we do we do by common consent. This makes European politics very boring. There is no drama. We sit behind closed doors and have long discussions which appear to be a waste of time to outsiders. But it also means that we have developed what is commonly referred to as "soft power", power exercised without coercion, through long and complex engagement with one another. Now

I recognise that there are certain situations in which this sort of engagement doesn't work. But there is in Europe a very deep-seated commitment to non-violence, which is the legacy of two world wars. With the exception of the British, and to some extent the French, no European army is really worthy of the name. In terms of manpower as well as technology, we are far behind the United States, simply because we don't spend enough money to keep pace with them. I suppose there is a hypothetical scenario that Russia could invade Europe, but frankly, I don't believe it. We're quite safe from direct military invasion, or so we think. So any European superpower that might emerge is going to be very different from the United States, Russia or China. Admittedly, this kind of soft power does not work in some parts of the world. It didn't work during the Balkan wars, for instance, which Europe did not do very much to stop. But I actually believe that if Europe had intervened, using its soft power between 1988 and 1990, or its hard power later on, the bloodshed might have been stopped.

You can see why I'm not particularly worried about the European superstate behaving like an empire. This is also why it is difficult for others, like the Americans, to understand what Europe is about. We don't do things in the way in which Chinese, Russians and Americans think they should be done. I think the Japanese understand us better, with a similarly awful experience of the Second World War behind them. The last thing they want is to use their military power. Economic leverage is something else—that's what they use, and we use it too. One thing is clear: the political supremacy that Europe enjoyed for so many centuries is over. To some extent, our destiny is going to be decided by others. There are, of course, positive ways in which other parts of the world affect us. Still, what Europe has done on other continents under the heading of colonisation is now being reversed, with an increasing influence upon who we are and who we will be. In this postcolonial world, we must shape an identity for ourselves that integrates certain elements and excludes others. At this early stage of the process, we still cannot decide what we want, and need to elaborate the standards that allow us to say that something is beautiful, but perhaps not really our sort of thing, or that it is ugly or uninteresting and hence should not be integrated. We surely cannot integrate everything. If we tried to do so, the resultant transformations would be so thoroughgoing as to make us entirely estranged from ourselves. One of the new long-term tasks facing Europe, therefore, is the formation of a novel kind of power of judgment, to be exercised in the domains of ethics, aesthetics and culture.

How do you see the representation of European power relations, from within, as an MEP sitting in Strasbourg and Brussels?

Well, the problem is this: the entire European Parliament is directly elected within a space of about four days. Because the European Parliament doesn't, in the eyes of the voters, appear to have the same kind of significance as their own national parliaments, voter turnout is pretty low. I think the lowest was in Slovakia—it was

only 17 per cent. Hungary with 38 per cent was somewhere in the middle. The best was Malta, where it was about 90 per cent, but there is a very good reason for that, which is that the Maltese population is about 400,000 and I think that voters make up 250,000–270,000. So each vote counts. Which does suggest to me that the solution may be to break up every country into little units of about a 100,000 so that people feel that power is theirs. But I'm afraid that isn't going to happen. And maybe it's a good thing. What we have right now, at any rate, is a parliament with a good deal of power but not that much legitimacy. How effective is the Parliament? Reasonably effective. I think that many of the legislative reports which come out of the Commission are improved by parliamentary scrutiny.

How do you see the role of nations and national minorities in Europe?

Basically—and this goes back to my first answer—nations are a reality in Europe. I think that the relationship between a high culture and a political nation is both direct and indirect, but at least one function of the state is the political articulation and protection of a cultural collectivity which we will call a nation. What we have in Europe is a group of very particular types of nation-states which are fairly alike. And they are fairly alike because, in order to gain recognition to protect their existence, they had to develop their own national identity in such a way that it would be recognised. A few nation-states that came into being in the eighteenth century and which had roots in pre-existing political entities—France, Britain, England, the Netherlands, Denmark and maybe Sweden—actually exercise quite a lot of cultural power. The emergence of modern democracy meant that it became necessary for people who were governed and taxed together to actually understand each other, to share discourses, so that they could have a say in how they were to be governed and taxed. This sense of commonality, of a shared enterprise, is what we call a nation.

As this system developed, fantastic energies were released by the concept of the nation-state, as shown by Napoleon's conquests. These energies were unleashed by the idea of the *citoyen,* the French individual citizen—at that time a man rather than a woman—who actively participated in the political affairs of his country and was ready to fight for it as a soldier. And these energies had enormous political consequences. Latecomers to this process—Hungary obviously being one of them —were bound to find that they were overwhelmed in terms of political, economic and military power. This gave rise to the fear that we, whoever "we" may be as a cultural collectivity, might disappear. The question that latecomers face is this: how do we generate the same energy when we lack the political framework? We don't have a state of our own. At best, we have the memory or the relics of a state.

This has been a particularly acute problem in Central Europe. It is much easier to fill the existing framework of a state in Portugal or in Spain. Germany is a very special case. There was a recognition that there was an entity called Germany, but what did that actually mean with such an enormous political diversity? Italy was

Defining the Term 'Nation'

Transylvania, bordered by the Eastern and Southern Carpathians and inhabited by a number of peoples for many centuries, is now a region in northwest Romania. Throughout the Middle Ages, it was part of the Kingdom of Hungary, albeit enjoying a certain autonomy. During the 150 years of Ottoman domination starting in the early sixteenth century, Transylvania was an independent principality. The Paris Peace Treaties that concluded the First World War declared Tranylvania to be ceded to Romania, and ethnic Hungarians were henceforth a national minority there. Following the Vienna Arbitration in 1940, Transylvania was divided and northern and eastern Transylvania were re-annexed by Hungary; but this arrangement was annulled at the end of the Second World War and the region once again became part of Romania. Forty years of Communism, hostile to cultural and other identities, radically altered the demographic map. The Saxons almost completely disappeared; Hungarians—with the exception of the approximately 800,000 Szeklers in the southeast, who make up 90 per cent of the local population, and the Hungarians in the northwestern frontier zone—were reduced to diaspora status. The total number of Hungarians in Romania now amounts to less than two million. The number of ethnic Romanians in Transylvania, on the other hand, has multiplied.

Since the end of the totalitarian system in 1989, the representatives of the Hungarian minority have put forward a number of proposals aimed at territorial and cultural autonomy. The Hungarian minority has been represented in Parliament, being part of the

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even more special. In any case, by the twentieth century, a very particular notion of the nation-state emerged, implying a particular national history, a national literature, a national music and a national culture. There is only one European country where there is no opera house: Ireland, where they have been arguing about building one but haven't done so yet. The Estonian National Opera House was built by public subscription in 1913. By then the Estonians existed as a nation, but as a state absolutely not. If you aspire to gain recognition as an autonomous cultural collectivity, you need to do all the right things—you create a national literature, you write historical novels, epic poems and so on. This is very European: we do history backwards. In fact, it turns out that this is what Europe is about. It's completely contingent on the need to create the kind of culture which others would recognise as European. And I think it does have a political aim as well as an aesthetic and social one.

A difficult problem arises when you have more than one high culture within the same state. How do you reconcile them? I think this is what György Frunda was trying to address in his report to the Council of Europe. He aroused huge controversies in Romania by suggesting that if more than one national group lives in one state, then they must share it. This is a fundamental issue—how do you construct a state system where more than one high culture is present? That's

government coalition since the 2004 elections. Thus, the Romanian delegation at Brussels also includes members of the Hungarian minority.

At the request of the Council of Europe, Senator György Frunda, a lawyer who is one of the leaders of the Hungarian Democratic Alliance of Romania (RMDSZ-UDMR) and a member of the Romanian Delegation to the Council of Europe, prepared a report which aimed to define the term "nation". He argues that everyone should be able to decide which "cultural nation" he or she belongs to, regardless of his or her citizenship. In the terms of the Frunda report, the countries of their domicile are primarily responsible for the national minorities on their territory, but their "mother countries" too are entitled to help fight for and assert the rights of their ethnic kin who live beyond their borders and are not citizens. Senator Frunda, in defining the term "nation", showed himself to be a true European; nevertheless, he was accused of treason by an indignant Romanian political elite. The report was well-received in the Council of Europe, but Senator Frunda nevertheless found himself in the dock in the Parliament in Bucharest. The fact is that the Romanian Consitution defines Romania as a Nation-State, in which "excessive" speculation concerning the definition of the term "nation" is qualified as a constitutional offence. The political debate concerning the meaning of nation quietened down somewhat, or let us say was suspended for a time, in view of the expected early accession of Romania to the EU. It remains to be seen whether this debate will intensify now that Romania will enter the EU at the beginning of 2007.

O. G.

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ultimately why the historic Hungarian state broke up—because there were too many high cultures and it couldn't cope with it. This was not the only reason why it broke up, but clearly Slovaks, Romanians and Serbs didn't want to live in a state with an exclusively Hungarian high culture.

The French model actually succeeded to some degree in creating a single overarching French culture, despite the presence within it of the Breton, Occitan and Basque cultures. They created a hierarchical relationship, although this is coming under strain now. But the French model worked for France because it offered opportunities and citizenship in exchange for the rural cultures being given up. It prevented the Basques, the Bretons and the Provençals from developing their own high culture. But you see, before 1914 Hungary never offered anybody anything else. They said "give up your Slovak or Romanian culture and become Hungarian". There was no distinct concept of citizenship, because the moment you create citizenship, you have to give votes to Slovaks, Romanians and Serbs who immediately use it to advance their own cultural aspirations. That was the lesson of 1848, and the problem is still with us.

So the nation-state has to develop forms which allow for more than one high culture to exist in the same area and to share in the political goals of the state, benefitting equally from access to material goods and even, more importantly, to

the symbolic goods of the state. How do you do this? Well, there is the Finnish model. Finland has two official names: it is called "Suomi" in Finnish; and "Finland" in Swedish. The capital is bilingual. From local governments to the state level, the official languages are Finnish and Swedish. Although the Swedish-speaking population is relatively small, the Swedish language—the Swedish collectivity—enjoys fully equal status with the Finnish. It is an integral part of the nation. As a consequence, the Swedes living in Finland don't feel they owe much to Sweden. They're foreigners in Sweden.

My proposition is that if the Romanian state wants to attach the Hungarians of Romania to the Romanian state, it has to give them far more than it is doing at the moment, and that of course means that the "Romanianness" of the Romanian state means making the Romanian state both Romanian and Hungarian. A serious discussion of this issue is long overdue in Romania. It is necessary to get this discussion underway so that the Romanian majority might slowly come to accept that their country is a multi-ethnic one, where more than one language is spoken and more than one culture is alive. Following the Finnish model, Romania ought to become bilingual. Well, that's not going to happen overnight, to put it mildly. At this point, it seems that even among the most liberal Romanians, there are many who cling to the totally outdated idea of a homogenous nation-state. As a consequence, they have difficulty recognising that, in a country with a million and a half Hungarians, the Hungarian language must have equal status with Romanian. Perhaps we must wait for a younger generation to discard this obsolete notion. The problem is that, in the meanwhile, large numbers of Hungarians of this generation are choosing to emigrate from Romania. Likewise in Slovakia. I think the only long-term future for Slovakia—10 per cent Hungarian, which is quite a sizeable percentage—is to recognise that some parts of Slovakia are indeed Hungarian. Not only are both languages spoken and both cultures present within Slovakia, but they actually also share a history.

Applying what I'm saying to Europe means, of course, a number of very hard decisions. It means that the state has to be shared, it means that the state has to make provisions for its minorities and in some cases even allow positive discrimination, some kind of affirmative action, which many people don't like. But I think this is the way forward. Otherwise you don't have full citizenship. That is really the bottom line.

Still, taking Britain as an example, it is absurd to think that no political consequences follow from multiculturalism, that you can simply say, "Oh, well, you can be Gujarati or Punjabi or whatever, and we can all celebrate Chinese New Year". As soon as a cultural group attempts to reproduce its culture, it is potentially divisive. It is the British majority that decides which aspects of your culture you may reproduce and which you may not. I think it is in Leicester where there's a sizeable Gujarati community. Indeed, fairly soon, they expect a non-white majority. The Gujaratis said, "We want to lead a Gujarati life. We want Gujarati doctors, Gujarati shops, Gujarati libraries," and so on. And everybody was shocked, horrified. That's divisive. But the Gujaratis said no, this is just what it

means to take difference seriously. And then the question is, how far can that go without endangering citizenship? And there is no clear answer.

Is it possible to draw a clear distinction between historic minorities and immigrant minorities?

Yes. We do make a distinction between historic minorities and immigrant minorities. Immigrant minorities are those which arrived in Europe after 1945. Historic minorities have more rights than immigrant minorities.

This is, of course, an ongoing problem. Immigration hasn't stopped. As long as immigrant groups have the right to acquire citizenship, there is no problem, but the question is how much of their own culture they can reproduce. And the answer is very little, because the host country can always say, "You chose to leave your country of origin for whatever reason and go to another country, and therefore you have to accept the dominant culture of the host country". Once you do that, however, you should be accepted on equal terms. But what are equal terms? The big host countries—Britain, France and Germany, Holland and Sweden—have created a unitary concept of citizenship within which discrimination on the basis of colour does take place, though only at a fairly low level. I suppose it is perfectly possible for somebody to be recognised as a Swedish or Dutch or British citizen while being black. Beyond that, I think the real question then is, to put it this way, can you become a Swede on totally equal terms, or English on totally equal terms, or Dutch if you are black?

But not all difference is necessarily discriminatory. I can give you an example from Budapest. Once, during the mid-1980s, I was sitting on a bus, and there was a black woman on the bus with a little boy who was maybe four or five. A Hungarian woman was sitting in front of her, and at one point she turned around and saw this little boy. Obviously, she had never seen a little black child that close to her, possibly she had never even seen any black person so close to her, so she was absolutely spellbound and did something that in Britain, say, is totally unacceptable: she pinched his cheeks and exclaimed, "What a sweet little boy! Look at his coal black cheeks!" And the mother was mortified. She had no idea, I would guess, what was going on. She couldn't work out where this woman was coming from. This was not a case of prejudice; it was, so to speak, pre-prejudice. This is simply wonderment at seeing something different.

Historic minorities are in a different kind of situation entirely. They are minorities because the state in which they live was structured very differently, very often because borders change. Someone once told me about an English person saying, "If those Hungarians in Romania are complaining so much about maltreatment, why did they go there in the first place?" For a Hungarian, this ignorance is not amusing. It tells you something. Because the answer is, well, it was the border that moved, not them. I think that historic minorities do have a different status and different rights. Some people disagree with this. But I think

historic minorities must be given an institutional and normative framework enabling them to reproduce, preserve and enrich their language and culture. And if they are part of a larger group living outside the state, then they share a history with that larger group, too.

What do you think about the victimhood discourses so widespread in our region, especially its Hungarian version?

In terms of identity construction, one of the most astonishing developments of the 1980s and 1990s was the consolidation of victimhood discourses. If you have it accepted by others that you are a victim, you immediately seize control of the high moral ground. At that point, you can essentialise your position and can even screen out other, competing identities. There is some propensity on the part of many Central Europeans to say, "We have shed our blood to defend Europe; we should be recognised as victims of history," etc. But there is no point in saying in London that I've come from a country which has resisted the barbarian hordes for centuries, because the Brits will say, "Who gives a damn?"

Some of us in the European Parliament stress the need for unified European history if we want to have some form of European unity. This means that Western Europeans need to acquaint themselves more closely with the devastating experience of Communism in the former Eastern Bloc, but it also means that citizens of countries that joined the EU recently should learn about figures like Jean Monnet or Robert Schuman. There are gaps on both sides which need to be filled. Victimhood discourses, I think, are the wrong way to go about it, since they lock you into the past. It is, of course, not easy to formulate a positive vision of European identity. But it is my conviction that we should try to sidestep the attraction of victimhood discourses and instead aim for a two-tiered identity, one that allows us to have our Hungarian or Czech or Slovak identity as well as a European identity parallel with it. I actually believe that the two complement one another in such a way as to offer a viable alternative to the seductions of victimhood. There is, in fact, a good model here, a community that has accomplished what I have in mind. The Irish lived in the midst of terrible oppression for hundreds of years; they lived through the devastating potato famine and the subsequent mass emigration of the 1840s and after. Even in the 1960s and 70s, that's what Irishness was mainly about. Today it isn't. Today Irishness is about being a successful European country. It has worked very well. I should add that I'm not convinced that victimhood is as important in Hungary nowadays as it was ten, twenty or thirty years ago. It is still there to some extent, but much less so. We seem to have problems other than historical victimhood. Oh, by the way, having said that, I would still like to have the Turks apologise for defeating us at the Battle of Mohács. ❧

Orsolya Gergely and Gábor Buzási

Olga Tóth

Modern Behaviour, Traditional Values

Changes in the Family since 1990

Numerous surveys show that in values and attitudes Hungarian society still feels the family to be more important than career, self-realisation, recreation and other social relationships; married people have usually been considered happier than the unmarried, and the family has generally been thought of as the most important (if not the only) space in which solidarity can be expressed.

Though the values attached to the family are to some extent undergoing modernisation, in general they have remained far more traditional than the parallel values in western European countries. Over the last fifteen years, however, the demographic behaviour of the Hungarian populace, and especially that of the younger generations, has become much like that of Western Europe. There are now new forms of family formation, which have emerged in parallel with a much slower transformation of values.

Marriage or cohabitation?

During the long years of socialism, marriage was virtually the only form of partner relationship in Hungarian society. While extremely modern in proclaiming the equality of the genders, the social system was also very traditional. Until the beginning of the 1990s, in contrast to most Western European countries, 94–95 per cent of the Hungarian population married at least once, and marriage took place at an early age. People married within two years of achieving their highest educational qualification, and their first child was born within a year of their marriage. The number of marriages was highest in the 1970s, with an average of 97,000 per annum; this figure had fallen to 43,800 by 2004. In 1990, the year after the socialist regime fell, 75 out of a thousand single girls at the age of 15 or over contracted marriage; by 2004, this figure had fallen to 32.

The foremost explanation for this homogeneous model of early marriage was economic. Hungary started out towards a market economy earlier than the other countries in the socialist block, and a rise in the standard of living was in evidence by the mid-70s. However, the only way to benefit from this was through a family model of two wage earners. Consumer goods were increasingly available, but they could not be

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acquired from a single salary. This was especially true when it came to home ownership or acquisition. While the Hungarian economy gradually opened out to the market, shortages were still evident. The main paths to home acquisition were either through building one's own or through allocation by either the local council or by the employing (state) company. In both cases the system assumed, and required, that applicants be married couples. Single individuals had no access to cheap state-owned flats or low-interest loans, and they did not earn enough to build or buy their own homes. It was easier for married couples with children to acquire a home; for the purposes of allocation, only children born to married couples were taken into consideration.

Nor should traditional views of the relationships between couples be overlooked. From the seventies onwards, there was an increasing tacit acceptance that sexual life began at an earlier age; at the same time, this was held to be acceptable only within the frame of marriage. Living together as an unmarried couple, in what was called a "wild marriage" (which had no status under law), was considered scandalous. In direct contrast to Western European countries, cohabitation was, up until 1990, a lifestyle common to the uneducated and to those of lower social status. The one exception here was the situation of widows who chose not to marry a new partner: this would have involved the loss of their widow's pension, the only source of income for many who had not secured a right to their own pensions. Society prescribed uniformity both materially and through its scale of values, and it exerted pressure upon the young to marry early and in a conventional manner. The unexpressed consensus was that the only *correct* form of an intimate relationship between couples was marriage.

In the wake of the great change of 1989 came significant changes in marriage statistics. Currently, the decline in the number of marriages from year to year gives no little cause for concern. The figure for marriages contracted now stands at half its previous level. Concurrently, there has been a growth in the number of those cohabiting, as well as the emergence of a singles group. These changes can be explained through a combination of factors. One of the most important, and most striking, is the rise in the age of those contracting marriages. In the years leading up to 1989, men contracted a first marriage at an average age of 24.7, women at 22. By the year 2004, the average age had shifted to 29 and 26.5, respectively. The shift in age is connected to an increase in the number of women enrolled in higher education. The proportion of the population in (full-time) higher education has nearly tripled over the last fifteen years, and 54 per cent of those continuing their education are women. The traditional duties of a married woman do not accord with full-time studies, so the majority of women so engaged only contract marriage after taking their highest qualification. Education improves opportunities on the job market, affords greater choice and allows women to reject the traditional form of marriage. Similarly, the best educated and most career-oriented young women may not find a partner who comes up to their expectations.

Another contributing factor to the lower marriage rate is that fewer people are marrying again after divorce. Divorced men and women do not necessarily envision a life shared with a partner as entailing marriage—if, indeed, they manage to engage in such relations at all. Although growing, the proportion of unmarried couples within the total number of long-term relationships is still much lower in Hungary than in Western Europe. According to the 2001 census, one in ten long-term relationships is in the form of cohabitation. This form is typical of younger people. In 2001, seventy-one per cent of women aged 15–19 living with a partner were not

married. (The comparative figure for 1980 was only 3 per cent.) In 2001, thirty-nine per cent of women aged 20–24 living with a partner were not married, as opposed to the figure of one per cent in 1980 (Klinger, 1996; Census 2001).

People choosing to live together without contracting marriage can be grouped by age, previous marital status and their socio-economic status. For financial reasons, widows continue to choose cohabitation rather than marriage. Chances of a second marriage are low for divorced women, especially if they are raising children, in which case they have difficulties in even forming a new relationship. There are a significant number of divorced women in their 30s who do not have partners and are raising their children on their own (Utasi, 2003). After divorce, more care is taken in choosing a partner, and simple cohabitation is preferred to marriage, which is assumed to be the greater commitment.

Many in Hungary are apprehensive about the new category of singles, seeing the emergence of this group as a sign of individualisation and selfishness. In fact, the young who opt for cohabitation as an alternative—or in opposition—to marriage, or who live independently without partners, can be subdivided into two disparate camps. One of these is the typical singles group of Western society. They are the most highly trained and best paid of their generation. Some continue to live in the parental home, leading a half-adult, half-child life. As in the West, sociologists use the term "post-adolescence" to describe the phenomenon whereby some young people, either by choice or compulsion, delay their coming of age and thus the meeting of the socially accepted norms (a regular job, marriage, moving out of the family home). They enjoy the advantages afforded by the life of a young adult and a child at one and the same time. Some maintain a home of their own, but put off marriage and cohabit with a partner, or are not engaged in a long-term relationship. Nonetheless, this single status of a major proportion of twenty- and thirty-year-olds (a quarter of those in their twenties, a fifth of those in their thirties) without a stable relationship is new to Hungarian society. Most of these singles look upon their status as temporary and aspire to a lasting partnership.

The largest segment of the young who cohabit or who have formed no long-term relationships is still composed of the least educated and permanently unemployed, living in rural towns, in regions that are economically backward. Men who are not earning and are out of employment do not get married—as such a status is contrary to the traditional family model. If a man does not have a stable job and a regular income, he will either not enter a serious relationship, or will choose a form of partnership involving the least commitment, since supporting a family is out of the question (Bukodi, 2004).

It is clear from the above that, over the last fifteen years, marriage and long-term relationships have been seen by the young as equivalent forms of family life. The question is how opinions and values in this respect have changed. Some research indicates that people consider the two forms of equal value on most counts (Pongrácz–Spéder, 2001). Marriage is seen as more suitable only as regards childcare and securing the goodwill of parents and the extended family. Other research, however, indicates that the majority of women in the 20–34-year bracket still see marriage as the ideal form of family life (Spéder, 2005). An international comparative study carried out in 2003 showed conflicting results. Hungarians' judgment of cohabitation has demonstrably changed. (The study referred to here and throughout this article is the 2003 Family Module of the International Social Survey Programme, hereafter ISSP. This involved Hungary and 33 other

countries, including those from North and Western Europe, post-socialist countries from Central East Europe and some non-European countries. The study in Hungary was carried out by the Central Statistical Office and used a sample of 1023 persons.)

Three quarters of the Hungarian respondents agreed with the statement that "It is all right for a couple to live together without intending to get married." This acceptance of cohabitation without marriage is significantly higher in Hungary than in the surrounding post-socialist countries, though it is somewhat behind the Western European level. It is worth noting, however, that while 75 per cent accepted cohabitation without marriage, only 61 per cent favoured trial marriage, where couples try out living together before actually starting out on their married lives. The modernisation of behaviour and of the value system seems to have happened in parallel.

