The Hungarian Quarterly

Volume 41 • Spring 2000 • $12.00

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The Hungarian Quarterly
formerly *The New Hungarian Quarterly*
8 Naphegy tér, Budapest H-1016, Hungary
Telephone: (361) 375-6722 Fax: (361) 318-8297
e-mail: quarterly@mail.datanet.hu
homepage: http://www.hungary.com/hungq/
Published by The Society of the Hungarian Quarterly
Printed in Hungary by AduPRINT, Budapest,
on recycled paper

HU ISSN 1217-2545 Index: 2684

Cover & Design: Roller 29 (Péter Nagy)

Annual subscriptions:
$40 ($60 for institutions).
Add $10 postage per year for Europe,
$14 for USA and Canada,
$16 to other destinations and $25 by air
to anywhere in the world.
Sample copies or individual copies of back numbers $12,
postage included.
Payment in $ or equivalent.
Annual subscriptions in Hungary Ft 3,600
Single copy Ft 950
Send orders to *The Hungarian Quarterly*
P.O. Box 3, Budapest H-1426, Hungary

Articles appearing in this journal are indexed in
HISTORICAL ABSTRACTS;
INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SCIENCE ABSTRACTS;
AMERICA, HISTORY & LIFE;
THE MUSIC INDEX;
ARTS & HUMANITIES CITATIONS INDEX;
IBZ (INTERNATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PERIODICAL LITERATURE);
IBR (INTERNATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOOK REVIEWS)

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Éva Ehrlich and Gábor Révész

Coming in from the Cold

The Hungarian Economy in the 20th Century

At the start of the 20th century, the Hungarian economy, on the fringe of the highly developed areas in Europe, showed a powerful and sustained upward trend. The first hesitant moves toward modernization had been made in the early 1840s. The Compromise *(Ausgleich)* with Austria in 1867 ended the difficulties following the 1848–1849 revolution, and Hungary was integrated into the legislative, government and taxation systems of the Empire, which displayed more developed social conditions than those prevailing in Hungary. All this created a relatively favourable framework for the Hungarian economy. The pulling force was provided by the new wave of industrialization on the continent, the driving engine of which was Germany. The general industrial upswing carried Hungary along, and also produced an agricultural boom, strengthened by protective tariffs, which created a basis for the expansion of Hungarian industry. It also ensured access to the capital imports indispensable for the early stages of development, especially for the infrastructure.

In the period between 1867, with the *Ausgleich,* and the First World War, the output of the Hungarian economy grew at a rate which was among the highest in Europe, indeed in the world. GDP rose threefold in 40 years, and per capita growth averaged 2 per cent per annum. Even this was surpassed by the 2.2 per cent annual average per capita growth of the economy of the territory of today's

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Hungary (the post-Trianon-peace-agreement territory). Land under cultivation grew by a third despite the disparities in land holdings, worsened by the feudal heritage (and the resulting rural overpopulation and poverty); crop rotation was spreading, equipment improved, animal husbandry expanded and was modernized. In employment, the growth in industry and mining from 10 to 18 per cent indicates mainly that this was the period when the food processing industry, based on the agricultural boom, took wing,[1] so also did metallurgy and engineering, fuelled by the expansion of the railways. Since the country is a water-collecting basin, river control and inland waterways were developed on an unprecedented scale. A railway network connecting almost every town and village was constructed, and Budapest emerged as a European metropolis.

The structure of the economy reflected the effects of the country's extensive foreign trade. The huge agricultural potential, far exceeding demand, was counterbalanced by weaknesses in the production of consumer goods. In textiles, the most important among consumer goods, the market was dominated by the more modern and competitive Austrian and Bohemian textile industry. The ratio of exports against gross national income was extremely high, around 30 per cent (the European average at the time was 11 per cent). The overwhelming majority of goods exported were agricultural and food processing products, the most important export markets being Austria and Germany. The capital needs of the rapidly growing Hungarian economy were financed largely by German and Austrian banks, including the Vienna Rothschilds, the Credit-Anstalt, the Deutsche Bank or the Disconto Gesellschaft. Between the *Ausgleich* and 1914, some 40 per cent of all investments were covered (although to a diminishing degree) by foreign capital. A considerable portion of incoming capital turned into government debt. The significance of the latter was indicated by the fact that in the early 1910s, debt service (interest payment and capital repayments combined) made up 6 to 7 per cent of GDP.

At the beginning of the 20th century Hungary saw a successful integration, continued on an agricultural basis. It suited co-operation with the more highly developed economies in the neighbouring countries, which in turn aided Hungary's modernization.

What lends historical importance to processes at the end, as at the beginning, of the century is that they unambiguously embody economic integration with more developed neighbours, Europe and the world. In the second half of the nineties the weight of foreign trade in the Hungarian economy is beginning to approach that characteristic of small countries with a developed economy. The value of both exports and imports amounts to and even exceeds half of the GDP. Three quarters of Hungarian foreign trade is with developed countries, within that two thirds with the fifteen member countries of the EU (around 40 per cent with Germany). The product structure is characteristic: two thirds of the goods are high-tech. Modern engineering (including vehicles) account for over 50 per

cent of exports. The most important export items are high-tech mechanical installations and vehicles and computer and electronic instruments.

The expansion of foreign trade and the renewal and forceful modernization of the Hungarian economy was primarily due to the local operation of large multinationals. Financially powerful giant corporations[2] participated in privatization, in the renewal of green-field units, naturalizing new competitive technologies, modern management practices and marketing methods. A disproportional ratio (around a quarter) of the capital flow to the successor states of the former Soviet empire found its way to Hungary in the past ten years, $1550 per inhabitant in 1997. The same index is $840 for the Czech Republic, $220 for Poland, $190 for Slovakia and $100 for Russia. About half the stock of venture capital in Hungary is in the hands of firms in which foreign interests are involved,[3] more than a third of the total venture capital stock is of foreign origin. The deepest segment of the organic integration with the European and world economy is provided precisely by this extraordinarily extensive presence of foreign capital in the Hungarian economy.

At the beginning and at the end of the century trends of modernization and integration were both present. For the greater part of the 20th century, however, developments determined by political forces acted towards diverting the economy from the main trends in the Western world, and the country was breaking away rather than integrating.

A shrunken economy

The First World War put an end to the hitherto spectacular catching-up. The basis of the previous socio-economic processes and their continuity was removed by three main factors: 1) a sizeable chunk of the Hungarian Kingdom was lost 2) participation in the international division of labour was disrupted because of the realignment of the surrounding regions 3) the expansion of the world economy was halted and slowed down, and the overall pace of economic growth declined.

The economy suffered immense damage when Hungary lost some two thirds of its former territory, including several areas rich in natural resources. The territorial settlement cut off or destroyed connections which had developed in the course of history. The Trianon treaty put a major part of rail links outside the new borders, thus splitting a large number of minor regions into two and causing difficulties in domestic traffic. With the disintegration of the Empire, the supply capacities and demands of several larger regions, earlier interconnected, became separated, resulting in losses of balance which were difficult to handle and which, in some cases, had a destructive effect. Last but not least, totally in contradiction with the Wilsonian principle of self-determination, some 2 to 2.5 million ethnic Hungarians living in clusters (and not in a diaspora) found themselves beyond the new borders.

Thus, in the aftermath of the First World War, developments in both the immediate neighbourhood and in the world economy became unfavourable.

At the end of 1919, Hungary, truncated, having gone through revolutions, experienced the first period of peace in a state of exhaustion. Everyday life was full of bitterness and misery, with the obligation of providing subsistence to hundreds of thousands of refugees pouring in from the areas cut off from Hungary and to soldiers and POWs returning in rags. This was accompanied by a huge inflation which, although depressing, helped to kick-start the economy. Printing banknotes assisted in financing part of government obligations, helped make available the minimal credit necessary for starting the economy, and contributed to the decline in wages and thus to a supply of cheap labour. Between the summer of 1914 and the beginning of 1924, prices rose 8,000 fold, while wages rose only 3,500 fold, a drop in real wages of over a half. This latter naturally served as an incentive for business and towards employment. In addition, inflation proved beneficial in re-invigorating business, since savings (including insurance and old-age pension savings) lost their value. In this way the losses of some individuals—or families—can become the engines driving the economy. Within a few years, the Hungarian economy moved away from the bottom level, and slowly adapted to the changed conditions. The country's import-restriction policy also contributed to this. In 1924, agricultural yields had already reached 70 to 80 per cent of the pre-war levels, and the consumer goods industries, protected on the domestic market, also showed greater activity. Again, the textile industry's output in 1924 exceeded the 1913 figure by 70 per cent. With this surge in production and a League of Nations loan, it became possible, in the summer of 1924, to fix the exchange rate of the *korona,* and in 1927 a new currency, the *pengő* was introduced. By the end of the decade the economy could be said to be in a more or less consolidated state, with output somewhat exceeding the pre-war level.

Developments in the world economy were, however, unfavourable to the integration processes once again under way in Hungary. The Great Depression in October 1929 soon hit Budapest. In the spring and summer of 1931, Hungary could only be saved from complete financial collapse by tough government measures. Hungary, with a powerful agricultural sector and a high ratio of agricultural exports, suffered especially heavy losses due to the depression. In 1934, the prices of agricultural products, including export prices, dropped to less than 40 per cent of their level before the depression, and the Hungarian economy suffered a price loss of nearly one third of its full export value. Industrial activity declined heavily because of a chronic lack of orders. The level of registered industrial unemployment reached 35 per cent in 1932.

Attempts to avert the consequences of the depression made restrictive fiscal and foreign exchange measures a permanent feature. In many countries, government-financed communal developments and public works were started to counter unemployment.

The attempts aimed to lift Hungary out of the slough of depression soon ran parallel with the political and economic trends developing in Germany (this also conformed to the economic possibilities). In 1932, the programme of Hitler's National Socialist Party asked that Germany should direct its external economic strategy towards Southeast Europe, that it should cover its raw material and food needs largely by imports from the countries of this region. Since agriculture was its largest sector, for Hungary's economy to climb back out of the pit it was imperative that agricultural surpluses should have a secure market abroad at acceptable prices. At the beginning of 1934 a German–Hungarian, then an Italian–Austrian–Hungarian agreement were concluded on large-scale exports of Hungarian agricultural products.

With the new momentum of agricultural exports, complemented by various additional measures (like the settlement of farmers' debts, price-balancing subsidies, etc.) incomes in the agricultural sector slowly began to climb. With the imposition of tough import restrictions, this had a stimulating effect mainly on the development of light industry. In 1929, only 60–70 per cent of domestic demand was covered by the Hungarian textile industry. By the mid-1930s this ratio had risen to 97–98 per cent. Heavy industry output was also growing. It was given a boost through fully or partly government-funded orders directed at a partial modernization of the railways, the modernization of electricity supplies and telephone systems, and the slow spread of motor vehicles; some orders were for the replacement or completion of military material.

Industrial output in 1937–1938 exceeded the 1929 level by 25 per cent, and that of the pre-war years by some 40 to 45 per cent. With regard to the whole of the economy and 1938, the last year of peace, the growth in output in the inter-war years was about 40 per cent which, at a time when the population increased by 1.16 per cent, meant that per capita growth of GDP was 0.7 per cent per annum.[4] This must be considered as below average, even amid the general slowdown in European economic development.

Yet even in the inter-war period, the Hungarian economy recorded some remarkable achievements. Despite all this, however, the economy as a whole did not come close to the highest performance of the time either quantitatively or—even less—qualitatively. If anything, it fell somewhat farther behind.

In agriculture, despite some minor corrections, the wide disparity in the size of land-holdings survived (along with the rural deprivation and overpopulation they entailed), and this had a depressing effect on the domestic market. The ratio of the agrarian population was as high as 49 per cent even in 1941, when the war economy was already in full swing.

Real structural change was brought about much less by a rapid introduction of up-to-date specialties and new technologies (based mostly on electric and combustion engines) than by the expansion of outdated industries, which were already losing importance in the more developed countries. In its structure and

technology, the Hungarian economy fell further behind the top level of the era than in 1913.

Nevertheless, the Hungarian economy was able to keep a position among the countries of the world which had been achieved in more fortunate circumstances, at the turn of the century. This, in more concrete terms, meant that the per-unit output of the economy was about half or two fifths of that of the highly developed Western countries, and 30 to 40 cent less than that of Austria or Czechoslovakia. At the same time, Hungary was definitely ahead of Poland, its eastern and southern neighbours, as well as Portugal, Spain and Greece.

Germany set out on the road of conquest in March 1938. Hungary, having profited from previous German expansion, joined Germany in the war against the Soviet Union in 1941, and fully surrendered herself to the German political will. That was how Hungary became an active participant and, in 1945, one of the vanquished in the Second World War.

The *cul-de-sac* of state socialism

Hungary was driven out of the war as one of Germany's last allies by the Red Army. The region fell under the dominance of the Soviet armed forces. Soviet economic and political control in Central and Eastern Europe expanded continuously until the countries of the region became incorporated in the "Socialist world system" as Soviet satellites.

This did not simply mean political realignment in line with the outcome of the war. The type of planned economy created in the Soviet Union appeared as a possible alternative to the capitalist market economy. It was seen as a "Socialist" economic model, in which social ownership of the means of production and the centralized economic and political power corresponding to it would be a basis for a rational concentration of resources, rapid and planned economic development and the elimination of economic backwardness. This approach was lent credence as, in the 1930s, the Soviet economy had developed rapidly and without recessions. Another cause for confidence, mainly in its industry, was that the Soviet Army (though with some outside help), was even capable of gaining superiority over the German war machine and its technology, which had defeated France in a few weeks, and also put Britain in jeopardy.

Despite some differences, it is possible to divide into major periods the largely uniform processes, policies and events within the economies of the Central and East European countries turning (or rather forced to turn) to "the building of Socialism" between the Second World War and the collapse of the Socialist regimes:

■ Reconstruction and resettlement after the war, Communist takeover, the clearing of ruins, rebuilding, stabilization, ending inflation, distribution of land, nationalization, the expansion of economic control by the state and the development of the necessary institutions (1945–1950).

■ The introduction of a planned economy rejecting market mechanisms, economic isolation and placing foreign trade on intergovernmental-bureaucratic bases; rejection of the Marshall Plan, establishment of COMECON for the implementation of Soviet dominance and the co-ordination of foreign trade in the Soviet bloc (1949–1952).
■ The period of forced growth based lopsidedly on heavy (military) industry; nationalization of agriculture, overdriven investment, declining and then stagnating living standards (1950–1962).
■ Attempts at rationalization: efforts and experiments aimed at developing a more consumption-oriented economic policy, a search for ways of international co-operation (1960–1980).
■ The period of decline (1979–1989).

Estimates based on the current territory of the country put the number of Hungarians who died in the war at eight or nine hundred thousand. (Nearly 10 per cent of the population), of whom some 400,000 Jews and 50,000 Gypsies were murdered in concentration camps. Material losses (including the number of homes destroyed) were as high as 40 per cent of the national assets of the year 1938. In addition, Hungary was obliged by the peace agreement to pay reparations, completed by 1952, to the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, the value of which made up 8–10 per cent of the national income of the post-war years.

Despite these enormous losses and heavy burdens, the re-starting and transformation of the economy was accomplished within some five years. In 1949, total output somewhat exceeded the level of the last year of peace. State ownership was close to 100 per cent in industry, transport, banking and wholesaling (and already some 30 per cent in retailing). Following the nationalization of large enterprises and banks, at the end of 1949, smaller businesses with 10 or more employees were also nationalized. Land reform, favouring poor peasants, was completed as a part of the democratic transformation in 1945–1946. In 1949, against the will of most of the new owners, land-owners were forced to join collective farms (often by the use of brutal measures). Inflation, starting during the last years of the war, then gaining momentum by the financing of production to fulfil the reparation quotas, was curbed in the summer of 1946, when a new currency, the *forint,* stable in value, was introduced. In 1949, a national government agency controlling the organization of production and the distribution of resources along the Soviet model, the National Planning Office, was already in operation.

Hungary's first Five Year Plan was a prime example of "Socialist" heavy-industry-oriented, forced industrialization. It is practically certain that the possibility of a third world war was taken into account when drawing up the plan; although this was never declared openly, it can be taken for granted.[5] The revised

(February 1951) version of the plan included targets which appear completely absurd today, like an annual 18 per cent growth in national income and 26 per cent in industrial production. This implied that 35 per cent of the national income was to be accumulated every year. Half of the accumulated funds were to go to industry, especially mining and metallurgy. That was the way in which Hungary, a country with precious few natural resources was meant to become "a country of iron and steel". The plan was similarly lavish with promises regarding living standards: they were to rise by 50 per cent. In reality, production declined in agriculture due to forced collectivization and the accompanying squeeze put on rural incomes.[6] The rise in national income remained moderate. The rate of accumulation (investment), on the other hand, stayed on target. It was mainly consumption that suffered most from the unrealistic objectives of the plan. In 1952 and 1953 the real wages of workers and employees were some 15 per cent lower than in 1950, and the real value of rural consumption 10 per cent lower. At the same time, shortages became a permanent feature of the food and consumer goods markets.

The new leadership after the revolution of 1956, headed by János Kádár, consolidated its power through a severe and bloody retaliation,[7] and clever concessions made in answer to economic demands. Following the crushing of the revolution by Soviet troops, some 200,000 people left the country, whose borders stayed open for months.

The turbulent months after the revolution and the politically motivated strikes were followed by an amazingly rapid consolidation. Kádár and the new party leaders were capable of learning from 1956. Their moves were motivated by a cautious pragmatism; it was etched into their minds, and almost became an instinct with them, that people must feel year after year that life is improving. The regime did not demand continuous demonstrations of sympathy, and it kept to its own slogan, "He who is not against us is with us".

One of the major successes of this new policy, aimed at avoiding confrontation and seeking consensus and new solutions, was that the organization of collectives was completed, often with the use of force but without serious trouble and without a decline in yields in 1961.[8] Spectacular achievements were produced in agriculture by some innovations unheard of in other countries of the bloc. The scope for household farming and for small-scale units in general was broadened, and more market-oriented methods, based on prices and procurement, replaced plan quotas and the system of compulsory deliveries which had been done away with in 1956. This led to a growth in output and an improvement in quality and choice. The success of innovations in agriculture encouraged politicians to experiment more freely with other non-socialist methods.

An awareness grew among economists that the problems were inevitably being created by a system and institutions of economic management that disregarded market rules and its own internal interests. It was the "operational mechanism", as it was then called, of the economy, that was to be blamed for

the production of goods with no consideration for demand, for waste, for huge quantities of superfluous stocks, and for the almost permanent shortage in economic resources and in goods needed by the market.[9]

A series of measures aimed at improving national economic planning, at "perfecting" the breaking down of central plans into local units failed. In the mid-1960s this led the Czechoslovak, the Hungarian and, to some extent, the Polish leadership into putting a radical reform of the economic mechanism on the agenda, reinstating the market. The fundamental idea underlying the reform was that the system of a planned command economy had to be abolished, enterprises made autonomous agents on the market, operating in the conditions of a regulated market where only priorities, not specifics, were predetermined. As the brochure published by the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party put it: "the reform is based on the organic unity of planning and market."

The reform was introduced fully in Hungary only. The ruling elite in Poland chose to initiate centrally directed modernization programmes instead, mobilizing foreign loans. After the failure of these, Poland ended up in a state of open crisis at the beginning of 1980, which was only "resolved" by Jaruzelski through the introduction of a state of emergency and martial law. In Czechoslovakia, the launching of reforms in 1967, similar to those in Hungary, led to a process which reached a stage where it broke taboos: it called into question the advantages of the Warsaw Pact and COMECON. Consequently, in August 1968, Soviet troops supported by military units from other "fraternal" countries, invaded Czechoslovakia.

The reform succeeded in Hungary because—drawing conclusions from, among other things, the 1956 Revolution—it attempted to change the practice of state Socialism not from a political stance but exclusively from the aspect of the economy. No attempt was made to question the international political position and internal power structure of the country, and not a word was said about any eventual modification of ownership relations.

The reform introduced in Hungary in 1968 freed the country's economy from many of the burdens of over-centralized and bureaucratic control, although when it began to work, it involved many cautious half-solutions and the postponement of some major moves. Growth sped up for a couple of years: it reached 6–7 per cent annually in contrast to the 4–4.5 per cent of the previous years. Efficiency also improved; supply became better adjusted to demand; stocks declined. Exports to capitalist markets, marginal in significance in the earlier period, grew in importance, and, along with the growing number of export-import transactions, the market-oriented attitude and the number of personal contacts in the West of the managers of independently trading Hungarian firms also increased. In agriculture, the reform brought to full maturity a production structure based on a voluntary co-operation (involving self-interest) be-

tween large co-operative farms and small-scale private (household) farming. The supply of farm products on the domestic market became plentiful despite sizeable agricultural exports; farmers and some other rural dwellers, with a second income, became relatively affluent. Market supplies, meeting everyday demand, furnished the basis for an annual 4 to 4.5 per cent increase in the consumption of urban inhabitants.

Despite the successes, the Hungarian reform soon came to face major handicaps. It came under heavy, ideologically motivated attacks in the party press of the other socialist countries as well as from home-grown conservatives. The countries of the Soviet Bloc made the achievement of self-isolation, economic autarchy their objective with the COMECON Complex Programme, accepted in 1971, extending the bureaucratic bonds. These decade-long ties made it impossible for Hungary to escape the programme, and its implementation further increased the number of intergovernmental economic agreements, mainly with the Soviet Union, based on division of production profiles. Under the Complex Programme, for instance, Hungary's large bus manufacturing industry and the supply of automobile parts for the Soviet automobile industry were established.

A huge challenge to the continuation of the reform (which was to prove impossible to cope with) was posed by the "oil price explosion" and the large-scale realignment it brought in international exchange values of goods. The momentum of the reform broke; the next steps planned were never implemented (some re-surfaced in the second half of the 1980s), and the old bureaucratic methods were restored at several junctions.

By developments fitting into the framework of COMECON programmes and seemingly favourable to the economy, Hungary managed to maintain an annual 4–5 per cent growth rate and a 3–4 per cent growth rate in consumption, measured in the volume of output. The unfavourable external messages indicating a new economic era were judged by the political leadership, conditioned to evade controversy and conflict, as signs of a temporary and transitory trend. The losses caused by shifting exchange value rates, highly disadvantageous to Hungary, were compensated with foreign loans available in abundance and on favourable conditions.[10] Hungary's loss in exchange value rates was some 20 per cent between 1972 and 1978. By the end of 1978, net national debt reached nearly double the annual value of hard currency exports. It ran into $6.1 billion, which was roughly equivalent to the losses suffered due to the decline in exchange rates.

Between 1950 and 1980, calculations using different methods indicate that the country's per capita GDP was tripled or even quadrupled under a state Socialist economy. That historically unprecedented growth of 3.7 to 4.7 per cent per year was, in the given period and in Europe, just a little above average. Correspondingly, Hungary's position in Europe, measured by economic performance, did not change. Its relative level of development moved to a somewhat higher point. Full employment and relative security of employment were

achieved by the mid-1960s, to be followed by a chronic labour shortage. The ratio of those employed, especially female employees, rose well above the European average (51 per cent compared to the total population, as opposed to 42 per cent). During those three decades, the per capita real income of the total population rose by 3.5–4 per cent annually. Within the inner composition of the total income of the population, the various financial and other benefits provided socially to individuals and family members gained in importance.[11] The level and choice of daily consumption and health and education services approached the standards of the economically developed regions of Europe at the time.[12] In thirty years, the number of persons per inhabited room declined from 2.7 to 1.3. New apartment houses, mainly prefabricated, were constructed at a rate much like the European average (6–7 apartments per year/1000 population), increasingly subsidized by the government. Private and collective home construction, often involving the owners' labour, was also subsidized in the form of special, long-term, low-interest loans. Millions of small weekend and holiday homes, often no more than makeshift shacks or discarded buses, were erected on tiny plots of land all over the country. In more popular holiday regions, privately-owned holiday houses offering rooms for rent began to appear in growing numbers besides those owned or ran by trade unions, firms or offices. From the end of the 1960s on, the isolation of the country's citizens was also gradually loosened. Hard currency traffic remained virtually closed, but Hungarian citizens were entitled every three years to buy hard currency supposedly enough to finance a two to three week trip to the West, even if in very modest circumstances. Those who could produce proper invitations were permitted to stay a month in the West every other year, and travel to the Socialist countries was unlimited, at least as far as the Hungarian side was concerned. (An invitation and a Soviet visa was necessary to travel to that country.)[13] With its relatively abundant supplies in consumer goods, Hungary became the centre of shopping tourism in Central and Eastern Europe. In Prague, East Berlin or Moscow, people queued up to buy Hungarian forints from their limited foreign currency allowances. These were some of the minor facts characterizing living conditions under "goulash Communism", which could be described as a kind of modest petty-bourgeois lifestyle.

Hungary's model, made acceptable to the people by the "domesticated" and softened one-party regime, reached its limits by the end of the 1970s. The accumulated debt of the country proved insurmountable. Huge industrial capacities built for second-rate, poor-quality mass production, which grew increasingly outdated at the time of the rapid spread of high-tech industries worldwide, shortage of capital and external trade relations oriented for decades toward the Soviet Union and the other COMECON countries, made it inevitable that this should turn into a debt trap in which servicing (and the avoidance of financial collapse) required more and more heavy borrowing.

This debt-trap stayed with the Hungarian economy in the period following the change of system and only started to vanish when the new stage of integration was kick-started with the help of imported capital.

The long final decade of state Socialism in Hungary (1979–1990) was characterized by three major tendencies.

1) Throughout these years the primary priority of economic policy was to avoid financial collapse. Tough restrictions (siphoning off of incomes, limitations on salary outflow, inflation) were employed in order to reduce investments and real wages (and through these, limit domestic consumption). The drastic consumer price rises (nearly 20 per cent in 1979; 150 per cent for the whole period, meaning almost 10 per cent per year) not only held back real wages but also reduced the subsidization and non-realistic character of consumer prices.[14] Growth declined, then stopped, and the last four years were characterized by stagnation. Even though dollar-related exports doubled while imports grew only by 20 per cent, the debt pressure intensified: Hungary, with raised interest rates, closed the year 1989 with a total net debt of $14.9 billion (three times the total of annual exports). The country could only be kept solvent by further international bridging loans.[15]

2) Legal opportunities for private enterprise on a small scale were increasing, and so were the possibilities of getting work and earning money in ways unfettered by the rules applying to the Socialist economy; consequently, the so-called second economy was growing fast. In the mid-1980s, already more than 3 million people were active in this second economy, most engaged in a second, market-oriented occupation.[16] This sector provided some 20–25 per cent of the output of the national economy, and a third or even a half of families had a direct interest in it.