Yet, marriage is still held in the highest esteem. Fifty-three per cent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "Married people are generally happier than unmarried people." Thus, every second Hungarian saw marriage automatically bringing happiness. Among the European countries surveyed, only Russia, Bulgaria and Poland showed a similarly high positive response. People in Scandinavia and Holland are least in agreement (only 16 per cent in Sweden). It is also worthy of attention that a higher ratio of men were in agreement, indicating that the old stereotype of a greater number of women attaching happiness to marriage has fallen by the wayside. There was no significant difference by age group; thus, while the young in Hungary are behaving in much the same way as their Western European peers, they are also in agreement with their parents in considering those living in a marriage as happier. A majority of the younger generation also aspire to marriage as a settled form of life.

Divorce

For many decades now, the divorce rate in Hungary has been very high. It peaked in the 80s, at 28 thousand per annum. The rate fell after 1990, levelling out at around 24–25 thousand a year. Thus the number of marriages contracted fell sharply, while the divorce rate remained high. This data indicates the instability and fragility of the marriages contracted. If the present ratio of divorces continues, demographers claim that 42 per cent of marriages currently contracted will end in divorce.

In 2003, forty-two per cent of divorces took place before the tenth year of married life, 35 per cent between 10 and 19 years, and 23 per cent after 20 years. Each year, an increasing number of long-established marriages are dissolved. There is a similar trend in the age of those divorcing. Every third female divorcee is 40 years or older; two thirds of the divorcing couples have had children together; the number of children with experience of life in a single-parent family is increasing. Children of parents who marry again, or form lasting life partnerships, experience various forms of family existence; some may become children of serially divorced parents.

One negative consequence of divorce is that the divorcees and their children are at a higher risk of falling into temporary or long-term poverty. Here again, there are differences between men and women. Among divorced women, mothers raising children on their own are far more likely to fall below the poverty line; among men, those who do not form new relationships and live in smaller villages are likely to go in this direction. Among homeless men, whose numbers have very visibly increased since 1990, about half have lost a roof over their heads as a result of divorce. The Hungarian family is still basically financed by two earners. If this arrangement breaks down, whether through divorce or un-

employment, the chances of slipping below the poverty line are greatly increased.

Three quarters of divorce petitioners are women. The causes for divorce are mainly unemployment, alcoholism, emotional problems, violence, poverty—and even sudden affluence. In many cases, the couple waits until the children have grown before they divorce. Interestingly, the unwillingness of men to engage in housework is almost never raised among the grounds for divorce. Numerous surveys show that housework in Hungarian families is shared in the traditional way and that Hungarian women are highly overburdened. Women working full-time spend on average three times as much time on housework as men do. Yet, no complaint is raised. The ISSP already cited reports that Hungary was one of the countries with the largest positive response to the statement that: "Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay." More than half of the respondents said yes. (Only Poland registered a similarly high rate.) Thus, Hungarian women seem to accept the fact that they have to do most of the housework, and therefore, do not raise an undue share of household work as grounds for divorce.

The consistently high number of divorces reflects public acceptance of divorce as a preferred strategy for conflict resolution in marriage. Irrespective of age or gender, 58 per cent of those questioned agreed with the statement: "Divorce is usually the best solution when a couple can't seem to work out their marriage problems." There is general consensus across Europe on this question, the majority everywhere being in agreement with this attitude. Thus, Hungarian views and behaviour here are in line with those in Western Europe. It is, nevertheless, important to note that, despite the appearance of a few mediating organisations, Hungarian social institutions are still not sufficiently adequate for aiding a civilized settlement of divorce. Due to the overloading of the divorce courts and the inability of the parties concerned to resolve their differences, divorce proceedings can frequently last for years and be acrimonious, especially where the parties cannot agree on the division of property or custody of children.

Childbearing and childcare

As in other European countries, Hungarian society is aging. The decline in the birth rate has been an important political issue for years, and the number of children per family has been falling since the beginning of the 20th century. Serious concerns have been only raised repeatedly from the beginning of the 1970s, when annual deaths began to outnumber births, indicating a natural population decline. Even compared to the 1970s, with its annual average of 150,000 births, a significant decrease has set in. Only 95,000 children were born in 2004.

As the marriage rate falls, cohabitation rises, and singles become a significant group. The chances of people deciding to have children are smaller, or the decisions are delayed. On average, in 1998, married women had their first child at the age of 25, but by 2004, the average age had increased to 27.5. The decision to conceive at a later age will, in the long run, mean fewer children in each family as women without stable partners or who delay establishing such a relationship will give birth to fewer children than those who marry young. In the last two years, there has been an annual increase in the number of recorded births, but it is too early to claim that this is a trend. Even here, a polarisation of Hungarian society can also be observed: 10–15 per cent of the young now envision their lives without children, an opinion which never before found such strong expression, since society as a whole linked childbearing with marriage and being an adult. Still, there are also the young who plan on having many children, and not just

young Roma respecting their own traditions, but also some of the highly educated young urban intelligentsia.

Attitude surveys have always shown that childcare and child rearing have consistently been highly valued by Hungarians. The ISSP survey also supported this view. Two questions on attitude were posed as regards children. The first proposed that "People who have never had children lead empty lives." This claim expresses a categorical evaluation, since it implies that the childless experience creates an unfillable absence in people's lives. Of the European countries, Hungary had an exceptionally high rate of respondents who agreed, well above that of other countries. Almost every second respondent strongly agreed (47 per cent), and 24 per cent agreed—a combined total of 71 per cent. Only one in ten respondents strongly disagreed. More women than men think that a childless person's life is empty. The post-socialist countries neighbouring Hungary are far more divided—split almost equally among those agreeing, taking a neutral position or disagreeing with the statement. This was the case in Poland, with a far higher proportion of practising Catholics than Hungary. The proposition was markedly rejected in Western Europe and Scandinavia, with two thirds of respondents disagreeing.

Hungarian responses to the statement: "Watching children grow up is life's greatest joy" were once again the most positive. This does not exclude the previous proposition, since it does not devalue the childless, but attributes much greater happiness to those who have children. This is perhaps why there was a very low negative response in Hungary and all the other countries in the survey. However, the Hungarian response was far more positive—with three quarters in strong agreement and 22 per cent in agreement—a staggering 96 per cent.

In the light of these figures, there is a clearly marked discrepancy between behaviour and the values attached to bearing and rearing children. Hungarian families have had fewer children every year (with the exception of the last two), and this is in line with the European trend. At the same time, however, Hungary seems very traditional, very child-oriented in terms of ideals and values. All this is obviously contradictory, and explanations for it are not easily found. Some believe that if the economy were stronger and if mothers and young women in general were better protected on the job market, if child support were further increased, then young couples would stop putting off having children. Renewed political and financial support for childcare would clearly improve birth statistics. In the meantime, another explanation also suggests itself. The child orientation of Hungarian society as expressed in its value system may simply be a response to a strong normative expectation. People know what answers are acceptable and go out of their way to satisfy expectations. However, if bringing up children is regarded as the greatest, even the only, source of happiness, should it not be of concern that people here find little to be joyful about in life, apart from children? They do not value social relations, self-realisation, civic work, studies or other forms of recreation too highly. It would follow from this that seemingly positive child orientation expressed in their values may express the need to cover up what is missing from their lives.

Decline in the marriage rate and changing attitudes to the traditional form of family life have also affected the number of births outside of marriage. In the eighties, fewer than 10 per cent of children were born to parents who were not married; by 2004, however, the figure had risen to 34 per cent, a trend especially marked in the number of women below the age of 20, who have their first child prior to marriage. Naturally, a significant number of births to the unmarried involves a couple living together and not a single mother. Together with

cohabitation, Hungarians have come to accept children born outside of marriage (so long as they are born to people living together as partners). According to the ISSP survey, less than half the respondents agreed with the statement "People who want children ought to get married." (No less than 36 per cent strongly disagreed.) For women, childbearing and marriage are more closely linked. A larger proportion of women believe that couples who are planning to have children should get married. Here, Hungary is in the middle of the European scale. Approximately the same number of countries show a greater readiness to accept children born out of wedlock than those taking a more negative stance. Actual behaviour and values, therefore, coincide on this issue.

Domestic violence

Domestic violence has received more and more attention in the last ten years. Empirical surveys initiated at the end of the 1990s, civic organisations and international agreements have made the issue a part of political discourse. Although many sound steps have been taken in the way of legislation, training and influencing public opinion, the results are still far from what one would desire.

Child rearing may be becoming increasingly liberal, but authoritarian methods and violence directed at children are still in evidence. Large-scale representative surveys show that one in eight adults were beaten more or less regularly by their parents, and one in seven mothers admit to assaulting their children (Tóth, 1999). Physical and emotional abuse of children occurs in every social class, and there is no detectable significant difference in terms of the educational level of the parent. It is significant that 70 per cent of Hungarian adults consider regular or occasional beating as normal in child rearing—especially when the child "deserves" it. In some cases, the parents argue that they are acting for the good of the child by, for example, "stimulating" better performance at school. In such instances, a fitful desire to meet result-oriented social norms is at work. In another set of such cases, parents vent their own sense of impotence, frustration and stress upon the child (and partner, one must add) through emotional and physical abuse. The sexual abuse of children receives much heavier condemnation. The surveys record that 8 per cent of adult women and 4 per cent of young adult men experienced sexual abuse in their childhood.

Violence directed at a domestic partner is a contentious issue. Even some decision-makers and experts try to play down domestic violence against women, although it is obviously widespread. A third of all adults grew up in families where physical or verbal abuse was an everyday occurrence during their childhood. A quarter of all women live in relationships that are physically threatening. In spite of this, many will try either to pretend the problem does not exist or that they, the women, are to blame. Frequently, the authorities asked to intervene will not show proper sympathy for the women. Many perceive the abuse of wives as acceptable, "so long as it does not cross certain limits." Research indicates that unemployment, alcohol, financial problems, divorce and male dominance all contribute to the high and unabating number of incidences of violence against women.

Domestic violence in Hungary has not been studied sufficiently. Little is known of violence directed at the elderly within the family, nor of the motivations, opinions and experiences of men in relation to violence. Legislation in line with European norms has gradually been introduced; several civic organisations (NANE, ESZTER Foundation, Habeas Corpus, etc.) are now active; family aid training has been initiated for police and social workers. Still, there are also a

number of deficiencies. An insufficient number of shelters is available for abused women; legislation requiring the abuser to keep away from his victim was only passed at the beginning of 2006; not all of those who should, have undergone the appropriate training. Also empathy with women victims is still not what it should be.

We may conclude that changes in family patterns over the last fifteen years have been a continuation of earlier trends. This is clear concerning births where the decline had set in well before the 90s. The number of divorces has steadied at a fairly high level. The decline in marriage and rise in cohabitation can be linked to the sort of economic and social changes which went hand in hand with the change in regimes and accession to the European Union. More education for women, the opening up of European frontiers, the rise in unemployment and the greater stress of the job market—all contribute to the delay in contracting marriages.

To conclude, behaviour and values do not always coincide in Hungary. The most extreme difference is observed between the value set on having children and the number of children actually born. For decades now, Hungarian families have been producing fewer children than the numbers they consider desirable; they perceive child-rearing as the greatest joy in life, while fewer and fewer children are being born. Values and behaviour have changed in parallel with regard to cohabitation, which is now being chosen in greater numbers by young and old alike as an alternative to marriage, and it is accepted as such by society. Notwithstanding the above, people in Hungary still believe that married couples are happier than others. Changes related to family life will probably continue to go along with the modernisation that is already underway. What is difficult to forecast is whether the value systems will follow suit or whether the present contradictions will remain.

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Kata Jávor

Tradition-Bound

Roles and Gender in a Hungarian Village

Prior to 1945, more than half of the land falling within the narrow confines of Varsány—a solidly Roman Catholic, devoutly church-going village in the hilly country of northern Hungary—was in the hands of big landowners. Around two-thirds of the villagers had dwarf holdings of less than 5 hold (7 acres) of land or were landless. The principal crops were wheat, barley, corn and potatoes, with the raising of livestock as a major sideline. These peasant smallholdings were insufficient, however, to maintain whole families, so the village's menfolk became accustomed early on to searching for work outside the village. Gangs of them travelled to the big estates for harvest work on the Great Hungarian Plain, and some went as far as Germany as contractual agricultural labourers.

The village had a population of 1,400 in 1935 (in 2001 it was 1,778) with the average family having 3–4 children, though this has been falling continually since the 1970s towards two per family. Thus, mothers with three children are now almost held up to shame: "Couldn't you shift your butt fast enough, then?" goes one common jibe. Since the 1990s, single-child families have become increasingly common.

Being remote from easy transport links, the village is tradition-bound. As one of the most striking signs of that, up until 1948 the village's female inhabitants all wore the multiple-underskirted "round skirts" of traditional peasant dress. Even when I started my field work in the village in the early seventies, over 80 per cent of women over thirty still went about in this colourful costume, while young girls would wear it too in church or on festive occasions, as they felt that it showed them off to advantage, making it "easier to get married off". The colours of the dress were coded for age and also status—for instance, that of a newly wed (until a third child was born), or widow. The move to dispense with this way of dressing began in earnest in the mid-1980s, as more girls had to move outside the village for their schooling. For some time they wore the "narrow-skirted" style along with the "many-skirted" peasant garments, but that put a big strain on the clothing budget.

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One should also mention the "boudoir" style of courting, which was still practised in Varsány during the sixties but was perhaps better known among the "Palóc" ethnic group.* What this entailed was that girls, though they were expected to walk in the street with downcast eyes to demonstrate their modesty, would receive a young man's courtship lying on a bed in a specially separated cubicle. All the village's courting young men would leave the inn in a group and make the rounds of the houses, waiting for the light burning in each girl's cubicle to be extinguished. After a few exchanges with the girl, the group would then move on, leaving behind just the one who was courting that particular girl: he would then set himself on the bed and, lying there fully clothed, pay suit to the girl. As becoming pregnant counted as the greatest shame for an unmarried girl in Varsány, she had to be fairly deft to avoid any serious consequences resulting from this odd courtship ritual, which some scholars look on as a relic of the medieval legend of Tristan and Isolde.

I have had the opportunity to stay in Varsány on four occasions, at intervals of roughly a decade—in the mid-seventies, in 1986, in 1995 and lastly in 2004—to keep track of how cultural stereotypes relating to gender roles have persisted, and to what extent, under the village's changing living conditions.

A segregated, asymmetrical and hierarchic relationship between the sexes, amounting to a form of "complementary opposition", was a distinguishing feature of the structure of peasant society. As a result of cultural discrimination and separation, the two genders operated in two distinct spheres. That cultural separation extended to everything and found expression in social stereotyping. The sexual polarisation was also underpinned by a strong male dominance that was as deeply imbedded in cultural symbols as in everyday interactions.

Naturally, the changes that have been underway in Hungarian society at large have not bypassed the village where I did my field work. These have included the general extension of paid employment among women and the access this has given them to an income of their own, along with a growing acceptance of birth control and the spread of childcare facilities in rural Hungary. These changes arrived much more slowly than average and became appreciable only during the eighties. At the same time in Varsány, the traditional norms of masculinity and femininity and the asymmetry of the division of power between the sexes have continued to be sustained by the family, which in Varsány is still essentially patriarchal. Even today the division of labour within the family underpins differences between the sexes in relation to power and spheres of interest; the moral and behavioural standards that are applied to men and women are totally different, and their socialisation also proceeds by different routes.

What roles, then, are women and men expected to accept in present-day Varsány? That is still determined by the respective positions that they occupy in the division of labour and authority. The division of labour itself is part of a symbolic system and not just an extension of some biological factor. At the start of my work in the village, during the early seventies, one encountered a rigid, gender-dictated division of labour within the family, which generally attached higher prestige to the activities of the menfolk. Different jobs were ascribed as having symbolic value according to whether

* ■ Mainly living in Nógrád county, they still maintain traditions of dress, crafts and rituals and speak with a distinct accent.

they were regarded as specifically men's or women's work. That rigid division was backed up by a powerful moral code, with a man whose wife carried out a man's work (e.g., driving a horse and cart or reaping grain) being censured just as he would be for undertaking women's work. On the other hand, a man was not supposed to dish up food for himself, but to sit at the table for his wife to place the food on his plate. In older times it used to be the fashion for a wife to put literally every object in her husband's hands, so that if the husband was washing, for example, she would stand behind him, holding a towel. It would also be the wife who, when her husband was about to set off for the fields with his horse and cart, would hand up to him the haversack containing the bread, bacon fat, onions and water that would be his midday meal, whereas in the evening she would be expected to have a hot supper ready, usually consisting of a dish of potatoes, cabbage or beans with meat on Sundays. Similarly, the home-made sausages that were produced when pigs were slaughtered towards the end of the year would soon be eaten up by the men. A wife was also expected to listen out for the rattling of her husband's cart and rush out to open the gate for him, and if the supper was not ready, the angry husband might well strike her.

Aside from hoeing, which was considered women's work, women were landed with the thousand and one tasks involved in running a household. In the olden days, even the soap that was used for washing would be made at home. Much time was taken up by processing flax, as this was used not just for bed linen and dishcloths but for the whole of the family's underwear and shirts or blouses, so that the loom was ready to be pressed into service at any time except on feast days. Often only night-time was left over for a woman to pay attention to work on a daughter's apparel or trousseau, as the village expected that, on being married, she should be provided with all the linen needed to last her a lifetime. At the wedding feast, the female guests would inspect the linen chests and wardrobes that would be opened to their gaze to show that they were suitably "crammed". Mothers with more than one daughter, therefore, had a particularly hard time of it.

Coming on the heels of full collectivisation of Hungarian agriculture during the sixties, the drift of the village's workforce into industry broke the previous bonds of families as economic units and thus represented a major challenge. By the early seventies one-third of Varsány's menfolk were already shuttling between home and their workplaces on a weekly or fortnightly basis, and the trend for workplaces to lie outside the village has only intensified since then, albeit usually involving only a daily commute. The bulk of these "industrial" jobs have been in construction, often involving the toughest unskilled labour, which the men of Varsány seek out for better pay, even though it often means abandoning a skilled trade. Most of these jobs would be in Budapest. This means that during the week they need to put up at a working men's hostel.

The womenfolk joined the labour force in a later wave, for the most part from the eighties onwards, and predominantly in small units that were set up close to the village by local co-operative farms or forestry concerns. This was often done against resistance from their husbands, because providing for the family had customarily been seen to be the responsibility of the head of the family, so that the entry of wives into paid employment was viewed as a threat to their male authority. "We're not feeling the pinch so badly that my wife has to work" or "I keep the wife out of my own pocket," the men would declare almost indignantly.

Since it was the men who continued to bring home the bigger pay packet and thus prestige, this was not enough in itself to shake traditional stereotypes. The actual division of roles was seen in how the household work was divided.

That is all the more the case, since the women themselves have no great expectations of their husbands becoming more domesticated, even among the younger generation: "I don't want to tread all over him. All I ask is that he clears up after himself when he's eaten." So, even if little has changed under normal circumstances, there has been some shift when it comes to emergencies. Since it is unusual now for young families to have an elderly relative living with them, young husbands will often pitch in to help with household duties, such as bathing the children or helping themselves to food at mealtimes. One can consider it another sign of the changing times that wives in their twenties are often prompted by their husbands to obtain a driving licence, though that has done little to alter the fact that it is generally the man alone who is permitted to drive the family car.

More powerful than such changes, however, has been the continuity by which Varsány's families uphold the social reproduction of male authority. The essence of masculinity is perceived in the fact that it should continue to be treated as the source of authority and privilege within the family. It has traditionally been a privileged existence that is a by-product of a historically and culturally determined system of inequality between the sexes. Some of the rites that institutionalise gender differences have now lost their previously obligatory force—as amongst the young, for example, with the rule that the man sits at the head of the table or that the wife hands everything to the husband—but others have persisted. Thus, it is still seen as natural, if a married couple goes anywhere on foot, that the wife carry any luggage. In other words, there has been no fundamental shift in the expectation that the man is there to be served. It is therefore still common for a teenage boy today to "order" his mother around without her seeing that as being in any way odd.

The asymmetry of authority that characterises relations between the sexes in traditional village society, and hence in Varsány, has been consummated in the binary "domestic/public" opposition that social anthropologists use to express the duality of the male and female worlds. Accordingly, women's activities are carried out within the private sphere, whereas men's activities are carried out in the outside world, the public sphere, and that is a major reason for the discrepancy in their prestige. The question is to what extent the changing position of women in the social structure has had an impact on the distribution of authority within the family.

What can be said for sure is that over recent decades, with the emergence of women into the public sphere, there has been a decline in the physical and symbolic segregation of men and women in Varsány. That has not brought any serious change to the balance of authority within the family, however, because for women, even though they may have a job, the domestic role remains primary. And it remains so due to the low prestige of their paid work and also the backwardness of the local infrastructure and services, with a continuation, to some degree, of the old norm of self-sufficient families. This all results in a continuing importance for women of the low-prestige domestic sphere.

The true weight of male authority is another matter, given that the presence of prestige often obscures the realities of power. The fact is that, despite the higher

prestige of men's activities and the continuing restriction of women's control to the family, the family has continued to be the most important social unit in Varsány. Since the men's workplaces are often outside the village, decision-making on many matters, both small and large, is inexorably slipping over to the women; it is they who supervise and guide the children, with the menfolk often being left only to give a nod of approval to a fait accompli.

In the public sphere it is still the case that greater expectations are placed on women to give ritual respect to men. With the elderly and middle-aged it is a general strategy that outside the home a wife should pay her husband certain forms of the respect that is due to the head of the family—in order to show that the husband is master in the house, even though in reality she is gaining ever-wider decision-making authority. The problem arises with the younger generation, where the wife may be more disposed to question her husband's place at the head of the family—this is often a bone of contention.

The asymmetrical balance of power is also underlined by a double moral expectation and norm on top of the rigid division of labour and authority. Accordingly, strong self-assertion is seen as most important for a man, and self-control and self-discipline for a woman, with a given action being judged according to the gender of the person who performs it. This duality is at its most acute in the field of sexuality. In cases of premarital intercourse and adultery, public opinion in the village will always condemn the female party on the grounds that "Men will be men." In recent years, though, the fact that young couples will have sexual relations prior to marriage has been tacitly accepted in Varsány, so that on this point the moral blame is roughly equally apportioned between the sexes.

Given what has been said so far, it appears that in Varsány the system of social assumptions that has polarised biologically based differences between the sexes as being masculine or feminine, and has underpinned male dominance, has not changed substantially over time. As stereotyped notions of masculinity and femininity are formed during the period of socialisation, it would be worth looking at whether there have been any changes in this area in Varsány.

In the village, parents teach their children, from the age of two or so on, to ascribe a symbolic masculine or feminine value to everything. The key areas for this are: fixing the individual's personal characteristics and behavioural forms as masculine or feminine, and using shaming to channel these in the appropriate direction; implanting an early consciousness of the division of labour between men and women; and clothing children in a way that is appropriate to their gender.

Taking these in turn, the personal characteristics that the parents seek to reinforce as being appropriate to the sex of the child they are bringing up are determined from the outset by their preconceptions of gender. In Varsány, the traditional role model expects men to show initiative and bravery and women to show the "passive" virtues of patience and self-control. Consequently, male children are expected to be active from a very young age, whereas the female role is expressed more in the form of prohibitions. On the one hand, they inculcate the forms of behaviour, and indeed even feelings, that are considered appropriate to the child's gender, and on the other hand they attempt to snuff out anything that departs from these. Thus, little boys will be made fun of, even by their parents, for showing any signs of unmanly sensitivity such as crying.

Overstepping the gender divide is frowned on much more with boys than with

girls, and the more so as they advance closer to adulthood. This corroborates Lipsitz's view that a cultural asymmetry in judging transgressions of the gender boundaries, as in Varsány, is characteristic of patriarchal societies. In line with the privileged male role for which boys are prepared, fewer expectations are placed on them, and they enjoy more freedom than girls of the same age. If a school complains about a male child, the parents will offer as an explanation and excuse something along the lines of "But, Miss, he's a boy!" It may be noted that even today boys in this village are brought up to be rather on the rough side, in line with traditional stereotypes.