3) This long decade, especially following Gorbachev's appearance on the scene, after 1985, was the period of the second wave of reform. The changes were unequivocally inspired by the need to adapt to a market economy and the value system of the world market. This was indicated by the most important moves: switching to a price system approaching the price rates of Hungarian exports and imports (1980), foreign currency valuations adjusted to actual conditions of supply and demand, and later, relying on these, the beginning of export liberalization; the extension of the autonomy of state-owned firms by the introduction of (self-governing-type) ownership rights exerted by company councils (1985); decentralization of the banking system and the beginning of the institutional separation of commercial and central bank functions (1987); the introduction of a tax system modelled on that developed in Western European countries. It must be noted, though, that these changes were taking place in a contradictory environment, and that their scope of movement was limited.

It led to contradictions that these reforms were instituted in the conditions of

full employment, and in a predominantly state-owned economy. The measures meant to differentiate between firms according to their performance could potentially result in bankruptcy for the "poor" ones, threatening a loss of value of state property and a decline in jobs. Bankruptcy on a massive scale was something that the authorities could not tolerate, and even though they had turned into reform Communists in the meantime, they felt compelled to intervene and take rescue measures in many individual cases. COMECON obligations also had to be met. Naturally, when it came to bargaining between the authorities and the firms in need of such individual deals, i.e. measures tailor-made for the firm concerned, it was the latter—the firms—which were in a better position, having more specific information. Thus there were heavy brakes limiting the full development of market forces.

The genuine driving forces of a market economy are associated with private property owned by private individuals. That the predominantly state-owned means of the economy had to go into private ownership (and ultimately into the hands of individuals) was, however, beyond the limits of tolerance. Consequently, in the course of the reform, artificially created institutions ("company councils") were chosen among the possible alternatives, with which to associate the ownership role. This new ownership form, however, turned out to be dysfunctional in practice because the "owners' decisions" followed mostly the direct (short-term) interests of a narrower or wider circle of the staff or managers.

Nearing the final change of political system, the reforms passed these limits with regard to ownership. A Corporation Act conforming to the conditions of a market economy was passed, making the foundation of private firms (employing fewer than 500 people) possible. Investments by foreigners were made legal, and provided with the necessary security under civil law. Finally, in 1990, the year of the changeover but still before the first free elections, a State Property Agency was established in order to control privatization, which had begun spontaneously as a consequence of the Corporation Act, and measures were taken to regulate the procedures to be employed in the course of the selling of state-owned firms and their assets. These moves were in keeping with the analysis of empirical facts, and especially with the changes of external and internal political conditions.[17]

The years of transition

Post-socialist change means, above all, the withdrawal of the state from the business sector, and the victory of private ownership. After 1989, the replacement of state-owned property by private property began in every East and Central European country. Privatization was probably completed fastest in Hungary. In 1989, state-owned and co-operative assets still made up some 75 or 80 per cent of the capital working in the Hungarian economy. Statistics compiled at the end of 1997 show state-owned business assets making up only 21

per cent of all recorded business capital. That ratio is roughly the same as the Western European average.

The process was threefold. One side of the rapid conquest of private ownership was the sudden increase in the number of smaller, mainly Hungarian-owned businesses (between 1989 and 1996, the number of limited companies increased ten times over, that of jointly owned businesses without legal personality seven times, and the number of each exceeded 100,000).

The bankruptcy of a smaller part of the formerly state-owned large organizations was accompanied by the privatization of their greater part. The third factor was the emergence of newly founded larger manufacturing and service businesses.

In the past decade the participation of imported working capital in the privatization of the economy was probably highest in Hungary in the whole of Central and East Europe. This is explained by the historical antecedents, by the fact that the "soft" Kádár dictatorship, which executed many reforms, created a receptivity for a change of system in society as a whole and particularly in the economy. During the years of transformation, the value of imported capital was 5 per cent of the GDP. This capital, mainly multinational, played a major part—roughly half and half—both in the privatization of large organizations and in the foundation of green-field investments.

The reorganization of the state-owned assets of the large-scale enterprises into private property has been crucial for policy-making. It was one of the major tasks of the governments and parliaments of the transition period to work out a rational solution for the privatization of large firms, through which the inherited factors of production are properly exploited, and ensure that both the employment situation and the influencing of who will become owners is kept under control.

In Hungary the successive establishments have stuck quite consistently to the view regarding large firms (even if with a few exceptions) that "anything that can be sold must be sold". Firms which would need more than one-time aid for a specific purpose, and could only be kept functioning with continuous support, have not been allowed to avoid bankruptcy and liquidation. This happened in the hope that the selling of large firms (or their units) via tenders, the stock exchange methods or in other cases to professional investors invited (or volunteering) to bid, may result in the emergence of capable owners. Thus a large part of the formerly state-owned assets has turned into genuine working capital, and the buyers have been owners of this capital. All in all, the privatization of large companies went on as a uniform process, largely independently of the changes in government.

Combining privatization with company self-management (i.e. privatization based on ownership by employees) was regarded as applicable only in marginal cases. It had been amply proved by the self-government-type management forms in the 1980s that its effects were irrational, and that they would result in the di-

rect boosting of personal incomes as the dominant interest. Similarly a type of privatization common in other countries, that is the distribution of coupons backed by the property of large enterprises, or their sale at a nominal price, was of merely marginal importance.

At the moment of the changeover, the country had a huge debt obligation, with the majority of the debt being loans from private banks and of government bonds sold on foreign stock exchanges rather than credits extended by other governments. Consequently, there was little chance of rescheduling or easing the burdens. Thus there was no other way for diminishing the paralysing debt burden than to sell the business assets of the state and to use the money from these transactions (or some of it) to reduce the debt.

The effort to reduce the debt burden also explains (at least in part) the Hungarian "speciality" that large units of the electric energy industry, gas and telecommunications (or their majority ownership) were also privatized, and, after consolidation, so were the state-owned commercial banks. All in all, nearly two thirds of the privatization income was received as foreign investment in convertible currency, making it possible to repay debts to the value of more than $3 billion ahead of schedule. By this move the debt burden left the danger zone and was reduced to a level conforming to international norms.

In recent years, Hungary was the scene of privatization on an unprecedented scale, mobilizing mainly imported professional investment. Privatization extended to the viable units of the entire manufacturing industry, nearly all hotels, half of the country's electricity plant capacity, nearly the entire utilities distribution network and the major part of banking and insurance.

The national assets formerly owned by the state were not sold to Hungarian capital simply because such capital did not exist on the scale necessary to buy them, and because without the participation of imported capital, anything like technological modernization and market development would have been out of the question.

With some exaggeration it may be said that for forty years Hungarian industry (and trading) was based on the COMECON and mainly the Soviet markets. The disintegration of COMECON and the Soviet contacts alone were the cause of an enormous loss in Hungary's business assets. Economic opinion, based on 1989 data, puts the loss at more than 50 per cent.

It is often asked if it was permissible or acceptable to let electric energy production and distribution, gas distribution, telecommunication and banking services go into foreign majority ownership. In today's globalizing world economy, the idea of "national self-sufficiency" is becoming rapidly outdated. In all areas, the European Union is moving towards the elimination of the isolation of national economies and markets. By moving in that direction, Hungary is adapting to the mainstream.

Purely on a national basis, relying on its own capital, Hungary would never have been able to raise, say, telecommunications (one of the major systems of a market economy) to international standards. And it would be similarly incapable in the future of modernizing and maintaining the standards of energy supply and banking services.

In the last decade of the century, the recession of the Hungarian economy of the 1980s turned into large-scale decline and crisis. The main cause of this was the loss of liquidity of the Soviet market, followed by the disintegration of the Soviet Union. A considerable part of the industrial capacities geared to that market, could simply not be converted or redirected. Some products proved sellable in other markets but only at huge discounts and under conditions favourable to the buyer. Import competition caused further difficulties, yet the liberalization of imports, being one of the fundamental conditions for the effective functioning of market forces (especially in small countries), was absolutely inevitable.

The agricultural sector owed its own crisis, in addition to suffering heavily from the collapse of the Soviet market, to privatization involving compensation. Many co-operatives went out of business, and the majority of their land—fulfilling compensation claims—went into the hands of former co-operative members or urban heirs in the form of small properties covering a couple of hectares. The disintegration of a considerable number of co-operatives that had functioned as co-ordinators, the division of their lands into small holdings, the shortage of equipment and capital, together resulted in a serious decline in agricultural production and in insolvency.

The above explains the enormous decline both in industry and agriculture: between 1989 and 1992, their output declined by an average 10 per cent annually, and in 3 years, by approximately 30 per cent. Services (including education and health as well as the bureaucracy) naturally acted as stabilizers. Nevertheless, the decline in GDP was extremely large: 18 per cent in 3 years (an average of 6.3 per cent per year), a decline comparable only to the worst of the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Within the conditions described above, the government of the changeover had no choice but to continue an economic policy oriented towards maintaining macroeconomic equilibrium. A strict fiscal and monetary policy limiting consumption continued and, following the decline between 1990 and 1993, it was actually intensified. The devaluation of the forint, improving the foreign trade balance and the balance of payments but also generating inflation, continued. Devaluation amounted to 30 per cent in 3 years. The rise in consumer prices was similar, eroding buying power. The drop in domestic consumption followed the decline in output.

The stops, halts and losses in the economy brought about chains of non-payment; the liquidity problems of one company engulfed other companies as well

(suppliers, then the suppliers of the suppliers). Nor were credits granted to firms (sometimes under the previous system), repaid to banks. Many of their outstanding debts turned into "bad debts". Their capacity for extending new credits declined, causing further problems for producers. In the end a situation arose when no one really knew who would fail to pay for what, and where the centres of trouble actually lay.

A proper legal framework had to be created for responsible business management (including banking management),[18] a system of business and bank accounting and, within that, the qualification of debts, making the composition of debt and capital stock transparent, so that the losses could be localized.

Bankruptcy procedures had to be carried out, and the companies (units) and banks capable of survival were stabilized or consolidated, having some of their bad debts settled by the state and by the replacement of their capital losses.

By the end of 1995 the economy had completed that operation. Around a third of the inherited industrial capacities had to be written off, and the number of jobs in industry dropped at about the same rate. Credit and bank consolidation was accomplished via the issuing of government bonds to a nominal value of several hundred billion forints. The interest due on these to be funded by the exchequer (in other words, by society) makes up some 2 per cent of the GDP in any given year. The mass of bankruptcies and the credit and bank consolidation served basically to get rid of the financial consequences of the shrinking of the economy due mainly to the loss of the COMECON and Soviet markets.

Hungary had to face tough restrictive measures once again in 1995, following a period when, as a consequence of politically motivated and too hasty measures taken to invigorate the economy,[19] the balance of payments deficit became dangerously large. New currency devaluations followed, and a special, temporary extra duty was levied on imports. After that, the volume of imports was reduced to a certain extent, and, as a consequence of the steep price rises (some 60 per cent in 2 years), the real value of incomes dropped drastically again, and so did consumption (by nearly 20 and 10 per cent, respectively).

These harsh economic measures[20] restored the relative balance of the economy. At the same time, privatization and the expansion of foreign capital, renewing the economic microstructure and abruptly improving the potential of the economy, began to make themselves felt. The economy, as we have shown, was able to enter on a path of lasting, export-driven growth. Since 1996, the annual growth rate of technology-intensive exports, directed mainly to EU countries, has been a two-digit figure; since 1997 the annual growth of the GDP is 4–5 per cent, real income and consumption have slowly begun to grow, too, and since 1988, the number of jobs has also been increasing. On the basis of its economic achievements (and following its admission to NATO) Hungary is a top candidate in East and Central Europe for EU membership.

Hungary had to pay an enormous price for returning to the European mainstream. The output of the economy (calculated in the size of the GDP) reached the level preceding the change of the system only in 1999, although with a significantly more modern make-up. During the last two decades of the 20th century, Hungary—much like the other East and Central European countries—must have missed a potential growth of some 40 or 50 per cent which, from a historical perspective, may be regarded as a loss due to the long period of disintegration. Measured by the degree of economic development, the gap between Hungary and the highly developed countries widened, and the country has now been overtaken and left behind by the rapidly developing economies of Spain, Portugal, and Greece, which were considerably supported after gaining EU membership. Hungarian incomes are somewhere between one third and two fifths of the European average. According to business calculations, the cost of Hungarian labour—because of the undervalued Hungarian currency—is even lower: 15–20 per cent compared to the European average. In the period of transition, employment dropped by a third, meaning that the earlier, extremely high rate fell back to the lowest European level (from 50 per cent to 36 per cent). Some backward regions and unskilled segments of the population, especially the Gypsies, where discrimination also increases the problem, suffer from severe, almost paralysing unemployment, reaching 50 or in some places even 80 per cent.

The country's rise can only be based on the development of the economy. The path of growth entered by Hungary in the last years of the century and the fact that EU membership now seems within reach indicates that once again, Hungary has set its course towards a rapid catching up. ❧

NOTES

1 ■ Between 1900 and 1910, Budapest became the world's second biggest flour milling centre after Minneapolis. Hungary supplied 24 per cent of the world's entire exports of flour.

2 ■ Such as General Electric, Deutsche Telecom, IBM, TDK, Philips, Samsung, Nokia, Suzuki, Opel, Volkswagen-Audi, General Motors, Siemens, Unilever, Nestlé, ABM-Amro, Raiffeisen Unibank.

3 ■ This figure includes those firms whose registered capital is at least 10 per cent foreign owned.

4 ■ A realistic view of the results achieved by the Hungarian economy between the two World Wars, should be based on the years 1937 and 1938. The forced development of the war economy of the following years does not reflect the genuine performance and capabilities of the Hungarian economy in normal conditions.

5 ■ In the early summer of 1950 the Korean war (a trial war?) broke out.

6 ■ Tens of thousands moved from villages to towns, fleeing from the violence and because of their dissatisfaction with the conditions in collective farming. Between 1949 and 1954 the total number of those moving from overpopulated rural areas to towns, most to seek better jobs and higher pay, was about 300,000.

7 ■ Thousands were imprisoned and some 400 are known to have been executed. The latter included Prime Minister Imre Nagy and his closest associates.

8 ■ The success was due mainly to the fact that the government concentrated its efforts on persuading the most highly respected farmers of villages to enter the collectives, rewarding them with leading positions. Another factor was that it was made clear by the recurring waves of organization at home, as well as by the examples of the neighbouring countries, that resistance was hopeless.

9 ■ These recognitions were voiced mainly in "inside" working documents and a few openly published papers by Hungarian, Polish and Czechoslovak economists. Quite a few high-quality analyses, available also in the socialist countries as "inside" material to selected persons, were published in the West, too.

10 ■ In this period cheap credits, abundantly available from oil dollars, were offered at interest rates below inflation levels.

11 ■ E.g. at the end of the 1970s, in keeping with the extremely high employment rate of women, nearly 90 per cent of children between 3 and 5 years of age attended government-funded nurseries whose standards were recognized as high.

12 ■ There were huge shortages in, and waiting lists for, non-perishable consumer goods, especially cars; the choice was narrow and the quality poor. Hundreds of thousands waited for a telephone for years, even decades. In the mid-1980s, the number of unfulfilled applications for telephones was 700,000.

13 ■ With the exception of Yugoslavia, none of the other socialist countries allowed its citizens a similar freedom of travel.

14 ■ E.g. in the summer of 1979, meat prices rose by 40 per cent.

15 ■ These loans became accessible when the country won membership of the International Monetary Fund. The application for IMF membership was the first international move by any Hungarian government since 1950 for which no previous approval by the Soviet Union had been sought.

16 ■ This category included, beside independent shopkeepers, artisans and small-scale farmers, all those who were producing something for the market rather than just for their own consumption. Furthermore, it included members of subcontracting groups belonging to larger organizations, individuals who by working extra hours, contracted for well-paid extra work at their own regular workplaces under special agreements.

17 ■ After the withdrawal of the Soviet Union (or Gorbachev) as a great power, the situation became a good deal more unambiguous. It was now clear that the countries of East and Central Europe historically and culturally affiliated to the West, could look forward to a bourgeois-type change.

18 ■ The laws on financial institutions, banking and accounting were codified in 1991. These furnished the basis for the separation and mutual independence of the basic institutions of a modern financial system, the central bank and commercial banks, and the money and capital markets.

19 ■ These measures were taken when the 1994 parliamentary elections were imminent.

20 ■ It was one of the ironies of history that these extreme measures had to be taken and implemented by a government and parliament with a Socialist majority.

Pál Závada

Jadviga's Pillow

Excerpt from a novel

I. "The natural law of matrimony"

Zachinam tuto knyizhechku.[1] I, András Osztatní, am starting this little note book on the 5th day of the month of February, 1915, just one day before my wedding.

Restless and fevered with anticipation, I cannot sleep, and so I will now take out my note book, which I bought at Binder's for the sum of one crown 40. (The minute I laid eyes on it, I was taken with the soft lilac lines on the sheets, and the indigo-colored cloth binding, and I made up my mind to use it as a Diary as soon as I could call myself a married man.) The clock has just struck midnight, and so I can now set down that today, it being the 6th day of the month of February, 1915, I will lead Mária Jadviga Palkovits to the altar as my bride.

Gyakovaty pana Bohu,[2] may the Good Lord be praised that I have lived to see this day.

I will confess that at this point I put down my pen, clasped my hands together and, bowing my head, offered thanks for my good fortune, after which I stretched my limbs (nearly toppling the inkstand into the bargain), for if the truth be known, I have worked them hard today. However, the fatigue I feel is not heavy but light, and the anticipation, too, has ceased straining on my nerves, and courses through me like blood.

1 ■ I shall now begin this small work.

2 ■ Praise be the Lord, in the Slovak language.

Pál Závada

was originally a sociologist. His other works are Kulákprés *(Kulák Squeeze, sociography, 1986), and* Mielőtt elsötétül *(Before Dark, stories, 1996). He is presently on the staff of the literatury magazine* Holmi *and working on another novel.* Jadviga's Pillow *became an instant success upon its publication in 1997 and has had eight editions since. Krisztina Deák's film of the same title had just been released when the magazine went to press.*

Jadviga's Pillow is written in the form of a diary, and concerns itself with the lives of a man obsessed by love of his wife, and his wife, Jadviga, equally obsessed, but by another man. Though on the surface the novel is also about alienation, it is the story—part fact, part conjecture, part mystery (could Jadviga be András's half-sister and his father's lover?)—of a mysterious family alliance, and is, at the same time, a critique of morality.

The diary which makes up *Jadviga's Pillow* is begun by András Osztatní on the 5th of February, 1915, the night before his wedding to Jadviga, six years his senior, and his father's adopted daughter. It is continued, after his death, by his wife Jadviga, who begins "talking" to her dead husband in this manner, telling him things she could not reveal while he was alive. It is then continued, after her own death, by her son, Marci, conceived outside of her marriage. Throughout, there are footnotes, and we soon realize that they have been added by Marci, who from the very first page is present throughout, and whose reactions—being a child of Communism as well as pre-war Hungary—are in sharp, and often amusing contrast to his parents.

The setting of the story, among the Slovak minority in northern Hungary, from where the author also comes, is likewise ambiguous; being the centre of the Carpathian Basin, it has always been a place where adamant protest and helpless resignation go hand in hand.

Judith Sollosy

We finished the preparations in good time. Zabijachka hotova,[3] two piglets are in the pan, properly scored for baking, and with it patés by the tubful, well combined, 3 sheep, skinned and jointed, plus 50 pairs of hens and 60 ducks, all plucked, and the cakes laid out on six large tables, at least, and everything securely under lock and key in the cellar and the pantry. The five barrels of wine from Solt Vadkert were brought in yesterday. The pálinka is of our own distillation. There is plenty of it decanted into bottles, and I have also ordered 20 bottles of brown and green liqueurs from Komló Inn for the ladies.

The women will set to work at the crack of dawn, laying down the tablecloths at the Smallholders Club, bringing in the plates, and firing up the kutkas.[4] (Knowing Mamovka, she will insist on overseeing the preparations, as well as the cooking, though it'd progress just as well without her.) Hulina and Boszák will take the meat over on the dray, but Boszák will stay there, for I made him promise to devote his full attention to the stew, which he will make in four large kettles. I don't want a proper cook for bárány paprikás,[5] no matter how good. All I want is Boszák. The way he makes it, it's red and dark, like bull's blood, and

3 ■ The little beating is done, i.e., they have finished slaughtering the pig.
4 ■ Places for the cauldrons, made of adobe.
5 ■ Mutton stew.

not runny, like those low-grade meats in their greasy, watery sauces. His stew absorbs its own succulent pan juices, the colour of sour cherries, and it quivers like a foal's flank after a full gallop, that's how strong and hearty it is. It practically makes the plate into which they ladle out that steaming stew tremble.

Our relatives will come around at three in the afternoon, after which we will cross the garden and formally ask for Jadviga's hand in marriage. Needless to say, Mamovka and I clashed over this, too. We couldn't see eye to eye on who should be asked for Jadviga's hand. I didn't want my own mother to give Jadviga to me (especially after the vehemence with which she opposed my choice of a bride) but, for instance, the clergyman Szpevács's wife, my Jadviga's Judit mama. Or else, my godmother, nyanyichka Erzsa, she could be there to greet us. But when I saw that Jadviga had resigned herself to it, I let Mamovka have her way. Let it be as Mother wishes, I reflected, as if she'd ever let anyone sway her from her appointed course. Besides (or so I reasoned), though I have Apovka to thank for Jadviga, Mamovka gave her blessing to our nuptials, too.

But what am I saying? Who am I trying to fool? Her blessing?! There's no time to go into this thing now. Let it suffice to say, the first time I approached Mother, resolved though weak in the knees, after she heard me out she turned as red as pickled beet, and while her komondor growled menacingly, she advanced, huffing and puffing, backing me up against the wall. "Cho? zhse koho? chsooo?!" she repeated, first choking with rage, then screaming and yelling so hard, the windowpanes trembled, What's this? Who would I marry?! And also, that you will study, not marry, understand?! Though she was never one to curb her tongue, I have never seen her quite so incoherent with rage. We were practically at fisticuffs when the dog growled at me again, or so I thought, and I fled for the kitchen, and Mother slammed the door.

We didn't speak to each other for two weeks, but then I couldn't take it any more, and one night I said to her, "Let's talk it over..." She stopped me with a wave of the hand and snapped, "Chobi vász chert zobrav, tak szi ju veznyi," i.e., what does she care?[6] I was surprised that she had changed her mind like this, and elated, too, though she quickly added, Considering how I can't see or hear, she's got me so thoroughly hooked, she added. ("You let her lead you by the nose, son, didn't you?") And that I don't even care about the difference in our ages, and that her smell has made me lose what little sound sense I may have had. (To tell the truth, Mamovka used the word "szmrad" which, as we know, means stink, because she's not used to Jadviga's lotions and perfumes. As far as I'm concerned, they make my head spin. Once on the way back from visiting her, I stopped in Vienna and bought some of the camphor ointment she uses, and I kept sniffing at it, sometimes until my head reeled, which went on and on until I could see her again, many months later.)

6 ■ In short, the devil take the both of you, go marry her.

I wasn't offended by Mother's gruff manner though; I would have liked to hug her and thank her, but she rebuffed me, saying I should stop it, leave her alone. Still, I was happy, though once again, it was no thanks to me that Mamovka changed her mind in my favour. In this manner was the rosemary fragrance of our love born from the noxious brimstone fumes of Mother's curses and the camphor scent of my true intended.

But back to the wedding! The new carriage with the leather seats will be harnessed by early afternoon; we will mount the smaller one, which Gregor will drive with the ribboned French reins Apovka brought from Győr, and which he treasured like the light of his eyes. The big double seater will trail behind; it will contain Mamovka, Krszní Otyec, and Krszná Mama[7] with my cousin Erka. Mother's house servant Zelenák can drive that, for all I care. (I gave him some proper clothing, seeing how Mamovka insists on this flea-ridden, pediculous Zelenák, so that she may have someone to order around, I expect. "Will you at least shave, for the love of God," I say to him. "What? Zse cso?"[8], Zelenák says, because he can be as deaf as a doornail when he wants, at which I say, "O-holyity!, rozumjetye?"[9] and also, "Here, take this suit of clothes, they're your size!")

And thus I have been forced to make my own arrangements for my very own wedding, because my beloved Father, moj milyí Apovka, did not live to see it, while my poor Mamovka, try as she might to order a whole cackle of chicken-plucking women and hired hands around (not to mention the rest of us), was no mean encumberment to me. Now, too, it's a struggle every step of the way, may the good Lord forgive her, and me, too, into the bargain!

The truth is, she is infinitely more sour and forbidding since the loss of her daughter, for now it is but the two of us; my older sister Zsofka, who was a bride to be, we buried just four months before Apovka's death, in October, 1913, our poor unplucked lily-flower. She was the apple of Mamovka's eye, the daughter on whom she bestowed her name, and in whom she saw her former maiden self. It was for her she had planned a grand wedding like this, I know that, and not for me. And when my time would come, she thought, it would be with somebody else.

She wanted me to marry the girl who was Zsofka's constant companion, and whom I would not offend for the world by setting down her name, the girl I did not want, whereas she always entertained certain hopes for me.

Incidentally, I saw her again three days ago at the Hromnyice-Day ball, where she danced with my friend Pali Rosza the whole night, may the Lord be praised. It was there, at the Mária Day Smallholders' dance[10] and on her name day, that

7 ■ Godfather and Godmother.

8 ■ What's that?

9 ■ Shave yourself, un-der-stand?

10 ■ Hromnyice is the Day of Mary and Candlemass, and it is her name day because she is Mrs. András Osztatní, née Mária Jadviga Palkovics. (Otherwise, a dance like this is just like the Smallholders' livestock fair, except they don't have to listen to the tooting trubatsh brass.)

I first showed myself with Jadviga in public, and I was as proud as a peacock with my lovely bride, who was dancing as a maiden for the last time in her life.

This morning, I dashed over to the other house for Jadviga (it was built by Apovka for Zsofka, but now we are going to live in it). "Come along," I said to her, dragging her across the garden. I then opened the cellar with the long key, and led my wonder-struck bride down the stairs to the oleanders wintering in the large cauldrons. "Pluck me a spray of rosemary," I said, "and stick it in my hat!" We laughed when she did this, and embraced, and then I said, "I had better be off, and so must you, lest someone should see us," even though it was not somebody else who did not want us to be seen together that day (or even custom, which is not especially strict on this point), but her.

If there was no separate bride's house and groom's house, she wanted to be spared, at least, for one more day, the ordeal of greeting a hoard of chicken and cake bearing relatives. Besides, she felt a cold coming on and preferred drawing the curtains in the new house and inhaling a brew of herbal teas, and applying her camphorous ointments to fend off an attack of migraine on her big day. "Also," she said, "I need time to think, Dear. I'm sure you understand."

"Oh," I said, stroking her, "there is nothing I wouldn't do for you," though I knew perfectly well that Mother wouldn't leave this, either, without comment Mamovka Drahá! Mamo, Mother dear! If only the Good Lord would soften her heart!

So it was this spray of rosemary that I have just put into my wedding suit pocket (having read the other day in "A Practical Guide" that this is the way), and I also crumbled some between my fingers, because it smells so nice when I raise them to my nostrils. I will also take out the camphor ointment, possibly for the last time, so I can pine for its mistress, who will soon be mine for ever.

For this little note book, and for myself, too (and for myself only), I will first set down how I won my Jadviga's hand in marriage, so that I may recall it until my dying day. I will write it down starting tomorrow, after I am a married man. Right now I am very tired.

*

8 February, 1915

The expenses and expenditures of my wedding were as follows: To the Smallholders Association, for rental of the Smallholders Hall, 30 zlatí;[11] 1 fatted hen, 2 milk-loafs (50 zl.) and two carts of firewood for each trubatsh musician (Chmel with 16 boys). Drinks (all gone): 3 1/2 hectolitres of wine and 1/2 hltr. pálinka and liqueurs (60 zl.). Mamovka presented Jadviga with a gift kerchief and collar (25 zl.), plus 3 zlati for the bridal dance. We gave the best man a cart of firewood. The wedding invitations from Weiszmüller's printing shop, 160, cost 4 zl. This came to a sum total of 172 zlatí, which doesn't include the rosewood for the fire.

*

11 ■ Gold.

I shall write more about my wedding (which went without a hitch, mostly), especially my wedding night, at a later date. (Actually, even though four nights have passed, it hasn't happened yet, not really, in its natural way, even though we have mutually assured each other of our amorous intentions—gentle stroking, etc. I haven't slept a wink for days, what with transports of ecstasy and extreme agitation vying for supremacy.)

*

9 February

I will now set our story down on paper, as promised, from the beginning, though our present situation, and most especially our nights—I would not forget any of it, not for the world. (Perhaps it could lead to understanding, or serve as a lesson.). But that will come bye and bye.

So then. Having harnessed Zephyr at the crack of dawn, I was soon out on the farm, saying I had to give Gregor his orders, whereas it is not Gregor at all who needs ordering, but me, for crying out loud, me, inside!

My Jadviga got up with me, an angelic smile on her face, whereas she couldn't have slept much either, and she gave me clean linen and ranyajka,[12] toasted bread in the stove (old granny Blahov had fired it up by then), and spread duck fat on top. I stealthily pocketed my small note book (I have pen and ink out on the farm), and we parted with a kiss.

I quickly gave Gregor his orders, dispatching him to do the harrowing, though he knows what he has got to do perfectly well, without me telling him. But hold on. Who am I trying to fool? If only this weren't a Diary! I can't send Gregor off anywhere, least of all to do the harrowing; I need *him* to tell me whether it is harrowing that's on the agenda today, or possibly something else.

I flung two sheaves of kukurícsa[13] husks on the embers, then I sat down at my old servant's table to write, moving it closer to the window. What I know I know mostly from Gregor anyway (who is also steward of my estate), so it is only fitting that I should do my writing in this out of the way nook, where he told me many a tale when I was a boy. He was Apovka's faithful servant since he was a boy himself. Grandfather had hired him, and though he never married, when this farm was left without dwellers, well on twenty years ago, Apovka put him here despite Mamovka's protests, who meant to put her field-hands here, women with all their kith and kin, because they flattered and badgered her (how it's such a lovely farm, and close to the village). But Apovka wouldn't be swayed, it's Gregor's as long as he lives, "do szmrty".[14]

My beloved father, György Osztatní, tripled his 30 hold inheritance and brought together a handsome homestead (not to mention Mamovka's 50

12 ■ Breakfast. But they also call it frustyik, from the German.

13 ■ The dried stem of the corn. But maybe he didn't write it correctly, because the corn stem was thrown in the kiln only after the cows had chewed off the leaves, but that's called "zetke".

14 ■ In short, he will stay until he dies. (In death, nothing remains, not even vowels: Szmrty.)

cadasters of land, which was cut off of the parental estate only at a later date, but part of which Mother managed herself, of her own volition, which Apovka observed with good humour). The other landowners referred to our estate as as a real bohatí majetok,[15] and made fun of Father's name,[16] because he made the most of himself in the village, and from his own resources, mostly, because he didn't spend his life playing cards, cavorting all night and hunting, like Count Vaclavszky, for instance, next to us.

Yet Apovka could have made another life for himself had he, as Gregor says, not set his sights on his own aggrandizement and running around all the time, fleeing his home, but had settled for the schoolmaster and cantor's daughter, whom he must have seriously considered for a bride, and of whom I shall say more later; in short, had he not married Mamovka, whose inheritance of half of the mill my uncle, Godfather Jankó, bestowed on her right away, and whose parents promised—and paid—her a handsome yearly percentage from the income on the estate, which was left intact, and which just added fuel to the fire of Apovka's ambition to make himself a wealthier man than his neighbours.

Being a clever and competent farmer who attended gymnasium in Csaba (after which, having pestered his father until he gave his consent, he was sent away to study the art of husbandry and the German language), they soon wished to bring Apovka into local affairs. But he, preferring to dash about, acquiring things, would rather sell somebody's wheat, or buy seed grain or machines, or purchase breeding animals, round up hired hands or even arrange marriages than work in a clerical job. Even so, he was repeatedly deputized to the local Chamber, the County, or Budapest—wherever he was needed, but office of any sort he refused. They would have made him a magistrate, member of the County Assembly, or a churchwarden, even president of the County Chamber, but he would have none of it. He refused to sit behind a desk, or doze on a bench the whole day long, he said. He'll gladly offer his services short term, he said, but that he feels no inclination to do what he must. This was one side of the coin. The other was that Father preferred to look after his own aggrandizement, and never was he tempted by office.

It all began when my Father did a favour for a certain Benjamin Winkler, a German lawyer's apprentice who was unmarried at the time, and with whom he had boarded at the house of the hardware merchant Fehérvári during their school years. It transpired that once the widower Poldi Weisz (Fehérvári's older brother, a Jewish cloth merchant from the village) visited the family with his two daughters, one of whom, Mici (Aunt Mici to me), caught Béni Winkler's eye. However, because Uncle Poldi would not hear of a German marrying his daughter, even if he happened to be a lawyer, Father carried their letters and other

15 ■ A real wealthy estate.

16 ■ Though is was not funny. In our part of the world, Osztatní in Slovak means 'Last' even today, even though the dictionary doesn't say this, it says, "the rest", i.e., what remains. A sort of remainder. Of course, it could be construed as funny: "Last Dregs" family. This could be done, I suppose.

missives for them in secret, finally bringing Winkler himself home with him, and arranging for them to meet. The meeting must have gone admirably, for Micike found herself with child, upon which the enamoured Winkler eloped with her and married her, ignoring the fact that his own parents had other plans for him, and were expecting his return to Germany. ("You married a girl by the name of Mici Weisz?! Gott im Himmel!") But Aunt Mici gave birth to little Franci Winkler despite their protests, while the lawyer, as a token of his gratitude, recommended Father to his older brother in Velgast, in Mecklenburg, and subsequently (because he was instrumental in pacifying his father-in-law, old Poldi), once they were back home, introduced him to his circle of friends—county officials, merchants, bankers and contractors—who in turn employed Father as their business contact to the farmers of the district, while they served him in good stead as business and family relations, first throughout the country, and later, even beyond.

Still—though he had plenty of opportunity to do so—Father did not desert his native village, the reason for which must be sought, I suspect, in the person of Mária Ponyiczky. But even Gregor cannot say what brought a sudden end to their years of longing for each other, for, on the one hand, when their secret was revealed and Grandfather thundered and forbade his son to court the penniless headmaster's daughter ("Cso kcses? Nye daju sznyov nyics!"),[17] this would not have sufficed to sway my by then already headstrong Father from his appointed path; on the other, one wonders how much damage the appearance of a certain young parish clerk might have caused who, they say, was probably transferred here only after Father, as Gregor relates, spent the night in desperate merrymaking to forget his sorrow, then, teeth clenched, and white as a sheet, he appeared at Mamovka's house during the Sunday meal, and without saying a single word to her, asked for the hand of the richest and haughtiest girl in the village (who, in her turn, had showed the door to many a wooer) in marriage. Not content with that, he demanded an immediate answer!

We will probably never know any of this for sure; we know only that it was on the same day the devastated schoolmaster Ponyiczky, who had become a widower the year before, and who by then was regularly trailed by groups of mocking children on the street, accompanied his daughter to her wedding in the clerk's village; and it was on this day, too, that my father, György Osztatní, and my mother, Zsófia Racskó, held a wedding feast so fabulous that no one has seen the likes of it, either before or since. Or so old Gregor says. The people of the entire village ate and drank to their heart's content. This was on the 7th day of May, in the year of Our Lord, 1886.

Within months, calamity struck in relentless waves, with just one gift of God shining forth from the dark relentlessness of fate, namely, that Mária Ponyiczky, the schoolmaster's daughter, gave birth, though a bit before her time, to be sure,

17 ■ Meaning, what were you thinking of? They won't give you anything with her! (Meaning, a dowry.)

to a beautiful baby girl. However, sorrow and desperation left no room in her maternal breast for joy, for a year and a half after her mother's death she first lost her schoolmaster father, then her husband, and nearly her mind, too, into the bargain. The melancholy scribe of the prefecture who, as they say, wore his fate inscribed on his handsome, wide forehead, was reputed to have died of blood poisoning as a result of a wound. Not a year passed, and the young mother, who was forced to hire a wet-nurse and nanny (for she had no milk, nor the will to live) returned to her Maker, and there is no knowing whether she simply let her soul slip away from her, because she would not eat and never recovered from her confinement, or whether she drove it willfully away, for there are those who say that she drank caustic soda.

I must stop now, because my wife is calling me to supper. I merely wish to comment that despite Mamovka's imprecations, Father first became the little orphan's legal guardian, then adopted her, and that she is called Mária Jadviga Palkovits, and she is my lawfully wedded wife.

*

Today, on the 10th day of February, Mamovka handed me, on bound paper sheets, the list that Ivka Kohut, my older sister's friend, had set down from dictation, and which is entitled, "The list of Zsofka's dowry for her wedding".

"Take it," says Mother, "seeing how it was all left on my hands! I had it taken to your wife this morning. Nobody wants it any more. Have her count the things, and sign it, that you took it. It should have been Zsofka's by right!" And having said that, she slammed the door.

I go to my Jadviga's room. Her eyes are red from crying, but her face lights up when she sees me. She doesn't have to say anything. I know that what Mamovka gave her, she gave in order to humiliate her. Is it proper for her to take all this, she asks, and must she take it?

We did not sign anything, but I subsequently transferred the inventory to my note book:

20 bed sheets
34 towels (30 for daily use, 4 with embroidered monograms)
10 tablecloths (3 damask, 2 store-bought, 5 homespun)
18 napkins (16 store-bought, various; 1 monogrammed, 1 big damask)
18 shirts, embroidered, 4 nightshirts, 1 striped shirt
11 white blouses, 4 white bodices
4 fustian underdrawers
8 blankets (4 white)
10 vests (6 white, 1 black, 2 pink, 1 with ribbons)
4 robes (3 for summer, 1 for winter)
12 underskirts (6 printed, 1 noldová, 5 store-bought)
8 skirts (2 silk, 2 printed and patterned, 4 hárász)

3 silk skirts with apron
13 aprons (2 hand-spun, with name, 1 liszter, 6 washable, 4 with tops)
3 flower-patterned silk frocks (1 patterned pink, 1 white with blue flowers, 1 hárász)
2 black frocks (1 plain silk, 1 repp)
1 white silk wedding gown
20 blouses (12 silk, 8 washable)
46 kerchiefs (16 silk, 8 gaziros, 3 broadcloth, 17 linen, 2 cotton flannel /fustian)
2 large shawls for the shoulder dark brown silk with flowers
11 winter shawls (3 with plush fringes, 4 Berliners with plush fringes, 4 Berliners without fringes)
20 handkerchiefs
1 woolen sweater
3 winter overcoats (2 cloth, 1 plush)
10 pairs of shoes (3 pr. suede, 1 pr. white, 1 pr. grey, 1 pr. black, 1 pr. beige, 1 pr. snakeskin, 2 prs. patent leather)
4 pairs of slippers (2 prs. patent leather, 1 pr. velvet, 1 pr. with white roses)
6 pairs of stockings (3 prs. silk, 3 prs. ribble)
cotton flannel /fustian cloth for 3 blouses, kazan cloth for 1 blouse, chiffon cloth for 1 blouse, white lace cloth for 4 skirts
10 pillows each with 2 kg. goose feathers
12 pillow cases (8 damask, 4 kanevász)
3 comforters / eiderdowns with 8 kg. goose down each
3 mattresses with 7 kg. goose down each

She will also take as her dowry:
2 veneered wardrobes
1 expandable table
1 mirror with stand
2 veneered beds
2 straw mattresses, store-bought
1 bedcover for a double bed
1 beige bedcover for a single bed
1 silk pillow case which Zsofka made herself.

Of the above, the bed linen and furniture were already in our possession. But Mamovka gave me this inventory sheet all the same, lest we forget, my Jadviga said, that we are living and sleeping in Zsofka's things, not to mention the clothes Mamovka gave Jadviga earlier, without telling her they were from the dowry. She especially said nothing about the wedding gown, whereas had she been able to refuse it, Jadviga would have had one made, because this was not to her taste. She also put away the silk pillow case, because she only uses the white embroidered pillow that came from her mother.

*

On the 11th of February, 1915 I bought, with my own money, parts for the Kühne seeder Mamovka and I own jointly: 3 pairs hinges for 42 fillérs, 100 nails, 9 seed funnels for the seeder from the tinsmith Strbka for 1 Crown 80 fillérs, 25 screws for 10 fillérs, for a total of 2.42 Crowns.

I do not have time to write about anything else now. Also, I do not understand anything, Jadviga most especially. Sometimes I feel like I am losing my mind. Poor Zephyr, for no reason I drove him so hard in front of the buggy today, he was foaming at the mouth. Then it rained, and I was drenched to the bone.

*

The following also happened yesterday. I must note it down, because tripping over that peacock is not all that happened.

The truth is when, as wet as I was, I unharnessed the horse and left the stable with the traces and wet blanket, I couldn't see a thing. Still, when (after flinging the stuff down angrily by the shed door) I kicked that poor stupid creature with all my might, I suddenly thought: She's just like this peacock. And also: Get out of my sight! And that my wife is just like you! And with that, I kicked it against the wall. I break out in a cold sweat, just thinking about it. It hawked, shook itself, and without looking at me, strutted away, gently swinging softly to and fro. And that's not all, because I don't know why, but as that peacock marched past me, its head held proudly high, its large tail swaying—is the long-tailed one the hen, or the little grey one, I wonder?—my anger doubled in upon itself, and I grabbed the wicker broom, and flung it at its young. I hit the largest of the three chicks, and as I removed the broom from its fluttering wing as it lay on its side, something clouded my mind, and I trampled it to death with my booted foot. The peacock never looked back at its young, but I looked around, horrified, lest someone should see me, especially Mamovka, who has been trying, ever since she had sent away for this pair of peacocks years ago, to hatch a rare egg or two; and it is only recently that these three chicks finally came, with a hatcher. I swept the flattened chick onto a dustpan, took it round the back, and loosening the top of the dungheap with a fork, I stashed it underneath. I felt such loathing, I nearly vomited, but the loathing I felt was directed at myself.

*

The 19th of February, 1915, Zsuzsanna Day.

At the break of dawn, I toss and turn in bed. I cannot sleep. My mouth tastes bitter, my body is taut and restless. The lark should sing for the first time today, but I listen in vain. Will spring ever come?

*

On the 21st of February, two weeks after our nuptials, Jadviga's confession, that one sentence. (I got up without a word, went to the window, and she came after me and put her arms around me. Freeing myself from her embrace, I paced

up and down the room until the break of day. Only then did I ask the first question.) However, I can not write or talk about it.

*

The truth is, before I turned the wick up in order to act as the faithful chronicler of my troubled heart, I downed two glasses of terkelyica schnapps,[18] chasing them down with a bottle of ordinary dry wine from Vadkert, which I got earlier from the komora.[19] I must drink, for I am overwrought; besides, the wine will give me courage for writing down such intimacies. Jadviga is asleep. I am not.

I smell my palm... At other times, when my camphor-scented Jadviga's smile holds out hope, I smell rosemary on her skin as it peeks out from under her gown. But like this, towards dawn, after the physical and emotional torment, I detect the smell of dill on us both. (Sometimes Mamovka uses such inordinate amounts of dill in her cooking and baking that it makes me nauseous, and I am quite overcome with loathing, and at times I must even leave the table. But I say nothing.)

In order for me to write down Jadviga's confession, I must back up a little.

I should begin with our wedding night, for in Stralsund, we never progressed beyond kissing, and for a long time, even that meant only the touching of the lips, for she would not let me probe between her pearly teeth with my tongue until the night before we left for home. (Not to mention pressing my face against her breast, over her bodice, or cupping my hand over it, these were also forbidden.) Here at home, she usually brought up Mamovka as an excuse, saying she might come in at any time. But she never repulsed me outright; she just smiled and gently pushed me away, though she was always blushing and hot, her breath quickened, and her lips, too, quivered ever so slightly, with hardly perceptible, convulsive little spasms.

We could not escape the wedding feast and retire to our room until very late. The more hardy of our guests, my friends Pali Rosza, Szvetlik, and the others, had a grand time, and towards dawn had the band play marches only, and kept kicking the wooden floor with their boots so it nearly collapsed under them, but then they persuaded the girls to join them again, and danced to Slovak songs. It was at that point we left; we glanced at each other, and off we went. (I told only Miki Buchbinder, but not Mamovka, who was in the kitchen, out back.)

We ran to the house, which from now on would be our new home, hand in hand, and the icy air refreshed me. Not wishing to grow drowsy and weak and get a bad stomach, I drank in moderation throughout the night, and though I ate a hearty meal (especially Boszák's excellent stew), I was able to relieve myself before we sneaked away, and to reduce the painful bloating. (I have often wondered while passing wind at night, under the covers—because it's not like passing water, when you can relieve yourself, and that's that; with wind you must

18 ■ Two shots of grappa brandy.

19 ■ And the "komora", that's the pantry.

wait patiently for it to happen, not to mention the fact that you can not stay in the jakes for hours! —in short, I have often asked myself what it would be like with two of us in bed? And would the bloating, which can be excruciatingly painful at times, stand in the way of the body's labour of love, for with its abdominal excitations, that likewise stimulates the bowels. And will that mean a disillusioning dash for the jakes? Or what?)

We did not immediately divest ourselves of our clothing (having changed at midnight, she was wearing her "bride's dress"), but leaning against the lukewarm stove, and each other, too, we talked in whispers about the wedding and how well it had turned out. (However, I had first kicked off my boots and turned the lamp down a bit.) Later, Jadviga slipped out to the dark kitchen and washed herself in the porcelain wash basin. I peeked, and though I could see nothing, she reprimanded me, so I turned up the bed in the meantime. She came back fully dressed, and after I had also rinsed the sweat from under my arms, what's more (something I normally did only when I took my regular bath), I hastily splashed water on my privates as well and came back to the bedroom, she was sitting on the ottoman as before. I kissed her then, and she suffered it, but I did not feel her arousal as I had done the last time. When I began to fumble with the buttons of her gown, she removed my hand. Go slowly, she whispered, and that she would rather do it herself, and the other side, that's yours, Ondrisko. And she pushed me away. She slipped then out of her clothes, I could hear, then she sat on the side of the bed in her nightgown. I pulled off my trousers, but after some hesitation, leaving my shirt and drawers on, I got in on the other side, and touched her.

I leaned over her and embraced her, and since she was still partly sitting up, and me pushing her down, she finally relented. Instantly, this made me so aroused, my body was one huge convulsion. But soothing my more urgent gestures, for her part, she asked that we remain still and just lull each other in an embrace. I did not care. Light-headed with her smell, I snuggled up to her, and since this time I was not vehement, she let me. And though I liked this, besides which I am by disposition not a fighter, my palm started slipping up her cheek just the same, then her neck, then her arm, then from below, from the knee, carefully working its way upwards. But she stopped my hand, saying I should come closer instead. Inviting and repulsing me at the same time, I thought, at which I plucked up the courage to lie full length against her right side (she was lying on her back, and me on my left side); cautiously, I laid my throbbing member on her thigh, and—there is no denying it—when she felt this, it made her shiver, and she shied away, but later, as we lay there without moving, she did not object to my lying so close on top of her. Still, though we were kissing passionately, when I tried to raise her gown with my right hand, again she would not suffer it.

And so it went. Kissing and snuggling, breathing ecstatically—that was all right, but finding my way to her lap, that was out. "Let's throw off our clothes,"

I pleaded (having first discarded my shirt). After much persuasion, she let me pull her gown up over her head, but she hooked a finger into the hem of her silken drawers, that was out, and she made me promise that we'd lie quietly side by side, just the way we were. However, she could not prevent me from freeing myself of my own drawers, and I was in seventh heaven as I snuggled up naked to her thighs (to the extent that the leg of her drawers would allow as it slipped up), and her right breast, too, not to mention the moment when, presently, I could touch the left. I could stroke her everywhere then; except the waist of her drawers, she would not let me touch that, she would not let me near her lap, despite my fevered embraces, and I tried to force her thighs open with my knees to no avail.

Yet she was highly excited herself, I am sure of that, and not just me. She addressed unforgettable, endearing words to me, as I to her, but she asked me to be patient, &, let's get used to each other first, let's be satisfied with what we have. But I, such is human nature, could hardly contain myself at this point, and when she felt my breath turning more and more uncontrollably vehement, and me pressing against her thigh with all my might, she grabbed me round the waist, tightened her embrace, and began rocking herself slowly back and forth, and me, too, and she whispered, panting, no, don't, take it easy, my dear! takto, takto! yes!, and while I rolled her drawers down her hips with my trembling fingers, so I could press my erection against her bare skin at least, we ended up holding on to each other for dear life in a quickening rocking motion, until the juices of my passion trickled down her waist. The bed spun round with me, and my breathing came so heavy, it burnt me inside, tears of joy and gratitude flooded my soul, though mixed with shame, to be sure, but as I lay panting on her shoulder, Jadviga calmed, hushed, and soothed me as if I were a child, and whispered, dobre, it's all right, my dear, it's all right. Dobre, Milyí moj, dobre!

*

Today, it being the 1st of March, 1915, is my wife's 28th birthday. I have a necklace for her. I will give it to her this evening. If only we could give ourselves to each other, too, entirely tonight! For I yearn to be in my Jadviga's lap at long last; I yearn to relieve not only my body, which throbs with want of her, but since her obscure "confession", my soul, too, into the bargain, tormented to its utmost limits with doubt. Perhaps I will also find the certainty I must have, possibly reassuring, as I now hope, or even the kind which, though it will corroborate my worst fears, will mercifully put an end to this unbearable state of suspicion.

But this gives pause for reflection. Could the painful certainty be preferable to this nagging doubt? Could it offer relief? Or will the opposite happen, and our love, which has not yet matured into unreserved giving, yet, despite its struggles, is profound (and may grow still more profound in our laps)—could our love, I say, be undermined by the mounting grievances? I do not know. However, let the in-

evitable have its way; let it come, if for no other reason, then because she is my wife, a fact I would rather not remind her of. My patience is at an end, husband and wife sharing a bed, every single daybreak with teeth clenched, and virgins still!

Could her heart be already harbouring stories unfamiliar to me?

*

Yesterday morning I threw down my pen with a sigh, for what I wrote did not get me anywhere (nor did my night with Jadviga), and I went, instead, to supervise the spring preparations in the fields. It is high time I concerned myself with matters of my farm, which I have been neglecting, alas, for far too long. I must take the reins in hand, and find a way to invest my funds, now that I am my own master, for the aggrandizement of my estate. A pity that the resourceful ideas which, in his time, for instance, teemed with such plenitude in Apovka's brain seem to evade me.

I know this because Mamovka would often upbraid Father with having left her, even as a month-old husband, to go take workers, recruited in our area, to Transdanubia, while on his way back he would stop in Pest to look into his various affairs, only to rush off, after a couple of days, to Germany, to see Ludwig, Béni Winkler's brother, who lived in Velgast, where he'd been a visitor even before his marriage. Then one day he came back with a profitable plan for organizing the transport of people who had their mind set on America, and who, for about twenty years thereafter, flooded out of the Great Plain in what seemed like endless numbers.

My Jadviga's fate as an orphan was also resolved through Apovka's contacts, though that came later. At first, according to Gregor's account, the child's life was no bed of roses, though Father provided for the wet nurse Anka, and furthermore, covered all of the little girl's other expenses. But after the death of the unfortunate mother, Mária Ponyiczky, Anka had to take the poor little orphan girl home with her, along with her own, which would not have been undesirable, for in this way, Jadviga would have had a sister, at least, but they lived in want and misery, not to mention the fact that there was Anka's good-for-nothing husband and foul-tongued mother-in-law to contend with, whose abusive language towards her daughter-in-law—as Gregor related to me—was outdone only by Mamovka, who chastised my kind-hearted father, saying, what the zrányik[20] hell business did he have with other people's brats. (By the way, up to that time, they had only one sickly little girl, unfit for life, who lived but a few short days, and only four years later was my sister Zsofka brought into the world, and me two years after her, in November, 1892.[21])

20 ■ Zrányik, that's a sort of poxing.'

21 ■ In order to provide a clear picture of things: Of the marriage between György Osztatní (b. 1865) and Zsófia Racskó (b. 1867) who tied the knot on May 7, 1886, the first Zsofka was born June 2, 1887, and died soon after; the other Zsofka was born March 22, 1890 and died Oct. 9, 1913. András Osztatní was born on Nov. 21, 1892.

Seeing how things stood, Apovka then had Anka, with the two little girls, taken in as a domestic at the Reverend Szpevács's house, in the neighbouring village, where he not only provided for the orphan, but also paid Anka's hire instead of the Reverend and his family, who in turn were bound to treat little Jadviga as if she were their own, and to look after her even when Anka was given a day off, to go home to her family. And may the Lord be blessed, this servant of the Almighty, and his kind-hearted wife, well-disposed toward children, kept not only to the letter of their written contract, but showed the orphan sincere love and affection.