The contrasting treatment that girls receive is illuminated by a saying that can be heard in the village: "At least one can give orders to a daughter, if not a son." In traditional villages, the divergent upbringing to which boys and girls were subjected served the "complementary opposition" on which their subsequent roles were based. Thus, with girls the efforts would be concentrated, above all, on developing self-control. Apart from the preservation of their good name, which was the key to the chances of a good marriage, it vouched for the virtues of submissiveness and patience that would be indispensable later on in their role as wife. As far as that went, the opening of opportunities for the young men of Varsány to gain jobs outside the village during the seventies created a new situation. They started to look on the village girls who had been brought up in the traditional manner as rather simple-minded and increasingly chose to marry girls from elsewhere. This was a major upheaval and transformed traditional matchmaking, which was supervised by the older women of the village. Another breach was created by disco dancing, a new form of entertainment that excluded adults and thus deprived older women of one of their prime sources of information for brokering marriages. Girls, having formerly been condemned to passivity, now became active agents in the marriage market. This, in turn, was accompanied by changes in the behaviour that a girl had traditionally displayed, with new features of assertiveness emerging alongside the earlier submissiveness and restraint. A new attitude gained ground which can be summed up by the adage "A lad will stop and stay where he sleeps." In keeping with the double standards of sexual morals, however, even in this situation both public opinion and the boys themselves expected girls to observe the limits.

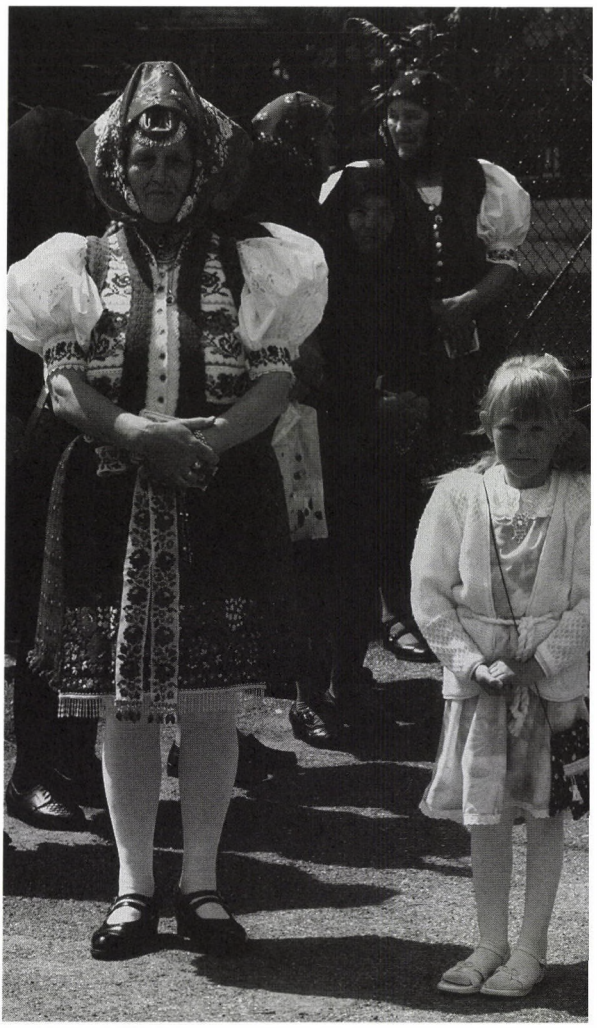
In traditional villages, an important element in impressing gender roles was played by training for work, with the spheres of activity for the two genders becoming gradually separated in the course of their upbringing. During the seventies, at the start of my field work, there was already a perceptible tendency for parents not to pass on the culture of peasant work to their children, as they did not wish them to lead the same lives as they had. That tendency had only intensified by the nineties, to the extent that now the nursery and school are expected to take on virtually the whole task of training the children, with many mothers not seeing even the basic instruction of girls into housework as being their responsibility.

True, the process of training children for work has seen a lessening of the gender polarisation, even if that is a levelling down; but the main reason for the change has not been any radical overhaul of concepts about gender roles as much as, in general terms, a radical shift in the status that Varsány's children have gained in the family. One important aspect of this is an "upgrading" of the value attached to daughters, particularly in the families of younger couples. In general, less is expected of children, but despite that, subtle distinctions are still made between the two sexes. Thus, girls still

have to cope with a greater burden of expectations and are still expected to be more diligent. Only now this comes in the area of school performance, where girls are expected to complete secondary school, whereas for boys the future is seen to be in training for skilled work. Nursery schooling has played a part in diminishing ideas about the role of gender in the division of labour. All the same, offers by young boys who have been taught in school to help with laying the table are, for the time being, still rejected by even the youngest mothers, who consider it to be "un-boyish". It should also be remarked that the process of roping children into work according to gender is to this day more pronounced in Varsány's farming families, in line with the parents' generally more traditional outlook on gender roles.

Prescriptions on gender roles also extend to outward appearance and clothing, which are treated as a form of behaviour. In traditional villages, the clothes that an infant would wear up to 2–3 years of age were neutral, and later on they primarily reflected changes appropriate to the age group; only with girls of marriageable age did they become an important tool in selecting a partner. Differentiation of the sexes was served by a colour symbolism for clothing by which it was deemed appropriate for boys to wear ever-darker clothes as they grew older, whereas for girls it was ever brighter and lighter shades. The clothing for a newborn would be light blue for a boy and pink for a girl, though if a daughter was born when a son had been expected, she would wear any light-blue clothes that had been bought in advance—but not the other way round. Thus, the aforementioned cultural asymmetry, which treats transgressions of the female sexual boundary more harshly, shows up even in the field of colour symbolism. Boys' clothing differed from girls' not just in its dark colours and confined forms, but also in the casual attention that was given to it.

From the mid-seventies onwards, the family's attention was more and more focused on the children, which was reflected in a steady growth in expenditure on clothing them. As the selection of clothing grew more fastidious and differentiated, it increasingly served to distinguish the sexes. With the opening of a nursery school in the village in 1976, the wardrobe for girls expanded with items of clothing that previously had only been



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Before mass, 2004.

adopted when older girls went out into society. Children were now only permitted to wear clothes that the mothers deemed characteristic for girls or boys. Thus, the coming of the nursery school lowered the age at which girls had to be provided with the attractive clothing that meets the norms of "girlishness"—an important vehicle of their gender role. In other words, the already strong gender polarisation of clothing grew even stronger, in that the wardrobe for boys, though possibly a bit more fastidious, in essence continued to comply with the old norms (e.g. they were not allowed to wear coloured or even patterned pullovers), whereas that for girls became ever more differentiated.

On leaving the relative "laxity" of infant school behind and heading for puberty, girls had to adopt an ever more ritualised outward appearance to satisfy a growing list of criteria and be considered suitably "girlish". Among those criteria were fitness for the occasion, variety, trendiness and, on certain special occasions, conspicuous newness. On the other hand, even in the nineties most mothers were still citing durability as their main criterion in choosing clothes for boys, though it is quite another matter that their sons are no longer in total agreement with them, as the supposedly "manly" indifference about such matters and the dominance of dark colours began to give way among teenage boys some six or seven years ago.

In Varsány, clothing is nevertheless an important tool in bringing up girls and boys and forming gender stereotypes. For several decades it has been associated with a complete gender polarization that from the earliest age treats colourfulness and variety as being female prerogatives, while unconcern and lack of colour have until very recently been seen as more befitting of masculinity.

From an early age, youngsters of both sexes acquire important messages from their clothing about what constitutes sexuality, or more specifically, its cultural freight. As they approach adulthood, the physical appearance of boys and girls becomes ever more polarized, and with that, almost unavoidably, they are taught a social and cultural definition of sexuality. One should note, though, that the positive discrimination given to girls in the matter of how they dress is evidence precisely of the persistence of sexual stereotypes, and specifically, of how in Varsány getting married is still considered, even today, the principal index of their success in life.

This may bring us nearer to broaching the issue of how inequality between the sexes is reproduced despite superficial signs of change (divorces, greater sexual freedom, the growing informal weight that women occupy within the family, etc.). My observations show clearly that sexual roles have been polarized to the extreme in Varsány by the system of social and cultural conditions, and that discrimination between men and women remains a fundamental factor of social organisation in the village. ❧

Géza Jeszenszky

The Afterlife of the Treaty of Trianon

Miklós Zeidler: *A revíziós gondolat* (The Idea of Revision), Budapest, Osiris, 2001, 256 pp. • Archimédesz Szidiropulosz: *Trianon utóélete,* I–III. (The Afterlife of Trianon, I–III), Budapest, XX. Század Intézet, 2002, 260 pp; 2003, 372 pp.; Kairosz n.d. 453 pp. • Ágnes Beretzky: *Scotus Viator és Macartney Elemér: Magyarország-kép változó előjelekkel.* (Scotus Viator and Aylmer Macartney: Images of Hungary with Variable Indicators), Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 2005, 138 pp.

Trianon refers to two palaces in the grounds of Versailles, once the favoured place of resort of the kings of France. In one of them, the Grand Trianon, the peace treaty with Hungary was signed in 1920, after the First World War. It has been widely held (and not only by Hungarians) that this was a most unjust settlement, far more punitive than the Versailles *Diktat* forced upon Germany. Trianon divided up the thousand-year-old Kingdom of Hungary, reducing its territory from 325,000 square kilometres to 93,000, and attaching 3.5 million ethnic Hungarians to countries where they were to become victims of discrimination.

Since I reviewed the latest account of the making of that treaty in these pages,[1] several works have been published in Hungary about the impact of Trianon on Hungarian politics and on the reactions it has induced in the general public. The abiding interest in Trianon is due to more than its being the most drastic dismemberment of a country in history, apart from the Partition (and obliteration from the map) of Poland in 1795.

The immediate aftermath of Trianon saw books and articles in several countries and in several languages, calling attention to its injustice and calling for its revision. Hungary's neighbours, the successor states that had benefited from Trianon, responded with their own propaganda, vindicating the treaty's provisions. Between 1938 and 1941, Hungary regained some of the lost territories, along with most of their detached kinsmen. This was another imposed settlement, accomplished by German (and Italian) arbitration—a *Diktat* as it were—but it was certainly in line with the wishes of the majority of the Hungarian populations concerned. The consequence was subordination to Germany in foreign policy, leading eventually to participation in the war, tremendous losses in lives and

1 ■ Ignác Romsics: *The Dismantling of Historic Hungary: the Peace Treaty of Trianon, 1920.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. Reviewed by Géza Jeszenszky, "The Genesis of a Lasting Quarrel in Central Europe", *The Hungarian Quarterly,* Vol. XLIII (No. 172) Winter 2003.

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assets and a blackening of Hungary's reputation. Following the Second World War, the Trianon borders were re-imposed, again against the will of their Hungarian inhabitants, this time mainly at the will of Stalin.

During the first decades of communism, mention of these borders was virtually banned in Hungary; in the later, more open phase of the regime, such mention was restricted to scholarly writings. From 1989, all restraints were gone but, surprisingly, hardly anybody in Hungary demanded the return of any territory. Most people have taken the sensible position of concentrating on the fair treatment of the Hungarians in the seven neighbouring countries. In this respect they are at one with István Bibó, one of the most widely respected Hungarian political thinkers of the twentieth century:

> Hungary will faithfully respect and carry out the peace treaty, once it is signed. It would be insincere to pretend that she has become an enthusiastic adherent of the grave dispositions of the treaty. But Hungary will not create an ideology or organize political campaigns for changing the borders, and will not pursue a policy which speculates in international crises or catastrophes, so that her territorial grievances could be remedied. Hungary will comply with the conditions created by the peace treaty without any reservations, except one: she cannot give up her political interest in the fate of the Hungarian minorities [living in the states surrounding Hungary].[2]

Hungary, having regained sovereignty, signed bilateral treaties with her neighbours between 1991 and 1996, and these included substantial provisions on the rights of national minorities and which explicitly renounced any territorial claims.[3]

Given that Hungary seeks no change in borders and endeavours to have friendly relations with all her neighbours, why then has so much been written on Trianon in recent years? The answer is quite simple. There is a persistent perception that the Hungarian minorities have not been treated fairly, that the governments of their "host states" are unwilling to meet the demands of their Hungarians for genuine local democracy or for autonomy based on collective rights. (Just as those demands on the part of the Hungarian minorities persist.) Indeed, given those many years of silence under the Communist regime, many in Hungary are surprised to find that people coming from the surrounding states, some living at a great distance from the borders of Hungary speak Hungarian— and often know more about Hungarian history and culture than most in the "mother country". Hence, the interest in Hungary itself is natural.

Miklós Zeidler, one of the best of the younger Hungarian historians, has already written a masterful summary of the pre-war efforts to revise the territorial clauses contained in Trianon;[4] as an editor he returns to the theme within the impressive series of collections of documents, *Nemzet és emlékezet* (Nation and Memory). This contains 132 documents, gathered under three headings: primary sources, political essays and commentaries and scholarly writings. Some have never been published or have long been forgotten. In order to illustrate the richness of the collection, I shall describe some of the most interesting, though little known, items.

2 ■ István Bibó: "A magyar békeszerződés" (The Hungarian Peace Treaty). [*Válasz,* 1946] In: *Válogatott tanulmányok* (Selected Studies), Budapest, Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1986. Vol. ii., pp. 294–295.
3 ■ Géza Jeszenszky: "Hungary's Bilateral Treaties with the Neighbours," *Ethnos-Nation,* (Köln) 1996. (1997) Nr. 1–2. 123–128.
4 ■ *Trianon.* Ed. by Miklós Zeidler. Budapest, Osiris, 2003, 932 pp.

In November 1918, Count Mihály Károlyi formed a government composed of leftist liberal and radical politicians. On 12 November 1918, he sent a well-argued cable responding to U.S. Secretary of State Robert Lansing's pledge of support for the Romanian claims to Transylvania. There are several documents pertaining to the newly formed Ministry for Nationalities, headed by Oszkár Jászi (who eventually was to have a distinguished career at Oberlin College, Ohio). The Ministry's plan was to transform Hungary into autonomous regions along ethnic/linguistic lines so that the country would become a sort of "Eastern Switzerland". The text, which Zeidler publishes, shows that Jászi's was a sincere attempt: the "People's Laws" were to create autonomous territories or legal bodies for the Rusyns (Ruthenians), the Germans and the Slovaks. (Following the failure of the Arad negotiations in November 1918 the Romanians were not included in the draft.) The future of those national groups, however, was not left to the peoples concerned, but was decided by the armies of the neighbouring states after the victorious Great Powers authorised them to occupy the territories claimed by their representatives in Paris, at the Preliminary Peace Conference. While Károlyi and his government hoped that the non-Hungarian nationalities would opt to retain the unity of the historic kingdom, the following government (and regime), the Hungarian Soviet Republic ("The Republic of Councils") officially renounced the territorial integrity of Hungary. This government, led by Béla Kun and composed of Bolsheviks and left-wing Social Democrats, hoped to see (or rather to create) similar Bolshevik republics around and in alliance with Hungary—just as had happened in Russia. When Romania and Czechoslovakia attacked Béla Kun's Hungary the Hungarian counter attack was successful and, in what is today the eastern half of Slovakia, a "Slovak Republic of Councils" was proclaimed. Following this, Georges Clemenceau, the Chairman of the Peace Conference, prevailed upon Kun to cease hostilities and to evacuate the territories occupied. That decision contributed to the fall of the Hungarian Bolsheviks, who were eventually replaced by a conservative national government, which was summoned to Paris and presented with the terms of peace in January 1920. Despite an eloquent speech by Count Albert Apponyi, head of the Hungarian delegation, in defence of the territorial integrity of the ancient kingdom, the new borders reduced Hungary to one third of its former territory and population. Hungary ceded territories predominantly inhabited by Slavs and Romanians but also by three and a half million Hungarians to the new or greatly enlarged neighbours—including Austria, the former partner in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. To sweeten the bitter pill, Hungary was given a vague promise that the new borders might be revised upon the recommendation of the Committees for the Delimitation of the Border, and that the interests of the Hungarian minorities assigned to Hungary's neighbours would be safeguarded by special treaties for the protection of minorities, to be signed by all those neighbours. The merit of this collection is that all of this can be followed in the documents printed here.

After the treaty was signed on 4 June 1920, there appeared a vast literature for and against its revision. Some telling items are presented by Zeidler. Extracts from the various party programmes and platforms show the remarkable unity Hungarians demonstrated concerning border change. Even the outlawed Hungarian Communist Party called for "the revolutionary crushing of Trianon"—at least before Stalin's change of course in the mid-1930s. It is also worth noting that quite a few of those addressing

the issue were ready to admit that the mistakes committed by Hungarians in the past had contributed to the eventual dismemberment of the country. Few, however, went so as far to say, as did Ede Ormos, that Hungary had deserved to be punished. Jászi, in his self-imposed exile, maintained that the Károlyi government had followed the right course and blamed the victors for treating it unfairly. Others, such as József Körmendi Horváth, pinned the blame on Károlyi and allied propaganda. Yet, neither Count István Bethlen (prime minister between 1921 and 1931), nor Jászi, nor the writer László Németh, nor the radical politician Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky believed that the Trianon borders would endure. In a reaction to a campaign conducted by the British press baron Lord Rothermere to achieve more equitable borders for Hungary, the Hungarian Social Democratic Party pointed out that only a changed and genuinely democratic Hungary had a chance to receive support for revision.

Meanwhile, those affected most seriously, the Hungarians cut off by the new borders, for whom Hungary became a foreign country, adjusted to the new situation better than the inhabitants in what was then called "rump Hungary". Instead of waiting for a miracle—that is, a benevolent outside intervention—they adjusted their thinking, their way of life, their ideals. They understood that the Hungarian minorities had to rely on themselves and on their own hard work in order to create the basic conditions for their future existence: political autonomy within their new countries. Their writers, artists and clergy proposed better programmes than their politicians—the texts here provide ample evidence.

There were abundant plans for rectifying the borders. Many people were dazzled by the notion of the perfection of the Carpathian Basin, the historic kingdom as a geographical and economic unit. Various federative and cantonal schemes were drawn up for a restoration of this unit, of which László Ottlik's "New Hungaria" stands out. The more realistic schemes were based on ethnic realities and claimed only territories inhabited predominantly by Hungarians. The return of some of those territories to Hungary between 1938 and 1941 was greeted with tremendous enthusiasm both in Hungary and by the reattached ethnic Hungarian populations, as the documents clearly show. The circumstances of the long hoped-for change of borders were, however, most unfortunate. Hungary became more dependent on Germany (Hitler's actual aim), relations with the neighbouring nations deterioriated further, and Hungary's claim for fairer borders was compromised in the eyes of the anti-Nazi alliance. Those affected most, the returned Hungarians, did not realize how precarious the future of the new arrangement was, nor how high a price they might pay for a few happy years.

At the end of the war, those gains were annulled. Czechoslovakia attempted to expel her 0.7 million Hungarians, engaging in ethnic cleansing *avant la lettre*. In the post-war political climate, all the blame for "the second Trianon" was put on the policies of the Horthy era. Understandably, there was no mention of Stalin, who turned down American proposals for minor border rectifications in favour of Hungary. Remarkably, both during the short-lived democratic period (1945–47) and the 1956 Revolution, there were no calls for border changes. The Hungarian body politic expressed hope for new, genuinely friendly relations with its neighbours, frequently referring to earlier plans for a "Danubian Confederation".

Discussion of the deteriorating situation of the Hungarian minorities was taboo during the thirty years under János Kádár, following the crushing of the 1956

Revolution. In typical Central European fashion, it was the writers, "the intellectuals" who first challenged the ban on speaking out—not to advocate border revisions, but to protest against the ill-treatment of Hungarians across the borders. The unofficial poet laureate, Gyula Illyés, broke the ground (but not with the essay printed in this collection), and István Bibó, in 1978, offered guidance to the younger generation in a letter to Pál Szalai, along the lines he had argued thirty years earlier:

> very likely the price of substantial improvement in the situation of the Hungarian minorities beyond the borders will be giving up [the hope for] any change of territory [...] but one can think about that only against guarantees for very serious improvement.

By and large this attitude has prevailed since the restoration of freedom of speech in Hungary in 1990. Of all the programmes and platforms formulated by parties that have been returned to Parliament since, only one, that of István Csurka's Hungarian Justice and Life Party (no longer in Parliament), calls for the peaceful, negotiated return of those border zones where the majority of the population are still Hungarian (despite the many years of expulsions, intimidation and colonisation).

Zeidler's impressive volume pays tribute to the Hungarian scholars, mainly historians, who were able to present the sad story of Trianon's antecedents and consequences dispassionately. The only difference between those who were writing before 1944 (László Buday, Jenő Horváth, István Kertész, Gyula Szekfü, Gusztáv Gratz, Imre Mikó and István Bibó) and those after the late 1970s, is that the former could still imagine a realistic chance for partial, ethnically-based border rectifications, while the latter no longer entertained such hopes. Long extracts from prominent present-day Hungarian historians (Magda Ádám, Géza Herczegh, Mária Ormos, László Szarka, Ignác Romsics, Zsuzsa L. Nagy, József Galántai and István Diószegi) provide detailed accounts of what happened in Central Europe in the most critical period of 1918–1921, and how the Great Powers decided the fate of the Hungarians and their neighbours. Pál Pritz offers a summary of how Hungarian foreign policy tried to pursue treaty revision in the inter-war period. The final section contains analyses by Ferenc Glatz, Zsuzsa. L. Nagy, Ignác Romsics, Pál Pastor, Balázs Ablonczy and others on how earlier historians or the contemporary Hungarian public saw the treaty and its rectification. They show that, in line with "proletarian internationalism", a distorted attitude prevailed between 1948 and the late 1960s, characterized by a total silence about nationalist excesses in neighbouring states. In contrast, increasingly realistic presentations have been appearing since the 1970s.

Practically simultaneously with Zeidler's collection, a sociologist, Archimédesz Szidiropulosz (as his name suggests, the son of a Greek refugee from the civil war of the 1940s), published three volumes on the afterlife of Trianon. The first is a select bibliography of books and other non-periodical writing on the subject, a total of 2,183 items and 172 maps. These are arranged according to the date of publication: before 1947, 1948–1988 (the Communist period), 1989–2000; under a separate heading are grouped works published outside the Carpathian Basin, mainly in western Europe and America. Each chapter is sub-divided into scholarly (history, ethnography, demography, law, economics, etc.) and analytical political works; sources and documents; information, propaganda and pamphlet literature; fiction, poetry and essays. In addition to relatively well-known items, the bibliography includes some that are little-known or forgotten. However, there are two serious shortcomings: only writings

in Hungarian are listed, and there are no annotations. Given the international character of the subject and the controversy over the interpretation of the treaty, these are serious flaws. Even Hungarian speakers would have needed guidance on the contents and value of many items. Some of the works are one-sided polemics, which may not be evident from their titles; nor, for that matter, does a title always indicate how and why it is relevant to the subject. Fortunately, there is a corrective of sorts: Zeidler's collection contains a large, annotated bibliography (in fact, a bibliographical essay) which contains almost all the important writings in the major languages, set out in a logical order. Both bibliographies include maps, which often reveal more than printed words can. (Strangely, the noted geographer Károly Kocsis' recent ethnographic maps and his *Ethnic Geography of the Carpathian Basin* [co-authored with Eszter Kocsis-Hodosi], published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1998, are not listed in either.)

In his second volume, Szidiropulosz hit upon the excellent idea of getting his contributors, mainly young historians, to write reviews of books and memoirs pertaining to the causes and the making of Trianon, which were published many years ago and are, consequently, barely known now. Albert Apponyi, Gyula Andrássy, Pál Teleki, T.G. Masaryk, Nitti, the official interpreter Paul Mantoux, Henri Pozzi, Gusztáv Gratz, Endre Koreh, Sándor Pethő and Jenő Horváth watched the events very closely (regrettably Eduard Beneš' memoirs were omitted); while modern historians (András Gerő, Ignác Romsics, László Tőkéczki, György Litván, Mária Ormos, József Galántai, Gyula Juhász and Ernő Raffay) are undoubtedly among the best authorities on the making of that peace. It is all the more disappointing to find that most of the reviewers did little more than summarise the books assigned to them, while frequently expressing their indignation at the treatment of Hungary or at the false statements made by various Czechoslovak and Romanian politicians.

There are questionable statements that draw no comment, such as that of Count Albert Apponyi, to the effect that if the centre had shifted to Hungary, the Monarchy would have survived. The reviewers apparently accepted almost all the conventional illusions, even those long since discarded or refuted. One such is the notion that the decisions on the border were based mainly on the false statistical figures provided by the Czechs and the Romanians—what really mattered was the military occupation by the successor states, while the ethnic, economic and strategic arguments were applied as a cover. Two traditional arguments should have been discussed. Jenő Horváth, a distinguished historian of the diplomacy of the inter-war years, had argued that the military occupation and administrative takeover of large parts of historical Hungary, after mid-November 1918, ran contrary to the terms of the armistice signed in Padua on 3 November; hence, from a legal point of view they were invalid. Does that mean that the Peace Treaty itself is not valid? Is there an authority which could rule that? It is not desirable to give a new lease of life to such old illusions, but that is what Szidiropulosz (or some of his authors) occasionally do. Another illusion is that the so-called covering letter signed by the President of the Peace Conference, Alexandre Millerand, held out the hope—even the promise—that if some of its decisions were found to be unjust, the Council of the League of Nations would offer its good offices for a revision of the territorial stipulations of the Treaty. A careful reading of the document in question shows that the statement referred only to the commissions charged with the delineation of the actual border on the spot, that they were not expected to divert substantially from the line drawn in Paris. These commissions were not

impressed by the protests or pleading of the local Hungarian populations, who were transferred to countries they loathed and which already manifested prejudice and dislike towards them. Even when the border commissions did recommend minor rectifications in favour of Hungary, they were usually turned down by the Council of the League. The Hungarian government had no alternative to signing the Treaty, but they were not duped into doing so by Millerand or his note.

The merit of this second volume is that it draws attention to works which contain little-known evidence of unfair treatment. Based on the memoirs of Paul Mantoux, who was the interpreter at the discussions between "the Big Four" or the Council of Ten, the reviewer (László Lator) observes that the Americans and some of the British (particularly Prime Minister David Lloyd George) aimed at concluding fair treaties—nevertheless he speaks about "the overall hate the Allied Powers felt for the Hungarians." Another author, Zoltán Major, makes an unsubstantiated and over-generalized statement: "Official Hungarian historiography stands on the basis of the *Diktat* of Trianon" (p. 218). While no serious person can contest the validity of the treaty, I know of no Hungarian historian who would not call its terms grossly unfair. András Kocsis reviewed the first serious irredentist analysis, a collection published in 1928 in several languages, entitled *Justice for Hungary*. In it, Jenő Horváth showed how Russia had worked prior to 1914 to undermine the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy by supporting Serbia and Romania and by inciting the national minorities of Hungary. György Lukács (not related to the Marxist philosopher) summarizes the ill-treatment meted out to the Hungarian minorities; Olivér Eöttevényi reveals the many actions, on the part of the successor states, destructive of the cultural heritage of Hungary, and Béla Földes notes the dire economic repercussions of Trianon—much of what they wrote is still valid today. One piece feeds foolish illusions. In 1995 Ernő Raffay, a well-known historian and formerly the deputy of the minister of defence (1990–92), wrote that in the early 1990s, Hungary missed the opportunity for a peaceful change of its borders. Such nonsense should have been refuted rather than supported by the author of the review, Béla Kosaras. Szidiropulosz' own contribution deals with the 1941 edition of the collected speeches of Prime Minister Pál Teleki. While he rightly emphasises the moderation and exemplary intentions of Teleki (e.g. self-government for the minorities who were returned to Hungary by the two Vienna Awards, and words of encouragement to Jewish citizens), he does not explain why so few of those noble intentions were carried out.

The third volume's title, *The Image of Trianon in Present-Day Hungarian Society,* bodes well. Instead of a detached analysis of contemporary public opinion based on questionnaires, polls and surveys, we are given twenty-one interviews (conducted by the editor himself) with politicians, historians, scholars, artists, writers, teachers and journalists, as well as a summary of the findings by the editor. Most of those interviewed are prominent; they are not representative of a Hungary where the average citizen does not know much about Trianon and cares even less about its repercussions. It would be unfair to the interviewees to try to summarize their thoughts, which usually reflect a mixture of sadness, nostalgia for pre-1914 Hungary, exasperation and indignation over what took place since the end of 1918, a concern for the Hungarian minorities, and comments on how their lot might be improved or how the legacy of Trianon might be overcome. While this survey is not representative, the views expressed show

that the change from dictatorship to freedom removed the restrictions which for almost forty years prevented learning and talking about Trianon. It was only after the political transformation that many younger people discovered that millions of Hungarians lived outside the country's borders, and their logical question was why? When the unity of Germany was restored, and, soon after, three multinational federations, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia fell apart (the latter two being the creations of the peace settlements of 1919 and 1920), quite a few Hungarians (especially in the successor states) hoped that the unity of the Hungarian nation could also be restored. What even many educated Hungarians did not realize was that it was not the borders that had changed, but their status: internal borders became international, and the border between the two Germanies became an internal one. Quite a few interviewees think that it was the fault (or the merit) of the Antall government that Hungary did not come forward with territorial claims, and most of them deplore the treaties Hungary concluded with its neighbours, in which territorial claims were mutually renounced. Few realize why a policy advocating border change would have been senseless, leading to dire consequences. It is the fault of the editor that he did not confront his interlocutors with this reality, nor did he draw attention to it in his summing up.

All those questioned gave honest answers to how they and their families were affected by Trianon, how they witnessed the unfair treatment of Hungarians in the successor states, how they divide the responsibility between the Great Powers and Hungary's neighbours, and what solutions they envisage for "the Hungarian question" which exists more than eighty years after the 1920 decision. No one believes that force should have been used, and only a few see the solution as lying in border rectifications. But all, including Francis Fejtő, the renowned Hungarian-French author, agree that there is an urgent need to induce Hungary's neighbours to grant self-government, a form of autonomy to their Hungarians. Only one, a retired colonel (István Ugrai) believes that Hungary should not raise this issue. There are telling details (in the form of personal accounts by Csaba Skultéty, István Garai, Endre Sipos and Attila Csáji) about what has happened since 1918, and particularly in the dramatic 1940s, in the territories inhabited mainly by Hungarians but detached from Hungary. In discussing the strength and deep roots of a type of blind hatred towards the Hungarians held by so many among the nations around Hungary, emphasis is rightly placed on the role of a distorted and falsified version of history. Far less harmful, but also deplorable, is the "little knowledge" some of the interviewed persons show about the West, about the role which Western Europe and the United States played in the 1920 and 1947 peace treaties, and in the Sovietization of Central and Eastern Europe. The most typical example is Kornél Döbrentei, an acclaimed, controversial poet, who thinks that "the West" (and its unpatriotic Hungarian agents) are directly responsible for the break-up of Hungary, the imposition of communism, the country's present political, economic and military weakness, as well as the deplorable mental state of the country. There is more justification for the criticism levelled at the West for its failure, since 1990, to promote the protection of the rights of the Hungarian and other national minorities, and particularly their demands for autonomy. If all the post-Communist Hungarian governments had been consistent in explaining how much an autonomous and satisfied national minority contributes to stability, we might have less tension and more genuine friendship between the countries of Central Europe.

While some of the interviewees show much common sense in addressing complex and controversial issues (I would single out Csaba Skultéty, Lajos Borda and Attila Csáji), the two Socialist politicians (Iván Vitányi and László Donáth, who is also a Lutheran pastor) downplay the relevance of Trianon for our days. The editor's final essay is a fair summary of the views expressed, and his conclusions are largely logical, as on the importance of discussing the past and knowing its repercussions. I also agree that there is much exaggeration in the fears about Hungarians being "too much" interested in their past, in their culture, being too proud of their achievements. Such an attitude is all to often a folly. It is a pity, however, that Szidiropulosz himself nurtures some false ideas about how and why Hungary was so severely treated in 1920, and why the Hungarian minorities have not received more understanding for their grievances.

Hungarians often deplore how little is known about them and their justifiable complaints in the West. Better informed Hungarians often see definite ill-will towards them and identify the person and activities of the British journalist and publicist turned historian, R.W. Seton-Watson, still remembered in Central Europe by his pen-name, Scotus Viator,[5] as one of the main culprits responsible for a prejudiced view of Hungary's history and of the relationship between Hungarians and their neighbours. Somewhat less famous is his younger colleague and rival, C.A. Macartney, in the twentieth century the foremost British authority on Hungary and its neighbours. (Between 1939 and 1943, he regularly addressed the Hungarian public in Hungarian on the BBC.) A comparative analysis of the two and their writings, much of which also focus on Trianon and the possibilities of the revision of its territorial clauses, has been successfully and impartially accomplished by a young historian, Ágnes Beretzky.

Those familiar with Seton-Watson's work know him as the indefatigable champion of the Czechs, Slovaks, Romanians and Serbs. Few are aware that at the outset of his career he was an enthusiastic supporter of the Hungarians, and of the '48-er Party of Independence. It was the short-sighted policy of the Hungarians towards the non-Hungarian minorities which turned Seton-Watson into a harsh (and often partisan) critic of pre-1918 Hungary and of the policies of practically all its governments. While Seton-Watson's activities until 1920 have received much attention from historians, Ágnes Beretzky breaks fresh ground by giving a critical assessment of his mainly scholarly activities in the 1920s and 30s. She is right, and not a biased Hungarian, in pointing out that, although Seton-Watson was disappointed in the policies of Romania and Serbia, he was not upset that Czechoslovakia had not given autonomy to the Slovaks and the Rusyns, and had opposed even minor border rectifications in favour of Hungary. His *History of the Roumanians* (1934) was strangely uncritical of the nationalist distortions common in Romanian historiography. His very negative view of Horthy and his governments never changed, although he did show some understanding towards the complaints of the Hungarian minorities. (That aspect

5 ■ The best account of Seton-Watson's role in the history of Central Europe was written by his two sons, Hugh and Christopher Seton-Watson: *The Making of a New Europe: R.W. Seton-Watson and the Last Years of Austria-Hungary* (London, Methuen, 1981). For a summary of his activities related to Hungary, see Géza Jeszenszky: "The Hungarian Reception of Scotus Viator", *Hungarian Studies*, 5/2 (1989), pp. 147–165.

might have been given more emphasis by Beretzky.) During the Second World War, Seton-Watson worked for the Political Intelligence Department and gave full support to the short-sighted policies of Eduard Beneš. When his old "friend and ally", Oszkár Jászi, asked him in November 1945 to stand up against the appaling Czechoslovak policy against the Hungarian minority, Seton-Watson apparently remained silent. Seton-Watson lived to see how the Soviet Union destroyed independent Central Europe, for which he had sacrificed so much of his time, talent and wealth.

Extending all the way from Arnold Toynbee to many experts on Central Europe, there is a widespread belief that C.A. Macartney was the counterweight to Seton-Watson, a somewhat biased pro-Hungarian author. Beretzky brings convincing evidence that it was not so, that Macartney was right when he told me personally, "The difference between Seton-Watson and myself was that he saw through the Hungarians, while I saw through all the peoples of Central Europe." Beretzky shows how close Macartney's views were to Seton-Watson's until the mid-thirties, and how critical he, too, was of the social and political conditions of inter-war Hungary. Notwithstanding that, extensive studies and travels led Macartney to advocate the revision of the Treaty of Trianon, by making the borders correspond to ethnic realities. That led to a dramatic break between the two in October 1938. Macartney, like most contemporary politicians and experts in Western Europe and in the U.S., welcomed the re-annexation of Subcarpathia (today's Carpathian Ukraine) by Hungary in March 1939, but disapproved of the Second Vienna Award, returning Northern Transylvania to Hungary—mainly because it strengthened Hungary's indebtedness to the Axis, but also because Macartney thought that the only equitable solution for the problem of Transylvania was independent statehood. Macartney worked for the British government until May 1946, writing 143 memoranda and 186 talks for the BBC on current issues in Central Europe, with particular reference to Hungary. Naturally, he was highly critical of Hungary's involvement in the war, but was aware how strong Anglophile sentiment was among educated Hungarians, and he tried to build upon that. It was for this reason that his radio talks were suspended in July 1943, mainly due to representations from Beneš and his British supporters (Mihály Károlyi also shares responsibility). To the very end of the war, and right until the decisions about the borders of Hungary were made, Macartney worked for a fair and just peace settlement and against the new phase of appeasement surrendering the eastern half of Europe to the Soviet Union. Faced with failure, he resigned and returned to scholarly life at All Souls in Oxford. His two most important books, *October Fifteenth, A History of Hungary, 1929–1945* (Edinburgh, 1957) and *The Habsburg Empire, 1790–1918* (Oxford, 1968) are the best tributes to his talents and impartiality. Although Communist Hungary deprived him of his membership of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1949, at least in his last years, in the 1970s, he was welcomed back by the leading historians of Hungary, and the shameful decision of the Academy was rescinded.

While the problems of Central Europe no longer arouse heated debate in Britain, the tensions created by the Treaty of Trianon persist. In Hungary one political camp continues to feel very strongly about those issues, while those in the opposing camp call this reaction irresponsible and dangerous. Zeidler's introduction points out that while professional historians now tend to dispute only minor details about the 1918–20 period, politicians and the interested public tend to politicize the

discussions and show little interest in historical accuracy.[6] The present writer can only agree with Zeidler that

> the divergence of political borders and ethnic dividing lines in Central Europe gives ground to grave political problems. That is an indication of the fact that neither the Trianon peace treaty, nor the various political efforts that transpire have been able to find a satisfactory solution to those problems, although to do so is a common interest and a common task. That's why Trianon could not find its final and exclusive place in historical tradition, but continues to remain a part of politics. This state is likely to endure until state borders continue to have high significance, until policies initiated by the national majority continue to discriminate against the national minorities, and until all the nations concerned overcome the chronic social-psychological trauma of hoping for or fearing territorial changes.[7]

Genuine reconciliation and friendship between the peoples who live in and around the Carpathian Basin is highly desirable, and Hungary is sincerely committed to it. It is to be hoped that the high principles guiding the European Union, and membership in it both of Hungary and all her neighbours, will eventually help to overcome passions and prejudices. Hungarians living around the state of Hungary should be able to live in peace and prosperity in the coming centuries in the lands of their ancestors. Local self-government, autonomies on the model of South Tyrol, would lay the Trianon Peace to rest. ❧

6 ■ A typical example is Gábor Koltay's "documentary" film *Trianon,* which drew crowds despite or, rather, because of the many mistaken interpretations in its presentation of history.
7 ■ Zeidler: *Trianon,* p. 11.

Miklós Györffy

In The Dark

László Márton: *Minerva búvóhelye* (Minerva's Hide-out).
Pécs, Jelenkor, 272 pp.

A military commander of the time said, in an important moment of his life, that delay is death itself. His point we understand and have no argument with. When practising our own trade (which entails far fewer casualties), however, we see otherwise: going all the way down detours, immersion in detail, consideration of all the various aspects—in one word, delay—is life itself.

The trade in question, and in which delay is life, is narration. Such is the comment of the narrator on his own narration in the quasi-historical novel *Minerva's Hide-Out*. From our knowledge of László Márton's earlier works, we may be justified in assuming that the narrator is also the author's mouthpiece.

The historical time in which *Minerva's Hide-Out* takes place is specified as the year 1844, and the setting, reconstructed from authentic contemporary sources, is Linz in Upper Austria. There are major and minor characters who all come with their own stories, and these are entwined well enough to provide some sort of plot—even though at the end this does not turn out to be so. All in all, everything is more or less in place for a standard historical novel to emerge, except for the fact that the formula is disrupted throughout by detours, delays, logic-chopping and commentary.

However 'realistic' the illusion of the story is, however credible and 'novelistic' the characters and events are, the protagonist of *Minerva's Hide-Out* is the narrator himself. In more than one sense of the word, he is above his narrative: at times he surveys the scene from above, for example from one of the balloons that often appear overhead; at other times he looks back on the events from a future that extends to our own days. He projects present conditions onto the Linz of 1844 and even 'intimates' to one character what will happen there almost a hundred years later, at the time of the *Anschluss*. He insists on providing authentic and verifiable historical facts and he also arbitrarily modifies them. His protagonist, Johann B., is a Hungarian poet (easily identifiable as János Batsányi), who had been involved in Hungarian Jacobinism and had spent most of his life abroad—first in Vienna, then in an Austrian prison, then in exile in Paris. Eventually the Austrian police minister designates Linz as his compulsory place of residence and here he has been living

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reviews new fiction for this journal.

for several decades. Of his wife, another well-documented contemporary, "Gabriele B.", a noted poet whose poems were set to music by Schubert, the narrator has "an awkward confession to make: at the time of our story she is actually no longer with us; in fact, as she died in the summer of 1839, she has been dead for close to five years. We have, however, extended her life and have arranged so that she is just about to set out on her way on the Landstrasse towards Main Square..." The full eclipse of the sun, which plays an important role in the novel, actually took place on 8 June 1842, "however, we arrange things so that in this story it happens on this very day, a short time after the angelus bell."

On one occasion, the narrator opines that

> some of our fellow writers deal out miracles in their works generously, as though they were emperors ascending the throne and throwing coins among the people... As far as we are concerned, we do not follow suit, however great our admiration may be when reading them... Making connections perceivable engages our attention to such an extent that we cannot, nor will we try, to make the reader believe in miracles.

This position is that of the contemporary 'realist' writer who believes in scientific progress and seeks rational explanations for everything and, accordingly, relates an authentic story. On the other hand, it is the playful attitude of a post-modern author of our own day, who dons the mask of an old narrative tradition so as to impart to the reader that he, in fact, is fond of miracles and symbols as a means of ironically suggesting hidden connections. Márton's narrator is thus inside and outside his story; he takes himself seriously as a narrator of authentic historical facts, while ironically questioning his own competence and reliability.

The 'delay', the doubts, the detours and the arbitrariness on the part of the narrator all result from the fact that the story he tries to relate does not round out as a story, however hard he tries. The story of Johann B. is the story of a man whose life has somehow gone astray. He is punished and his life is ruined because "it was impossible to condemn him and it was also impossible to release him." Here we may recall the first sentence of Kafka's *The Trial*: "Someone must have been telling lies about Josef K., for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning." There is indeed a reference in *Minerva's Hide-Out* to the doorkeeper's scene in *The Trial*. Johann B.'s trials are just as absurd as Josef K.'s. Attracted to the ideas of the French Revolution, the young poet was first imprisoned in the fortress of Kufstein because of his chance acquaintanceship with an informer who pretended to be a Jacobin conspirator and who denounced him, while he in turn failed to denounce the informer. The second time he found himself imprisoned in Spielberg was because the Austrian police wanted to find a culprit for a crime against the state, although it was not certain that such a crime had taken place. Someone had translated from French into Hungarian the proclamation Napoleon addressed to the Hungarians after he occupied Vienna. Johann B., who had fled Vienna in 1809 and, after the fall of Napoleon, had been seized in Paris, was charged with doing the translation, although some people at court thought it would be a serious political blunder to condemn anyone for the translation of a proclamation from one language to another. It eventually turns out, too late, at the end of Johann B.'s life, that the translator was a Viennese teacher by the name of József Márton. The reader may rightly suspect some connection with the author. All the more so as Márton's narrator calls the Jacobin informer, who

appears in some sources as Martinovics, by the name of Mártonffy. For that matter, the author apparently enjoys harping on secret connections that can be divined from certain proper and common names, mythological motifs; as a variation on the theme of the "translation" lurking throughout the story, he analyses the telling Hungarian meanings of German personal and place names.

When all is said and done, Johann B. "was punished throughout his life instead of a shadow". Never actually sentenced, he suffered the consequences of his 'not being sentenced' throughout his life. This absurd situation gives rise to another absurd situation in the present time of the action, which for a time seems to be a real complication in the plot, but then turns out not to be so. A Hungarian member of the Diet, Ödön Beöthy (another historical figure) arrives in Linz from Pozsony (Bratislava) by steamboat; the governor and the chief constable of the province of Linz suspect that he intends to contact the eighty-one-year-old Johann B. to further some conspiracy. However, Beöthy "was in Linz simply because under no circumstance did he want to be in Pozsony", where the Hungarian Diet was then sitting. His reasons are purely political: he does not want to vote for a motion before the Diet, nor does he want to vote against it. When it turns out that nothing has happened apart from the fact that Beöthy has availed himself of the services of the governor's former mistress, all that is left to be done is to describe the eclipse of the sun. That the narrator leaves to an authentic contemporary witness, who follows the exciting event from a high vantage-point, the spire of the church of the Ursulines.

But why *Minerva's Hide-Out*? Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, appears in the book in several guises, to find shelter eventually in the head of the recluse Johann B. In the opinion of an enlightened physician, this obsession is a symptom of a brain tumour, and in another sense it may be interpreted as wisdom fleeing the world to take refuge in the exiled poet's head. In 1790, Batsányi wrote a famous poem, "The Seer", in which he predicted that the world would be renewed "ere the century rises to its climax." Five and a half decades later, the world is renewed at the most in that it has changed, having banished the ideas of the century of the Enlightenment. Knowledge and wisdom have been confined to a hide-out and, as likely as not, have stayed there to this day. This hide-out might as well be the novel *Minerva's Hide-Out* by Márton, whose narrator commands an imposing knowledge of his subject and of narration. Whether this knowledge is worth anything, that is left up to the reader. ❧

George Gömöri

Through British Eyes

Peter Unwin: *1956: Power Defied.* Wilby, Norwich, Michael Russell, 2006, 256 pp. Victor Sebestyen: *Twelve Days: Revolution 1956.* London, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2006, 340 pp., with photographs

The Hungarian market has been flooded by books on 1956; books discussing this momentous year have also been published in the United Kingdom. Some of these were translations from other European languages, others written in English. The two rather different books reviewed here fall into the second category: the first written by an ex-diplomat and amateur historian, the other by a journalist. Their strengths and shortcomings in some ways are connected with their respective author's original training and experiences.

Peter Unwin joined the Foreign Office in the summer of 1956, just a few months before the Suez crisis. Later he served in Hungary, first from 1958 to 1961 and then as Her Majesty's Ambassador from 1983 to 1986. One of Unwin's sons was baptised by Cardinal Mindszenty, at that time a long-term "guest" of the American Legation. After the change of regime, he published a book on Imre Nagy, Prime Minister of the 1956 Revolution, a book that was also translated into Hungarian.[1]

From this short introduction it is clear that he knows Hungary well and is particularly well informed about modern Hungarian history.

1956: Power Defied, however, is not only about Hungary, but about the whole year which in many ways changed the world and the future of Communism in Europe. Unwin lists (even before the title-page) the ten most important political events of 1956 and devotes one or more chapters to each. His narrative is roughly chronological, geographically comprising the whole world, including events in Algeria and Cuba, yet the focal points seem to lie either in Eastern Europe or in the Middle East. In a sense the culmination of the year's events is the Hungarian revolution and the Suez crisis, happening at the same time, in the second half of October 1956.

Peter Unwin mixes personal reminiscences and cool political analysis in a way which is interesting, though sometimes slightly disconcerting. Chapters 1 and 3 are rather personal, while Chapter 2 is entitled

1 ■ *Voice in the Wilderness: Imre Nagy and the Hungarian Revolution,* London, 1992; *A pusztából kiáltott szó. Nagy Imre és a magyar forradalom,* Trans. by Zsófia Dobrás, Budapest, Héttorony,1993.

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"The World in the Fifties", and chapters 4 and 5 discuss the "Middle East Cauldron" and Colonel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal. We have to wait nearly a hundred pages to read about the all-important Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party and its consequences. Unwin sees its significance not so much in the Congress itself as in Nikita Khrushchev's secret speech which "reversed the whole official account of the Soviet Union's history". While it could be interpreted as a shrewd tactical move from a man who in the 1930s in the Ukraine carried out Stalin's cruellest orders, it certainly confirmed Khrushchev's position as the leader of reforms within the Soviet leadership. What he did not reckon with was the effect of his revelations on the 'friendly' East European countries, especially those which had had their native Communist leaders eliminated in Stalin's purges: the Poles and (because of Béla Kun's execution in 1939) the Hungarians. Unwin does not say this, but it is a well-known fact that Boleslaw Bierut survived the purges because he was in a Polish jail, as did Mátyás Rákosi who, until 1940, had been in a Hungarian prison. While some of the anti-Stalinists in these two countries were upset about more than the liquidation of Communist leaders who had fled to Moscow, I think this fact also played a role in the disruption of Party unity both in Poland (and perhaps to a lesser extent) in Hungary.