These details of the story I could pry out of Gregor, I recall, only during the summer before last, after Apovka and I travelled to Germany together, for the last time, and where, in express obedience to my father's wishes, I became reacquainted with Jadviga in Stralsund, though this time, as a grownup. However, before I could reveal to Apovka the emotions this encounter had stirred in my innermost heart, he was taken ill with an especially virulent and dangerous disease, which evaded precise diagnosis, and which, after two horrible leave-taking weeks, the most painful period of my young life, took him from us on 8th February, 1914, at the age of forty-nine. I conveyed the devastating news in a letter to Jadviga, who confessed her great affliction in a desperate letter of her own, and who, now that Father was taken from us, thanked me, personally, for everything for which she owed her only benefactor, she said, nothing less than eternal gratitude, yet at the same time upbraiding me for failing to dispatch a telegramme as soon as Father was taken ill, for she would have come home then, either to nurse him or to take her leave. Poor soul, how could I have written? ❧

Translated by Judith Sollosy

Dragan Velikić

Budapest, Strictly Personal

1

This story begins in the blacksmith shop of Anton Csonka.

From Rakovceva Street the eye can see only two wide windows and the front door of the single story house on Kastanjer, one of the seven hills on which the town of Pula lies. Stepping inside, the visitor is surprised by the length of the hallway which runs straight through the house and out to the inner courtyard where the shop is located. Metal stairs lead up to a flat roof, where the view is like from atop an observation post. It is the harmony of the asymmetrical: from the roof of the lowest house the observer can see the whole town, because the house stands at the very top of Kastanjer. So the observer gets a sense of the importance of position.

In the early sixties of the twentieth century I was eight years old, I read *Paul Street Boys* and after school often dropped by Anton Csonka's shop. Mr. Anton was making huge forged iron lanterns at the time and they were eventually to become his shop's recognizable signature in the streets of the old city. And while Anton Csonka was forging lanterns, I would steal into the corners of the shop, rummage through the battered cupboards and gaze at the objects on the shelves as if I were in a museum. My explorations always wound up at the shelves where, standing on the middle board, was the coffee mill that Anton Csonka's father had made in Budapest after World War I. Old man Csonka (whose first name will be omitted here because I have forgotten it) had for a while a coffee-mill-making shop in Budapest, the city where Anton was born in the late nineteen twenties.

Dragan Velikić

was born in 1953 in Belgrade. He is the author of five novels, two books of short stories and three books of essays. His novels, stories and essays have been widely translated.

Mr Anton was, in fact, my friend. We would sit in his shop for hours, hunched over a sheet of paper where Mr. Anton would pencil in Pest's toponyms, pronouncing aloud the names of the streets and squares. Mr Anton would try to explain to me where Paul Street was. That was the first time that I heard the words *út, utca, tér, körút.* Mr. Anton would remove from the top of one of the shelves prints of Buda and Pest. I remember a fountain, the banks of the Danube and engraved above it the ramparts of a fortress, a bridge and a ship passing underneath. I also remember the scenes from the black-and-white postcards he gave me, which, in the course of the past thirty-five years, have gone astray amidst my book covers or the bottoms of my drawers, travelling the invisible paths that objects do. I can no longer remember details from these postcards, however hard I try. But I always know, without the slightest effort, that one of them depicted a woman with a parasol, standing in front of a delicatessen. I remembered the name of the shop-owner because of my own fascination with Attila the Hun. His name survived the centuries only to find itself printed on the store front of a delicatessen in Pest.

2

In June of 1967, the principal of my music school announced that on our way to Trencsin, a town in what was then Czechoslovakia, we would be stopping off over in Budapest.

I thought to myself: finally I will see the East.

Mr. Anton Csonka explained that we who travel to Budapest from Yugoslavia always arrive at Keleti railway station. In Hungarian, the word *keleti* means—Eastern. In the language in which Anton had revealed Budapest to me, in my language, which no longer exists and which, when it did exist, was called Serbo-Croatian, the word *keleti* concealed the verb *letiti*—to fly. So for me, from the very first, the name of Budapest's railway station was a Babylonian word, a word which mixed languages, a word which in one language meant to fly, and in another meant East. And I was muddled by it: the East is what flies, or what one flies to, and what one flies to is in Budapest. Budapest is where the lucky arrive, only they fly Eastwards, only they catch what flies.

And so I thought to myself: finally I will see the East.

The buses transporting our school orchestra and choir stopped at Keleti. The drivers told us that we would take a half-hour break, the teachers told us not to stray from the bus, the principal told us he was ready to explain whatever was unclear to us, and one of the drivers told us that they would not wait for anybody. Scared, excited, I stepped off the bus, stopped, opened my backpack to check whether the forints Anton Csonka had given me were still in the inside pocket, and then slowly made my way toward the exit of East. I walked out, but did not get far, I stopped right outside the station, in front of a kiosk selling

postcards. I wanted to buy some postcards, not to mail them, but rather to keep them for myself. Then, as now, collecting postcards was for me an act of continually forgetting and remembering. Now, as then, I do not keep the postcards in any special place, rather they are scattered among my books, so that every book in my library conceals a postcard, although with time, I forget which card is in which book, I confuse or forget places and scenes, the postcards vanish in the books. I can no longer find them when I want. I can only hope that one day I will open the book with the postcard I am looking for.

I can give a detailed account of this encounter with Budapest. There is only one thing I have forgotten, everything else I remember with crystal clearness.

I have forgotten how long I spent choosing the postcards, looking, probably, for a scene from one of Csonka's black-and-white prints, a scene which, in its intimacy, was not to be found on the retouched colours of Budapest that were displayed at Keleti station's news stand in June 1967. I remember everything else quite clearly: when I returned to the parking lot, the buses were gone. I ran around at a loss, a frightened boy, lost in the East. Russian soldiers were passing by, I stopped them, frantically trying to explain that I was lost, they laughed, one of them patted me on the shoulder, and then, yes, miracles do happen, an icecream vendor who spoke my language came over to me. He took me to the Lost and Found, where they phoned the Yugoslav embassy, a man from the embassy came to fetch me, he said he would issue me a special paper for me to return to Yugoslavia if the bus did not come back for me. Thus began the longest day of my life.

The man from the Yugoslav embassy dropped me off at a home for juvenile delinquents. I sat in a huge room with chess boards on several of the tables. There were a number of boys and girls in the room. Two were playing chess. I heard the song *Marina, Marina* in Hungarian, I did not move, waiting, still frightened that something would go wrong. Eventually I relaxed and played chess with another boy. A few hours later, a young woman walked into the room, as pretty as a fairytale princess, and what she told me was like a fairytale: your friends know you are lost and they miss you, that's what she said, as if embarking on a story. We will find a car and it will take you to Czechoslovakia tonight. And the fairytale came true, the only thing I do not remember is what language she told it to me in. Late that evening, sitting in the back of a car, I left Budapest, without postcards but no longer lost. Before drifting off to sleep, I gazed out at the dimly lit streets of Pest through which we wandered for ages before coming out of the labyrinth.

And that was it. Budapest was not on my itinerary again until the early nineties. It was then that the map of my country changed and towns and languages in my country began to disappear. Churches and train stations flew off, into the air. These changes turned me into a traveller, into someone who lives in-between, who is nowhere. I lived between Belgrade and Vienna, I lived travel-

ling by train, a train which had a stop in Budapest. I would stand for about ten minutes at the coupé window, looking out at Keleti, at the place where I had got lost twenty-five years earlier. The ritual of standing at the coupé window at Keleti station repeated itself, always at the same time, depending on the direction I was coming from: Belgrade or Vienna. This ritual presumed thoughts about "being lost". But I did not think about whether, after being lost in Budapest, I had ever managed to find myself or was, perhaps, still flying around the East like a ghost. I thought about something else, about how millions of people in the country I came from, a country that was disintegrating, wanted only one thing – to be lost, but to stay alive.

3

Early in the morning of March 24, 1999, I left Belgrade and took the *Avala* train to Budapest. For the first time, Keleti station was not "somewhere in-between", a stop-over, a waiting point for the journey to resume. For the first time, Keleti station was my destination. I headed for an apartment in Kecskeméti Street, where I was going to stay for an unspecified period of time, to start living there, to sit down at a table I had not chosen but which waited for me almost obdurately, to start to write. Half-an-hour later I was standing at number four, I opened the front door and walked into a story, into a different space. The story is Grimm-like. Standing right next to the front door was a tall, fat cook, dressed in white, holding a big knife in one hand and a cigarette in the other. Next to him was a huge, fat cat. The cook and the cat watched me, carefully following my every move, not budging, and I walked past them, noticed stains on the cook's apron, noticed in the hall behind them a wooden table with raw meat on it, and realized I was looking at the kitchen of a restaurant.

The space was panoptic. I entered the inner courtyard which led to all the apartments in the building. The windows looked out on each other. You could see into the apartments, people were exposed in their privacy to outside eyes. They had no place to hide. I thought of the paradox of it: the city where I had once been lost was a city where you could not hide anything from view. The apartment windows were screens televising the little secrets of everyday life. On the way to my apartment I saw: a boy eating at a table in number seven, an old lady sitting on her bed and smoking in number nine, a blond woman in a dentist's chair in number eleven. I unlocked the door of number thirteen, the curtains were drawn, it was dark and stuffy in the apartment, I went over to the window, the only one in the apartment, pulled back the curtain, opened the window and again saw the cook and the cat watching me. I sat down in the armchair, turned on the television and learned that half an hour earlier, just as I had stepped down off the train at Keleti, war had broken out in Yugoslavia.

4

Two days later, my son arrived in Budapest by the same train. The fact that he was thirteen at the time, exactly the same age I was in June 1967 when I strayed from Keleti station, the fact that my son found safety in the very city where I had been lost, evoked in me a mixture of feelings, fear and gratitude of almost mythical proportions, which I felt at every moment, lived with, became used to as a new way of seeing the world.

And so, with my son, I began to discover the city. He had a system: first he would study old maps of Budapest which he would buy in second-hand book shops, maps which depicted the pre-war city, the post-war city, maps which depicted the transport grid, the grid of streets and squares. Next he would carefully study modern maps of the city, clearly memorizing every detail. Then we would set off, by tram, which in Budapest are yellow. My son would explain everything to me: where the trams used to run before the war, why they no longer go there today, why today's routes are better or worse. He would explain how some of the squares used to look before the war, he would describe the façades of buildings that are no more, he would compare them with their modern counterparts, and it was then that I realized: in his mind he was constantly building Budapest and tearing it down, he was seeing several Budapests at once, to his eye every square was a multitude of squares, and the past surfaced as a picturesque image in the middle of a scene which just happened to catch us. And the scene multiplied, the city became layered, stories were awakened and were experienced by someone who had only just arrived in the city, someone who did not know the language spoken by the people of the city, someone who at the age of thirteen had situated himself in a past and a present, thus inventing for himself a space which he could inhabit as if he had always lived there. That was when I also realized the following: that my son refused to be in exile, that he refused to be lost, that he had discovered a whole enormous city called Budapest so that he could find himself in it, with all its memories and, thus, with an entire future.

We established our everyday life in Budapest, meaning we established our daily routine: we would set off in the morning, taking tram number 4 or 6 down the Körút, getting off at Margit Bridge and crossing the island of the same name on foot. At Árpád Bridge, we would wait for tram number 1, going in the direction of Népstadion. Soon we began to recognize the kiosk vendors, the women selling dried flowers, the vagrants assembled around the bridges and entrances to the subway, the tall, blond woman selling silver jewellery who would smile at us, the girl playing the violin at various sites in the city. The city began to assume a face of its own.

We also had another version: we would set off on tram number 47 or 49 to the Gellért Hotel and climb up to the Citadel. The view from there spanned Pest's unending streets, reminding me of the view from the roof of Anton Csonka's single-story house in Pula. At that moment I could see any city I cared to imagine.

5

I have a large collection of Hungarian words in my head, a collection that is both full and empty at the same time.

Full, because I remember the words, I can repeat them, they exist, they exist even for me, as mine—a kind of souvenir of the past from a life I am only now starting anew.

Empty, because I do not know what all these words mean. I remember the words the way one remembers one's own name, I remember them as a random connection of symbols naming something unique, inimitable, the only person who roams the world with that first name and last, with that personal word that will outlive him, the way names outlive us, naming us even after death, forever, on a tombstone or in someone's memory.

For instance: Pillangó utca. I translated that name to myself as Pillangó Street, in other words, I did not translate it at all, convinced that it was a name, a street bearing somebody's name. I walked through Budapest as if I had just arrived in Babylon where, by the grace of a god who had yet to become angry or disappointed, everything had a personal name, untranslatable, and thus immediately understandable. I had the feeling that I understood every word, that words were inhabiting me, immediately entering a personal, friendly relationship with me. I did not feel rejected by the language.

Nothing about that feeling changed even when my friend explained to me smilingly that Pillangó means—butterfly. You are talking about the Street of Butterflies, she said, about Butterfly Street. But the word "pillangó" was ever after engraved in my mind as the name of a butterfly. There was a "Pillangó butterfly" and it lived in Budapest. And what does Budapest mean? Is it a personal name, the name of a unique and inimitable person? Personal names can only be stated and remembered. You cannot tell a story about them. Which is why I am unable to tell a story about Budapest.

6

I am writing these lines in northern Germany, in the city of Bremen. For the past several days now, every time I have gone to the institution which gave me my grant, the kind woman in the office has presented me with newspaper clippings about the Frankfurt Book Fair which has just ended. I realized it was a misunderstanding only when, along with articles about books by Hungarian writers, she gave me a magazine in Hungarian. "Here, have something in your own language."

"But I don't know Hungarian."

"What do you mean, didn't you come from Budapest?" she asked with noticeable discomfort in her voice.

"Yes, I did, but I don't know Hungarian, and, as far as I know, I'm not Hungarian."

"Ah. I thought you were a Hungarian writer."

"No, I'm a writer from Belgrade, but I have been living in Budapest for the past six months. After Bremen I will be returning to Budapest."

This was not the first time that when mentioning Budapest I had uttered the verb "to return". Did that mean that for some time I had already been returning from my travels to Budapest? My address was there and although I viewed it as an address in exile, as a temporary address, I was no tourist at that address. In Budapest I had everything that tourists do not have in towns of passage: I had my dentist in Villányi út, a repairman for my typewriter in Szív Street, I had my Kör restaurant in Sas Street, a restaurant where I would go for dinner upon returning from my trips, delighted to see Lajos's face, the face of a waiter who remembered me and who, welcoming as he was, would always wish me "Good evening" in Serbian, a language he did not know but which he would summon up simply to let me know that I was not alone.

There in Budapest I also had second-hand book stores where I would buy old guide books, my favorite kind of reading material. Although I had not taken any books with me from Belgrade because the evening before my departure I realized that any choice of books I might make would be incomplete, and that I could not know in advance which books I might need at any given moment, after just a few months in Budapest I had collected a small library which now contained English translations of Hungarian classics, monographs on Budapest and a dozen guide books. So, my library, which was itself in Budapest, contained books by Hungarian writers, as if I had always known Hungarian, as if I had always read nothing but Hungarian writers, as if I had never read anything else. If a library of books is a kind of identity card, and if it is also the history of a past, then I was living under the same name, but with a new identity card, a new past which was the history of Hungarian literature.

7

Most important of all: I *return* to Budapest the way some people return home, because it is a city with its own welcoming faces.

The face of István Eörsi who was in Budapest for me from my very first moment in exile. István immediately asked several practical questions: did I have enough money, did I have a place where I could write, did I have a desk, did I know anyone else in Budapest? Then he explained to me, and this he considered to be equally important, which restaurants served good food, and how to order cabbage, potatoes and turkey in Hungarian. Returning from Germany, István transported a small computer over the Hungarian border for me. I could imagine István explaining to the Hungarian customs officers how he had a friend in

trouble and was bringing him the computer so that this friend could write. I could see him battling to persuade the Hungarian customs officer of the truth of his words. I drank an excellent *pálinka* with István in his apartment, gazed at the Danube, and listened to István talk about Georg Lukács. One evening István showed me a photograph of a beautiful young woman, his lovely Jewish grandmother who had been killed by the Nazis.

The face of Éva Karádi, the erudite philosophy professor, who dreams of Central European literature inhabiting a single space. One day, as if offering me a cigarette, one day Éva offered me a key, "the key to my office at the university", she said, "so you can have a place where you can work". Éva is quiet and slightly distracted. Éva, it seems to me, worries only the worries of literature, like a wondrous being from one of Borges's stories.

The face of Stojan Vujičić, who revealed secrets to me as well. It was he who taught me which white Hungarian wines to buy, he who taught me something about second-hand book stores in Budapest, it was from him that I learned about a small history within Hungary's great history, about the history of the Serbs in Hungary, he who uncovered the Tabán to me and who took me to Szentendre. I would go to his apartment every Sunday, stepping over the piles of books, and we would sit down, sometimes talk, but sometimes I would just sit there and listen to the sounds in Váci Street, trying to decipher the city.

The face of Miklós Vajda, which is the face of calm and stability, the face of some sort of age-old knowledge. Looking at his face, it struck me that, in the final analysis, perhaps the word "gentleman" does mean something after all.

The face of György Konrád is the face of a question. György Konrád asked me: how do people behave toward you, have any of my fellow-citizens shown any intolerance toward you, or to others who have taken refuge, because you fled, or because you are from Serbia? György Konrád is the face of constant care that foreigners are not hurt, that others are accepted, protected and attended to. And even before I started to reply to his question, I knew: the city inhabited by György Konrád is a city because he keeps watch over foreigners. He is guardian of the city.

The face of Marietta Vujičić, a translator who, I am sure, is not always aware of when she is speaking Hungarian and when she is speaking Serbian. Marietta, who dreams in several languages, has the face of concern and consideration, the face of pure openness and welcome: just as she moves from one language to another, from one past to another, mixing everything together, so Marietta talks of her past and agrees to listen to mine, as if, spilling over from some other life, we have always been close friends. And as I listen to her talk about her encounters with the great Croatian writer Miroslav Krleza, I think how I do not want to get up and leave, I think that, maybe, I have come home. ❧

Bremen, October 1999

Translated by Marco Ivić

Ádám Nádasdy

Hungarian–A Strange Cake on the Menu

You can be proud of anything, if you really want to be. Ostriches, I suppose, are proud of not being able to fly—this would be an embarrassment to most birds, but oh how fast an ostrich can run! Hungarians are proud of their language, just because it is so different from all European languages, unable to express things like masculine and feminine, having no word for "to have", but being able to express (with a separate verb conjugation!) whether the object is indefinite or definite. Thus *Látok!* means "I see" (generally, or something indefinite), while *Látom!* means "I see it". Hungarian does not belong to the Indo-European family of languages: the only other languages in Europe which do not are Finnish (with which Hungarian is distantly related), Basque and Turkish.

The Hungarian language is extreme, and so (they say) is the Hungarian temperament. Attractive but unreliable. It accompanies you like a faithful friend, then at one point you turn around and it's gone, abandoning you to struggle with expressing yourself. Especially if you translate from or into Hungarian. Nothing is the same. "Music" is *zene* or *muzsika,* and the two have different connotations. "I have a fever" is *Lázam van,* that is, "Fever-my is". The exchange "Has the doctor gone away?"—Yes" would be *Elment az orvos?—El,* that is, "Away-went the doctor?—Away." Nowadays nobody would seriously connect language with national character, but this was widely done in the Romantic Age and after, all through the 19th century. The Hungarians realized they were "alone": when all other nations established their linguistic family ties, Slavic, Germanic, Celtic and so on, Hungarians found none. Then scholars discovered around 1800 that the relatives of Hungarian were Finnish, Lappish, plus some little-known languages in Siberia. And they were very distant relatives, not like German to Danish, or French to Italian, where the relationship is easy to see.

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This was received with disbelief and disappointment, since people had expected something more spectacular: for another hundred years amateur (and not-so-amateur) linguists were busy proving that Hungarian was related to Turkish, Japanese, Hebrew, Sumerian, or what you will.

Not all Hungarians are happy with this language: some can never learn it, either because they go away early or they come here late. Franz Liszt was proud of being Hungarian, but didn't speak the language because he came from a German-speaking family and spent most of his life outside Hungary. My grandfather, Eduard Ritter von Hübner, was born in Prague in 1883 and came to Hungary in 1920, but comfortably managed here with very little Hungarian till well into the 60s, when the last generation of German-speakers began to disappear. I remember the national census of 1960. Since Grandpa didn't understand the questions, I filled in the questionnaire for him: Place of birth, Occupation, till it came to *"Anyanyelve"* on the form. "Muttersprache? (Mother tongue)" said I. "Ungarisch (Hungarian)", said he, in German, of course. "But Grandpa, you can't speak Hungarian, can you?" I protested, preparing to write *"német"* (=German) into the rubric. I was thirteen. "Stupid child!" he shouted, "what do you know about life? Write *"magyar"* and shut up!"

Hungarian, in one way or another, has always been a minority language. First, when its earliest speakers, the Magyars split off from the Finno-Ugric language area (east of the Ural mountains) around 1000 BC, and joined the alliance of semi-independent Turkish tribes in southern Russia, who all spoke Turkic languages like Chuvash, Bashkir or Tartar. The Magyars, for some mysterious reason, did not abandon their Finno-Ugric mother tongue, even though they must have been bilingual (Hungarian–Turkish), as is shown by plenty of loanwords from Ancient Turkish, including basic ones like *kék* 'blue', *gyárt* 'to manufacture', and even *baszik* 'to fuck'. Their names (e.g. *Árpád, Gyula* for men, *Emese, Sarolt* for women) were also Turkish, as were their clothes, weapons, kitchen utensils and burial rites. Thus it is not surprising that the Byzantine chronicles which first mention the Hungarians (around 950 AD), call them "Turks". Actually, the Hungarians themselves had lost all memory of their Finno-Ugric origins. They thought they were a far-off branch of the Turks and/or Mongolians, and that ultimately they derived from the Huns. For many centuries this was the accepted theory taught in schools and, even after being ousted from serious scholarship by the Finno-Ugric discovery, it survived as a neo-romantic and neo-nationalist legend, so much so that Attila is now one of the most frequent Christian names among Hungarian men. Other nations look at us in puzzlement: how can you name a little boy after the scourge of God?

In 896, the Hungarians settled in their present homeland, the Carpathian Basin (later organized into the Kingdom of Hungary, which existed until 1945), but they never became numerous enough to fill it: there were large numbers of Slavs, later also Romanians and Germans living there. True, the Hungarians

were the largest single group in the area, but there were always more non-Hungarians than Hungarians in historic Hungary. Many words were adopted from Slav (*asztal* "table", *szabad* "free"), from Latin (*templom* "church", *pásztor* "shepherd", *sors* "destiny"), and even Italian (*piac* "market" from piazza, *pojáca* "clown" from pagliaccio).

Naturally, the language which was felt to endanger Hungarian most was German: cities and their burghers were mostly German-speaking, as was printing, correspondence, even theatres, all this reinforced by the Habsburg administration. All educated Hungarians spoke German, and those who wrote in Hungarian constantly felt the attraction to import "Germanisms" and at the same time the desire to avoid them. This is why, paradoxically, Hungarian is very similar to German. I am not only thinking of the many German loan-words that Hungarian has adopted, such as *példa* "example" from German Bild, *sógor* "brother-in-law" from Schwager, *krumpli* "potato" from Grundbirn(e) "ground pear", *nímand* "insignificant person" from niemand "nobody", *verkli* "hurdygurdy" from *Werkel* ("little mechanism"). Much more importantly, it is the common stock of figures of speech ("mirror translations") that have made Hungarian similar to German, just like a dolphin is similar to a fish, even though its origin and internal structure are quite different. In both Hungarian and German one can say that someone "cuts up" to mean that he boasts *(schneidet auf = felvág),* or that he has "inside images" to mean that he is conceited *(eingebildet = beképzelt).* The words, the endings, the sounds are different, yet the discourse is parallel. Once in Berlin I read in the paper about some political event: "wie sich das der kleine Moritz vorstellt". I grinned: this is exactly what we say in Hungarian (*ahogy azt a Móricka elképzeli* "as little Maurice imagines to himself").

After the First World War new borders were drawn and present-day Hungary was formed, where for the first time Hungarian was an absolute majority language (Hungary is now about 98 per cent Hungarian-speaking). In the newly formed neighbour states, on the other hand, Hungarians found themselves in a very pronouncedly minority situation. There are altogether roughly 13 million Hungarian speakers, about 75 per cent living in Hungary and 25 per cent in the neighbouring countries. This should explain why the language is such an important, even hallowed, symbol of cultural and national identity. When speaking of "Hungarian literature", for example, one constantly hovers between meaning literature in Hungary or literature written in the Hungarian language. Incidentally, the language itself has always shown little variation: there are only negligible dialectal differences. Hungarian speakers—and literature (or literatures?) produced by them—display few differences from Bratislava (Slovakia) through Budapest (Hungary) to Braşov (Romania).

The ingrained minority feeling has had interesting effects even in Hungary, where it no longer has any justification: for example, as late as the 1960s actors

felt obliged to "Hungarianize" their non-Hungarian-sounding names. This has now changed, and we have actors proudly bearing the names Hirtling (of German origin), Kolovratnik (Slav) or Papadimitriu (Greek). But the feeling that the language has to be defended like a rare plant remains. Purists—some of them too radical, others more tactful and considerate—continue to grumble against the influx of foreignisms, except that the great influencer is no longer German but English. (A couple of years ago some voices even demanded a law to forbid using foreignisms in public, but thank God it was realized by decision-makers that this would not bring the required results.) Not only do technical terms like *szkenner* (scanner) or *lízing* (leasing) come in, but many words related to current lifestyle and sensibility, such as *mainstream, fíling* (feeling), *retró* (nostalgic revival) or *badis* (someone into bodybuilding, i.e. well worked-out, muscular).

Hungarian is not only different because of its word-stock. Its structure, as the standard technical term goes, is agglutinative. This means that endings are attached to words in a neat and prescribed order, and words can grow to stunning lengths. There are no prepositions, and very few auxiliary verbs. For example, *hajthatatlanságunktól* means "from our inflexibility", and is structured *hajt-hat-atlan-ság-unk-tól,* each element in turn expressing the verb, the possibility, the negativity, the possession, the preposition ("bend-can-not-ness-our-from"). And all this happens very regularly, indeed mechanically. Every noun has to have -k as its plural, without exception, even if it is new or foreign, thus *les Tuileries* becomes *a Tuileriák.* Even verbs end in *-k* in the plural (in the "we-you-they" forms). However, the vowels of the endings will change ("harmonize") in accordance with the stem. If, in the above long example, the stem is *sért* "to hurt", the word will be *sérthetetlenségünktől* "from our invulnerability", with all the vowels harmonically changing to suit the stem. (This is a phenomenon also found in Turkish.)