Peter Unwin is right in focusing attention on an essay of Imre Nagy's written in 1955 in which the then deposed Prime Minister argued that the Five Basic principles of Bandung "laid a mine under Moscow's rule in Eastern Europe" (p. 105). Before that moment, no East European Communist leader (save Tito of Yugoslavia) could have entertained the idea of neutrality. With the Austrian Peace Treaty of 1955, however, this suddenly became possible. In the last days of October Khrushchev asserted that if the Soviets did not reoccupy Hungary, it would be taken over "by the [Western] imperialists", but in fact this was a false argument. Neutral Austria would never have allowed a Western armed force to enter its territory. At the same time, Nagy was not taking into account the risk of siding quite openly with the Yugoslavs, a step which—in Soviet eyes—went much further than the tactical adjustments of Khrushchev vis-à-vis Tito in 1955–56.

The Suez crisis started with Nasser's nationalisation of the Canal in the summer of 1956. Unwin gives a detailed description of these developments. Although he maintains that the timing of the Anglo-French action did not depend on events in Eastern Europe, he tries to quantify the impact on Hungary of the military action in Egypt. According to him, the final Soviet decision to intervene a second time was "forty per cent caused by developments in Hungary itself, forty per cent by the impact of those developments on the Soviet Union, China and the satellites, and twenty per cent by Suez" (p. 216). Although this sounds like a fair assessment of the situation, we know now that Nagy's proclamation of Hungarian neutrality was not the cause but the effect of new, menacing Soviet troop movements, and the Soviet decision to attack for a second time had already been taken at the Central Committee meeting of October 30, hours after the Anglo–French ultimatum to Nasser had been issued. As the Soviets had no idea of how Eisenhower was going to react to Suez, they wanted to avoid "defeat on two fronts", in Egypt and Hungary. In other words, Suez was a rather important element in swinging the military behind the second, fatal intervention.

Unwin's political analysis is usually sound; he is also entertaining when describing his personal experiences, such as listening at the American Legation in Budapest to a sermon by Cardinal Mindszenty "in scarcely comprehensible

English" (pp. 179–180). The problems begin with his account of the Hungarian events of October 1956. Why did Rákosi choose László Rajk and not Imre Nagy as his "key traitor" in 1949? Because of Rajk's pre-war past, his service in the Spanish Civil War and following internment in France when he *could have been* in contact with U.S. intelligence; Nagy at that time was an emigré in Moscow and had good Russian contacts. Unwin keeps silent about this and also fails to mention the small student demonstration on October 6, 1956, which was a dress-rehearsal for the much bigger demonstation on the 23th. As for events on that latter, crucial day, he is strangely misinformed. "The students march begins, along the Buda bank of the Danube to the bridge that will take them into the heart of the city" (p. 122). While the students of the Technical University began their march at 3 p.m. they staged a silent demonstration on the Buda side and they never crossed any bridge before reaching General Bem's statue, also on the Buda side. The next passage describes the assembly at Petőfi's statue, organised by the students of all the Pest faculties of ELTE. They, by the way, also started *their* march at 3 o'clock and the two large marches joined together at Bem Square. The vagueness of Unwin's account of the Petőfi Square meeting is remarkable: "student orators recited [Petőfi's] poems and declaimed their political opinions" (p. 123). However, it was not a student but a well-known actor, Imre Sinkovits, who recited one of Petőfi's poems, the famous *National Song* of 1848, which helped to kick off the 1848 Pest Revolution. Moreover, no "political opinions" were declaimed at that point; most student demands were displayed on banners or shouted out on the march. What were these demands? We are not told. Maybe just anti-Communist "political opinions". Unwin also believes that the demonstrators on their way to General Bem's statue "passed Parliament on their way" (p. 123). They did not. It was from the statue that they streamed back to Kossuth Square, because there were no proper loudspeakers available at the first meeting point. And it was from the balcony of Parliament that a much surprised and hesitant Imre Nagy tried to address the crowd that evening; this happened at roughly the same time that another crowd managed to pull down Stalin's statue near the City Park, several miles away.

Unwin's account of the Republic Square Massacre (p. 134) is also unsatisfactory. While there is no way to justify mob violence, such as the horrific way in which some of the dreaded secret police, the ÁVH, were lynched after they came out of the building with a white flag, important details are missing from his narrative. First of all, not only members of the "armed gang", but some ambulance men were also hit from inside the building. Secondly, the defenders only gave up shooting after a Hungarian tank had pulverised half of the building. Most of the lynch mob did not belong to the armed groups that had fought the Russians earlier; quite a few of them had criminal records, so they certainly were *not* idealistic "freedom fighters". Every revolution gives a chance to sadistic individuals to kill—but to claim that that one terrifying incident tipped the balance for intervention in the Kremlin is a gross exaggeration.

Part of the explanation for Soviet intransigence over Hungary is provided by Khrushchev's domestic needs: he had to assert himself as a "strong" leader. A year later, after getting rid of the Molotov faction, he would probably have acted differently, but in the last months of 1956 he was more than willing to pose as a Stalinist. Unwin quotes an interesting but little known episode from the Kremlin's New Year's Eve Party of 1956–57 at which Khrushchev declared himself "a Stalinist in the consistency with which he fought for Communism" (p. 217). At which point one

recalls the question asked by some Frenchman (possibly Sartre) in 1956: "et qui saura destalinizer les destalinisateurs?"

Victor Sebestyen, we learn from the dust-jacket, was an infant when his family left Hungary as refugees (presumably in 1956). His book with the somewhat Baroque title of *Twelve Days, Revolution 1956, How the Hungarians Tried to Topple their Soviet Masters* is a curious mixture of good and sloppy journalism. Courtesy warrants that I should comment first on Sebestyen's achievement: his discussion of the twelve revolutionary days is informative, well-constructed and, on the whole, true to facts. It was a good idea to confront American, Soviet and Hungarian decision-making in each chapter devoted to each single day; this method reveals the extraordinary complexity of foreign reactions to events in Hungary. These chapters give an insight into Soviet wobbling and indecision over whether to stifle the revolution or give Imre Nagy a chance to control events and lay bare American hypocrisy and impotence at a moment when the policy of 'liberation' faced its moment of truth. The Soviets overestimated the influence of the CIA on events in Budapest and the Americans underestimated Soviet willingness to destroy their 'peace-loving' image by unleashing their tanks against a small and until then 'friendly' Socialist country. Sebestyen is also right in pointing out that "the steely Soviet Ambassador [in Hungary], Andropov, was beginning to play a vital role in suppressing the revolution" (p. 178). There were moments when Andropov's opinion mattered more in the Kremlin than the reports sent back to Moscow by their emissaries to Budapest, Suslov and Mikoyan. Andropov never trusted and, in all probability, personally disliked Imre Nagy.

Sebestyen is also right (similarly to another Hungarian-born author, Charles Gati) in his criticism of Radio Free Europe. Apparently, the CIA-funded radio's moderate line of reporting changed on the day of the October 28 ceasefire "almost as though the broadcasters did not want the truce to hold"(p.181). It is also clear that Radio Free Europe did everything possible to undermine Imre Nagy's position. Its broadcasters acted irresponsibly, urging the insurgents (who never numbered more than a few thousand) to achieve a military victory and, then, after the November 4 Soviet attack, to hold out because "help is on the way". Eisenhower had totally different concerns: wanting to be re-elected, he was unable to help the Hungarian uprising, and UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld flew to Cairo instead of Budapest. Many years later Denis Healey wrote in is memoirs: "The Hungarian tragedy was all the more agonizing for me because the Suez affair distracted NATO at the critical moment from attempting to dissuade Khrushchev from sending the Red Army into Budapest."[2]

Once again, the 'distraction' of Suez changed heavily the odds against the survival of the Hungarian experiment, the revolution groping towards a Third Road.

Now let us look at the debit side. It is irritating to read Sebestyen's journalistic clichés applied both to political situations and the characterization of personalities. Hungary was not an "aristocratic society" before the Second World War in spite of the large landholdings of the Esterházys and the Pallavicinis. I do not think historians would agree with the statement that "from the 1930s, with Horthy's blessing, Hungary became increasingly Nazified" (p. 8). If this were true, the Germans would have had no reason to invade Hungary on March 19, 1944. Also

2 ■ Denis Healey: *When Shrimps Learn to Whistle.* London, 1990, p. 96.

untrue is Sebestyen's allegation (p. 28) that Hungarian Communists insisted on using the term "collective farms"; in fact, they always took great care to refer to them as *"termelőszövetkezet"* or TSz ("producers' association"). The siege of Budapest in 1944–1945 did not last three months (p. 269): Pest fell after less than one month's bombardment and Buda on February 14, a matter of seven weeks at the most.

Sebestyen also has an annoying habit of applying snappy adjectives to some of his characters. Imre Mező, who died in the Republic Square Massacre, is first characterized as "plump" and "cheerful"; Zoltán Vas is described as "moustached" (p. 184). I met him once: Vas wore glasses, but had no moustache. The poet László Benjámin, whom I have also met several times, was neither "small", nor "bespectacled" (p. 82) and while Sebestyen might not have heard his name ("a poet... few Hungarians had previously heard of"), the fact that he won the Kossuth Prize some years earlier and for some years was the regime's most trusted Socialist poet, might have made him more than a little known in Hungary. (In those days, I once heard a poem of his recited on Radio Free Europe.)

There are also grave factual mistakes in Sebestyen's book. The 'best' of these is confusing Catholic Archbishop József Grősz and Communist Party boss Károly Grósz (p. 36), claiming that Poznan is "an industrial town on the Baltic coast" and that the Poznan riots were put down by Soviet troops (p.99). The junior diplomat in Egypt who was arrested and eventually executed as a spy was not Zoltán Tildy's son, as Sebestyen claims (p.164), but his son-in-law. Heroes' Square was not "dominated by a giant bronze statue of Stalin" (p. 118) for the statue stood about half a kilometre further to the East. "Freedom Hill" in Buda was never called "Szabadhegy" (p. 265), only "Szabadsághegy" (now it is once again "Svábhegy").

Connected with this sloppiness in providing reliable information is the staggering amount of misspellings in this book, both in the text and notes entitled "Sources". In a book of over 300 pages, one can tolerate some mistakes, but here they are just teeming; some of them even sound rather funny in Hungarian. At one point (p. 67) even Premier Imre Nagy's name is misspellt, but so are Lieutenant-Colonel Gyula Princz's (several times) and Attila Szigethy's (seven times). The real fun begins when Sebestyen tries to spell "Szuhakálló" and manages "Szukahalló" (translated back into English: "Hi, Bitch!"), or when he gives the title of the newspaper of the Hungarian police, he thinks it was called *Magyar Randor.* It gets even worse in the notes, where I have found a Hungarian sentence, consisting of two authors' names plus the book title (note 11 in Chapter Seven), which has, believe it or not, eight misspellings. Considering this, I would not have expressed achnowledgements to his "wise editor" at Weidenfeld's, Ion Trewin, who obviously saw no reason to have the MS checked by someone who speaks Hungarian. This is a shame, for the book, as I have said, does have its values. Let us hope for a second, corrected, edition. ❧

Péter Hahner

A Fitting Commemoration

Attila Szakolczai (ed.): *1956*. Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 2006, 775 pp.

With the publication of the successive volumes in Osiris Kiadó's 'Nation and Memory' series, one of the most interesting general syntheses of Hungarian history is taking shape, piece by piece, before our eyes. These volumes assemble the most important historical sources of a period, along with the views and comments of as many active participants, contemporaries, public figures, scholars and artists as possible; they thus simultaneously present the changes undergone by the picture of an age. These volumes acquaint the reader with an event, as best the current state of knowledge allows, but they also show how that event has been seen in other historical eras, from the most varied viewpoints: through the eyes of witnesses, memoir writers, those who deliver commemorative addresses, politicians, scholars, or even people with a joke to tell, if it comes to that. With this variegated (and at times conflicting) compilation of sources, the publisher is certainly not seeking to validate some kind of "post-modern" approach under the banner of an "anything goes" principle. For one thing, the volumes in the 'Nation and Memory' series first point to the data that can be substantiated, and to the facts and chronologies that are beyond dispute. Only then do they go into the varying interpretations of those facts, their interconnections and consequences; not surprisingly, these differ according to the interpreters' knowledge, ideology and purposes. Thus edited, readers are protected from the temptation to take up simplified, one-sided positions and may be encouraged into thinking for themselves and forming their own opinions. At the very least, they will most certainly be alerted to the fact that history is never written "definitively", but is constantly rewritten from different angles.

Half of this latest, nearly 800-page addition to the series comprises documents. For a presentation of the history of other periods that might well be overdoing it, but it is readily acceptable when the subject is the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. For one thing, we still do not know enough about this often-traduced event; for another, it will do the younger generation no harm to be given a sense of the climate of the early 1950s. And what could summon up the climate of Hungary's Stalinist era better than having Stalin's obituary passed as an Act of Parliament? It was a bright idea to open the book with this stomach-turning reminder of institutionalised bootlicking.

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The editor has done an excellent job of selecting the most characteristic documents of the period. Thus, we can read, for instance, how Lavrenti Beria, so well-known for humaneness, condemns the maltreatment of Hungarian political prisoners, and how Mátyás Rákosi, Stalin's Hungarian satrap, kow-tows to him while alive but later "exposes" him after Beria himself is arrested. There are points where a plain statistic on its own can be shattering: in decreeing a general amnesty following the Stalinist terror in Hungary in 1953, the Ministry of the Interior mentions a figure of *"approx.* 748,000" individuals who were supposedly being pardoned. That *"approx."* is a nice touch: no slouches they—almost one in ten of Hungary's population was doing time in prison, and that was that: why should the Interior Ministry bother to keep a more accurate count? At the end of the report, though, it turns out that they have counted over 10,000 more than there should be, but they provide an explanation for that as well. János Kádár could be just as cavalier when it came to figures. In December 1957 he said: "They have now sentenced I don't know how many, six-and-a-half or seven thousand, and now we hear about 9,800. We spoke about how it would have been much better to condemn five or six hundred people to death, then there would have been 30,000 fewer people to lock up in prison. We spoke about how it would be useful to continue the discussion about this main issue" (p. 401). No doubt they did continue the discussion.

It gives pause that even in 1956 working men could still sometimes ask leading politicians "Is there any prospect of women being exempted from work in the near future?" Which means they still thought in terms of a world in which a single income would provide for the whole family. When, one wonders, did they give up on that pipe dream? I simply cannot imagine anyone posing the same question nowadays.

To what sort of hidden regularity can one ascribe the fact that once dictatorial regimes have broken the back of a country's people, they then proceed to put the language on the rack? Has anyone examined the jargon used by the Communist party as thoroughly as Victor Klemperer analysed the Nazis' use of language? It would be well worth doing so, because there were some Communists who were simply incapable of speaking grammatically or who at other times were overcome by a mania for coining new words. Khrushchev, for example, attacked Rákosi by saying "What is making headway in your country is barge politics!" Oh yes, that was precisely what was wrong with Rákosi—his confounded barge politics. The documents that are collected here bring out very well that it was not just a struggle between political factions that was being fought out in Hungary between 1953 and 1956, but also a battle by writers and journalists for rational thinking and proper expression—against the primitive use of the language of entrenched stupidity and devious malice.

It is fascinating to read the answers that György Marosán gave in response to questions put to him by the workers of the Cable and Wire Rope Works: "I shall make a report about this matter to the Politburo... This sounds like the voice of the enemy." In other words, this representative of the "Workers' Party" is threatening to inform on, and calling enemies, the very workers in whose name he is supposed to be wielding power. How elegant, shrewd and manly of him. And then we have the truly famous promises. For instance, Kádár's reassuring radio talk about how Imre Nagy and his associates wished to leave the country, and "as the government of the People's Republic of Romania was willing to grant them asylum, they departed to Romanian territory on November 23rd. We have promised that we shall not start criminal procedures against them for their past grave actions that they too have acknowledged after the event.

What is more, we shall keep our word." Fine words, yet somehow words they failed to keep. The evident concern for legality is also touching: when the Soviet comrades recommend to Kádár and Ferenc Münnich that they set up a "revolutionary military people's tribunal", the Hungarian leaders were of the opinion that they would have difficulty getting the presidential council to accept that as legal. In their view, a simple court martial would be "a judicial organ having sufficient authority in the eyes of the people for a sentence of death by hanging or shooting to have the necessary effect on the country". It is sobering to become acquainted with such meditative flights of the one-time leaders who governed Hungary for decades and whom some are still willing to praise even now. The writer István Eörsi, who in innumerable articles exposed the base on which Kádár's consolidation rested, was right to say that in vain do the lies come to light, in vain does it become blindingly obvious that the emperor has no clothes; there will always be someone who reckons that the tailoring at the back looks snazzy.

I am unable to adopt the same ironic tone when it comes to writing about the documents that stem from the days of the Revolution itself. All I can say is that while reading them, I suddenly felt hot and cold chills all over. It is simply impossible to study this event dispassionately as one can the constitutional debates of Hungary's Reform Age in the 1830s and 40s, or the country's 1867 Compromise with its Habsburg rulers. Many of us live on the sites of the events, knew the actors personally and have our own experiences of the consequences. It is our story too. Generations of French historians had been arguing over their own Revolution for two centuries before François Furet could declare in the title of one of his essays that "The French Revolution is Over", because the majority on both the left and the right had reached agreement on which of the Revolution's accomplishments they were able to accept. One wonders when it will be possible to say the same about the Hungarian Revolution.

The illustrations in the volume have been judiciously chosen, avoiding as they do the familiar photographs that have been published innumerable times in favour of less well-known, and all the more telling, shots. Thus, the portrait of Ernő Gerő and his icy, toad-like gaze or Voroshilov's dull-witted face are every bit as unforgettable as the shot of a Hungarian officer painting the Kossuth coat of arms onto his tank, or one of the corpse of a nurse lying in Rákóczi Avenue, with her opened ID booklet carefully placed on her chest. And how many genuinely happy, smiling faces are to be seen among those taking part in youth assemblies; one wonders what became of them a few months later. Another successful idea was to juxtapose two *Time* covers: the first, from 1956, is of a Hungarian freedom fighter, the magazine's "Man of the Year"; the second, from 1957, is of a smile-wreathed Khrushchev. The two pictures are a good reflection of the contradictory aims of a section of the Western press, which wanted to have it both ways, both by paying homage to the Hungarian revolutionaries who had been left in the lurch but also making a friendly gesture towards the Soviet leadership. They were just as quick to forget that Vice-President Richard Nixon called Khrushchev "the butcher of Budapest". The pictures also demonstrate how methodically the Russians blew Budapest to bits in 1956. As Uncle Kohn, the eternal figure in Budapest Jewish jokes put it: "Well, I never! It's a good thing they were our friends. Just think how it would have been if they were our enemies!"

The second part of the book includes personal memoirs, which in more than a few cases are just as shattering as the documents. The editor has been at pains to ensure that readers are given a comprehensive picture in both geographic and political terms. Thus, alongside Budapest,

one also has the chance to learn about the sometimes no less harrowing incidents that took place in the provinces, and a voice is given to those who opposed the Revolution as well as those who supported it.

I was delighted to find that articles by Hannah Arendt and Raymond Aron are included among the pieces by foreigners who wrote on the revolution, though I rather missed one by Albert Camus, who wrote an unforgettably moving foreword to a book that refuted the accusations levelled against Imre Nagy. Sadly, there were too few Western European left-wingers and liberals who were not duped by Soviet propaganda, for even a few lines to be quoted from the more famous. I am likewise sorry that the editor chose to restrict his choice of literary texts to prose, for I simply cannot believe that Gyula Illyés's emblematic poem, "A Sentence about Tyranny", and other, in those days sensational poems, would have "strained the space constraints" referred to in the book's Introduction.

It was gratifying, however, to find snippets by Imre Szenes, Ervin Hollós and Co., as it will not harm today's young to learn something about the voices of "official" Hungary in the years between 1956 and 1989. To take just one example, a passage by János Berecz, who in 1966 was elected to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on the strength of a work he wrote about the 1956 "counter-revolution" and went on to climb ever higher in the Party hierarchy during the Seventies and Eighties: "Hungarian workers demonstrated with many deeds that they looked on the Soviet soldiers as their helpers and comrades. There was more than one case where squads of factory guards provided armed support for actions by Soviet soldiers, or hurried to the aid of hard-pressed smaller Soviet units." There's nothing to beat international collaboration, is there?

To sum up, it is fair to say that Attila Szakolczai and his assistants at Osiris offer readers a thoughtfully edited and reliable reference work which makes for a riveting read and boasts a superlative set of illustrations. There are appropriate footnotes to draw readers' attention to lapses in memory or deliberate "misrepresentations" by those who are recalling events, and the long, detailed bibliography is a good guide to the ever-growing 1956 literature. It is to be welcomed that the index of names includes potted biographies of the leading figures and more famous personalities. And it is a mark of the care taken in editing that I did not notice a single misprint in a volume of nearly 800 pages.

The decision to include a selection of the typical jokes and ditties of the era was a masterstroke. For those who were alive at the time, these constituted the one weapon the vanquished had to strike a blow against the victors, a blow that can still be felt to this day. Two versions of a revolutionary "Our Father" are included, both of which start off "Our Father Khrushchev, which art in the Kremlin..." and end "... for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. But not for ever and ever." That was one prophecy which, admittedly none too quickly, did at least come true.

I can personally vouch for the authenticity of one bit of doggerel that made the rounds by word of mouth (p. 415), though I knew it in a slightly different form. In 1956, we lived next door to the Lőrinc Spinning Works, and at the age of two, I apparently amused my parents by reciting a couplet that I learned from the workers on the other side of the fence: "One forint the piping-hot fried dough, János Kádár kiss my ass"—not "Piping-hot dough fried here..." as printed in the book. The version that I know not only scans better, but also fits better with the follow-up: "They're also one forint in Kalocsa, up your jacksie Marosán!" I must confess I don't recollect that bit, but no doubt it would have been asking too much of a two-year-old to memorise that as well. ❧

Judit Csáki

Public Smashes, Private Storms

Mátyás Sárközi: *The Play's the Thing: the Life of Ferenc Molnár.* London, White Raven Press, 2004, 166 pp.

"Ferenc Molnár has his ardent supporters and his outraged detractors," a critic once wrote, and the writer Gyula Krúdy was of much the same opinion even back in the 1930s. Molnár divided the critics, if not the public, from his very first successes onwards, and this was still reflected in the successive scenes of the arguments about him that rumbled on in Hungary during the early 1960s. The two camps might be summarised by saying, on the one hand, that Molnár was an innovator of plays for the Hungarian (indeed European) middle class in respect to their dramatic form and their dialogue; on the other hand, he was blamed for degrading playwright's work to a (globally) successful drama-factory and business enterprise, his works being nothing more than glittering surfaces with no depth, repetitive assemblages of transferable motifs. There is some truth to both sides of this somewhat simplified divide, but they are rather besides the essence of the matter.

The "essence" of Molnár surely lies in the personality. That at least is what the reader gathers from Mátyás Sárközi's biography of Molnár. In the classical life-and-works tradition it examines its subject's oeuvre alongside his life, the works with the man. Biographies of artists are in short supply in Hungary's book market these days, which is all the more curious given the otherwise conspicuous interest in non-fiction and the success that is enjoyed by one volume after another of diaries or correspondence, even the lives of politicians. As Molnár's grandson, however, Sárközi is able to tackle his subject's life and works from a privileged position. Recent years have seen the publication, for instance, of a substantial part of the correspondence of Márta Sárközi, the daughter of Molnár's marriage to Margit Vészi; there has also been a volume edited by Mátyás Sárközi, *Menedék* (Shelter), that delves thoroughly and with panache into the afterlife of *Válasz* (Response), a literary magazine which was suppressed in 1949. Ferenc Molnár crops up tangentially in both books, so one could say that the groundwork has been laid for a full-blown biography.

Published in London two years ago, Sárközi's book is aimed first and foremost at the non-Hungarian reader who wishes to know more about the author who gained world-wide fame as the writer of comedies that have retained their popularity to the present day, and the author of the ever popular *The Paul Street Boys* (often

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labelled—in my opinion wrongly—as a children's book). It must be a fairly substantial public, given the large number of productions of Molnár's plays that are currently running in Budapest theatres. Thus, the day on which I am writing these lines will see the first night of a new production of one of his rarely performed pieces, *Riviera* (1926,) and in the capital alone there are four other plays currently on offer. There is little doubt that Ferenc Molnár is the playwright who has been most frequently performed on Hungarian stages over the last half century. And to anyone who says with a dismissive wave of the hand that theatre directors put on his plays one after another purely with an eye to box office receipts, one can only remark that plays like *Liliom* (1909), which became widely known in Rogers and Hammerstein's musical version *Carousel,* or *The Glass Slipper* (1924), *The Play's the Thing* (1926) and *Violet* (1921), still regularly feature as examination pieces at Hungary's University of the Dramatic Arts.

Sárközi mentions that although he is a grandson of Molnár, as a boy he never got to know his grandfather, and this biography does not fall into the trap of giving a portrait seen through the rose-tinted spectacles of a devoted descendant. It is a work by a writer with literary skills in his own right, who, despite living in England for the last fifty years, has never lost interest in his native land. Besides, he has a gift for telling a story and a fine analytical eye.

Both these virtues have left their mark on this volume, which by and large follows the unwritten rules of the genre in tackling its subject chronologically and interweaving what was going on in the life with what was going on in the work, offering colourful commentaries and bringing in pertinent family legends. It nevertheless sticks to being an account, for Sárközi shrinks from offering assessments, or at least direct assessments, in regard to the person and his works. As far as the latter are concerned, he usually draws on contemporary critics or the public's responses for opinions ("Some Molnár specialists have condemned it [viz. *One, Two, Three,* 1930] for its shallow characterisation" or "Budapest did not like *The Red Mill* [1923]"); for the former, he cites how Molnár was perceived by friends and acquaintances ("The playwright Kálmán Csathó recalled in his memoirs that...", or "Molnár, who had a reputation for being thrifty, received a great many begging letters and, in most cases, he helped.") This is one way of bringing in all Budapest, not just the notables associated with the press and theatre, family and friends, but also colourful, albeit slightly exaggerated sketches of the socio-political conditions of the time. The lifestyle of the (upper) middle class, their networking rituals, hang-outs, style and way of thinking make up an impressive, entertaining and at times distinctly cinematographic panorama: one can picture the men puffing on their fat Havanas in the Fészek (Nest) Club, a favoured haunt for artists, or in an elegant dining room of a fashionable hotel, and it is to a large extent they who determined what to think about anything. True, these were still the "golden days" of the era before the Great War, but it strikes me as rather ill-advised to apply that same easy-going style to later periods. (To be fair, I should note that Molnár himself did not display any great sophistication in his judgements of what were complex political situations. It is clear from the letters cited by Sárközi that he was both an eccentric and egocentric individual who ordered his own life according to what he deemed to be in his own best interests. Thus it is entirely in keeping with Molnár's mentality that Sárközi observes: "Despite Mussolini, Molnár planned to remain in Italy for a while. After all, he loved the country...")

As for the personality, most particularly in his private life, Molnár was popular with women, but was quite unfitted for private

happiness. His first wife was Margit Vészi, an exceptionally gifted lady. She was the daughter of József Vészi, who, as editor in chief of the daily *Budapesti Napló* and the German-language *Pester Lloyd,* put a definitive stamp on Hungarian cultural life around the turn of the century. He can be credited with promoting a host of talented people, including, not least, Endre Ady, arguably the greatest Hungarian poet of the first half of the twentieth century. Vészi's daughter, Margit, was the muse for a cycle of poems that Ady entitled *Margita Wants to Live.* Having taken herself off to Paris, despite her father's disapproval, to study first painting then singing, she met the then dashing and as yet still light-hearted Ferenc Molnár at her parents' house in Dunavarsány. This led to a whirlwind romance that was only intensified by parental objections. Her father's apprehensions proved to be well-founded: Molnár was already well known for his roughness, and he had struck her even before they married, as he was to do on many subsequent occasions. Margit left her brutal husband before the birth of their daughter Márta and became a writer of sorts. Indeed, she was Hungary's first female war correspondent. Under her married name Márta Sárközi was to become the mother of this book's author and a writer in her own right, one of the leading lights of post-Second World War literary life in Hungary. The enduring gift that Margit received from Molnár was the rights to his play *Liliom.*

Ferenc Molnár's career took off like a rocket. From his start as a reporter for *Budapesti Napló,* he quickly established himself as a writer and dramatist, in no small measure thanks to József Vészi's eye for talent and subsequent backing. Meanwhile the other strand of his life was also gathering momentum: his inclination to preserve his independence even as he enjoyed living under the spell of a galaxy of female admirers. There can be little doubt that this played a role in pushing him into the arms of the theatre: when it comes down to it, that was the only thing to which he remained faithful to the end of his days.

The affair that Molnár conducted with Irén Varsányi, a celebrated actress of the Vígszínház (Comedy Theatre) company in Budapest and female lead in a string of his plays, represented a brief but all the more passionate intermezzo. She was unwilling to divorce her husband, but by then Molnár was captivated by the whole atmosphere of theatre life. His next love was Sári Fedák, the first true operetta prima donna. The talk of Budapest, this relationship was played out before a large audience, with the couple's private lives held up to public scrutiny. Molnár may not have found a suitable partner in the affair, littered as it was with rows and reconciliations, constant changes of living arrangements, ostentatious gifts and extravagant promises. He did at least have a worthy counterpart in Fedák. She was not disposed to drop the prima donna act in her private life, and she sought to dominate Molnár in the same way she dominated theatre directors, who always tried to please her by indulging her whims. A law unto herself, she could not abide men who were stronger than herself; whereas Molnár, for his part, always managed to preserve enough of the leeway he needed to lead life as he wanted. When Fedák tumbled to the fact that Molnár was paying court not just to every pretty chorus girl or would-be prima donna that crossed his path, but to one in particular, the highly talented Lili Darvas, she chose an odd means of breaking with him, which was to demand that he marry her.

Lili Darvas consequently had to wait until Molnár had divorced Fedák before she became his third wife. Meanwhile her star was in the ascendant, first at the Vígszínház, then with Max Reinhardt's company in Berlin, after which the only roles she was willing to take on back home in Hungary were in her husband's plays. It is likely that

Molnár truly did love her, as he made over to her the rights to two of his plays: *The Guardsman* (1910) and *The Swan* (1920). He may well have wanted to share a proper life with her, as during the 1930s he bought a splendid villa for precisely that purpose, but they never moved in. (Later on, Molnár's daughter was to live there with her husband, and that was where the author of the book was born.) Although both parties were in America at the outbreak of the Second World War, they were no longer really living together. Lili Darvas continued her career as an actress and lived her own life. There seems to have been what amounts to almost a business agreement between the pair, with Molnár putting up with Darvas's independence (and liaisons), in return for which she accepted, indeed smiled on, the presence by Molnár's side of Vanda Bartha, who was nominally his secretary but in truth more his live-in partner. Vanda seems to have been the only woman who was willing to tolerate all the fads of the by then ageing Molnár—at least for a while, because she eventually committed suicide. Molnár sincerely grieved the loss, writing the autobiographical volume *Companion in Exile* (1958) for and about her.

Try as he might to refrain from making explicit judgements, Mátyás Sárközi's delicate irony, throw-away remarks and choice of epithets leave little doubt about what he thinks. Yet rather than ramming it down his readers' throats, he prefers to let them form their own judgement, recognising that there is room for other ways of thinking about a particular work and this or that aspect of Molnár's character.

What we glimpse in this book is the face of a true playwrighting powerhouse, part genius and part craftsman, a composite of moments of inspiration and assembly-line output. The flip side of his life is likewise characterised by extremes of hedonism and wretchedness. Sárközi graphically describes how posh hotels and a life of luxury eventually palled for Molnár; how he climbed over anything and anyone to get the women he desired only to find himself, in the end, alone, staring blankly ahead in the bar of some swanky hotel like the Danieli in Venice. These dualities drove this impulsive, highly volatile writer almost compulsively to the writing desk, making him a true workaholic—or to be more precise, a slave to success.

Molnár knew how to write plays: he could do that better than anything else. He also knew how to write novels and short stories, to say nothing of the newspaper columns and reports that, as a born reporter, he had at his fingertips. All the same, there is little point in Sárközi telling us (or me at least) that *"The Green Hussar* ... is perhaps worthy of Maupassant," because the prose writing was more reliant on raw instinct (which is not to detract for a moment from the merits of a masterpiece like *The Paul Street Boys*), whereas Molnár knew inside out exactly what made a play work, both in principle and in practice: how it should build up, how characters should be constructed to hold their own, what makes for good dialogue. It surely cannot be by chance that possibly the most successful of all his plays is the one in which he lets precisely that cat out of the bag: *The Play's the Thing*.

Sárközi does not say so (it is not his job), but anyone reading the book may come to suspect that it was this supreme mastery that backfired on occasion. His conversancy with clichés and rules, abetted by the demands of theatre managers hungry for box-office hits, enabled him to pull together a new play with great facility, as a matter of routine, almost mechanically. I rather doubt Sárközi's suggestion that this could be put down to the sickly and ever pricklier Molnár simply burning out on moving to America. My belief is that the tendency to produce weak pieces alongside masterpieces was there from the very start, just as it was at the height of his career. ❧

Nándor Dreisziger

The Life and Times of Laura Polanyi Stricker

Judith Szapor: *The Hungarian Pocahontas: The Life and Times of Laura Polanyi Stricker, 1882–1959.* Boulder and New York: East European Monographs/ Columbia University Press, 2005. viii + 218 pages. 31 pages of photographs.

John Smith (1580–1631) of Jamestown fame was a hero of early American history. Tradition has it that when he was captured by the Indian chief Powhatan, he was saved by Powhatan's daughter Pocahontas. Smith had lived an adventurous and controversial life. Years before his stay in Jamestown, he had visited Hungary and had taken part in the bitter struggle that was going on between Christendom and the Ottoman Turks. Later, he wrote a book about his experiences, *The True Travels, Adventures, and Observations of Capitane Smith* (1630).

Unfortunately for Smith, his picaresque accounts of his travels on the frontier-lands of Western civilization had come under suspicion by the end of the nineteenth century. In particular, in 1890, the English scholar of Hungarian extraction Lewis Kropf pronounced Smith's *True Travels* the romantic scribblings of a picaroon who had probably never been to Eastern Europe. Laura Polanyi's claim to North American academic fame is that she refuted, with the passion of a crusader, Kropf's accusations and thereby rescued Smith from historiographical disrepute. If Pocahontas had saved Smith's life, Laura Polanyi Stricker saved his reputation.

Judith Szapor's work on Laura Polanyi is the biography of a remarkable woman who realized her academic ambitions only during the seventh and last decade of her life. The book is also the story of the extraordinary turn-of-the-nineteenth century Hungarian entrepreneur Mihály Pollacsek and of his five children, three of whom became scholars of world renown.

Of these children, Laura Matild was the first born. She had the good fortune of being born to parents of talent, ambition and respect for learning. Her father came from a long line of assimilated Jews who had been involved in Hungary's economic and commercial development for the better part of a century. Mihály became an entrepreneur himself, a railway contractor who provided the living standards enjoyed by Hungary's prosperous bourgeoisie for his family. This included governesses and private tutors for the children until they were ready for secondary school.

Nándor Dreisziger

arrived in Canada from Hungary in 1956. Since 1970 he has been teaching Canadian and European history at the Royal Military College of Canada. His research interests include the history of North America in wartime, Hungary before and during World War II, and Hungarians in North America.

What was unusual for this family was the background of Laura's mother, Cecile Wohl. She was the daughter of an enlightened rabbinic scholar from Vilna (Vilnius), from the Pale of Imperial Russia. Mihály met her in Vienna, where she was supposedly sent by her parents to make sure she did not get involved in the budding revolutionary movements of the Russian Empire. However, Cecile maintained contacts with Russian revolutionaries throughout her Viennese and Budapest years and bequeathed an exposure to Russian revolutionary ideologies to her children that would accompany some of them throughout their lives. Laura's mother had extraordinarily high social and intellectual pretensions and ambitions and was the supporter and friend of members of Budapest's intellectual, political and artistic avant-garde.

There can be no doubt that the "brilliant" and "creative" Cecile acted as an important role model for her daughter. Yet, Szapor argues that Laura's "systematic and analytic mind" was more reminiscent of her father. Her interests and her choices of subjects in school called for "steady work and promised no instant return" and would thus represent a departure from the "sometimes superficial interests and intellectual fireworks" of her mother (p. 53). As a young adult Laura would become involved in and work for cultural and political organizations, such as the moderate Association for the Education of Women and the more radical Hungarian Association of Feminists.

Mihály and Cecile Pollacsek gave Laura, as well as the other children, the best possible education money could buy. Laura attended first an elite, private, Lutheran boys' *gimnázium*. Next, she went to the newly established girls' *gimnázium* run by the National Association for Women's Education. She then entered university just as post-secondary education was opening up to young women.

The economic downturn that Hungary experienced in 1899 had both an immediate and a long-term impact on Laura's development. The downturn led to Mihály Pollacsek's Hungarian enterprises going bankrupt. He had to look for opportunities abroad, and he had to absent himself from Budapest for protracted periods. The family had to make do with less. More importantly, someone had to take over the running of the household, mama Cecile having never been a model housewife. Laura stepped in to fulfil that role. Her skill in solving complex problems would serve her family well at the time as it would in the years to come. The experience probably also confirmed in Laura the importance of a well-managed, close-knit family as the preeminent institution of society.

In 1904 she married Sándor Stricker, a well-to-do businessman with few scholarly pretensions, and settled down to life as a middle-class housewife and mother. Her absence from public and academic life was short-lived, and she became active in the feminist movement, as well as in the Sociological Society, an association of reform-minded young intellectuals. She resumed her studies and completed her doctorate in 1909.

In 1911, she decided to open an experimental private Kindergarten to provide "secular moral education" for five- and six-year-olds. Launching such an institution served both practical and intellectual purposes. Laura's own children were of the appropriate age, and the school was to be an outlet for her theoretical interests. It also spoke of her belief in equal educational opportunities for girls and her enthusiasm for Freud's ideas. One of her youngsters was Arthur Koestler, who later in life reminisced about his experiences in a rather sceptical manner. He thought Laura opened the school because she was a bored housewife who wanted to put into practice "some extremely advanced... [and]

somewhat confused pedagogical ideas."[1] In fact, rather than being motivated by the frustrations of being confined to the family home, Laura's venture into pedagogy fits with her belief in the value of education and her concern for the well-being of the family.

During much of the First World War, Laura and her family lived in Vienna. They returned to Budapest just in time for the war's end and the emergence of the government of Count Mihály Károlyi. Here, great new adventures might have awaited Laura had the course of Hungarian history developed differently. She was to run for Parliament in the new regime's inaugural elections, the first by universal suffrage in Hungarian history. They were never held, as the Károlyi regime collapsed and was replaced by the Communist-dominated Republic of Councils.

Communist rule and, after its collapse, the reprisals against the real and alleged participants and sympathizers of the two revolutions drove many of the Pollacsek family's friends, relatives and even some of its members into exile. Laura stayed on and tended mainly to family responsibilities. Hungary of the 1920s was not the place for feminist and progressive political activities or even for serious public discussions of reform.

The three Pollacsek brothers (who had earlier changed their name to the Hungarian-sounding Polányi) lived in Austria, Germany and Italy early on in the inter-war years. Some of their friends ended up even further afield, including the Soviet Union. Laura's by then grown-up daughter Eva (originally Éva) also went there in the early 1930s, being employed as a designer in the Soviet porcelain industry. Laura followed her daughter. When Eva was arrested and implicated in an alleged plot against Stalin, Laura went to work to gain her release. Miraculously, Eva was freed. They both left the Soviet Union. Eva's experiences helped to serve as an inspiration for the famous anti-Stalinist novel *Darkness at Noon* by the former Kindergarten pupil Arthur Koestler.

Despite these experiences in Soviet Russia, Laura remained an admirer of the Soviet system. She felt that there what she valued most of all, the family and the pursuit of human happiness, were being emphasized—as opposed to individualism and the accumulation of material wealth that were glorified in the capitalist West. For Laura, just as for her brother Karl, socialism had become a passion, a creed whose tenets could not be questioned. At one point Laura even planned to write a book about the Soviet Union—and within it, no doubt, about Soviet family policies. The book was never written. The increasing Nazification of Central Europe forced Laura to attend to other tasks, to help escape from that part of the world as many of her siblings, relatives and friends as was possible.[2] Not all her siblings got out—her sister Zsófi and her family perished in the Holocaust.

Although there is much information in this biography about the children of Mihály Pollacsek and Cecile Wohl, this reader would have liked even more. For example, how the Polányi children, and especially Laura, handled the growing ideological rift between Mihály and Karl. Further, it would have been interesting to find out what happened to Laura's enthusiasm for the "Soviet experiment" in the wake of the developments in Hungary in the 1950s, the terror under Rákosi in the early fifties and the repression after the 1956 Revolution. As a frequent visitor to the country, she must

1 ■ Koestler's memoirs quoted by Szapor, p. 33.

2 ■ The story is told in the chapter "The Odyssey of the Polanyis" as well as in the slightly longer article: Judith Szapor, "From Budapest to New York: The Odyssey of the Polanyis," *Hungarian Studies Review*, 30, 1–2 (Spring-Fall, 2003): 29–60.

have been aware of the persecutions, the general poverty and the oppression of women, despite the official rhetoric about political freedom, proletarian prosperity and women's rights.

A review of this book should not end on a negative note. It is more befitting that it revisit the outstanding contributions that members of the Polányi family made to Hungary and the world. Two of Laura's siblings achieved international renown. Michael (Mihály or "Misi"), the scientist-turned-philosopher, became one of his age's most astute critics of communism.[3] Karl (Károly), who shared his sister's passion for revolutionary Russia (and delusions about the Soviet Union), attracted —and still attracts—a large following because of the doubts he voiced about a world driven by market forces.[4] His devotees are especially numerous among intellectuals ill at ease with the West's headlong rush towards free markets and globalization. It should be added that the next Polányi generation followed in the footsteps of the first, whether through success in the arts (as, for example, Laura's daughter Eva Zeisel), academic life (Karl's daughter, the economist Kari Polanyi-Lewitt), or in science (Michael's son John, who shared the 1986 Nobel Prize in chemistry).[5]

Judith Szapor's biography of Laura Polanyi Stricker is a testimony to the accomplishments and intellectual legacies of Cecile and Mihály Pollacsek's children. Their successes were due no doubt in large part to their talents, industry, self-confidence and skills at networking. The Polányis also enjoyed more than the usual share of luck in life. They had the good fortune of growing up in a part of the world that, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was a place of personal security, rapid economic growth and unfettered intellectual development. The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in general and Budapest in particular were indeed such places, despite the hold that feudal traditions and strident nationalism had on the Hungary of the time. The family was also fortunate in having members who managed to escape the country when it became impoverished by war, revolutions and dismemberment, as well as by the triumph of conservatism and chauvinism in the inter-war years.

Luck accompanied even those members of the family who tried life in Stalin's Russia. Though traumatized by the purges, they (unlike many other long-term "guests" of the Soviet Union) miraculously escaped with their lives. Another turn of fortune for Laura, Karl and Michael had been their success in transplanting their lives, before the horrors of the Second World War enveloped continental Europe, to the lands of the Atlantic Democracies. The final stroke of personal luck for Laura was the chance encounter of a family member with the historian and biographer Bradley Smith and Laura's consequent involvement in his project to rehabilitate the reputation of the early seventeenth-century American hero John Smith. Miraculously, luck continues to accompany the Polányis beyond the grave, in finding a family historian as well-trained, diligent and capable of empathy as the author of this volume. ❧

3 ■ Lee Congdon, "Polanyi and the Treason of the Intellectuals", *Hungarian Studies Review* II, 2 (Fall, 1975): 79–90. The importance of the family in Laura Polanyi's thought has been pointed out to me by Professor Congdon. Electronic correspondence throughout May and April, 2006.

4 ■ About Karl Polanyi see Kari Polanyi-Levitt, ed., *The Life and Work of Karl Polanyi* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1990).

5 ■ John C. Polanyi of the University of Toronto shared the prize with the American scientists Dudley R. Herschbach and Yuan T. Lee for their discoveries regarding the dynamics of elementary chemical processes. http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/chemistry/laureates/1986/index.html

A Leap to Faith

Mark Rylance in Conversation with László Bérczes

Mark Rylance, the internationally acclaimed actor and theatre director, was recently in Budapest to see a production of *Hamlet* at the Bárka Theatre, directed by his long-time associate, Tim Carroll. Mike Rylance is best known for his Shakespearean roles and his work at the Globe Theatre in London, where he was Artistic Director from 1995 to 2005.

The original Globe was where most of Shakespeare's plays were first performed and a replica, built to Elizabethan design at the instigation of Sam Wanamaker, opened in 1997.

Michael Billington said about you in The Guardian*: "Whether by accident or design, he has become the last of the actor-managers: while running the theatre, he has also played Henry V, Hamlet, Cleopatra, Olivia, Richard II and Angelo. And, through his own inbuilt charisma and quicksilver timing, he has acquired a mastery of the space that no other actor can match." Now that you've left the Globe, have your views on the playing of Shakespeare changed?*

I'll go and see Shakespeare in any form, I'm not a puritan. But in England, I can't imagine wanting to play Shakespeare in any theatre but the Globe. The basic difference there is the relationship between the audience and the actor. The audience is very, very different. Because of the architecture, because of the standing room, because of the price of tickets, if that will last. The difference is being in a circle rather than a square. The active nature of hearing and listening. Speaking with an audience rather than to them, just as happened last night at the Bárka. There was a meeting of the actors and the audience, which was very creative. There was a man with an eye-patch, and at one point Hamlet got a map from him and did

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László Bérczes

is a theatre director and was the dramaturge for the Bárka's Hamlet. *From 1996, he has been the artistic director of the Bárka Theatre in Budapest, where he has staged plays by Mrožek, Pinter and Synge, among others. He has published several books on theatre.*

some things to him. He did things back and held him. Held Hamlet, stroked his hair. The actor let the member of the audience hold him. It was wonderful. Compared to the kind of "behave well and just involve your mind in the play", this kind of acting is much more creative and the possibilities are much greater.

For an actor there is risk involved in a production like this. Would you take it?

Yes, I would. The sense of the play comes from what Stanislavsky calls the objectives. And for me, sometimes the objectives are lost in a method. As I understand it, every night is different. For me that was the biggest challenge of the performance last night. Tim Carroll is trying to give the audience the pleasure of the birth of life, moment by moment—the birth of acting, the birth of a performance, moment by moment, as we experience it in the rehearsal room. Often, when I go to the theatre, it's not there. It's just a repeat. I agree completely that we must carry on trying to find the spontaneous life in plays. It's much more important than interpretation. I would feel much more at risk going into a mainstream production where it was going to be "you stand there, then you walk there like that, then you raise your arm, then you say..." I know the English director Trevor Nunn, who directed a *Hamlet* recently. If the actor playing Hamlet changed an inflection of a line, Trevor Nunn would say, "Why have you changed that?" and show him how to say it. I would have to leave that kind of production. To me, that kind of production is much more of a risk, much harder to bring to life and to discover things through. I have played Hamlet over four hundred times. I know that where I began was not where I ended. You have to keep changing, but these experiments mustn't become the point. They have to be the means to an end. You use different props, but the props mustn't become the point either. Take yesterday's production:what we saw is still a tragedy. A tragedy will arise if something happens that we wish didn't happen. Someone learns to be a king by making a lot of mistakes. Because he has made so many mistakes while learning to be a king, his kingship will be about dying, and his first act as king is to die for his country. This is the tragedy of Hamlet. We see Hamlet make lots of mistakes, we see him realise the mistakes he's made and then offer himself up to resolve it. And we see the mistakes catch up and be too much for him. I don't think that is "interpretation". Maybe Tim would call that an attitude. An ideal play should yield on some occasions an experience that touches us—not just in the mind, but also in our hearts, in our senses.