As we have said, there is no grammatical gender, thus no difference between "he" and "she", "his eyes" and "her eyes". This makes it possible for writers (and especially poets) to express things in a more abstract or more unspecified way, while in translation it often becomes a problem since in other languages the gender has to be specified, and it is the translator's responsibility to decide how and when to do so. There is only one past tense, thus no difference between "learnt, has learnt, had learnt". On the other hand, a single word expresses whether the possession or the owner is singular or plural: *háza* "his (or her!) house", *házuk* "their house", *házai* "his/her houses", *házaik* "their houses".

Hungarian poetry can use very old-fashioned, even classical metrical schemes, because all vowels exist in long or short form: the long vowels are shown in spelling by acute accents (as in Czech), thus *á, í,* and even *ő, ű* (the famous double accent or "Hungarian Umlaut", the horror of all computer fonts). Thus *tör* is "to break" but *tőr* is "dagger". This play of long and short makes it possible to write perfect hexameters, and many twentieth-century poets have done so, pro-

ducing good contemporary poems. Rhyming is also surprisingly popular, and not only for humorous or satirical purposes (as in most Western poetry today), but for serious matters too. The fact that poetry is always much more dependent on (and is more nurtured by) the idiosyncrasies of its language may explain why poetry is still said to be the strongest branch of Hungarian literature: obviously such a language, like an unusual block of marble for the sculptor, inspires the poets. But it may also explain why Hungarian poetry is so hard to translate, and why Hungarian prose (which, admittedly, also has its masterpieces) is much more widely acclaimed with the non-Hungarian-reading public.

For Hungarian may be a golden cage for its speakers. It is worth comparing the recent history of Hungarian and its speakers with that of the Irish and their language. Around the middle of the 19th century the Irish (so to speak) agreed among themselves to abandon the Gaelic language and to go over to English. Today almost all Irish people living in the world are native speakers of English, and can no longer read or understand Irish. This may be a sad fact for the loss of a rich and ancient language, but—let's be frank—a great bonus for the nation, since they possess an international language, and hundreds of millions can easily read anything written by Irish writers (not speaking of the advantages in commercial, etc. life). Hungarian was in a very similar situation *vis-à-vis* German as Gaelic was with English; however, the opposite happened. In the mid-nineteenth century masses of people living in the Kingdom of Hungary, whatever their mother tongue, agreed to switch over to Hungarian, and indeed, in a few generations much of the country (certainly what was to become present-day Hungary) became monolingual Hungarian-speaking.

Hungarian has become a full-fledged European language, with science, law, business, leisure, crime and literature all being conducted in Hungarian. Open (perhaps too open, some would say) to foreign influence, it shows no signs of decay or destabilization. But when Hungarians cross the border to Vienna, Paris, London, or the non-Hungarian-speaking areas of the neighbouring countries, they are lost, unless with years of hard work they learn a foreign language, by definition very different from theirs. The knowledge of foreign languages is pathetically low, compared to Holland, Portugal, Greece, or Finland. The Irish have eaten their cake; the Hungarians have it. ❧

Sándor Rákos

Poems

Translated by David Hill

Sándor Rákos (1921–1999) was a member of a group of young writers (with Ágnes Nemes Nagy, Balázs Lengyel, Géza Ottlik, János Pilinszky, Iván Mándy, et al.) who started an important literary journal after the war and stood for the autonomy and depoliticization of literature. The journal Újhold *(New Moon) was, however, soon banned by the Communists after severe attacks on its policies by György Lukács, the philosopher. For years these writers were not allowed to publish. During this period Rákos translated the Sumerian epic* Gilgamesh, *which became a great success and made him famous. With the mellowing of the dictatorship he returned to the scene and published more than a dozen volumes of poetry, and for many years headed the Translators' Section of the Hungarian Writers' Association. In its obituary* The Independent *of London wrote of him: "Rákos's poetry is completely the opposite of what was expected of Hungarian poets in the early 1950s—it is apolitical, introverted and rather pessimistic. It is concerned with the eternal questions of human life and the poet addresses his verse to* Homo sapiens, *not the person of a definite historical period; in this he is not unlike Sándor Weöres, perhaps the best Hungarian post-war poet."*

Strange Match

what's starting inside of you
is a ball-game where on both
halves of the pitch you're playing
defender and striker too

***David Hill**'s*
first collection, Angels and Astronauts, *was published last year by the National Poetry Foundation (U.K.)*

but then I might add it's like
when somebody puts themselves
in check and then makes counter-
moves playing both black and white

pitted against themselves they
must fend off their own forays
creating a self-outselfing

best-of-all world champion Me
the self from the self snatching
the banner of victory

The Death of the Poem

they say
the polar circle's shifting southwards
and the world in its deep-frozen whirling
will screech more and more
moss will overgrow our gardens tomorrow
and with a tinkle the songbird will fall
from the frozen sky to the stone-hard leaf-litter
this more-or-less globe-shaped planet will become
different though also perversely still the same
another glow (or twinkle) coming from its sun-moon
saw-teethed shadows of pines will sharpen
against rocky earth's grindstone
and ghost sounds will keen after sounds
and barking like corridors under the ground
roars will echo across icy wastes
yes
maybe we will turn to ice
among evening hills in a high snowdrift
losing our traces on untravelled tracks
fumbling for footprints while silently
feather-fluff envelops us to the neck
snow
deathly snow
however laughable the crown-antlered sun-disk
this spring-playing autumn this writing's
meteorological present-time

may find the vision
the grim wintry presentiment—
anybody who's been lost in freezing dark
but kept in their secret innermost pocket
two or three matchsticks deeply concealed
knows very well that even the prospect
of light illumines and that of warmth warms
and that of home conjures home
here is the poem
it is inflammable
its floating-wick or its flaming bonfire
lights up the faces of the people
when it flickers out
even existence bursts
poem-lack strikes like icy lightning
and the snake of freezing
creeps onto the heart of creation

Untitled

no none of them not one of them
none of these deaths that are gathering
standing in front of me hovering
sniffing up sneaking away again

no none among them is mine yet
it comes for someone else not for me
with a specially rained nose for the
odor the code of that other one

don't start beating more loudly heart
when in silence it sniffles around
from your throbbing it would suspect

you're lawbreaking stepping out of bounds
to mark me out lead me apart
it doesn't need express instruction

Before being thrown

alone spirit-
alone
helpless pawn
of outer and inner
multiplying
blind forces chased
driven
i stand
i put my foot
against Nothing's
cornerstone
how many millions have stood
like this
in the muzzle shot
of the moment
before being thrown

Standing-cell

in this cavity that your
body's shrunk to god's shut out
your self creates for yourself
out of yourself a cell-god
which will learn to god around
even in a narrow space
learn to shepherd over you
in the suffocating dark
walled-in duplicate-yourself installed by you
(anti-Adam) as the faeces-lined
standing-cell's inhabitant your creation

Eclipse

each sun-up there's a sun-eclipse
the days that still remain diminish
and shrivel into gold your time
forks out their value like a niggard

from your fingers the minute slips
if you lose it it's lost for ever
your trial does not allow replays
the verdict's on your tail and revving

on day-release condemned to death
all you can waste are ephemera
but make sure there's reason to bow
your head under the ax tomorrow

FOUR APOCRYPHALS

Still

still inside of its egg the world
was forcing open its shell casing
one was just poised to become all
through endlessness of times and spaces
still life had not yet been caught out
by angles tossed into dead nothing
still even light did not exist
in blind dark Negation was squatting

Already

already on the present's stem
future and past branches had sprouted
already heaven's and hell's sovereigns
on their conceited thrones sat proudly
already light had shot through space

across spaces down every age
already the unrevealable
had been revealing but not Grace

There

there teeth will crunch and grind on teeth
hands will be wrung with crack of knuckles
there we must take heed of all things
with which till then we had not reckoned
there we will earnestly regret
we came to the world to perdition
there blinding lamps will glare on us
in a timeless interrogation
there we must answer everything
the deaf will hear the dumb will holler
there a great press will squeeze our spirits
anathema's unearthly horror

And

and up they rumbled hosts of troops
and up it rushed the ocean's foam-tide
and off trooped the defeated troops
and ebb tide caved up over flow-tide
and then the endless was complete
and had no end and no beginning
and from one piece you'd know the suite
and when it started it continued
and off trooped the defeated troops
and ebb tide caved up over flow-tide
and up they rumbled all the troopers
and up it rushed the ocean's foam-tide
and

László Darvasi

Jackals

Short story

Before dusk fell he asked them not to disturb him any more that day. He was very tired. As he said this he looked straight at Peter, who knew he'd be incapable of complying with the request. Peter was sitting among the disciples and the casual onlookers. He nodded with a troubled brow. That day the Master had healed some women who suffered from issues of blood, a man who had had a stroke, a deaf-mute and a man possessed by the devil; he had raised someone from the dead, and finally calmed the rough waters of the lake so that the fishermen could return. But since the storm and the dreadful wind had swept away their nets, the fishermen came in without a catch, and, instead of being glad to be alive, they were sad and anxious as they moored. The Master shook his head and called for a basket of loaves and some fish. By dusk he had grown weary. Understandably. In the dazzling red light of the setting sun he asked his disciples with a smile— because he certainly could smile, he could even laugh heartily, slapping his knees, whatever his enemies or the most blind of his followers might claim—not to talk about him and his miracles. He asked them to keep it secret that he was here and all the things he had done. The disciples were surprised.

To keep him secret?!

Conceal his miracles and good deeds?

But that's impossible.

From that little remark you could tell he possessed that quality which the Romans called a sense of humour. Some of his followers smiled. Peter, however, just scratched his head and felt awkward.

And the Master is now lying down in the back of the shack, among some of his disciples; in the putrid twilight of the place his body seems no different from

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László Darvasi

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anyone else's. One hand rests on his chest, just above his heart, the other is stretched out at his side. And Peter, that heavy-browed, dull-witted but patient fisherman, has twice reached out to the Master's face to waken him. And twice withdrawn it, as one who knows he is doing wrong. Outside the sky is radiant. A thousand stars are sparkling, and the light of the Moon spreads over a land suffocating from drought as if there were a good reason for being hopeful. Should there be? Peter is again deliberating where he should touch the Master. On his hand or would his face be better after all? In the end he touches the fingers at his side. Right away he feels even that is more than he should have done.

"Master."

The sleeper doeesn't move, but the momentary gap in his breathing suggests that the words have got through to his consciousness.

"Master," Peter speaks again. "Forgive me."

A tremor runs through the sleeping body. And the next moment he is sitting up. He stares at Peter with eyes so wide awake that the latter shudders. As if this calm and unshakeable look would bore right in among his thoughts. Peter feels weak and defenceless. He turns away.

"I know you're tired, Master."

"I am tired. But you've been wanting to say something all day," he says in a voice with the force of a slap in the face. The Master hates uncertainty.

"There's a woman living near here," Peter whispers.

"That's why you quarelled with Thomas."

Thomas had found new living quarters for the Master at noon, more comfortable and cooler, perhaps safer too. Peter, however, insisted more and more stubbornly on this shack, arguing so persistently and passionately that in the end Thomas wearied of the useless dispute, and nodded with a deep sigh.

"Let it be as you wish, Peter."

The Master speaks up.

"Is the woman ill?"

"Her son."

"What's wrong with him?"

"He's dead."

"Why did he die?"

"I don't know," answers Peter, clenching his fist and keeping it clenched. The Master shakes his head and slowly stands up. And, like someone who is perfectly aware that Peter has not waited this long in vain and without reason, steps noiselessly out into the open, almost walking without touching the ground. Peter follows him with clumsy movements, more than once kicking an extended arm or leg, then standing petrified lest the sleeper should wake.

The Master is already standing outside under the night sky. It's as if he were under the sky, and not the sky above him, two states of affairs that are not the same thing. Peter points to the dark shape of the neighbouring shack.

The Master, as usual, is the first to go in.

The woman is sitting in the dark, her hands on her lap. She seems to be keeping vigil. Peter pulls a piece of material away from the hole carved in the wall, at which the light of the Moon reluctantly shines into the hovel. It consists of two rooms opening on to each other, one for cooking, the other for sleeping. And in the tiny kitchen alongside a few chipped pots, small bags of wheat and baskets lies a corpse. Peter again feels the unbearable smell of a decomposing body. He tries to breathe through his nose. The woman raises her eyes to the Master who is already examining the body. A young man. Judging by the smell he has been dead for at least a day. Flies are settled on his body for the night, and in the light of the Moon he looks like a ghost.

"Give him back to me, Lord," says the woman in a hollow voice. Then adds:

"I beg you."

The Master steps closer to the body and bends low over it, not seeming to mind the stench and the insolence of the flies who, stirring, soon waltz listlessly back again. Their blue backs sparkle insidiously in the dark. Peter all of a sudden has a vision. The hand of the corpse seems to move, rising to the Master's face to touch it. No. The Master's hand moves, and he slowly draws his open palm over the length of the body. He halts somewhere around the neck.

"Light!" he says softly.

The woman gets up and brings a lamp. The Master holds the flickering flame up to the dead man's face. The reddish blue line around the neck is clearly visible. The Master calmly touches the neck, feeling for the broken vertebrae. Peter stares at the ground; a piece of clay breaks in two with a soft crunch beneath his foot.

"Give him back to me, Lord!" says the woman.

Peter rouses himself.

"Her son," he says, pointing needlessly at the woman. "He's all she's got."

The Master straightens up and holds the lamp above his head.

An iron hook protrudes from the low ceiling. The Roman soldiers build using strong hooks like this.

The woman starts talking. She looks at Peter.

"This morning I met your companion, and he asked me why I was troubled because he could see I was in anguish. And I told him my son had died. At which he said he would speak to you. Who's that, I asked, because I had not heard about you. And then this man, your companion, Lord," the woman points at Peter, "said he would speak to you of my trouble and you would help me."

Peter doesn't dare look at the Master, he prefers to stare at the dead man's face. It's close, very close. And something that is close feels no shame. The woman goes on talking.

"I haven't heard about you, Lord. I don't know why not. Yet I was at the market and at the well, I took the goat out to pasture. I've got a goat, you know."

"The whole town is full of the news that I'm here," says the Master suddenly, and Peter has never heard his voice quite like this. He was not angry like he was when he upset the tables of the merchants who had brazenly moved into the temple court; he was not hard, nor was he transfigured. He was somehow reserved. Peter shook his head involuntarily. No, that's not the right word. Implacably rather.

"He," her hand again stirs towards the corpse, "sat there for weeks. His soul was as empty as... as this basket here," the woman picks up a small basket and holds it in front of the Master. "He neither spoke nor ate. I don't know what it was. What kind of devil."

"Did he not know of me either?" asks the Master, his tone unchanged.

"He sat here for weeks, motionless. He did not eat. Hardly drank. He just waited," the woman repeated. "Give him back to me."

"The whole village is talking about me," the Master repeated.

"I don't know," says the woman, and becomes uncertain. "I suppose he could have been waiting for you, lord."

"How could I give him back if he did not have trust in me?"

"So that he should trust in you from then on, lord."

"Hope is not something to bargain over," says the Master quietly.

"He's tired," Peter intervenes, words as good as a betrayal.

Silence.

"Yes," says the Master unexpectedly, with a nod, "I'm tired."

The woman does not speak any more. She gets down beside the dead body, looking up at them from below. Her eyes are like two glow-worms. The Master moves away, stepping out into the open air, Peter follows him, waiting for a word, an explanation, perhaps just a gesture. But no. The Master returns to their quarters and lies down in his place among his disciples, sighing and grinding their teeth in their dream-troubled sleep. He appears to go to sleep the moment he stretches himself out. His chest rises and falls evenly. Peter stands over him and watches. Then he nods.

In a few minutes he is standing in front of the woman again. The stench of the corpse seems even more unbearable. Peter looks at the body and scratches his head. Then he takes the woman's arm.

"I'll take him away," he says.

The woman does not reply, she does not move, just stares with her two glow-worm eyes. Peter puts his hands under the corpse, gives a little groan, but he's already lifting it, carrying the lifeless body ready to disintegrate. He takes it out of the house, lugging it down several narrow lanes, taking it out of the town, taking it to the meadow loud with cicadas.

"Stupid," he says to the body, and throws it to the ground. "You fool!"

Peter sits beside the dead man and waits. He is no longer wrought up, not restless. And he is right. In a few minutes the first animal appears. Its eyes gleam

in the darkness, and its elongated shadow precedes it because the moon is grinning from behind. It picks up the scent with its nose held high, then starts to prowl cautiously round Peter and the dead body. Peter does not move. The animal is walking round and round, in smaller and smaller circles. By this time its companions have arrived too, but they wait, they have not closed in yet because this animal circling closer and closer is clearly their vanguard, their scout. Now it is so close that Peter could touch it. The animal stops at the corpse's side and waits. It slowly lowers its head, meanwhile the others move forward warily. And then the animal snatches at the dead body, tearing at the wrist. Peter hears the bones crunching. But he still does not move. The animal gains confidence and bites at the arm of the corpse, lifting it from the ground, and, growling, it starts to pull the whole body as if wanting to drag it away from beside Peter who is alive and alert. Which is of course what it wants. And at that moment when the others too are about to throw themselves onto the cold, stiff flesh, Peter lunges forward. First he strikes the animal on the head with his fist, then with his next movement he draws it towards him, tugging it onto his lap. The animal has no chance. Within moments Peter breaks its neck, then repeatedly dashes its head against a stone. Peter feels that his hand is bloody, but it is not his blood. The rest of the pack have fallen back, cowering, and now they are snarling, gums exposed, teeth bared. Peter stands up and throws the carcass among them.

In a few minutes there is again silence. Peter takes a biggish stone and smears it with the animal's blood. He heard when he was a boy that animals do not come back to a place signed with the blood of one of their kind. They don't come back because they are afraid of their own blood. After that he buries the body and puts the stone over it. Then he walks back to the town. It's still night, and the cicadas are still making their music.

Peter lies down cautiously beside the Master. He crosses his arms over his broad chest and shuts his eyes. All at once he senses that the other is awake.

"Were they there?" Peter hears the Master ask.

"Yes, they were," he says, and doesn't open his eyes.

"And?"

"They won't come back again," whispers Peter.

"They will," says the Master, and goes back to sleep. ❧

Translated by Elizabeth Szász

Ildikó Nagy

A Great Painter Misunderstood

Bertalan Székely (1835–1910)

Bertalan Székely (1835–1910) Exhibition. Hungarian National Gallery, September 30, 1999–January 30, 2000. Arranged by Zsuzsanna Bakó, Assisted by Orsolya Hessky, Katalin Szabó and Annamária Szőke. Catalogue: Zsuzsanna Bakó with Orsolya Hessky, Emese Révész, Attila Rum and Annamária Szőke. Budapest, 1999

Bertalan Székely's name is generally associated with historical painting. *The Women of Eger, The Discovery of the Body of Louis II, The Flight of Imre Thököly,* and *Ladislas V and Czillei,* reproductions of which are to be found in history textbooks, on the walls of classrooms and even in railway carriages are all by him. Retrospective exhibitions invariably rebutted this one-sided view, but such exhibitions were few and far between, the last one being held in 1955.

The Academy of Fine Arts in its Barcsay Hall showed only one aspect of Székely's art, his studies of movement, in 1992 (Curator: Annamária Székely) but that was enough to make us stand back in amazement. We were able to follow the horses' movement from phase to phase on numerous smaller sheets as well as on huge cartoons for frescos, and with the help of a hypotrope the painter himself made we even saw them arranged to form a moving picture. This was perhaps the most exciting Hungarian artist, a real *pictor doctus* who had studied the depiction of motion with the methodical rigour of a scientist. The contrast between the phase-by-phase perception of movement and its real-time continuity led Székely to produce analytical drawings that bring to mind the Futurists' works.

Before drawing rash consequences, however, it must be hastily declared that Székely was not a forerunner of Modernism. He was a 19th-century artist of broad vision, who was a product of the age of positivism, a firm believer in science and in the possibility that the objective foundations of aesthetic qualities could be discovered and categorized. In his person an extremely versatile artist and a man of many talents awaits to be discovered and understood anew. His erudition was as astounding as his capacity for work. He was equally well versed in the Tractarian papers and in the philosophical works of his age; he read books on psychology and the natural sciences. He produced nearly one thousand paintings (only seven of which were large historical compositions), and on top of his

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voluminous graphic output and countless sketches, his bequest of manuscripts in the form of letters, notes and other documents runs approximately to 10,000 folios. Of this, only a negligible fragment have been published so far. Székely's oeuvre will continue to provide work for art historians for some time to come.

He was born in 1835 in Kolozsvár (Cluj) into a family of ancient nobility but inadequate means. He attended school in his home town, then went to the Polytechnic of Vienna in 1850 to study engineering. One year later, however, he switched to the Academy of Fine Arts, where he promptly won a prize. He copied the great masters' works; among the places he was often seen working away was the Albertina (Archduke Albrecht's collection of drawings and engravings in Vienna), where he came to earn the guards' respect to the extent that they actually let him take home world-renowned masterpieces. This was how he was eventually able to practice drawing in his own home in the evenings. As the family's finances further deteriorated, he was forced to abandon his studies in 1855 and return home. He gave drawing lessons, painted portraits and altarpieces, and even trade signs. It was not until 1859 that he could continue his studies. He went straight to Munich to work under the famous historical painter Karl Piloty. He then spent a short period in Berlin, before returning to Hungary and settling in Budapest. In the meantime he was married and children were born in quick succession. One of his chief patrons was the future Minister of Religion and Education, Baron József Eötvös, who obtained portrait commissions, financial aid and finally a scholarship for him. Through his former master, Piloty, he received a commission to paint the murals for the Bavarian National Museum. The money he earned there enabled him to travel in Western Europe in 1864, and in 1868 he visited Italy on a scholarship. After 1871 he taught figure drawing and painting at the Mintarajzképző és Rajztanoda (the predecessor of the Budapest Academy of Fine Arts), an institution he headed from 1903 until his death. Around 1870 he started his stays at Szada, a village near Budapest, where later Frigyes Schulek designed a house with a studio for him. He was buried there.

The earliest document with relevance to his art is known as his *Juvenile Diary*. This is a 38 x 24 centimetre sketchbook containing drawings and notes on 360 pages. Székely made entries in it between 1858 and 1865, and he also appliquéd some of his earlier drawings into the book, which thus came to document his entire youthful development, all the way from his childhood drawings corrected by his mother (from 1840) through his years of study in Munich right until his thirtieth birthday. Without references to the artist's private life, the diary is exclusively devoted to art theoretical and technical matters. However, Székely wrote extensively, and sometimes in a rather critical vein, about his teachers and fellow students. These characteristics persisted in him throughout his life. He was ruminative, reflective and strongly critical, and he was also highly reserved, reluctant to explore even his own emotions. It seemed that he de-

voted his entire life to work (teaching) and to art. Naturally, the notes continued after the *Juvenile Diary*. The Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences holds nearly 50 of his notebooks in its Manuscripts Department, which contain notes, sketches and drawings from the period between 1862 and 1904. Székely probably continued producing such notebooks, but these have either been destroyed or they have dissappeared from view.

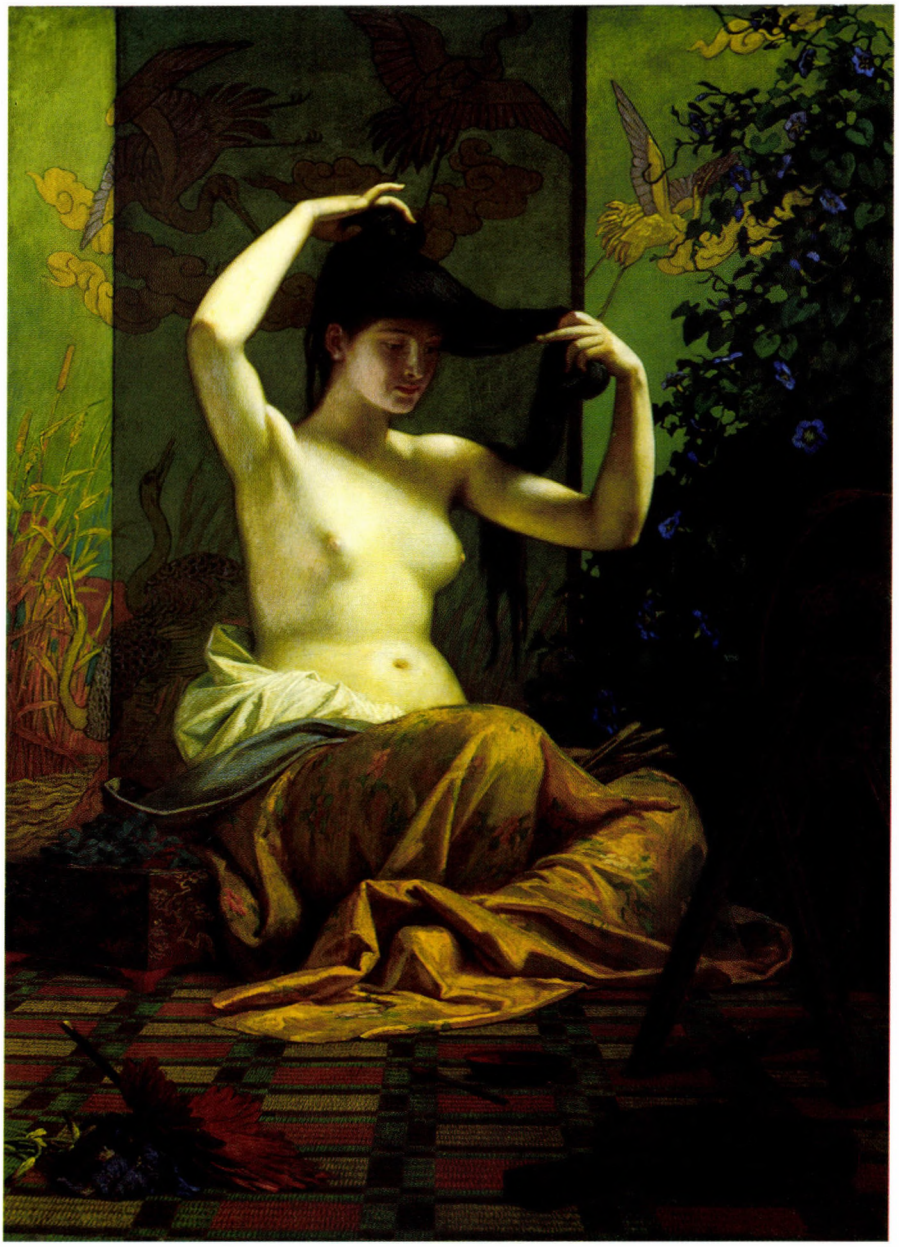
Chronological arrangement is not a suitable method for reviewing his oeuvre. Székely himself probably ascribed very little significance to chronology: he rarely dated or signed his own works. He was interested in genres, themes and problems of composition and colour, to which he kept returning. This oeuvre, produced over half a century, has a circular, rather than a linear, structure, one that cannot be divided into stylistic periods, although the difference between his early paintings and those produced in his mature years is striking.