This Hamlet *has gone down well with audiences and critics. But even the most positive critics say, "Next time we would like to know what this Tim Carroll thinks of the play". Doesn't the director have to interpret?*

What is the task of the coach of a Budapest football team? Or the Arsenal football team, or the Hungarian team? Is it to interpret the game of football? I don't think so. I think it is to enable the players to play the game to their fullest potential.

I think critics interpret things. You can sit with Tim and have dinner, and hear wonderful ideas about *Hamlet.* But I found at the Globe, and I find for myself as a director, that I don't want a production which is a production about the play, any more than I want a football game about football. I want the actual game. And I want the actual play, I want to be there with the characters, experiencing what the play has written for them to experience. I'm so bored of going and having actors interpret parts and give me a kind of interpretation. People may say I interpret parts. I don't try to interpret parts, and I try not to judge my characters. I try to find a way of playing them that is alive and present. I make choices to find out how they are achieving what they want to achieve. Trying to interpret Shakespeare would be like trying to interpret the Danube, a force of nature.

I think the people who interpret the play are the audience, if they wish to interpret it. It is more important for the director to create the right time and space for the actors and to convince us on as many levels as possible that the play is taking place, that it is happening, and that we are there with the people experiencing it.

What can a director do towards that?

A lot! And directors have an enormous effect on the presence of the people and the place of the performance, on the presence of the play, on the decisions about the materials to be used, on the setting, the decisions about what will be cut, the casting. All these have an enormous impact on the quality of the present moment in the performance. I am not a very experienced director, but I know as an actor that it is important that I am working with the director. I don't want to work for a director. I want to work *with* a director.

What kind of help does an actor need?

I need guidance, but I need to be able to play very freely, like a child. I don't like sitting and having ideas about how things might go, I prefer to get up and play and then find things by playing. I very much like to be inside it finding out, and I need a director to be outside it. The director is there to give an impression from the outside of what appears to be happening. Then we start to make bridges between those things. I think the director is like a gardener. He needs, at times, to give more earth or water to a particular moment. Other times a director may think, yes, it needs a cut and let's try this or that. Directing needs to be a dialogue between a gardener and, let's say, a plant. I want eventually to be as convincing as a rose.

The rose is there, the Danube is there. Even if you interpret it well or not...

I may misunderstand the word "interpret". People said when I played the Duke in *Measure for Measure* last year that it was a very new interpretation, a very different interpretation...

In Hungary we would use another word, the concept.

The concept, yes. I think *The Tempest* last year had a certain concept. There was a trinity at the heart of the play, Prospero, Ariel and Caliban. The concept was to go to the core of the structure of the play and enable a lot of playfulness. Last night, too, there was a concept. If you make some decision as a director about how long you will rehearse, I mean, deciding to rehearse for a week rather than for six, that's a concept that has a massive effect. But we are talking more about where directors say something with *Hamlet* about, I don't know, the 1956 uprising in Budapest, or they put it in a particular period to say something about those events. I think that approach can be revealing, too.

Do you look for these things, or do they just happen?

Last December, I was playing *Measure for Measure* in Pennsylvania, in America. And during the day, a prisoner in California had been put to death. There were a lot of lines in the play about a young man who was going to be put to death in the morning. Has his reprieve come? It hasn't come. Will he be executed? It was in my consciousness in the course of the day, and I felt it was in the consciousness of the audience. Now why should we lock that out? That's part of us being present. So it's good to have a production that's able to do that kind of thing, to work with what's new. Shakespeare's plays and classical plays have a wider archetypal structure to them and a structure of consciousness. Something may arise, maybe something that was very funny yesterday that is not so funny now, maybe something else that was very sad yesterday that is now funny. Plays are always changing, because the day is always changing. And I think in Shakespeare's time they would have added lines.

Once while you were playing Cleopatra in the Globe, someone from the audience shouted out, "What's wrong with real women?" How did you handle that?

First of all, I tried to go on. An interruption from the audience can be used to benefit the story. For instance, in *Two Gentlemen of Verona,* if a character is being asked to forgive another character, and someone shouts from the audience, "Don't do it!" that's very good for the story and means that that person is involved in the story. It heightens the drama, like in the kabuki theatre. But this person was saying, "What's wrong with real women? Why do I have to watch these fucking fairies?" This was not helpful to the drama at all. So my first decision was, I'm just going to go on. Ignore him. But then he also shouted, "I want my money back!" So without thinking, I went forward and said, "You can have your money back. Tell the box office, Queen Cleopatra says you can have your money back." It was very lucky that I said that, because I gave him what he wanted. I asserted that I was Queen Cleopatra. I didn't accept that I wasn't a woman. Then he said, "What is wrong with real women? There

are lots of unemployed actors. Why are you playing these parts?" And I said, "I would love to talk with you about this, but my mind is rather entangled at the moment." And then people started to get angry with him, too. And I said, "No, no, my people"—so I made all of them my people. I make it sound like I was being clever, but I was just making it up to survive. What was important in retrospect, something that I learnt at the Globe, was not to think of the audience as the audience. I think of them as other actors. Every moment. Like last night, the grave-digger made us into the mourners, or the gravestones. I would find it difficult to go into a theatre where everyone was saying to me, "We are the audience over here and you are the actors over there!" As if on a film screen. For me, at the theatre everyone is an actor. And I always imagine the audience as other actors in the play. Other characters in my space. That's certainly how I used to play at the Globe.

You could have said, "Mark Rylance says you can get your money back."

When I said "Queen Cleopatra", I didn't come out of character. I felt like I met him halfway. It's like last night, when the actor playing Hamlet was embraced by a member of the audience, and he let him do that, but he stayed in character and moved on when he needed to. I wonder what would have happened if I just said, "What are you talking about, sir?" I could have shamed him. What I did was queenly in a way. I mean, he had a good point, you know. Why is Cleopatra played by a man?

That's what I wanted to ask.

The point is to revive and to celebrate the creative imagination of the audience. We did four or five all-female productions. We wanted to be a kind of gymnasium for the imagination. If you have men playing all the parts, it's going to involve a leap of faith, a leap across a gap in reality and a leap to those of us pretending to be women. Likewise, when women played men. In the Globe Theatre, in that architecture, it was something which always worked a bit better than trying to be realistic or naturalistic.

The *Anthony and Cleopatra* was in 1999. We had done one all-male production in 1997, the opening production of *Henry V.* And it had been a big success, with a young boy playing Princess Catherine. Since then we have moved to a mixed gender company, the same as any other theatre. But the Globe should explore sometimes what they did in this building in Shakespeare's time. We know that they played with a full company of men. In *Anthony and Cleopatra,* we asked, "Would this wonderful older woman, a 39-year-old Cleopatra, have been played by a boy?" I saw the Kabuki actors in Japan, and thought again, well, would you have had a boy play Lady Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet* when you had a boy playing Juliet? You probably would have had an actor who had played women when he was a boy. So the particular thing to explore was someone older playing a woman. It was the Globe's third season when *Anthony and Cleopatra* came up; this was a

very important experiment that no one had tried, and it was the right kind of thing for the Globe to do. It concerned the Globe's identity. Were we just going to be a tourist theatre like the Regent's Park Open-Air Theatre? Or were we going to try a legitimate experiment in its architecture and see how much people would believe if we stretched reality?

So the Globe had to decide on its identity, to avoid becoming just another tourist centre, a museum—not a serious place?

I understand why people would think this about the Globe. Most London theatres have tourists in the audience. And when I played at the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford in the eighties, the audience would change over after the interval. Half of the tourists had gone to see Anne Hathaway's Cottage during the first half and at the interval they came to see the second half of the play when the other half went off to the Cottage. I think it's a compliment that people want to travel and come to a theatre. I am sure the Bárka would be very happy if people visiting Budapest would come to their theatre. It's a good thing. That's not the problem. The problem is whether you are treating people to something that's fake, not really from Budapest. Something that has been made very cheaply to be sold to people who will think this is the real Budapest. So the Globe has to work very hard not just to make money out of doing something like *Midsummer Night's Dream* over and over again. I think that's why projects like our *Anthony and Cleopatra* were important, and why Tim Carroll's experiments were very important. What we did was to build an old piece of architecture similar to how the early music movement has reconstructed the instruments which Mozart, Liszt and Beethoven would have heard. The old theatre was rebuilt, and we learn lessons from it about the way the actors and the audience met each other. I think this is very challenging. We have no government subsidy, and yet there is no other theatre that's offering 700 tickets at 5 pounds each. The RSC has 11 million pounds of subsidy a year, and their tickets are 40 pounds each. That means the Globe is making a serious challenge. I don't think we abused the so-called tourist when we offered something challenging and serious.

One of the things we have learnt is that when the Shakespeare plays were first done, there wasn't a concept for a production. There was a concept for what theatre was. Plays were primarily being done in the amphitheatres, in the great halls of the nobility, at the court. So when people came to the Globe, there was definitely a concept that it would be good to share with people the language, to describe their desires and speak to their hearts with a language that was engaging and humorous, not a kind of teaching. It was actually an enjoyable way of learning about life, a way which didn't appear to be serious. The Globe demands that kind of storytelling, something that has a lot of visceral, sensual qualities. We dance, we have live music, we sing, and there is a lot of humour in the playing. Those are the old things that we have discovered by having to make the place work. The

thoughts in the plays look after themselves, but entertainment and fun is just as important. In today's English theatre, storytelling, the ability to engage in dialogue with an audience, the dynamics and use of our voices, the use of our bodies—all the physical and sensual aspects of theatre have diminished. Sound has very much diminished in excellence. I think that is something that the Globe is very serious about. I don't think other theatres in England have the same length of rehearsal periods, or indeed have the kind of ballet-company training that we found we needed. But that has always been an aspect of the Globe, even in Sam Wanamaker's time. Those of us who have been working there have tried to explore the architecture of the Globe.

Do you consider yourself primarily a Shakespearean actor?

Of my generation of actors, I've probably given the most time to Shakespeare. Even the new writing we have done at the Globe has been a reflection of Shakespeare, trying to explore what Shakespeare was doing in our new projects.*

What would you feel about taking on, say, a Chekhov or a Pinter play?

There is a word in English, *eloquence,* defined in the English dictionary as "to speak with force, fluency and appropriateness". To affect the mind and move the emotions. Shakespeare is eloquent at any moment. Playing it for a period of time is like having very good wine to drink or very good food to eat. I don't feel that the purpose of my career is necessarily to play all these other wonderful people.

You were about sixteen when you first played Hamlet.

Thirty years ago. Do you know a little about astrology? Saturn has moved through twelve houses. This year Saturn is in the twelfth house from me and beginning a new cycle next year. And thirty years ago, when I first played Hamlet, Saturn was beginning a cycle.

What have you got in the pipeline?

I have projects. First of all, I'm reforming Phoebus' Cart, a smaller theatre company that I had set up before I went to the Globe. This involves my wife Claire van Kampen and Jenny Tiramani. Tim Carroll is very closely involved; he is so close to us that he is almost a fourth member. The first thing we want to do is a piece about globalisation, about trade and business. The story we feel will shed a lot of light on this is about two businessmen from Pittsburgh, Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick, and the early anarchist movement in America which tried to

* ■ Peter Oswald's *Augustine's Oak* was the first new play to be performed at the Globe in 400 years.

assassinate Frick. This story shows the roots of American corporate power, what American business is trying to do in many ways to the rest of the world. It would be written in verse. 2008 is the 250th anniversary of the founding of Pittsburgh, so I want to play it in Pittsburgh, and in the National in London and in New York on Broadway. I'm also working on a production of *Peer Gynt* in Minneapolis. I am starting to work on a play about the great mystic poet Rumi, who for me is the Shakespeare of Islam. Tim and I are thinking of a few other projects. We have been looking at *R.U.R.,* the play by Karel Čapek.

I know you are also much taken with the authorship of Shakespeare's plays.

For most of the playwrights of the time—Ben Jonson, Middleton and the others—you can see there's a relationship between their life and their work. But with Shakespeare there is a gap, ten years that are lost. Between his life in the small town of Stratford and his first plays in London, which are very erudite, full of signs of a university education. Very witty plays about the court, about very powerful people.

For me the question to put to this Stratford man is "where did you get the life experience and the book learning that appears in your plays?" Because you can be born with a genius to write, but you can't be born with such book learning and life experience. There have always been questions about his capability to write those plays. For me as an artist, it's intriguing, and I'm not sure that it was a single genius in a pub somewhere overhearing stories, writing things down.

But according to Al Pacino, there was Shakespeare sitting in a pub, thinking of Mark Rylance in the future.

Well, I'm just not sure. We know he didn't write them all on his own. The Renaissance was much better at enabling a group of people to work together. We know how most films and most television is made, with different writers contributing at different stages, contributing different aspects. Then there are all those enquiries and books written about other people whose lives more closely match, like Sir Francis Bacon, Edward de Vere, about five or six candidates in all.

Including Shakespeare himself?

He is a very strong candidate, since the plays are attributed to him. After his death, his friends said that this is the guy who did it. What upsets me about this is that even on the worldwide Shakespeare site, the one question you can't ask is "Did someone else write the plays?" If I ask the question, I'm treated as if I were a man who is denying the Holocaust. You cannot get a job in Academia if you don't think Shakespeare wrote the plays. If they are so confident about it, why are they so aggressive in rejecting the question?

Shakespeare is better known than the Bible. Are you doubting...

I'm doubting God, yes. Well, from my experience with the plays, I do have my doubts. But I don't feel it is particularly important. Whoever wrote the plays, everybody seemed to be happy that they should be attributed to Shakespeare. So that's good. It's a good name. It wasn't a name of the actor, his name was Shaksper. The name has been changed by someone to Shakespeare, which aligns the name with Athena, the goddess of wisdom, who shakes her spear at ignorance. And the spear is the mind's ability to penetrate darkness or to slay ignorance. I just find the enquiry has been very helpful to me as an artist, and at the moment I'm just not sure who wrote the plays. I find Sir Francis Bacon very, very interesting and useful to read. He might have been involved as an editor. He was alive till 1626, when the First Folio was published, which I think he helped to put together with Ben Jonson. I decided to make a play about the authorship. There is a man who has all the books in his basement, has a webcam and broadcasts on the web. One day the authors themselves turn up in his past. William Shakespeare, Francis Bacon, Edward de Vere—they all come to his house. And he talks with them and interviews them. And every night features a different subject, and every night the audience also gets to ask questions. It's a live show, like a chat show. But it proceeds to larger questions, about what is identity and what is the right boundary for a question.

A kind of dialogue, just as in the Globe?

I think it will be good for the audience to meet the candidates and ask them questions. I would play the host, so the interviews can be improvised. Those are the things I am working on.

What will you take home from your first visit to Budapest?

Well, obviously the main event, the reason for coming, was to see this *Hamlet.* And this very, very brave acting. I haven't seen such free and brave acting for a long time. I very much like to listen to a play and look at the audience. This is one of things I liked at the Globe, and I liked it here last night. The quality of the Hungarian audience, this was very, very striking. There was a little boy, he must have been under ten years old. After three hours last night he was still watching, his attention was incredible. At the very end, when Hamlet died, he was still very much watching and listening, and I remember that very strongly, the impression of listening. The other thing I'll take, apart from my desire to return, is this amazing landscape of the river and these rocks and hills and the sense of why people fought so often to have this place. The landscape, which releases a certain kind of energy, so that you feel you want to be here, that things happen here.

I'll take home with me last night's audience, the actors and the landscape. ❧

Tamás Koltai

Why *Hamlet*?

Recent Productions in Hungary

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is all the rage in Hungary. In the recent past, three theatres have concurrently mounted new productions (still running), and four foreign companies have brought their versions here. Meanwhile, Árpád Schilling, a young Hungarian director, has staged a production at the Burgtheater in Vienna, two classes of student actors have given public performances at the University of Dramatic and Cinematic Art in Budapest, and the Krétakör Theatre, arguably the Hungarian company best known abroad these days, will shortly be adding the play to its repertory.

No-one should be surprised. After all, *Hamlet* is, and always was, the play of plays. Shakespeare's works are some of the most often performed in Hungary, yet *Hamlet* is not constantly in the repertoire in the way that, for instance, Chekhov's plays are. It is not so long ago that years would pass before a *Hamlet* would be mounted, and those who were at the helm of theatre life thirty or forty years ago thought it would be taking things too far if one were to watch the same play on more than one stage in the same town in the same season. In the sixties, the Madách Theatre had huge success with a production of *Hamlet* showcasing Miklós Gábor, who was the most notable actor of that time. Gábor's ideal as an actor was Laurence Olivier, and he played the role of Hamlet over three hundred times. In an enthusiastic review, J.C. Trewin, a respected British theatre critic of that era, declared Miklós Gábor to be one of the greatest ever Hamlets. Hardly surprising, then, that the National Theatre in Budapest, which had scheduled a new *Hamlet* with another superb actor, got cold feet and shelved their production. The Prince of Denmark and his play may not have been totally lost to view since then, but Hungary has seen no major new production for more than two decades.

The obvious question is why?

Hamlet is the most philosophical and introspective of Shakespeare's plays. It can only be performed responsibly if actors and audience are seriously interested in life's fundamental questions, what we think about the way of the world and our role in it. These questions may be posed at the most abstract level or resonate with the most immediate political actuality. Miklós Gábor's Hamlet—a slim, blond, Romantic prince who was crushed by the walls—said just as much about his times as the Russian director Yuri Lubimov's touring production of the same era (also seen in Hungary) with

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Vladimir Vysotsky as a guitar-playing Hamlet, and so did the mid-eighties production at Kaposvár, drawing metaphoric force from its staging of the unnerving court protocol of Denmark.

What has happened since? Are there no Hamlets to "take arms against the sea of trouble", who feel that the "business of this world" is empty? Bringing a *Hamlet* set in a wild, barbarian "ice-bound realm" to Hungary for the second time in six years (his leading actor's rocker hairstyle having turned grey in the meantime), Eimuntas Nekrosius, the distinguished Lithuanian director, has confronted the intellectual lassitude that forms one of the approaches to interpreting the drama.

The equally acclaimed Georgian director Robert Sturua and his Rustaveli Drama Theatre of Tbilisi presented ironically the colours and perversities, the parody puppet-likeness and cruel fatefulness of a revenge story. (In 1992, the British Shakespearean Society voted their London performance as one of the ten best Hamlets of the past half century.) Romanian-born Vlad Mugur, who is now domiciled in Germany, fashioned a dance of death out of Shakespeare's tragedy. Another Romanian director, Victor Ioan Frunza, working in Timişoara (Temesvár) with a local Hungarian company, devised a production set on a railway (its Budapest performances were staged on unused tracks in the Western Railway Terminal) that aimed to stamp out any lingering nostalgia for the Dual Monarchy in the Central and East European consciousness.

These days another approach appears to be re-emerging. As far back as 1972, the Atelje 212 Theatre of Belgrade brought to Budapest what they styled *A Cellar Hamlet.* The roles were divided up between five actors, four male and one female, in jeans, pullovers and short-sleeved jackets. All four men played Hamlet, and they also took turns with the roles of Claudius, Polonius, Laertes and Horatio. Hamlet was played by whoever happened to be wearing a necklace, while the king was whoever had the crown. Does Hamlet exist at all, I asked at the time, or are there only Hamletian situations? Is it possible to be Hamlet, or can one only put on Hamletian shows, Hamlet variations, Hamlet rituals?

The production that was taken to the Burgtheater in Vienna makes do with just three actors. It was likewise Árpád Schilling who, in a production that was seen back in Hungary, distributed the roles among student actors without any reference to their build or even gender, so that practically anyone might be Hamlet or Ophelia or Rosencrantz. This same principle was followed in the dramaturgy and staging adopted by a separate class from the University of Dramatic and Cinematic Art in a parallel production.

Another interesting *Hamlet* was presented by the Ukrainian director Vlad Troitsky, who recently set up a Hungarian-speaking company based in his home country (although it works mainly in Hungary). Entitled *Sleep of Death*, his production was traditional in that the roles were handed out to individual actors, so there was a Hamlet, an Ophelia, a Claudius, Gertrude, Horatio etc., albeit just one person for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (an actor was assigned to play just one of these schoolfellows, who are interchangeable even in Shakespeare's text, with a large rag doll as the other). Troitsky tracks the plot in an *almost* linear fashion—"almost" because he switches or combines or altogether drops a number of scenes in order to draw out the optimal sequence from a dramaturgical viewpoint. Thus, Ophelia drags in the corpse of her dead father to lay him out before Hamlet, who is seated on the ground, self-absorbedly throwing dice. It is in this situation—coming much later than in the original

text—that Troitsky sets their disenchanted and disillusioned dialogue, ending with the exchange of mutual reproaches, or at least the fragment of text which survived the cuts. Hamlet is rolling the dice as he throws off his replies, or on more than one occasion mumbles to himself, "To be or not to be?" (which is all that is left of the soliloquy). This is followed by an abridged version of Ophelia's paroxysm of madness and then her death. Such individual and original ingenuity makes for a telling psychological compression.

With regard to the production as a whole, however, it should be made clear that Troitsky's intentions are far removed from psychological realism. He works with powerful elements—live music, dance, physical gestures—and with characters more or less constantly present on the stage, at times active, at others passive. The music runs in the background almost throughout to produce a rhythmic effect that structures the performance, though it does occasionally burst into independent life, adopting various styles that range from traditional Hungarian wedding music to hit waltz tunes. There are even instances where this sparks off a dance interlude. The parody of a hit tune is all the more refreshingly ironic for being performed by four young ladies dressed in frothy white evening gowns. In another scene, this quartet also stands in for the gravediggers, alienating as they tell funny tales, swig spirits and eat onions. Less successfully, it is they who "drown" Ophelia by splashing water on her from buckets. (When the buckets were lined up at the front of the stage by the footlights, rather as though they were substituting for the stage lamps back in the days of Molière, they gave a marvellous "performance".) Throughout the duel, the four amazons swing on rocking-horses in the background, the silence broken only by their sinister creaking. The duel with poisoned axes, a brawl that ends off-stage in the wings, the slow and tense ceremony of the final slaughter, with the corpses laid in a line, indicate that the director is well aware of the nature of political clashes in Eastern Europe.

The strangest of the *Hamlet*s was put on by the Bárka Theatre under the direction of Tim Carroll (who for several years worked at the Globe Theatre in London). This is a production in which all the roles except Hamlet are switched among the actors. Hamlet was played on every occasion by Zoltán Balázs, who is also known for his work with his own company as a director of avant-garde productions; the rest of the roles are allocated by lottery shortly before the performance among the several actors who have prepared for each role. The actors wear their normal street clothes. The designer devised a shared space for the actors and audience from a nest of platforms that are raked back unevenly on two sides. The members of the audience pick up their seats from a pile and set them down where they want, except for a space demarcated by rag carpets, which must be left free in order to comply with fire regulations. Wherever they sit, they are roped into the action, with the actors moving in front of, behind and amidst them. Where one sits changes act by act, with another lottery determining where the next focus for the action is to be located; anyone "in the way" is obliged to move over. By prior request, the audience members bring along some personal belongings and CDs to lend, the latter being handed over to the "music maestro" who plays bits from them (should he choose to do so) during the performance. These personal belongings are held in the hand or put down on the floor beside the seat, so that the actors (should they choose to do so) can "work" them into a scene as props. The performance thus consists of a string of improvisations.

Theatre history has *Hamlet* down for being, in some sense, a one-man show, and that is true inasmuch as it is primarily about Hamlet. The person in the title role acts everyone else off the stage. He stands at the centre of the dramatic force field: all the rest hinge on him and gain sense only through their relationship to him. None of that is true for *King Lear,* which tends to be raised as a counter-example by critics as being equally philosophical, yet balanced in respect of its conflicts. In *Hamlet,* it is Hamlet above all who plays, who "puts on an antic disposition". His changes, his capering, his ripostes—his ad-libbing—startle most of the other characters by placing them in unexpected situations, caricaturing and sometimes even insulting them. The role is thus admirably suited for the strategy that Tim Carroll has adopted. It is questionable whether something that works well for Hamlet, the character, also works well for *Hamlet,* the play. That notwithstanding, Carroll does not seek to bring to the production his own (pre-) conceptions (or to put it more crudely: interpretation). He does not wish to decide beforehand whether ("in the present age") *Hamlet* should be about one thing or another. He is content to let the play speak for itself and account for the interactions between the characters in the presence of the audience, and what is more—since he takes as his starting point the dictum that every audience and every performance is different—in the presence of that day's audience. To put it another way, only that day's *Hamlet* exists, or as Peter Brook once said: a performance can only be given once.

There is no question that with the Bárka Theatre, we cannot enter the same *Hamlet* twice over. The role played by chance is obvious—first and foremost in regard to the objects borrowed from the audience. Thus, in one performance Ophelia's letter to the Prince was a length of string carrying a roll of toilet paper or tickertape, whereas another time it was a video message sent by mobile phone. Yorick's skull might be a tennis ball or a cap, the first being thrown up against the canvas awning that forms the ceiling, the latter rammed onto anyone's head. The duel might be fought with ropes, but equally by scoffing chocolate wafer biscuits. Some of the props work, others do not. A folding ruler or T-square can be used to measure a person (even symbolically), and it can also be squeezed in a vice. A flower patch consisting of a plastic bag (if that really is there by chance) comes in handy to whirl round when in Act 1, Scene 2 Hamlet says that "foul deeds will rise, / Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes." And when, in a passage in the next scene starting "Yet here, Laertes! aboard, aboard...," Polonius not only instructs Laertes verbally but also sprays his armpit with a borrowed deodorant, then that is amusing. However, when the playing around with a boot-tree leads to a member of the audience taking off a shoe, it makes no sense in that context, since the object cannot substitute for the person. The proximity of the audience only amounts to something if the actors can establish a genuine relationship with them. An actor in the auditorium has a challenge when the play's flattering lines about actors are spoken on stage. When an audience member who had been nominated as a substitute Polonius was asked "Have you a daughter?" and spontaneously answered "No, I haven't," that set up a momentary tension, as Shakespeare provides no text to match that response. On one occasion, while delivering the "To be or not to be" soliloquy, the actor playing the title role unwound a roll of insulating tape around himself and a member of the audience, then for good measure, also taped Ophelia to himself so vigorously that his partner literally (never mind theatrically) could not free herself, and it was only through a

hazardous fall that it was possible to end the scene on cue. That was Hamletian in a way different from an occasion (likewise with this company) when the Hamlet got drunk on a bottle of wine (though perhaps he was only simulating it). The Ophelia characterised this bitterly while the Claudius, assuming love-induced delirium and pointing at the bottle, could declare, "If't be the affliction of his love or no / That thus he suffers for."

One could cite endless examples and variations, but the above is enough to draw conclusions. One is that only Hamlet has unlimited scope to improvise. The others, whatever their role, are highly constrained, but experimenting is not without its uses even for them, because it functions like a public rehearsal. The unexpected changes of partners, the unexpected reactions and maintained concentration act like a gust of fresh air on mostly mollycoddled, clichéd, hackneyed theatre practices. Of course, for a professional performance it is necessary to settle on the best solutions during rehearsal but, with those fixed, still preserve the sense of being reborn day after day, especially from the angle of a formal-conceptual entity that meshes with spontaneous details. That was not the aim here, however.

The great English actor Mark Rylance watched one of the performances as a member of the audience. Zoltán Balázs, in the title role, had acquired a large pair of scissors from a member of the audience. Opening the scissors, he held one of the blades against the seated Rylance's neck, then slowly, articulating his words very clearly, started off in Hungarian "To... be... or... not... to... be." The English actor then joined in—in English. The Hungarian actor fell silent, rather as if he were following his companion and interpreting what he was saying, until finally they both spoke the text simultaneously. In the end, the scissor blades were closed, the English actor/audience member sat down, and the performance carried on.

Having worked a lot with Tim Carroll in the past, Rylance spoke glowingly about the Bárka Theatre's *Hamlet,* saying that the director had taken certain risks, and in his opinion that was what theatre was essentially all about. What was important was that a performance should be reborn from one moment to the next. He admitted that he never knew what to make of the customary director's injunction to "Interpret Shakespeare!" pointing out that trying to do so is like trying to interpret the Danube, a force of nature.

There is no question that with the Bárka Theatre's *Hamlet,* the audience is deprived of what is generally referred to as the director's interpretation. Interpretation is left to the onlooker: it depends on us, the audience, on what sort of performance we are looking for. With certain qualifications that is true of theatre on other occasions; it is just that in this instance our involvement is more intense. We do not just watch but, to some degree, we write our *Hamlet.*

After all, theatre only works if we are Hamlet. ❧

Erzsébet Bori

All in the Family

Réka Kincses: *Balkan Champion*
Colin Keith Gray & Megan Raney Aarons: *Freedom's Fury*

Réka Kincses makes her audience work hard. She is in no hurry to come to their assistance when it comes either to analysing events of the recent past in Transylvania or clarifying the relationships between the figures. Close attention has to be paid, because the nuggets of information, reminders and references are dropped bit by bit, so that the story has to be put together rather like a mosaic, constantly assembled and rearranged, thought through and then reconsidered, filling the gaps from one's own resources. The eponymous hero, Előd Kincses, a lawyer from Târgu Mures (or Marosvásárhely to Hungarian speakers), acted in the 1980s as defence counsel in a series of politically motivated trials. His most famous client was László Tőkés in the dying weeks of the Ceauşescu regime. That taking up of a democratic role laid the foundation for a rapid take-off of his political career after the fall of the dictatorship. Yet it took less than three months for the rising tide of nationalism to sweep him aside: prior to the anti-Hungarian riots in Târgu Mures, in March 1990, he had attempted to intervene as a conciliator, only to have both the Romanians and the Magyars set him up as a scapegoat. He felt he had to flee, and so he escaped to Hungary, where he lived for seven years in exile, meanwhile taking his case to Strasbourg. But no charge was (or ever had been) laid against him, so there was no sense or reason for his prolonged absence. On returning to his native city, however, his attempts to re-enter public life were in vain: he failed to gain a place within the RMDSz (the political party of ethnic Hungarians in Romania) or in the Romanian parliament. He claims that there has been a conspiracy against him and that he was betrayed by his former fellow-campaigners and friends.

At this point the film's director—who is only now revealed to be the leading figure's daughter—returns home from Germany in an attempt to use the devices of a documentary film to ferret out the reason for her father's successive failures. (The film was made for a German television audience. It would indeed be interesting to know what they made of this peculiarly Hungarian-Romanian, or even intra-Hungarian, conflict.) She gets back home, grills her parents and then, one by one, contacts and arranges to see, wherever possible with her camera, those who are involved, the anti-

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heroes of this family's story—all people with whom she is on close, informal terms. She speaks with Romanians and Hungarians, national and local leaders, county figures of old and of the present day, lays hands on archival footage—just as a good documentary film demands.

The strands all lead back to the Original Sin. On March 19th, 1990, a mob of Romanians turned up in the city armed with traditional tools, the customary way to settle disputes in that part of the world. They had come to beat up Hungarians—and plainly not on their own initiative. The next day, the Hungarian community gathered in the main square expecting an apology from the President. Előd Kincses was one of the speakers who urged the crowd to moderation from the town hall balcony. The Romanians also gathered, though not for purposes of apologising. The army was ordered out to maintain the peace but did not intervene, and the outcome was predictable: deaths, wounded, accusations, violations of the law, injustice.

Back in Hungary, news of the events was received with shocked incomprehension. The country was still high on the euphoria that had come with the overthrow of the hated despotism, the hope placed on the new democratic order and the chance to set relations between the two nations on a new footing. The Târgu Mures riots marked a brutal shattering of such hopes. People are little wiser since then about what was behind the disturbances and have no chance at all of understanding. Indeed, the Hungarian public receives a more rounded picture, with views from more sides, about riots in France than it does about affairs in Transylvania (or in the Vojvodina region of Serbia, or in Slovakia), which are only ever seen from the viewpoint of the local ethnic Magyar inhabitants. And that is a barely differentiated slant, with Hungarianness in first, second and thirtieth place as a criterion—and only after that, at best, from the angle of whether one is male or female, an entrepreneur or pensioner, a Christian Democrat or a railwayman. It is surprising, then, that there are nevertheless a few brave souls who are willing to voice dissent.

March 20th, 1990 was a watershed in the life of the Kincses family as well. The father became a fugitive; the mother, a toxicologist, was unwilling to accept voluntary exile because she did not wish to give up her job and her home. The younger daughter stayed with her mother, the older one took her school-leaving exam and went off to Germany. The suppressed emotions gradually come to the boil and tensions make themselves felt as more and more of the family past is revealed.

The film does not give an answer to the question that is posed at the start: why did the father's career go into free-fall? Instead, it finds a whole series of reasons and answers, which in turn raise further questions. For generations the Kincses family have been middle-class intellectuals with a strong sense of Hungarian identity and liberal values. Nothing is said specifically about the middle-class or liberal values: we simply see them—see them in their way of life, in the arguments between members of the family, in the relationships between parents and children. And it is also evident how those values clash with national sentiments and alignments. One typical family legend has it that Előd Kincses, in his young days a sprinter, was accused before one of his races of being about to deliberately lose to a Hungarian rival. He took to the starting blocks and won a gold medal for Romania, but then sustained an injury which stopped him from competing again, which was why he never made it beyond taking gold in the Balkan Games. The daughter, who is proud of her parents for "having the guts to resist", escaped the insoluble dilemma of existence in a minority community and has made an uncommonly honest film about this delicate subject.

Balkan Champion has justly been disparaged for being a "family film" that addresses a domestic audience without paying any regard to the needs of foreign viewers. *Freedom's Fury,* on the other hand, was produced specifically with the Western public in mind. Nor could it be otherwise, as the quartet of executive producers alone—Lucy Liu, Quentin Tarantino, Amy Sommer and Andy Vajna—is mind-blowing enough. Vajna's involvement may not be so surprising, given that the producer of such blockbusters as *Rambo* and *Total Recall* is Hungarian-born and was one of those who left in 1956. But how about the other two, a film star and a top director in Hollywood? There is a quite straightforward answer here, too. Colin Keith Gray, the film's co-director, went to school with Lucy Liu. When *Freedom's Fury* was in production, she happened to be featuring in Tarantino's *Kill Bill.* Gray used to be a keen water polo player and was coached by Dezső Gyarmati, a member of the Hungarian team that won the gold medal at the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne and who actually played in the notorious semi-final match in which the Hungarians faced the Soviet Union.

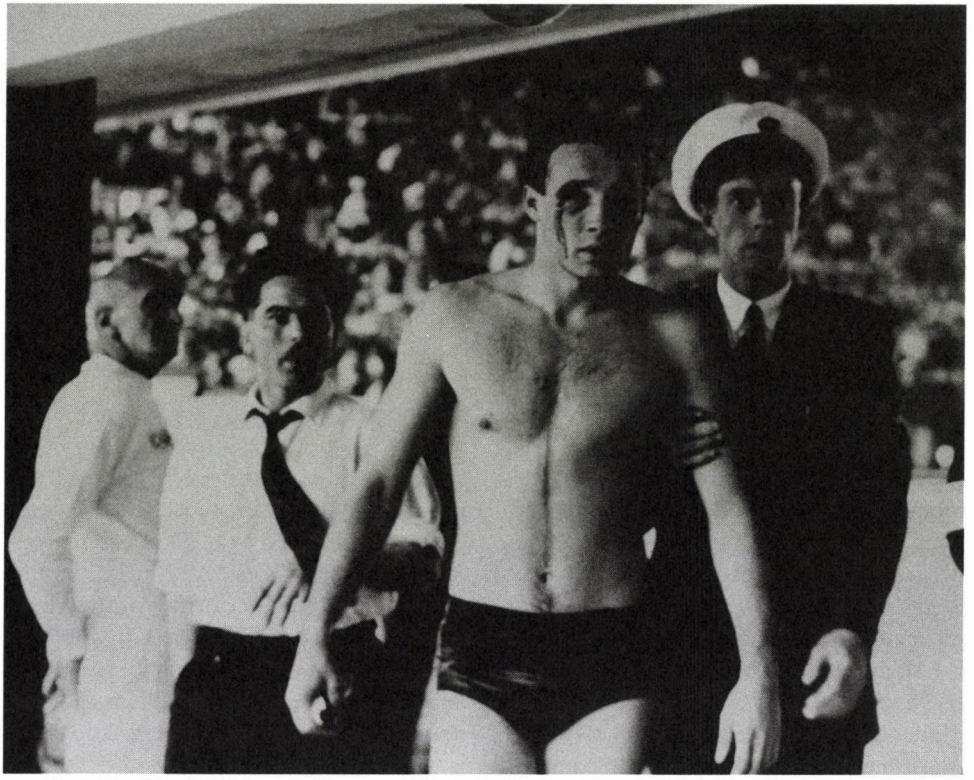
If there are two things for which Hungary is best known, then they are Ferenc Puskás, legendary member of the great Hungarian football team of the early fifties (who died as we were going to press)—and the 1956 Revolution. What *Freedom's Fury* seeks to do is to place the latter event in a historical perspective, and if one were to try and explain what 1956 meant (and means), then one could not find a more apt vehicle than sport for doing so. In their recollections, those who took part frankly admit that the last thing on their minds was gaining political satisfaction from their Russian opponents. To the extent that there was a desire for revenge, that was more on account of a not entirely deserved defeat they had suffered earlier in the year at the Spartakiad in Moscow, which had been followed by some brawling in the changing rooms. The mood of the Olympics, which was strongly affected by news of the Hungarian Revolution and its brutal suppression, changed everything. Despite this being just a semi-final, and between two European teams at that, the poolside seating was jam-packed and the tension stretched to breaking point: the spectators were hoping to see blood. And that is what they got—quite literally. In the last quarter, after a long string of clashes and with the Hungarians leading 4-0, the match had to be suspended, because one of the Russians had thrown such a wild punch at Ervin Zádor that it split his eyebrow. Blood was pouring out of the wound and staining the water red.

Now, water polo is no game for the faint-hearted. It is a tough struggle of bodies against one another on the surface, and even more underwater, with serious injuries far from rare. Since it is not widely known in America, the film-makers have gone to some trouble, with typical Hollywood thoroughness, to help the audience by showing how the scoring works, what tactics are employed, the training techniques, and even the history of Hungarian success in the sport, all of which is illustrated by wonderful archival footage.

The film is equally systematic about dealing with the '56 Revolution, where it certainly helps to have some knowledge of the background, and particularly how, after the Second World War, Hungary came to be bundled up with other allied or conquered Eastern European countries as satellites of the Soviet Union. Reference is therefore made to the beginnings of the Cold War, Stalin's death in 1953 and the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party (at which Khrushchev first admitted to Stalin's crimes) as important milestones on the way to the Hungarian uprising. After that, from October 23rd on, the viewer tracks the

events in Budapest day by day, with a superimposed counter at the bottom of the screen showing the countdown in days to the opening of the Olympics Games. Mention is made of the Suez Crisis too, which many Hungarians feel played a part in the crushing of their revolution, with and the year of the Tian'anmen Square massacre, an experience the brother-and-sister team of Colin Keith Gray and Megan Keith Raney and their age-group shared.

Back in 1956, quite a few of the water polo team did not return home, and it was only in 2000 that they had a reunion, in



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An injured Ervin Zádor is led to a casualty room for attention for the injury which he received from a Russian player in the closing stages of the Hungary vs Soviet Union water polo match. Melbourne, 6 December, 1956.

Khrushchev turning a blind eye to what France and Britain were up to in Egypt and, in return, being given a free hand in Hungary. The defeat of the revolution and the ensuing retribution, however, were epilogues to the grand victories that were won in the swimming pool and on the battlefield of freedom. In regard to the latter, of course, history is still being written—right up to 1989, the year when most of Eastern Europe regained its liberty which they were joined by four Russian veterans of the notorious "bloodbath". Apart from reconciliation, the get-together in Budapest gives an opportunity to show off the Hungarian capital at its best, from the banks of the Danube to splendidly restored atmospheric Turkish baths, from Buda Castle to one of the luxury hotels. To cut a long story short, what *Freedom's Fury* shows is Hungary Hollywood style, in its best clothes and at its most alluring. ❧

Paul Griffiths

Ligeti Was...

CDs of Old and New Ligeti Recordings

Ligeti was... The past tense is hard to accept, no matter how that sentence might have been going to continue. Ligeti was one of the most admired composers we had. Ligeti was one of the very few artists of his generation to gain wide public appreciation. Ligeti was an extraordinary craftsman, a creator of rainbows through time, fantastical and frolicsome. Ligeti was all those things and more, and until the moment of his death, in Vienna last June, the world seemed a little more buoyant for his presence. There had been no new music from him since 2002, when he added a movement to his Hamburg Concerto (with solo horn), but there always might be. Now there will not, and we have to look at an output that is complete.

Helping us do so is a four-disc compilation put out by Deutsche Grammophon under the title 'Clear or Cloudy' (289 477 6443), bringing together most of the recordings controlled by the parent company Universal Classics, and rapidly released in homage at a bargain price. (Ligeti might have appreciated the speed and the generosity.) Included are works from the Sonata for solo cello (1948–53) to the Violin Concerto (1989–93), several of them appearing here once more—as in these cases—in their very first recordings. The same prestige of priority belongs (though curiously not claimed in these instances) to the accounts of the Second String Quartet by the LaSalle, of the organ study 'Harmonies' by Gerd Zacher, and of the duo piano sequence *Monument—Selbstportrait—Bewegung* by Alois and Alfons Kontarsky. Moreover, these three recordings were all made by the work's creators, when the pieces were still new. We also hear the destined performer of the Violin Concerto (Saschko Gawriloff) and one member of the original team for *Aventures* and *Nouvelles Aventures:* William Pearson, rejoining the ensemble a decade and a half later for Pierre Boulez.

The set thus has a great deal of historical interest. There is, for example, a special satisfaction in discovering how adept the LaSalle Quartet were—in the month of the world première, if after almost a year and a half of rehearsals—at managing the glistening hazes of harmonics, the abrupt shifts of texture, the vociferous characters and the turns of speed to be found in the Second

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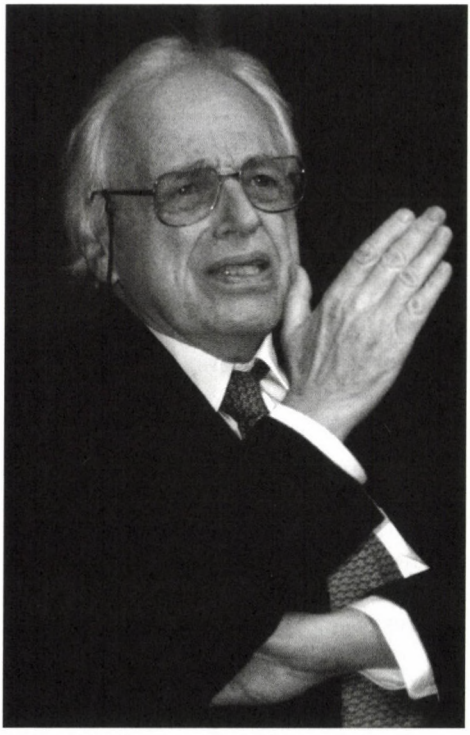

FELVÉGI ANDREA

György Ligeti at a press conference prior to a production of Le Grand Macabre *by the Hungarian State Opera at the Thália Theatre. Budapest, 1988.*

Quartet. Imposing, too, is the Kontarsky brothers' realization of the pieces for two pianos—a performance finding expressive qualities that perhaps went unrecognized at the time: rage, obstinacy and melancholy, as well as the delight, simultaneously sunny and sardonic, in the weird and wonderful ways of sound.

Others among the older recordings sometimes suggest how the understanding of Ligeti's music changed between the 1970s and the 1990s, perhaps partly in response to the new works he was producing. Played by the London Sinfonietta under David Atherton in 1975, *Melodien* is bubbling and brilliant, with barely more than a foreshadowing of the desperation and the tragic weight Reinbert de Leeuw was to bring to the score a quarter century later, in his version with the ASKO/Schönberg Ensemble, which the composer was able to oversee for the complete recorded edition.

In such cases the new set, with recordings made between 1968 and 1996, complements that edition, which was in preparation between 1994 and 2002, and which was split between Sony (seven records plus a double album for the opera *Le Grand Macabre*) and Teldec (five records). The Sony-Teldec collection includes almost everything Ligeti wanted performed, the exceptions being the version of *Ramifications* for larger string ensemble and the last three piano études (added by Pierre-Laurent Aimard on the subsequent Teldec disc 'African Rhythms'). This virtually comprehensive survey includes, too, a lot of astonishing performances, not least from Aimard (in all the solo piano music and the concerto), Frank Peter Zimmermann (in the Violin Concerto), Reinbert de Leeuw (conducting most of the pieces for reduced orchestra) and Jonathan Nott (guiding the Berlin Philharmonic through the Requiem and the full-sized orchestral scores).

Even so, the new Deutsche Grammophon offering has plenty to recommend it, quite apart from its historical performances. Pierre Boulez leads the Ensemble Inter-Contemporain in beautifully clear, colourful and characterful performances of four concertos (those for cello, piano and violin, and the Chamber Concerto) as well as *Aventures* and *Nouvelles Aventures*. One may regret he has never recorded the bigger works—indeed, seems never to have performed the piece that was central to Ligeti's success if exceptional within his output: *Atmosphères*. That work is heard here, somewhat ironically, in a recording by the Vienna Philharmonic under Claudio Abbado that Ligeti did not like, for reasons that may have to do with the corporeality of the sound. Ligeti wanted a continuum, which he felt Hans Rosbaud achieved at the première in 1961 (though not in the studio recording that has been released by Col

Legno), and which he might have found, too, in Nott's remarkable account.

'Clear or Cloudy' provides, nevertheless, a good, economical introduction to Ligeti's music and, for the already captivated, brings some important performances back to life. What it lacks—such as any choral music other than *Lux æterna,* or any solo piano compositions beside two of the Etudes—can be supplied from the Sony-Teldec series. Then, of course, there is always room for alternative views, such as come from several other fine recordings. Among these are Peter Eötvös's disc with the Ensemble Modern devoted to the cello, piano and chamber concertos (also on Sony), Fredrick Ullén's two piano albums (on BIS), in which a couple of the études go at startling speed, and Gábor Csalog's more poetic way with this music in his recent anthology of études by Ligeti and Liszt (on BMC).

The releases involving Csalog and Eötvös (with Miklós Perényi adding value in the Cello Concerto) point up what is otherwise a puzzling dearth of recordings by Hungarian musicians and ensembles. There may once have been political reasons for that (though the Chamber Concerto was recorded by András Mihály for Hungaroton in the 1970s), and Ligeti himself, proud of his international standing, probably resisted a close identification with performers from his native land. But despite all that, it is bizarre that Ligeti's large body of choral music—most of it with words in Hungarian and melodic connections with Hungarian folksong—has been recorded only by choirs from France (on EMI) and Britain (on Sony).

As one listens to the Deutsche Grammophon set, in which no Hungarian musician takes part, it is impossible not to recognize what Ligeti retained from Hungary, long after he had created his own world. The second movement of the Violin Concerto revives the real or imagined folk melody that had appeared four decades earlier in the Sonata for solo cello. Often in the études one hears patterns of four short phrases balancing one another—blueprints of folksong remaining after everything else has been washed away. And in the Piano Concerto, most notably in the second and third movements, such a pattern takes on the very particular shape of the fugue theme from Bartók's Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta.

Ligeti was immense in his knowledge, and the uses to which he put it. Ligeti was, like all great artists, bigger than any nation. Ligeti was also, part of him, homegrown. ❧

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During the time we have been here, the season has changed from winter to very early spring. We have walked daily in the extensive park of the Margitsziget—watched the melting of snow, the appearance of a few song-birds, the up-thrusting of the crocuses, and the beginnings of navigation on the Danube (starting with the appearance of a number of kayak enthusiasts). At night we listen to the rumblings of what I suspect to be the movement of Soviet supply-truck convoys, on their way from the railway yards to the great military base a few miles further up the river. And whenever I go out and meet people, they ask me, in a way that wrings my heart, for the answers I am unable to give them.

From a letter by George Kennan to John Lukacs
Hotel Thermal, Margaret Island, Budapest, March 27, 1986
(pp. 52-55)

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