Székely began with a masterpiece right at the start: he painted his *Self-Portrait* in 1860, at the age of twenty-five. Completed during his years of study in Munich, the picture shows the artist at the start of his working life, looking sternly with head held high, suggesting determination and steadiness of purpose. Behold the artist!—the picture seems to say, merely through his posture and with no recourse to any external devices. His somewhat oriental appearance—high cheekbones, narrow eyes—was afterwards captured only in photographs, looking increasingly weary and harassed, yet the stern look and the firmly closed lips remained. In all probability, he painted this portrait for himself—a necessity for young artists, as the cheapest sitter is always the artist himself. He refrained from exhibiting it for forty years. When he finally decided to put it on display as part of his retrospective in 1900, it was received with a huge ovation, and the critics rated it as one of the peaks of nineteenth-century Hungarian painting. Since 1933 the portrait has been in the Museum's possession, a regular feature in the permanent exhibition and in representative albums.

Portraiture was a genre that Székely continued to practice throughout his life. It provided him with his main source of income. He painted the portraits of the period's prominent intellectuals, and also of the Empress Elisabeth on the commission of Csanád County. Elegantly dressed ladies and musing young girls, scholars, ministers and members of his family are portrayed, but even the children are depicted with a solemn look on their faces. There is nothing frivolous, superficial or light-hearted in these portraits. An exception was when he used professional sitters—a beautiful Rachel or a Paula; on such occasions the thick profusion of loosely-combed hair, the flimsy dressing-gown, or the provocation flashing in the half-closed eyes provide some evidence of artistic liberty. He made his students' sitters pose in a similar fashion, and it is interesting to compare these meticulous drawings with the master's effortless work.

Self-Portrait, 1860. Oil on canvas, 61 x 47,5 cm.

The Women of Eger, 1867. Oil on canvas, 227,5 x 175 cm.



Japanese Woman, 1871. Oil on canvas, 168 x 120 cm.

Study of a Tree, 1877. Watercolour, 435 x 400 cm.

Study of a Female Head (Rachel), 1880s. Oil on canvas, 68 x 55 cm.

Study of Clouds, 1890s. Oil on paper, 33 x 44 cm.

Hunting the Miraculous Stag, 1900–1902. Tempera and pencil on paper, 275 x 394 cm.

The Abduction of Women. Sketch for a mural for Vajdahunyad Castle, 1900–1902. Tempera and white grounding on paper. 226 x 621 cm.

Page from the theoretical paper on ceilings.

The sense of vocation that his *Self-Portrait* radiates also found an expression in his deeds. While still in Munich, Székely wrote a letter to József Eötvös, in which he outlined the concept of a National Gallery. Such a collection should hold historical paintings, the significance of which the painter put on a par with the national epic. He planned a series of paintings on the main events of Hungarian history in such a way that the various pictures should reveal "the inner value and significance" of the events. He ascribed an elevating and ennobling function to historical painting, and thought of the effect that the story had as more important than the factual depiction of the event. That effect could be best achieved through composition. The artist's business was to capture the drama of a single moment. To arrange a chance moment with artistic means merely through his posture. Székely first sketched his earliest historical painting, *The Discovery of the Body of Louis II,* during the involuntary suspension of his studies in his *Juvenile Diary* as far back as 1857. That was also the time that he laid down the rule whereby a painting required three kinds of sketches: 1) a pure line drawing; 2) a sketch of light and shadow for rendering masses visible; and 3) a colour sketch. He remained faithful to this rule all his life. *The Discovery of the Body of Louis II* was completed in 1860, after numerous sketches in pencil and oil. The painting met with a good reception and was soon placed in the National Museum.

Of Székely's seven historical paintings, five take their themes from the wars with the Turks. The artist presented this period in the history of the nation—invariably interpreted as a symbolic battle—as a national tragedy and as evidencing heroic resistance. It was not just their own country that the Hungarians defended against the superior Ottoman forces, they undertook the protection of Christianity. The painter portrayed various episodes, some of them tragic, some glorious. He painted *The Battle of Mohács,* the event that in 1526 marked the beginning of a period of 150 years of Ottoman rule in Hungary, seen as the greatest national tragedy both by historians and by the nation as such. Engulfed in mist, the battle still rages in the background; but in the emphasized foreground, in a deserted corner of the battlefield, Turkish and Hungarian corpses lie peacefully side by side. Everyone is equal in death. The king himself was a casualty, and the discovery of his body was a favourite topic of 19th-century Hungarian painting. Of the numerous depictions of the event, Székely's version, *The Discovery of the Body of Louis II,* is the best known, and its extraordinary success was repeated in his *Women of Eger.* The siege of Eger was both an heroic and glorious episode in the struggle against the Turks. The Ottoman army was unable to take the fortress for two years, and the women defending it played a prominent part. Understandably enough, this episode still has a strong appeal to the hearts of Hungarians; its narration in a novel (Géza Gárdonyi: *Egri csillagok—Stars of Eger*) is still on school reading lists in Hungary. The painting was purchased in 1868 by the Women's Society of Eger, who saw themselves as the descendants of those heroic women. They donated it to the Hungarian National

Museum. It provided a good opportunity for Székely to demonstrate his "group" theory. In building up the composition, the figures were to be arranged into groups in such a way that they form what he called a "group line". No part of the group could form a separate unit by itself, only in conjunction with the other parts: "light and shade, convexity and concavity, which start on one figure should terminate on another." He thus achieved the painting's pictorial unity and emotional impact using carefully calculated painterly devices.

Although Székely undauntedly believed in the importance of historical painting, he had to come to terms with the fact that enthusiasm for the genre was rapidly waning, and as a result his difficulties in selling his pictures were mounting. He sold *Ladislas V* for an amount that barely covered his expenses. Looking back on his career in a note recorded in 1871, he expressed his resentment as he was taking stock of all the genres he had tried and in which he felt he had failed to succeed. The portrait commissions were insufficient to make a living and to support a family. There was no demand for historical paintings, as national feeling was low. Genre painting was not appreciated, and people, prudish as they were, would not buy nudes; and as to landscape painting, the countryside around Budapest was less than inspiring. On one of his foreign trips he concluded that "painting has become furniture," in other words, painting founded on noble ideas, the kind that he believed in, no longer found a receptive audience. After the mid-1870s he abandoned historical painting, although in 1885, after prolonged preparation, he completed his last such work, *Zrinyi's Sally*, which captured another heroic episode in the Turkish wars. He had no hope of selling the painting; eventually a collector bought it from his estate and in 1920 donated it to the city of Debrecen for its planned municipal museum.

After turning away from historical painting, Székely focused attention on genre painting. He pinned great hopes on *Japanese Woman* (1871). This composition occupies a unique place in the history of Hungarian painting, being an early example of that Japanoiserie, which swept Europe in several waves. The idea of the painting can be traced back to two sources: in Spring 1871 the National Museum presented a group of artworks collected by János Xantus on a journey to the Far East. Székely saw the exhibition, and used several of the items displayed in his paintings. The other sources of inspiration were portfolios of the work of Hokusai and other Japanese artists, one series of which can still be found in the Library of the Budapest Academy of Art, which probably acquired them through Székely's mediation. The painting, which was exhibited in Budapest, did not meet with a good reception, regardless of the fact that one of the period's leading critics, Ludwig von Hevesi, wrote in praise of it. Although Hevesi clearly realized that the painterly values of the work would only be appreciated by "the more discerning members of the public", he was still hopeful that the composition would be sold—perhaps to somebody abroad. His hopes proved unfounded, so much so

that the painting remained in Székely's and later his heir's possession for a long time. The National Gallery bought it in 1997, and it went on to star in the artist's retrospective in 1999. One can safely predict a reappraisal, as it is one of the central pieces of 19th-century Hungarian painting.

During the 1870s genre painting came to occupy a prominent part in Székely's work. It was characterized by an epic vein and a moralizing proclivity. He frequently produced paintings in pairs, representing different sides of life, often in a melodramatic manner. These include *The Widow, The Happy Mother,* or *The Nun,* in which a nun tries to feed the new-born baby of a woman who had died in labour, along with its counterpart, *The Orphan,* which relates the subsequent fate of the same little girl. It was his partiality for narration that led the artist to painting series. One such series is the twelve-part *A Woman's Life (Longing, The Bride, Farewell, Abandoned, A Prayer for the Absent, The First Child,* etc.), in which he portrayed the life of a middle-class mother. Its counterpart is *The Lascivious Woman,* which shows all the familiar features: *The Reclining Woman* lying idly in front of a mirror, or the exhausted and morose *Dancer. Nocturne* and *Lovers in the Boat* are two unusually idyllic and poetic compositions, both conjuring up the Rococo. Both are highly theatrical; it is almost as if the scene took place on stage, and the sculptures decorating the palace's garden (Cupid and Psyche, as well as the mermaid and naiads) themselves could come alive at any minute. Székely displays his extraordinary painterly inventiveness in rendering these otherwise quite common themes. He achieves a powerful emotional impact by his mastery of *chiaroscuro,* and by the magical conjuration of a mystical ambience. Amongst these genre paintings, all of a high quality but essentially rooted in 19th-century Academism, *Japanese Woman* stands out as if it had arrived from a different planet: primarily not on account of the theme, as oriental subjects were fashionable at the time, but for its conception. This beautiful female nude, whose face was anything but oriental, simply wanted to comb her hair. The plants around her, live and artificial, along with the exotic objects, such as a screen with birds painted on it, follow from the principles of composition, and not from Japanese tradition. The painting displayed the same originality of approach that characterized Western contemporaries' compositions on similar subjects (Claude Monet: *La japonaise*).

The pair of nude compositions, *Before the Bath* and *After the Bath,* could almost be perceived as genre paintings though the figures' extremely graceful postures in these two paintings, one a front and the other a back view, are closer to his nude compositions which culminate in the variations on the theme of Leda and the Swan. Székely kept returning to this theme: twenty variations are known today, from 1857 right until the 1890s, not counting the drawn sketches. In accordance with his theories, it was not so much the erotic content but the compositional possibilities offered by the winding lines and the parallel rhythm of the

woman's arms and the swan's wings that interested him, along with the landscape elements, of course.

Although he initially complained about the lack of inspirational scenery around Budapest, landscape painting was ever present in his work, and eventually he even discovered suitable surroundings in Szada, where he finally made his home. His first landscape drawings are found in his *Juvenile Diary.* These are fine studies of nature, of farmyards and plants growing near ditches. In the second half of the 1850s, he painted romantic scenes of riversides, in dusky light, complete with willows. He approached landscape painting as methodically as he did all other genres. He wrote a study on depicting plants, with special regard to trees, under the title "Drawing Landscape after Nature". As if writing a textbook, in this study he explained the exact method of painting various kinds of trees in great detail, along with the colour combinations of the foliage during spring, summer and autumn, even including the mixing of colours. He used the same methodical care in depicting clouds according to their different types (*cirrus, cumulus, stratus,* etc.) and the various times of day. Whether his methodical categorization actually helped or hindered his art, is a moot point. Unlike his contemporaries who were critical of his methodicalness, we tend to admire him for it, especially as the paintings show no sign of constraint. The houses and gardens of Szada, the valleys and streams, both at dusk and in bright sunshine, are painted in fresh and vivid tones. His studies of clouds from the 1890s would deserve a separate essay. His insistence on capturing the ceaselessly changing cloud formations, the colour and light conditions, the fleeting and ephemeral, reveals a similar passion—an urge to reflect not the vision but the law—that moved Monet to paint Rouen Cathedral and other series.

The last genre that Székely took to was mural painting. During the 1880s Budapest went through a spectacular development. It was the time when the city became a metropolis with an ever growing number of public buildings. These buildings needed mural decoration, and Székely received many commissions. In addition to those the municipal authorities and the government gave him, he also designed murals for the Church and even for some townhouses, although we do not know of the latter actually being painted.

Given the elaborate theories Székely developed in preparation for painting a tree, we can imagine the preparatory work he carried out in order to paint a multi-figure fresco. Allegorical and historical themes are found in his designs, in accordance with the commissioner's demands and the function of the building. One of his earliest was *Dionysian Procession* (1881), for the Academy of Music, although it never materialized. (A large part of his mural designs were not realized.) The elongated composition, planned to cover an area of 2 metres by 7 metres, showed the procession of women and girls draped in the Greek manner, and this gave the artist an opportunity to transform his own compositional technique.

The earlier "group theory", based on the relations between closed groups, gave way to the depiction of continuous movement, in such a way that each figure represented a subsequent phase of forward motion. The depiction of movement became the central theme of his art. In addition to the movement of humans, he also tried his hand at the movement of horses, and hoped to utilize the results of his research in education and in the painting of historical frescoes. He read books on hippology, and even obtained Eadweard Muybridge's photographs capturing the various phases in a horse's movement, elaborating them by drawing intermediate phases that the photographs did not capture. He also drew the sequential drawings for a hypotrope, an instrument that created the illusion of a horse's movement when set in spinning motion. He was in correspondence with Etienne-Jules Marey, who worked out a notation apparatus on the analogy of musical notation to record the movement of horses. He believed that in order to be able to represent the world's visible forms, one had to have detailed knowledge of the laws that governed them. This is, of course, impossible. Székely's mural designs—and most notably the equestrian scenes made for Vajdahunyad Castle and the Fisherman's Bastion in Buda—confirm that even his knowledge of a horse's movements, no matter how advanced it was, could not radically alter composition. Nonetheless, the discerning eye can discover certain niceties in his depiction of cantering horses, which create the illusion of forward motion by arranging subsequent phases of movement next to each other.

The exhibition presented another separate area of Székely's research, his fresco designs, in Annamária Szőke's arrangement. It is not known for which particular building they were intended. Contemporaries' estimates put the number at nearly seven hundred, only a fragment of which have survived. Ninety-two were shown, a brilliant cavalcade of figures in drapery set in oval-shaped fields—from elaborately drawn forms to designs reduced to colour patches. We see them differently, one hundred years after their completion. Trained by abstract art, our eyes tend to perceive each design as an individual composition, without waiting for the patches to assemble into figures, and the figures into stories. We admire Székely for his painterly sensitivity, his artful distribution of patches, his ability to render perspective and depth, and also for the dynamic effect that Székely achieved after making calculations and experiments, without the works showing anything of this scientific preparation. We are under the impression that all this was achieved spontaneously, with a single act of creation. Naturally, Székely would never have thought of exhibiting these designs, but seeing the effect they have on us would perhaps have given him satisfaction. The scientific apparatus that he put behind this oeuvre, his unbelievably hard work and perseverance and his obsession with precision, were all meant to serve the "psychological content" through discovery; this was the goal "for which the entire picture was created". ❧

György Matolcsy

At Long Last

1999 occupies an extraordinary place in Hungarian economic history. It is a rare occurrence in recent decades that the performance of every major aspect of the economy should be essentially better than expected. Three characteristics defined 1999: primarily, economic growth was considerable and macroeconomic equilibrium indices essentially improved, in spite of signs of a global financial crisis and a certain weakness in important export markets. GDP grew by 4.3 per cent, twice the average EU rate, and the balance of payments deficit fell from $2.3 billion in 1998 to around $2 billion. The budgetary deficit declined to 3.9 per cent of GDP in 1999. The primary equation shows a plus of 2.3 per cent of GDP. The foreign trade balance alone deteriorated, but a deficit which was less than $3 billion was accompanied by a significant improvement in the balance of payments.

By the end of 1999 economic performance had reached the 1989 standard in all essential aspects. That was the second defining feature of the year. An era came to an end in 1999, the era of decline and of unmanageable disequilibria. It is true that economic growth had started earlier—first in the second half of 1993 and 1994, and then after 1997, but it was only at the end of the decade that the Hungarian economy made up for the losses of the nineties.

1999 was also the first successful year of a new economic model which was proclaimed as government policy in 1998. The new government's approach to essential economic questions differed from that of earlier administrations in the nineties. The supposition proved sound that the Hungarian economy had transgressed a stage where furthering growth went with a deterioration of equilibrium indices. Dynamic economic growth and an improvement in equilibrium were both characteristic of the performance of the Hungarian economy in 1999.

There was also evidence that growing consumption did not necessarily lead to runaway imports, thereby upsetting the balance of foreign trade. What was

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essentially responsible for the deterioration in the foreign trade balance was the narrowing surplus provided by the food industry and subcontracting. The export losses due to the crisis in Russia amounted to $300 million in 1999, more or less the amount by which the foreign trade balance declined.

In 1999 growing real incomes did not act as a brake on foreign investments: on the contrary, they proved to be an incentive. That was another point confirming the soundness of the new economic policy. The net inflow of operating capital in 1999 was $1.4 billion, $450 million more than in the previous year. True, half of this sum is accounted for by the diminishing working capital outflow of domestic firms, but it is nevertheless a fact that the 4 to 5 per cent growth in real incomes resulting in a 4.5 per cent growth in consumption far from damaging foreign investments, obviously acted as an incentive. This is in harmony with investors being interested in the quality of the skilled workforce rather than in low wage levels in Hungary.

1999 confirmed another economic recognition. Some economists and a number of politicians, including senior ministers, are convinced that tax reductions favour economic growth, and that the taxes paid by an expanded economy will more than make up for the loss in revenue. In 1999 the social security contribution of employers was reduced by 6 per cent, which had a beneficial effect on the economy as a whole. It benefited foreign investors and it strengthened domestically owned firms. Indeed, it even boosted the income of the exchequer.

A growth in consumption and incomes also helped. Gross incomes grew by 18.2 per cent in the state-financed sector, and by 15 per cent in the competitive sector at a time when inflation was running at 10 per cent for consumer goods. This too helped to produce an essential turn in the development of the Hungarian economy. Earlier economic growth was almost exclusively due to exports by large multinationals; in the second half of 1999, however, industry saw its domestic sales, which had stagnated in the previous seven years, beginning to grow significantly. The public started to make up for consumption that had been postponed earlier. This started to show in the boosted sales of the food processing industry, of electric appliances and tools, and of certain products of light industry. More than a hundred thousand new motor vehicles were sold in Hungary in 1999 as against the earlier forty thousand in 1998, which in itself indicates a considerable strengthening in public confidence. Growing sales was both cause and consequence of the domestic boom. As a result, consumption may grow and this in turn means more orders for domestic firms. The fact that, after a slowing down in 1997 and after, the retail trade activity clearly livened up in the second half of 1999 signifies that what we are confronted with here is not merely a making up for consumption postponed, but a general growth in consumption made possible by growing real incomes. At the same time, naturally, there was a decline in the growth of net household savings from 800 billion forints

in 1998 to 650 billion forints. The significant reduction in real interest rates very likely had a decisive role in this.

A further objective of the new economic policy was met in 1999. The economic upturn went with the creation of new jobs and growth in employment. After nine years of decline and a brief period of stagnation, employment started to grow again in 1998 (by 55,000, or 1.4 per cent). In 1999, a clear major breakthrough occurred: the number of those employed went up by 114,000, that is 3.1 per cent. What is most encouraging is that the improvement was above average in regions of high unemployment. As against 1.9 per cent in Western Transdanubia and 2.1 per cent in Southern Transdanubia, employment grew by 4.8 per cent in the Southern Great Plain and by 4.5 per cent in Central Transdanubia.

Entrepreneurs accounted for the greatest growth in the number of those employed; the staff of firms employing more than five grew by 10 to 15 per cent in the engineering industry and in commerce, at a time when the state-financed sector showed a decline of 2.5 per cent, which is good news in itself. Taken as a whole the domestic rate of unemployment declined by a full percentage point to 7 per cent, as against the 8.9 per cent average for the EU.

Hungarian economic performance in 1999 was good. An essential consensus prevails in this respect amongst economic analysts and their institutions in Hungary and outside. This is highlighted by the fact that the expectations at the beginning of the year of both analysts and investors, as regards the economic prospects of the region—and of Hungary—were fairly pessimistic. Let us admit it, there were good reasons for doubt and there was some foundation for the lack of faith in the confident and optimistic objectives and indices published by the government. Around the middle of 1997, the storm clouds of a global financial crisis grew and the Russian crisis occurred in August 1998. The boom significantly abated in the country's major export markets and international investment institutions were reluctant to exempt Hungary from the Eastern European crisis zone. Between mid-1998 and mid-1999, world economic centres thought that an ever deepening world financial crisis was very much on the cards and were reckoning with the occurrence of a universal economic crisis in its wake.

Things did not happen that way, but it was by no means clear early in 1999 that they would not. All credit is therefore due to the Hungarian government for not falling into a slough of despair, for resisting the advice of many to introduce general restrictive financial measures. Instead of panicking the government reacted calmly and cautiously. The price was in reduced investment. Although investment was favourable, planned government investments were literally washed away by last year's heavy floods or disappeared in a changed international economic environment produced by the threat of a universal financial crisis. Credit is due to the government not only because a reduction in investments

was used as a shield against introducing restrictions, but also because extra privatization and concessional income was used to shore up the ramparts of the budget. Cautious defence and bold attack were both characteristic of 1999 economic policy. Zsigmond Járay, the Minister of Finance, clenched his teeth and kept his faith instead of clamouring for restrictions.

We would be deluding ourselves if we did not face up to all that went amiss in 1999. Housing construction sank to an all-time low. The roughly 17,000 homes built were even below 1920s figures. It is good news that the budget ended up 50 billion forints better than planned, but it is bad news that 20 billion forints had to be spent on flood relief, since that amounts to the costs of 50 to 60 kms of unbuilt motorways. Nothing came of a number of major local government communal investments, nor can the health services look back to 1999 as a good year.

A significant improvement in the financial and economic standing of Hungary occurred early in the year 2000. This was based on a performance which was much better than expected. Hungary is reckoned a success within the region, as the most attractive area for investment. But there are also major risks associated with this good news. It will prove very difficult to repeat last year's 4.5 per cent reduction in the rate of inflation—which was something to boast about by any standards. An acute difference between Hungary's "off-shore" area and the country's customs area persists, which is manifest in differences between GDP and national income. Because of the differences between GDP and the national income which can be consumed in Hungary—in 1999 GDP grew by 4.3 per cent but GNI by only 2.5 per cent—the income of the population and domestic consumption cannot grow at the same rate as GDP. Infrastructural bottlenecks survive, which make it impossible for large parts of Hungary to compete on an equal footing for domestic and foreign capital. In its absence there is no modernization and there are no well-paid new jobs.

Early in 1999 the government avoided the trap jointly sprung by the threatening world financial crisis and the peculiar structure of the Hungarian economy. Early in the year 2000 a similar snare, or rather, its reverse can be discerned. While last year the danger was excessive pessimism and the introduction of a package of general restrictions prompted by it, what is dangerous now is the presumption that we have already successfully taken the first decisive step in making up the economic leeway and in mass upward mobility. There are risks in believing that from now on the path will be smooth and that success is certain. The right policy was needed to avoid the snares and pitfalls of excessive pessimism in 1999, and that is needed now too, since faith in automatic success is as dangerous a trap. The true lesson of 1999 is that business and people in their private life profited from the participation of government in the economy, both because of what the government did and also because of what the government refrained from doing. ❧

Pál Engel

The House of Árpád and its Times

The Hungarians were once horsemen whose pastures in the 9th century were north of the Black Sea, in what is now Ukraine. Between 894 and 900, under their leader Prince Árpád they conquered their future homeland in the Carpathian Basin. Like other steppe tribes, they too were pagans. In the 10th century their plundering raids terrorized Christian Europe from Bremen to Otranto and the Channel to Constantinople. Their defeat in 955 on the banks of the Lech near Augsburg, by King Otto I, the future Emperor Otto the Great, put an end to these raids for good.

Around the year 1000, in keeping with others in Eastern and Northern Europe, they converted to Christianity and founded a kingdom. Their first King, Stephen I, was the grandson of Prince Árpád's grandson. He was crowned on Christmas Day 1000—or, according to others, New Year's Day 1001, the *fons et origo* of the Kingdom of Hungary. The early rulers were all descendants of Prince Árpád and the last of them, Andrew III, died on January 14th 1301. These three centuries and two (or three) weeks, from the coronation of Stephen I to the death of Andrew III are called the Age of the Árpáds by historians.

It should be noted the above designation is the product of modern times. In the Middle Ages they preferred to forget Árpád or the pagan origins of the dynasty. Speaking of the "clan of the saintly kings" seemed more appropriate, two of its ruling members having been canonized by the Church: the founder Stephen I in 1083 and Ladislas I (1077–1095) in 1192. The medieval name sounded good but was not really accurate, since neither Stephen nor Ladislas continued the line, being succeeded by collaterals. Stephen's son—Prince

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Emeric, (later also canonized) predeceased him in 1031. Saint Ladislas was survived by a daughter, Piroska, who assumed the name Irene as the wife of the future Byzantine Emperor John II Comnenos. A mosaic in the Agia Sophia in Constantinople shows her portrait.

According to the official myth, the Hungarian Republic is a direct descendant of the state founded by Saint Stephen. Unfortunately, the country was truncated and lately the form of government was changed too but—and this is insistently stressed—it has been the same Hungary throughout. The emphasis on continuity explains the no doubt surprising fact that the Holy Crown of the medieval kings of Hungary figures on the republic's arms. One might imagine that there is scant connection between a republic and a crown, but it is the business of the crown in the arms to symbolize political continuity, "the thousand-year-old Hungarian state."

Such historical fictions are thick on the ground in Central Europe. Should an objective observer compare a pre-1914 and a post-1920 political map of this part of the world, it would strike him immediately that the Hungarian Republic is as little identical with the Kingdom of Hungary as modern Turkey is with the Ottoman Empire or the Federal Republic of Austria with the Austrian Empire. Quite obviously new political identities had come into existence in all three cases. These were all new states born of the dissolution of empires after the Great War. The difference is only that the Turks and the Austrians are aware of this but the Hungarians are not, or rather they prefer to turn a blind eye to some facts. Perhaps understandably, as the medieval Kingdom of Hungary was a power to be reckoned with, more than three times the size of the present Republic. It covered the whole of the Carpathian Basin, including all of what is Slovakia today, much of Romania, Yugoslavia and Croatia and a bit of Austria and Slovenia too, reaching down to the Adriatic cost. After 1102 the kingdom of Croatia—the south of the present Republic of Croatia—also belonged to Hungary since the kings of Hungary were kings of Croatia as well. It is not easy to renounce such a respectable estate. It is difficult to accept that the Hungarian Republic is no longer the Kingdom of Hungary of yore, but just one of its successor states, like Slovakia.

To return to the Árpád dynasty. We know today that the three hundred years of its reign cannot be considered a unit. The Kingdom of Hungary, or Hungary, as I propose to call it henceforth, changed in most respects in those centuries. The picture it provided around 1300 was totally different to the state of the country around the year 1000. The transformation, which could be described as a civilizational process, particularly accelerated in the 13th century. The current consensus of historians is that the devastating 1241/42 Mongol invasion played a crucial role, far more important than the extinction of the House of Árpád. Historians of medieval Hungary tend to speak of the pre-1241 and the post-1241 periods.

We know precious little of events before 1200. Sources are scarce. As far as we know, a single chronicle was written before that date. It only deals with

events before 1167, and the text is only known in later reductions. A number of 11th-century codes of law have survived which bear some resemblance to Wessex legislation or the Lex Salica. Some deeds survive, the oldest being that granted by Stephen I to the Benedictine Monastery now called Pannonhalma. It was dated 1001 but has only survived in a 12th-century amended version. The earliest surviving original document is King Andrew I's Deed of Foundation of the Abbey of Tihany (1055). There are barely more than 200 pre-1200 documents and they all refer to ecclesiastic institutions. Foreign authors, however, tell us a fair bit about conditions at the time. The most interesting, perhaps, are two eye-witness reports, by Bishop Otto of Freising, who travelled through Hungary in 1147 as a member of the Second Crusade,[1] and by Abu Hamid, a wealthy Muslim merchant from Spain, who lived in Hungary between 1150 and 1153.[2]

Abu Hamid, a widely travelled man, described Hungary as a country where you could live well and life was easy. He was prompted to this judgement by the fertility of the land, which every traveller remarked on. Wheat, being plentiful, was cheap, the Sicilian Arab geographer Idris reported, having got his information from merchants.[3] A Frenchman who was in Hungary somewhat later, in 1308, opined that the name Pannonia was due to the plentifulness of bread *(panis)*.[4] This Frenchman also reported that Norway alone boasted of more fish than Hungary did in its ample waters. Much later too it was said that only half the rivers and lakes were water, the other half were fish. Everyone also noted the size of the flocks, praising the rich and lush pastures and the fertile soil where innumerable horses and cattle grazed.[5] Right up to the end of the Middle Ages even peasants ate a great deal of meat, and none of the sources ever mention famine amongst the plagues which struck Hungary.

Bishop Otto was not as fond of the Hungarians as Abu Hamid but even he had to recognize the advantages of the country. The fertility of the soil and the splendour of the view reminded him of the Garden of Eden. But, he said, "the inhabitants were ugly, their eyes were deep-set, they were small in stature, and their manners and speech were savage and barbarian. Was blind fate to blame, or must we marvel at the patience of the Lord that such a magnificent country was the lot of these barely human monsters?" It would seem that the Bishop was somewhat prejudiced against Hungarians. Around 2100, 11th- to 13th-century skeletons have been anthropologically examined and this survey shows that 95–97 per cent of the population at the time were Europoid.

This does not, of course, mean that Hungary was a truly European country at the time. Perhaps "developing country" is the *mot juste,* except that this term now refers to something far from what I have in mind. Since Stephen I the country had continuously developed, though not very rapidly in the beginning. Christian ecclesiastic institutions soon covered the country. After the last pagan revolt was suppressed in 1061 the domination of the Church was absolutely firm. The Benedictines were the first monastic order to be established in

Hungary. Stephen II (1116–1131) brought in the Praemonstratensians, Geiza II (1141– 1162) the Cistercians, Templars and the Order of St John. The magnates also founded monasteries in quick succession; by 1200 there were at least a hundred in the country. Immigrants from the West, at first French, then German, moved in growing numbers, bringing new institutions and skills. The populous community of Transylvanian Saxons, which was recently brought to ruin by Ceausescu, was established by Flemings from Bruges at the time of Geiza II. "Latin", that is Wallon merchants settled in Esztergom and Székesfehérvár, the two royal seats, sometime in the 12th century. They were accorded considerable autonomies. They soon raised walls to protect their homes. These were the first cities of a Western type in Hungary. Starting around 1150, students from Hungary studied in Paris. One of them, Lucas, was later Archbishop of Esztergom. Like Thomas à Beckett, his fellow student at the Sorbonne, he proved himself a devoted son of Rome. Another was a notary in the chancery of King Béla III (1172–1196). In his old age he wrote the story of the conquest of the pagan Hungarians as he imagined it, in the manner of a fashionable knightly romance. Many must have been familiar with these at the time, since the Hungarian versions of Tristan, Yseult, Lancelot, Alexander, Paris and Hector were fashionable names given in baptism. They must have known the stories but they were not likely to have read them. Right up to around 1500 it was held in Hungary that reading was a passtime unworthy of a gentleman.

In other respects much of the nomad heritage and of colourful eastern ways survived. Bishop Otto of Freising thought the dwellings of the Hungarians were pretty rough. The material was mostly reed, more rarely timber, and even more rarely stone. People spent most of summer and autumn in tents. Idrissi mentions many towns, but these were more like the later Astrakhan than Cologne or Ratisbon. Abu Hamid was happy to discover that there were innumerable Muslims, though some of them pretended to be Christians. In fact there were students from Hungary in Aleppo even around 1220, and Pope Honorius II was informed that Muslims did better in Hungary than Christians, prompting many Christians to convert to Islam. Some Christians were of the Eastern rite. Stephen I himself founded a convent for Greek nuns near Veszprém. The deed of foundation is in Greek, and a copy, confirmed by King Coloman in 1109, survives. Greek scholars lived at Bács, the other seat of an archbishop around 1150. One Cerbanus in Venice used manuscripts obtained from Hungary to translate Maximus the Confessor and St John of Damascus into Latin. Right in the heart of the country, in a town now called Dunaújváros, a monastery stood in 1238, with the martyred Panteilimon as its patron saint, and one Andronikos as its patron.

At that time both commerce and mints were largely in the hands of Muslims and Jews. The Royal Treasury obtained huge revenues from silver mines, chiefly in Transylvania and in what is now Slovakia. Handicrafts were not worthy of mention but there were considerable exports of horses, cattle and hides. In the

12th century the slave trade still flourished hereabouts. Abu Hamid too bought himself a buxom young girl at a favourable price. All King Coloman (1095–1116) forbade the Jews was the taking abroad of slaves born in Hungary, and he also compelled them to put all deals with Christians in writing. There is evidence that this actually became a habit, though the royal requirement would seem to be irreal given prevailing conditions.

It would appear that what Bishop Otto disliked most were Hungarian political institutions. Hungarian notables, he wrote, were so subservient to the ruler that they thought it a crime not only to agitate openly but even to offend by secret murmuring. That was annoying indeed. In the West at the time feudal monarchies prevailed, which implied that the lords temporal and spiritual interfered wherever they could. The example of Thomas à Becket and Richard Coeur de Lion points to the liberties they were able to take even with powerful princes like Henry II or Frederick Barbarossa. Parliaments were still out of the question; nevertheless, there was not much fun in ruling. In that context the power of Árpád Kings appeared as unlimited. Dynastic strife was not unknown in Hungary but whenever a king happened to sit firmly on the throne, the term *firm* truly meant that. There being no feudal system, the king had no need to engage in contests with feudal magnates. Every one of his western contemporaries could only envy Hungarian royal privileges. It was the king alone who could mint coins, he alone possessed castles, and whenever he campaigned the people were compelled to support him.

Such facts and the dimensions of the country implied that medieval Hungary was reckoned as a regional great power. The Holy Roman Empire last tried to subject Hungary in 1051 but after that it tended to show respect. Of the other powerful neighbour, Abu Hamid argued that the imperium of the King of Hungary was several times more powerful than that of the ruler of Byzantium. That was an exaggeration. In a long war lasting from 1149 to 1167, Manuel Comnenos had proved more powerful than the kings of Hungary. It is a fact, however, that Hungarian foreign policy was aggressive throughout, even in relation to Byzantium. Hungarian hosts regulary invaded the territory of their neighbours, they marched or rode to Kiev, through Galicia, the Balkans and Austria. Foreign forces, however, were rarely able to intrude into Hungary. There is no doubt that, apart from the two empires, the Kingdom of Hungary was at the time the strongest and most aggressive power in the region. According to Abu Hamid, the host of the King could not be counted, and every people was afraid of the number of his warriors and of the King's great courage.

Progress suddenly accelerated around the year 1200. The most tangible evidence is the multiplication of documents. More have survived from the reign of King Andrew II (1205–1235) than from the previous two centuries. His son, Béla IV (1235–1270) already put his orders in the form of writs and demanded written reports on their execution. In time the courts too abandoned pure

verbality and following the 1280s, written summons and adjoinments and many other kinds of court documents became common. Béla IV was a great one for granting municipal privileges. He furthered the building of modern fortifications, raising the Castle of Buda, the later capital of the country. His queen, the Greek Maria, built the Castle of Visegrád in the great bend of the Danube. By the end of the century, stone Gothic churches stood in their thousands, and stone castles in their hundreds. Muslims and Greeks were successfully weeded out and mendicant friars had erected their houses in at least a hundred towns and villages. From 1290 on diets were regularly held. Bit by bit the country began to look like any other monarchy in Europe.

The 1241 Mongol invasion played a considerable role in the way things shaped. Prior to the 16th century Ottoman conquest, this was the greatest political and economic catastrophe. Western Europe has not experienced anything like that since they managed to contain the Hungarians. Compared to such an Asian nomad invasion, a Viking plunder raid was no more than a visit by friends.

Mongol horsemen, led by Batu Khan, the grandson of Chingiz Khan, flooded Hungary in March 1241. Béla IV's host was no match for their archers, the King himself was chased to the Adriatic litoral. Then, in 1242, the Mongols withdrew as unexpectedly as they had arrived. Mounds of corpses and burnt villages were the signposts of their route. It passes human understanding how they managed to kill as many in a single year but the fact is that large areas turned uninhabited in their wake. Their departure, naturally, was followed by an epidemic and then by an unprecedented but explicable famine. After all, there had been no sowing for two years. According to some demographers, the population declined by 50 per cent but even the most cautious speak of a decline of 15 to 20 per cent at the very least.

"In that year," an Austrian annalist recorded for 1241, "Hungary that had existed for three hundred and fifty years was ravaged by the Tartar host."[6] Demographically the Mongol invasion can be compared to the Black Death elsewhere in Europe. The effects were similar: like the Black Death, the Mongol invasion too accelerated social change and irreversibly altered the economic structure. That, however, will have to be the subject of another tale. ❧

NOTES

1 ■ Otto Frisingensis, *Gesta Friderici*, lib. I, c. 31; in: *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, vol. 20 (Hannover, 1869) p. 368.

2 ■ Ivan Hrbek, "Ein arabischer Bericht über Ungarn (Abu Hamid al-Andalusi al-Garnati, 1080–1170)", *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vol. 5 (1955) pp. 205–230.

3 ■ *Géographie d'Édrisi*, trad. Pierre-Amédée Jaubert, vol. 2 (*Recueil de voyages et de mémoires publié par la Société de Géographie*, vol. 6; Paris, 1840; reprint: Amsterdam, 1975) p. 377.

4 ■ Olgierd Górka (ed), *Anonymi Descriptio Europae Orientalis anno MCCCVIII* (Cracow, 1916) p. 43.

5 ■ Gyula Moravcsik (ed.), *Fontes Byzantini historiae Hungaricae aevo ducum et regum ex stirpe Árpád descendentium* (Budapest, 1948) p. 158.

6 ■ Hermannus Altahensis, *Annales* in: *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, vol. 17 (Hannover, 1861) p. 394.

István Riba

Reading the Runes

Evidence of the Dual Conquest?

For several decades now Hungarian historians have argued about whether the Hungarian tribes reached the Carpathian Basin towards the end of the 9th century. The earlier scholarly consensus that they conquered the country in 896 was disputed by the archeologist Gyula László, who maintained that the 896 conquerors had found their own kin already in occupation. So far László and his followers have relied mainly on archeological evidence. It was pointed out that the invaders were far fewer in number than those already in residence and that the burial grounds of the age of the Árpád dynasty offer no physical anthropological evidence of end of 9th century immigrants. The 896 conquest, generally accepted since the second half of the 19th century, is largely based on an interpretation of documentary evidence and on linguistic data.

Gábor Vékony, who teaches Prehistory at Eötvös Loránd University, maintains that a recent find offers evidence which backs the theory of the Dual Conquest. On March 24th 1999, diggings at what is presumed to have been the centre of a clan at a lea called Alsóbű near the village of Bodrog in County Somogy, revealed a part of a bellows belonging to an iron furnace. its importance lies not in its nature as a tool, but in the runic inscription it carries.

Excavation at Bodrog has been going on since 1979. A team headed by Kálmán Magyar of the County Somogy Museum has so far found traces of three Árpád-age settlements, two churches and a monastery of a type associated with a particular clan. On a mound in the vicinity forty-five iron furnaces were found below a layer containing 11th century items, thirty-seven of which have already been excavated. Surprisingly, the characteristics of these furnaces differed from those of earlier known Avar-age furnaces. The same layer also contained pottery. "It is highly probable that this can be dated early 10th century," Kálmán Magyar stated with conviction. There is not much chance today of establishing which furnace the bellows potsherd belonged to. Péter Márton, of the Science Faculty of the Eötvös Loránd University, used archeomagnetics to confirm the hypothesis that the bellows fragment is of the same age as the furnaces. The essence of the method is that the deviation between the magnetic and the geographic north differs over a period of time. Metal pollution in the fired clay lines up in

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Dual Conquest

The archeologist Gyula László first fully expounded his "dual conquest" theory in 1920. Hints that the conquering Hungarian tribes found kindred people, as it were, in residence, when they invaded the Carpathian basin in 895/896, appeared in his earlier works too. Indeed some archeologists, e.g. Géza Nagy, had already toyed with the hypothesis around 1900. Gyula László was prompted by an examination of three maps: those of archeological finds dating from the Age of the Avars and those the Age of the Conquest, and that of 11th century toponyms. The comparison showed Hungarian toponyms to be thick on the ground in areas which lacked finds dating from the Age of the Conquest but included many associated with the people that had moved into the Carpathian Basin in the post-670 period. Thus nothing associated with the conquerors was found in SW Transdanubia, or South or NE of the present frontier. It is also of interest that there are considerable differences in the physical anthropology of those buried in the Age of the Conquest. People of an entirely different mould were buried in cemeteries of that age in the Danube–Tisza interfluve, that is the Great Plain, than in northern and eastern Transdanubia; the grave furnishings, however, are the same, and typical of the age. Physical anthropologists have established that those from the Danube–Tisza interfluve are totally different from the human remains of any previous inhabitants of the Carpathian Basin, whereas there are resemblances between those buried in northern and eastern Transdanubia in the Age of the Conquest, and others in early-Avar-age graves.

Gyula László concluded from the toponyms that a fair proportion of the early Avar population which settled around 670 was Hungarian-speaking. In the chronicles they figure as Onogurs. According to the present consensus of historians, following the death of Khan Kuvrat of the Volga Bulgars, some of the tribes, led by his fourth son, settled in the Carpathian Basin. (Others, led by Asparuch, the third son, settled in the territory of present-day Bulgaria where they were absorbed by the local Slavs). Gyula László also searched for documentary evidence to shore up his theory. The Russian Primary Chronicle speaks of White Hungarians in the South Russian steppes in the age of the Avars, and Black Hungarians at the end of the 9th century. László argued that this backed the theory of the Dual Conquest. The Hungarian *Kézai Chronicle* in the twelve eighties speaks of 700, and the *Illuminated Chronicle* (mid-14th century) of 677 as the date of the Conquest. Western chronicles all favour an invasion at the end of the 9th century, but there are earlier western sources which speak of Wangars or Ungars.

The great majority of historians today does not exclude the possibility that there were Hungarians amongst the Onogurs who found their way here around 670, but they reject the possibility that any sizable number of them survived with a Hungarian identity for two hundred years. It must be said too that an extraordinarily small number of finds from the 9th century have survived. Most recently György Györffy has explained this by the fact that a large part of the population perished because of climatic conditions which turned the Great Plain into a desert. In any event, the fact is that there was not much of an opposition to the Hungarians and it was not long before the Slavs, Franks and Avars accepted Hungarian rule, and were absorbed in the Hungarian people.

I. R.

the period of cooling according to the pole valid at the time. Since these are available to archeologists, dating on that basis is relatively precise.

Gábor Vékony examined the runic inscription in April 1999. He established that the incisions were made in the soft clay, before firing, their *terminus ad quem* was therefore the 10th century. Vékony claimed that he could read and understand the inscription. He argued that it was in Hungarian, and in the Székely runic script with which historians have been familiar for some centuries.

Inscriptions in several kinds of runic script have been found in the Carpathian Basin. Most are either of the Avar age or the Székely type. So far only relatively late Székely runic script has been persuasively deciphered. Though there have been efforts aplenty to make sense of the others, none of these has been accepted by the consensus of scholars. Cryptographers presume, however, that these scripts are all related to each other and very likely also related to Central Asian ancient Turkic runic script, which was deciphered in the 19th century. Thus they all run from right to left, as against Germanic runic script which—like Latin script—runs from left to right.

The two major survivals of Avar-age runic script are an inscription on an object which is part of the Nagyszentmiklós (Gross Sankt Nikolaus/San Nicolae) Treasure and incisions on a pin-case which turned up near Szarvas. The Gross Sankt Nikolaus Treasure also contains an inscription in Greek script, but not in Greek, which has not been decyphered yet. Nor can we tell the language of the inscription—or the ethnic origin of the writers. Gábor Vékony suspects that this text too may be Hungarian. The shape of the letters made it certain that the two scripts are identical.

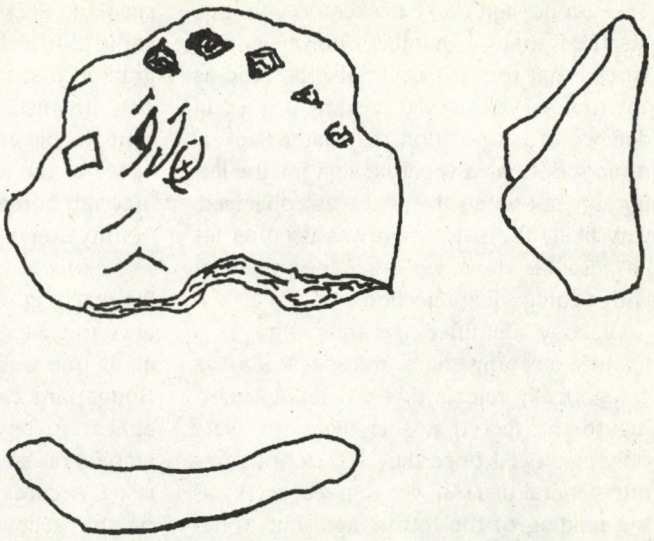
Székely runic script is first mentioned in Simon Kézai's 13th-century chronicle. He states that the Székely, after coagulating with the Blacks (or Vlachs), "I am told, used their script." This, in any event, suggests that the Székely used a script with which they were not familiar in the Royal Court. The 15th-century Thuróczy Chronicle reports that the Székely know how to make some sort of incisions in wood, which they employ as script. An example of the actual Székely alphabet survives from that time, on a later colligatum of a 1483 incunabulum, in the castle library at Nikolsburg (Mikulovo) in Moravia.

It is noteworthy that in practice the 15th century is *a terminus a quo* for this script. Some went as far as arguing that humanists associated with King Matthias invented it. "No competent authority would agree with that now, there is no doubt, however, that this is when it became fashionable." (András Róna-Tas, an authority on the topic). This fashion grew and in 1598 János Telegdi published a book on Székely runic script. One and all indulged in the script, numerous texts were incised, causing no end of dating problems for later historians. It is rarer on paper but was much favoured for cryptograms in the 17th and 18th centuries by the initiated.

Survivals are rare and there is no direct evidence whatever but, András Róna-Tas remains unshaken in his belief that Székely runic script was part of the life of the conquerors. In other words, the Magyar tribes were literate in their own way before they became literate in Latin. He does not explain, however, why runic script survived only amongst the Székely, who live in eastern Transylvania, the only ones to use it after the 13th century.

The origin of the Székely also still puzzles historians. Of yore there were some who identified them as the descendants of nomads, who formed a tribal confederation with the Hungarians, an advance guard in

battle, and frontiersmen after settlement. Current research confirms them as frontiersmen, not only in the eastern marches of Transylvania, where they survive, but also in the environs of Pozsony (Bratislava-Pressburg) and in Western Transdanubia, in Zala and Vas counties where in the Őrség (the March) toponyms still bear witness to their earlier presence. In Transylvania they first lived in what, between the 13th and 19th centuries, was known as the Terra Saxonis, moving on to their present pastures in the 13th century when the Saxons arrived.



Bellows fragments from the Alsóbű excavations—one bearing four runes—and a complete clay bellows

Vékony reads the inscription on the bellows as "fonak" which he interprets as "fúnák", which in the Hungarian of the time corresponds to "I should like to blow". "This is a telling inscription, very likely linked to the magic of production." Vékony explains. "In other words, the conquest smiths used the inscription in the hope of improving the quality of their work." But this is nowhere near the end of the argument. János Gömöri, the authority on iron-making in the Middle Ages, reconstructing the bellows, maintains that the original text of the inscription must have been longer, and that it very likely was made up of several words. This appears to be confirmed by the space before the fourth letter reading from the right, suggesting that this fourth and apparently last letter is the first of a new word. This argument, of course, makes nonsense of Vékony's reading.

Lately, linguists too have objected to Vékony's theory. "This text is at least four hundred years older than the first known example of Székely runic writing" András Róna-Tas pointed out. He mentioned that he already had his doubts when he heard that Vékony's was a sightreading. "Fundamental changes may occur in a script in the course of the centuries." This makes it doubtful that a text four hundred years earlier than the earliest previously known could be read easily at sight. But there were problems with the reading as such. Two of the four letters have likely links with the Székely runic script, such a link is possible for another, but must be excluded for the fourth. At a discussion held at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, noted linguists, including Professors Benkő and Harmatta, shared Professor Róna-Tas's doubts concerning the alien nature of this letter in the company of Székely runes. Vékony retorted that a closer look allowed one to recognize a cross in the middle of the letter, thereupon Benkő and Harmatta withdrew, admitting that in that case it could well stand for the phoneme "f".

The second sign is the Székely "o". No one disputed that. A number, however, disagreed that this "o" could also be read as "u" (ou) as Vékony did. Vékony argued in defence of his position that later Székely runic script has a separate sign for the letter "u", but when this text was conceived, very likely the same sign was used as for "o". So far, however, such notions met with a categorical rejection.

Vékony identified the third sign as a ligature meaning "na". Professor Róna-Tas categorically rejects this possibility, refering to the fact that such ligatures were only employed once the Latin script came into general use. All were agreed on "k" as the reading of the fourth sign, but Róna-Tas maintained that this kind of runic "k" was only used in high pitched vowel words (Székely runic script has another "k" for deep vowel words), Vékony's reading of "fúnák" would contravene the laws of vowel harmony. Loránd Benkő furthermore was not happy about the structure of the word "fúnák". That, according to Vékony was made up of the root "fú" and the inflection "-nák". But "fú" in ancient Hungarian is not related to blowing (fúvás) but means mallard. Nor does the suffix "-nák" indicate the optative. Even in the 12th century, the optative included four phonemes, the inscription on the bellows should therefore read "funaik", but Vékony was clearly only able to put three phonemes into his reading. "All this leads me to doubt that these four signs could be read as if they were Hungarian," Benkő concluded.

Vékony, however, not only deciphered the text, he also went on to draw far-reaching conclusions. Referring to the fact that so far Székely runic script inscriptions had only be found in Székely inhabited territory, this new inscription, according to Vékony, may well mean that Hungarian speaking Székely lived in Transdanubia as early as the 10th century. Loránd Benkő granted that this was on the cards but the only linguistic findings that may be relevant to this argument were located in the valley of the Kerka, in the Őrség, near the Austrian border, a relatively long way from County Somogy.

Vékony's conclusions are even more far-reaching. Given that there is no reference to eastern links in the Alsóbű material, as one would expect where conquering Hungarians can be presumed, the bellows appear to be blowing fresh air onto the embers of the long-standing dual conquest issue. According to Vékony, the inscription on the bellows-fragment should be connected with the people who lived there and, given that (according to him) the text was Hungarian, it must be attributed to the locals (Székely), and not to tribes which only immigrated at the end of the 9th century—i.e. to what many would call the second wave. In his view the Kalota (Transylvania) region grave finds—which can be shown to belong to the Age of the Conquest, confirm his opinion. The runic inscription in that is Turkic, and not Székely. According to Vékony, this only goes to show that the Hungarians who formed part of the Conquest used another kind of runic script, whereas those already in residence, perhaps at Alsóbű, wrote in the Székely manner.

All the same, many find themselves unable to accept Vékony's theory. Professor Róna-Tas, for instance, thinks it preposterous to draw such far-reaching conclusions from four signs of disputed reading. Indeed, in cannot even be persuasively established of what kind of runic script they form part. "Not to mention that an inscription on an object cannot offer conclusive evidence regarding the vernacular of a given community." ❧

Jancis Long and Alex Bandy

Dress Rehearsal for a Revolution?

In September 1956, six weeks before the outbreak of the Hungarian Revolution, Elemér Kerékgyártó, head of the Marxism-Leninism office of the Education Ministry and deputy chief of the Department of Dialectical Materialism at Budapest's Eötvös Loránd University, defended his *kandidátus* (doctoral) dissertation *A karácsonyista ideológia bírálatához* (Toward a Critique of Karácsonyist ideology). Despite the academic tone of the title, this was an outright ideological attack on Sándor Karácsony, a philosopher-teacher known at the time throughout Hungary and, then as now, unknown beyond its borders. The paper's Stalinist phrases already sounded dated in 1956, when the thaw that began with Stalin's death and accelerated with the Soviet Union's 20th Communist Party Congress had allowed writers to use more normal language. Even Kerékgyártó's supporters considered the dissertation an unscholarly work. Its best defense would probably be that it had been written a year or so earlier when Marxist-Leninist dogmatism was still unchallenged. Yet this uninspiring work, presented in the usually unexciting forum of a dissertation defense, turned into an event whose excitement is remembered by everyone present.

The event incorporated many of the political and ideological currents of Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe in 1956, during the months between Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's crimes in February and his crushing of the Hungarian Revolution in November. The people who made this unexpected theatre out of academic business themselves provide a glimpse of some of the different paths taken by Hungarian intellectuals in the difficult years between 1945 and 1956. Like a snapshot, this event reveals not just one of the unusual moments but some of the strange every day reality of the psycho-social history of Communism. For these reasons we tell the story.

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Kerékgyártó

Kerékgyártó was 37 in 1956. He was a tall, good-looking man. He came from a poor family, but had succeeded in enter-

ing and graduating from Eötvös College, the most highly regarded liberal arts school in Hungary, modeled on the École Normale Supérieure in Paris. In 1939-40 as its student president he had invited left-oriented speakers to the college. Though Eötvös was proud of its liberal argumentative traditions, this was a daring move after the beginning of World War II when Hungary's semi-fascist Horthy government was moving into increasingly intensive collaboration with Hitler.[1] On graduation Kerékgyártó was conscripted into the army. By 1944, with Hungary occupied by the Nazis and their own fascist Arrow Cross party administering the country, he was active in passing grenades to the underground opposition. If discovered, he could have been shot instantly by his commanding officer.[2] He spoke English well and had some expertise in Shakespeare and Keats.

Like many young men Kerékgyártó had joined the Communists at the first possible moment after the war, and his rise in the hierarchy was quite rapid. By 1947, he was secretary to the First Secretary of the Party, soon to be the (Soviet controlled) dictator of Hungary, Mátyás Rákosi. After a short time it was decided that he would be better placed in the new cadre of teachers of Marxism-Leninism, a compulsory school subject after 1948. This move seemed to bury his early talents and courage. Few now can recall any interesting or noteworthy facts about him. He was not feared or hated as were some involved in this story. "He was just nobody" seems to sum up the general impression.[3]

How Kerékgyártó came to choose Karácsony to write about is not known. Karácsony had died four years earlier, having been pushed out of his teaching positions. Kerékgyártó had published an article against him in 1955. It is possible that the Party decided Karácsony's teaching was still an influential threat to party discipline and ideology, and asked Kerékgyártó to write the article.[4] Such a piece would not need to convince the scholars. It would be read as a warning that teaching Karácsony's works was punishable. Or Kerékgyártó himself may have wanted to attack Karácsony, from conviction or as a good career move. Kerékgyártó had attended Karácsony's classes at one point. Some claim he had been unsuccessful in joining the inner circle of Karácsony's students, and was still hurt.[5]

Setting

The typed invitation to Kerékgyártó's defense stated that it would be held at 3 pm at the Eötvös Loránd University science of history lecture hall on Pesti Barnabás utca. The "opponents" (the official readers who could be counted on to ask a few critical questions and finally recommend that the work be accepted) were László Mátrai, a member of the Hungarian Academy of Science, and József Szigeti, a philosophy teacher and holder of the same *kandidátus* advanced degree sought by Kerékgyártó. The dissertation could be viewed at the Library of the Academy or at the University. The hearing would be open and all were welcome.

Not stated on the invitation were the members of the committee who would ultimately accept or reject the candidacy. These were the literary historian László Bóka, philosophy students Ágnes Heller, later an internationally known philosopher and critic, and István Hermann, pedagogy teacher Ilona Horváth (Mrs Endre Székely), linguist Zsigmond Telegdi, and György Nádor, a former rabbi, in 1956 a teaching assistant to the philosopher Béla Fogarasi. The secretary was István Mészáros, later known in the West for his books on György Lukács and Marxism. The President of the committee was the ethnogra-

pher Gyula Ortutay. Heller, Hermann (who were at that time married to each other) and Mészáros were all students of Lukács, the world famous Marxist literary philosopher with a tortuous relationship to the Communist Party before and after 1956. Working with him gave them a dramatic apprenticeship in Lukács' principal topics—history, ideology and realism.[6] It is noteworthy that except for its president, no one on the committee was considered a "Party philosopher".[7] This was a term informally in use at the time to distinguish those guaranteed to make all decisions in terms of Party policy, from those who might, within limits, question or ignore it. It could be used for academics who were not strictly philosophers.

The "opponents", however, László Mátrai and József Szigeti, and the committee president Gyula Ortutay were consummate "Party philosophers". The elegant Mátrai, known for his pursuit of "good food, good wine and good women"[8] had been a promising philosopher and scholar of aesthetics. He had accepted the post of Director of the University Library, he said, because what-ever happened in politics, "a library would look much the same."[9] He is remembered for his willingness to follow every twist of party doctrine in order to keep the job and the fine apartment that went with it.

Szigeti, a philosophy professor, was known for his early studies of Diderot and Kierkegaard, and intelligent Marxist-Leninist teaching in the late Forties. He had been one of Lukács' first advanced students after the war when the latter returned to Hungary from many years exile in Moscow. When the Party turned against Lukács in 1949, Szigeti was subjected to threatening questioning about which Lukács had protested to József Révai, the Communist's chief ideologist, later Minister of Culture. However, Szigeti soon added his voice to Party criticisms of Lukács and broke off relations. In the summer of 1956, apparently sensing the changing times, Szigeti publicly aproached Lukács with a statement of renewed admiration.[10] This would have exacerbated, not muted, the hostility of the Lukács students on the committee. It is but one example of the many potential lines of discord and complicated history that underlay the panel who would consider Kerékgyártó's application on September 10.

Ortutay had been well known from the Thirties as a major ethnographer of rural culture of southern Hungary, and as a politician. He had been President of the Hungarian Radio, Minister of Education, Director of the Board of Ancient Monuments, and Minister of Culture and Education. He had played a leading role in the post war years when the Communists were still competing for power. In addition to intellectual contributions from his ethnohistorical expertise, he worked politically by joining the Smallholders Party, the Communists' largest political rival. However, he was a "crypto Communist", working to subvert the Smallholders from within. Former colleagues might have understood his working strategically for his beliefs, but few forgave him his adamant refusal to help personally many whose trouble with the Communists was a direct result of information they had unwittingly trusted to him. Everyone associated with the Kerékgyártó defense could name friends who had been denounced to Party authorities by Mátrai, Szigeti, or Ortutay, with outcomes ranging from mild to severe harassment, job loss, torture and jail. Some of the denounced were present.

Doctoral dissertation defenses the world over are often *pro forma* affairs. Passing the tests formal and informal and preparing the written material that allow the candidate to *arrive* at a dissertation de-

fense are the true gates to academy. A few dissertations are rejected at this stage, usually because of a conflict between professors, or a student's refusal to accept faculty advice to postpone the defense. The majority are either passed, or the candidate is asked to rewrite or add some material. This does not necessarily mean that all candidates have done good work, merely that their colleagues are willing to admit them to their ranks.

Certainly Kerékgyártó had every reason to expect a *pro forma* acceptance of his ideological critique of Karácsony. He was a Communist Party insider. His credentials in Marxism-Leninism at the Ministry and at Eötvös University were made still more important by the recent closing of the separate Marxist-Leninist Institute. Karácsony was a safe target from the Party point of view. From the late forties, when the Hungarian Communists were establishing their control, they had identified as dangerous Karácsony's open empathic style of teaching, his theories of pedagogy, emphasis on peasant education, and his large following from three decades of work with young people. In 1949, aged 58, he had been forced to resign his many teaching functions and youth leadership positions, and was subjected to various indignities. His death in 1952 was said by many to be the result of this treatment, particularly the loss of his teaching positions. Kerékgyártó's criticisms of Karácsony had already been published and were thought to be safely within the Party line and language. A further reason for confidence in his success was that Ortutay, Mátrai and Szigeti would be fully aware that he was supposed to be awarded his Ph.D, and, for various reasons would be glad to see Karácsony's name and followers discredited.

What Kerékgyártó and his colleagues had not counted on, however, was the climate in Budapest in the summer of 1956, and the deep reserves of affection and respect for Karácsony nourished by hundreds of the silenced generation of the Stalinist years.

The Hungarian Revolution of October 1956 came as a complete surprise to almost everyone, east and west. In hindsight, however, historians have traced developments in Poland and Hungary following Stalin's death in 1953, that demonstrate a growing attempt to loosen the grip of Soviet control and introduce humanizing reforms. The reforms were proposed within the framework of Marxism-Leninism and overall Soviet hegemony, which were considered non-negotiable.[11] But the difference between those who believed in shaping policy in a more liberal direction, and those who remained committed Stalinists and/or ready to accept all Party directives was becoming a defining parameter of 1956 East Bloc countries. While Moscow and the Hungarian Communist leadership lurched back and forth between 1953 and 1956 in their attempts to find the balance between reform and control, writers, teachers and publishers in Hungary gradually became bolder, in reverting to "normal" language and genuine, if guarded, discussions of needed changes.[12] Kruschchev's "secret" speech denouncing Stalin's crimes on February 24th 1956 (which was soon circulated in the satellite states) was a major impetus for voicing criticism and new ideas.

To let steam off in the summer of 1956 the Hungarian Government authorized the Party youth organization to form a "Petőfi Circle" to meet and discuss reforms. The name came from Sándor Petőfi, a major 19th-century poet killed in the 1848–49 Revolution against Habsburg rule. However, these meetings, turned into overflowing debates far more outspoken than was intended, and spawned discussions in homes and workplaces that would have

been unthinkable during the previous eight years. Virtually all participants at the Kerékgyártó defense on September 10 had participated in one or more of these summer evening events. Were it not for the atmosphere of reform and speaking out that had been created in Budapest, Kerékgyártó's Party line dissertation might well have passed without note. Earlier, most of those who despaired at what passed as "scholarship" under the Party aegis would have been too frightened of the consequences to protest. Later, in the long softer Kádár years, they would be too alienated to bother. This was indeed a particular moment.

Karácsony

Even in 1956 Kerékgyártó might have had no trouble had his target been other than the late Sándor Karácsony. Karácsony was a complex figure in Hungarian intellectual life. Born in 1891, to a "cultured landowner" and the daughter of a minister, he had had a varied education in the universities of Budapest, Vienna, Geneva, and the army of the Habsburg empire. By the time he took up his first teaching position in Budapest in 1919 he had mastered Latin, Greek and six modern languages, and felt deeply influenced by the cultural linguistics of de Saussure. From then on his life was spent teaching pedagogy and philosophy, leading Bible study circles, writing more than 20 books, dozens of articles, editing a monthly youth magazine, and leading youth groups, including the Hungarian Boy Scouts, YMCA and the post war Hungarian Democratic Youth Organization. (MADISZ). He taught in a series of high schools, and lectured on language at the Calvinist College in Debrecen before being appoined to the chair of pedagogy at Debrecen University in 1942. His tireless energy in summer camps and youth events was the more remarkable considering his First World War wound that made walking difficult (he required two sticks to get about), and the weight he acquired in later life.

Karácsony's central passion and genius was for education, the awakening of the young to independent thought and ethical concern. He rarely bothered to answer the criticisms of his contemporaries (which he understood as arising out of the changing politics of the day) but was meticulous in critical dialogue with his students. Philosopher of science László Vekerdi, attending his classes as a 19-year old, and expecting the haughty Germanic style of university teaching, was amazed to find open class discussion, no one point of view being demanded, and Karácsony entering class one day with an acknowledgement of a mistake he had made in the previous session.[13]

The public issues on which he wrote, spoke, and organized concerned better education and living standards for workers and peasants, and the strengthening of Hungarian awareness of the identity and deep philosophy that lay in its literature and language. Linking these themes, and often becoming subjects themselves, were Karácsony's lifelong Calvinist[14] beliefs and ethics, and his "philosophy (psychology) of the other man" in which seeing a situation from the perspective of the problems of the other was the key to good teaching, good thinking and ethical sensibility.[15] His concern for Hungarian identity developed in the years following the First World War when Hungary had lost its world status with the fall of the Habsburgs, and, far more importantly, 60 per cent of its own territory and population to neighbouring countries in the post-war Trianon Treaty. The short-lived violent Communist regime of 1919, its violent overthrow by invading Romanians, and the eventual stabilization imposed by the right-wing regime of

Regent Horthy, had further damaged Hungarian self respect. Karácsony (and many other intellectuals) feared for a permanent depression of the Hungarian spirit. Writing and teaching on Hungarian literature, language and pedagogy became his form of ministering, of therapy for a sick soul. Karácsony's best known book was *A magyar észjárás és közoktatásügyünk reformja* (The Hungarian Mentality, and the Reform of Our Public Education) in which he related the language and psychology of Hungary's different social strata to the forms and richness of their education.

However, unlike many who sought new Hungarian identity through Christianity and intellectual nationalism, Karácsony avoided the paths that led to anti-Semitism at home, and hatred directed abroad at the countries which had benefited from Hungary's erstwhile land. His "other man" philosophy led him to illustrate the suffering of Hungarians by examples of earlier Romanian, Serb or Slovak suffering under Hungarian and Habsburg oppression. In religion, Vekerdi noted, "he was religious in a manner which was quite the opposite of the religion of the Church. When I told him of my atheism, he not only tolerated it but picked me out to join a little circle of people with whom he discussed the inner ethics of religion.[16] Vekerdi's brother, philologist and national librarian József Vekerdi, a believer, put it differently: "Karácsony was one of the great medieval Christian mystics, the only person I have ever seen living together with God in all his deeds."[17] As anti-Semitism grew with the fascist tide of the Thirties and Forties, Karácsony made it a point to visit Jewish batallions, and later the army's Jewish work brigades as they were sent off to the Second World War's most dangerous tasks.[18] A survivor of a labour batallions reports Karácsony shaking each man's hand and asking forgiveness in the name of Hungary.[19] After the 1944 German invasion of Hungary he would sometimes appear in class wearing the notorious yellow star required for Jews.[20] Later that year he heard the Gestapo were looking for him, and went into hiding.

Karácsony started the first Hungarian rural Boy Scouts organization, arranging for scholastically interesting programmes, such as archaelogy under the guidance of experts from the National Museum. He ran summer camps where peasant children were prepared for the examinations that privileged urban children would take at the same age. He used this experience to publicize the need for educational facilities in rural areas. After hearing Karácsony speak, the mayor of one rural region had two new schools built. Karácsony's concern for the appalling inequalities of education and basic standards of life in Hungary led him to a left-wing sensibility. In the Thirties he had angered both the Church and the right-wing government by speaking sympathetically of Marxism. He said it addressed problems of inequality that "Christianity had failed to solve."[21] He had made friends with László Rajk, Communist veteran of the Spanish Civil War, later Interior and Foreign Minister, later still victim of a show trial. Karácsony was also a friend of the left-wing peasant writer and politician Péter Veres.

Karácsony's sympathy for Marx, for peasants, for free education, and his anti-fascist record made him a potential ally of the Communists as they faced their struggle for power in 1945. Indeed, they took note of him and sent one of their brightest, most devoted new members, Imre Lakatos, to attend his classes, and report on the use they might make of him, and difficulties he might pose.[22] György Lukács once said "The party needs the youth, the youth are for Karácsony, there-

fore the party needs Karácsony." This did not necessarily signal Lukács' endorsement of Karácsony's thought, which many intellectuals found muddled. Lakatos and others had recommended Karácsony for membership in the Communist Party. He did not apply himself, but told Lakatos that if he were admitted he would want his Party card to show that he had been a member since 1919, when he participated in the brief Communist commune.[23] The Party did not give him a card, but he worked vigorously with them between 1945 and 1947 as head of the National Committee for Free Education. However, he was as noncomformist in his support for Communism as he was for Christianity or national spirit, and was noted as such by the Party intellectuals. He had written in his 1945 book *A magyar demokrácia* (Hungarian Democracy) that "every person should respect everyone else's autonomy... there is no dictatorship in a democracy, but there is order." This was immediately attacked by the Marxist historian Erzsébet Andics in the newly revived Debrecen left wing daily paper, *Néplap:* "Democracy does not allow everyone to behave independently, like autonomous beings."[24]

At meetings of the Free Education Committee, powerful Party members, such as Erzsébet Andics, had the opportunity to observe that Karácsony's passion for education and the "other man" would not be suitable for the intellectual climate required by the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was a problem the Communist Party faced everywhere. What must be done with the charismatic and idealistic people they needed in the drive for power but who might continue to think for themselves, or attract a personal following in the next phase, when full dictatorship needed a subservient population? The "solutions" for disposing of their more independent supporters could be life threatening, or merely heart breaking. Karácsony had too strong a following, it was said, to arrest him, but he was forced to give up his teaching.[25] In 1950 Géza Losonczi wrote "the roots of the Sándor Karácsony sort of trend reach down into the soil of the counter-revolution." He attacked Karácsony's "love for the Hungarian peasant and peasant farming" as "hostility to collectivized agriculture."[26] Witholding Karácsony's pension, it was hoped, would cause an early death because of the quantity of food they imagined he needed to sustain his great weight. He did not starve, because his students organized regular collections for him, and brought him spiritual sustenance by gathering at his home. But he did die quite soon. A letter arrived the day of his death stating that his pension had been cut off altogether.

Karácsony had a large following of former students. The term *karácsonyista* had been in use since the Thirties signifying both the disciple-like devotion of his students and a certain disparaging irony from those outside the group. Members of the circle themselves disliked this and the alternative term "alexandrists". "We thought of ourselves as Christians, not cultists,"[27] said one recently, though many of the circle were not religious. The wife of one student stated her disquiet with the circle. "Everything was open to doubt and debate, except Karácsony himself!" Others suspected there was a homosexual flavour to the intensity of the group, even though many of the gatherings were at his home or in the presence of his family.[28] He had married the daughter of a Calvinist priest and was father to two daughters and a son.

Kerékgyártó's thesis

The most positive comment on "karácsonyist ideology" in Kerékgyártó's thesis[29] was that it was anti-German and had

had a role as a "legal internal opposition" during the 1930's. Its harm, however, also came from these origins. Kerékgyártó introduced his thesis (earlier the published article) as a response to the Third Congress of the Hungarian Working People's Party (the Communist Party) which had called for a critique of the harmful impact of "the philosophy of the counter-revolutionary era between the two world wars." The specifics of these "harms" in the Kerékgyártó accusation form a useful check list of the issues believed important in Eastern European Communism, or at least on their propaganda agenda, in the mid 1950's. (The passages in italics paraphrase the actual words of the thesis).

"Karácsonyist ideology" reflected the nationalist, populist (népies)[30] and anti-Communist attitudes of the petty bourgeois elements of the peasantry. Like the populists, Karácsony considered the peasants as "the backbone of the Hungarian people," and took a nationalistic stance. In Communist ideology the rural and urban working class should recognize the unity of their interests. Populism indicated any appeal to the interests of ordinary people that did not recognize the singularity of the proletariat, or the Party as sole guarantor of proletarian interests. Nationalism represented denial of the world wide unity of the proletariat, and the indivisibility of interest between an East European country and the Soviet Union.

Karácsonyist nationalism was combined with cosmopolitanism, *as reflected in servile attitudes to Western Europe, especially the Anglo-Saxons.* Cosmopolitanism represented any suggestion that there was something to admire or be learned from western political and economic ideas..

The philosophical views of "Karácsonyism" were influenced by Plato, Kant, Hegel, Bergson and Nietzsche and other irrational idealists, and fideists (Christians) making them hostile to materialism. It is interesting that Hegel is included in this list of bad influences, since his influence on Marx usually kept him out of the demon philosopher list, despite his idealism.

One immediate political danger of "Karácsonyism" was its suggestion of there being a "Third Way" uniting the interests of capital and labour which would lead to the strengthening of capitalist development in the villages. This "third way" echoed, indeed was derived from, the 1930's misguided attempt for a "special Hungarian path" between Fascism and Socialism.

Most damning of all, was that *Karácsonyists took a negative position on the dictatorship of the proletariat, claiming that proletarian dictatorship would exclude democracy, given that dictatorship is the opposite of democracy. At the same time, they denied that workers could administer the state and insisted that leading state administrative posts should be filled by qualified people. "They do not think that communists, workers and peasants have such qualifications. They have not accepted the Soviet Union's experiences in this regard.*

Preparation

It is not clear when the Karácsony students decided to make trouble for Kerékgyártó's doctoral defense. When his article had appeared in *Társadalmi Szemle*, the official theoretical journal of the Communist Party, a year and a half earlier, there was no question of any open opposition. But early in the summer of 1956 a young biologist, György Kontra, who was an active member of the last generation of Karácsony's students, received from his friend György Tamás, who arranged formalities for advanced degrees at the Academy of Science, a copy of the Kerékgyártó thesis. It would seem that Tamás also was interested in an "unofficial" criticism. This

may have been the reason for his appointing a committee who were not "party philosophers". Kontra noted: "This gave me all summer to work on it." He even received the official "opponent" speeches. He was determined not to echo Kerékgyártó's *ad hominem* insults by attacking the author. He simply listed each quotation that could be shown to be inaccurate and the citation from Karácsony's written work that proved this.[31] Meanwhile word spread throughout the Karácsony net-work that the dissertation might be challenged.

Nor is it clear just when the challenge was taken up by Imre Lakatos. But his fiery political approach, in contrast to Kontra's quiet scholarship, turned out to be a pivotal part of the proceedings. Lakatos, later a world famous philosopher of mathematics and science, had his own complicated Party history. In the early Forties, while a student at Debrecen University, he had run intense illegal seminars on Marx and Lenin. These continued even in 1944 when he went into hiding from the Nazis, along with his girlfriend and other Jewish companions.

Like Kerékgyártó, Lakatos had thrown himself into Communist Party work as soon as the war was over, recruiting new members, and doing what was asked as he finished his first degree at Debrecen university. As mentioned above, one of his earliest tasks (in early 1945) was acting as liaison between the Party and Karácsony whose classes he attended. Karácsony knew that he was representing the Party and was reporting back to them.[32] Here an odd thing happened. In March 1945 Lakatos went through a conversion ceremony in which he "became" a Calvinist Christian, with Sándor Karácsony as his godfather. Since no one ever heard him waver from his Marxist atheism in those years, or deny his Jewishness (which was no longer a problem since the Nazi defeat) it seems like an odd act. His friends attribute it to the same "Hungarianizing" that had led him a (like many Jewish survivors of the Holocaust) immediately after the war to change his Germanic name. From Lipsitz he became Lakatos. He later joked that the conversion was a deal with the priest in exchange for a vote for the Communists in local elections. It is possible that respect for Karácsony may also have been involved. One of the frequent topics in Karácsony's circle, which included "outstanding mathematicians such as László Kalmár... Péter Rózsa... Imre Lakatos," was the relationship between mathematical logic and linguistic logic.[33] Karácsony was included with Lakatos' two other mentors, Árpád Szabó of Debrecen University and his secondary school literature teacher László Kardos, in a meeting he called to get advice from them on his future before he moved to Budapest in 1945. Karácsony was also a member of the dissertation committee for his 1947 "first doctorate".

Lakatos's enthusiastic contributions toward dismantling the old educational system showed little influence from Karácsony's approach to education. Working from the Ministry of Education (partly within Ortutay's tenure as Minister) and on several formal and informal committees, he was active in firing independent (i.e. "non-progressive") teachers and substituting those who could be relied on to transmit the Party line. Much later in his life he became a passionate advocate of quality and freedom in education, but between 1945 and 1950 he was known for being a full Stalinist.[34]

At virtually the same time as Karácsony was being sidelined for his independence, the fervently committed Lakatos also fell out of Party favor. He was expelled from the Party in April 1950[35] and in June was sent to Recsk, the notorious hard labour camp where Hungary for a few years emu-

lated the horrors of Stalin's Gulag.[36] After his release from Recsk in September 1953, Lakatos had played no overt political role. He worked in the Mathematical Institute of the Academy and spent as much time as he could on the study of mathematics, "making up for lost time", as he often said. However, by midsummer 1956 he had started work on a major speech for the September meeting of the Petőfi circle on the topic of reforming education. According to people who talked with him immediately after jail, it was not primarily his experiences there that moved Lakatos in a reformist direction. More likely it was the influence of friends who had been gradually modifying their 1950's hard line view while he was in the deep freeze of prison camp, and in particular those who were now leading "reformists", such as psychologist Ferenc Mérei, and reporter Miklós Gimes. The former was later imprisoned and the latter executed for their roles in the Hungarian Revolution. Lakatos also said later that the blacklisted books he was free to read in the Academy Library had made an impression on him, both in enabling him to criticize the regime, and concerning the bad effects of censorship.[37]

To persuade others to attend the Kerékgyártó defense, Lakatos spread the word around town that the academic quality of the dissertation was so poor that the self-respect of the Academy, the Party and Hungarian intellectual life demanded it not be allowed to earn its writer a doctorate. He devised questions for certain people to ask of specific members of the dissertation committee. On September 9th Lakatos appeared in Kontra's university office to discuss plans. He was also looking for a telephone. Kontra was not senior enough for an office phone, but Professor Imre Török, down the hall, head of the anatomy department, had one. Lakatos, explaining that he had known Török in Debrecen University, marched straight to his office, and took possession of the telephone. He called every member of Kerékgyártó's committee with his intense excited expostulations that the doctorate should be rejected. In these calls he made use of the status he had as an ex-political prisoner.[38] In that summer of 1956 the injustices of Hungary's Stalinist period had given its survivors an aura of respect. Ágnes Heller felt he was asking for a special compact between him and her to preserve academic standards and redress the recent past.[39]

As a veteran Stalinist, and ex-prisoner, however, Lakatos knew there was other ground to be covered. Another phone call was to Ervin Hollós, head of the youth association (DISZ), and a key liason between the Party leadership and the unruly Petőfi Circle meetings. Hollós, like Lakatos in Debrecen, had also reported to the Party on Karácsony's doings. Lakatos asked him point blank, "What does the Party have against Karácsony?" "Nothing," was the reply, "except that he was a friend of Rajk's."[40]

László Rajk had been arrested in 1949 while serving as Foreign Minister, subjected to torture and trickery and executed after a major show trial on false charges that included espionage and treason. He had been part of Karácsony's circle in the late Thirties, and had remained friends. Public repentance for Rajk's case and the three people executed with him, had been pushed on to the public agenda (largely by Rajk's widow) in the post-Stalinist thaw, and plans were already underway for a massive ceremony of rehabilitation and reburial. Lakatos knew that if by 1956 this was Karácsony's only sin in the eyes of the Party, and that about to become a virtue, opposing his attacker was probably not a very dangerous act. He continued to scheme. With his old friend and mentor Árpád Szabó, he planned strategy to sway public opinion at the doctoral defense.

Szabó, a respected scholar of Greek philology and mathematics, had since his early youth known Karácsony. From his own position as an exceptionally young faculty member at Debrecen University, he had recommended Karácsony for the pedagogy chair in the early 1940's. He had worked with him on the National Committee for Free Education after the war. Though Szabó had some reservations about Karácsony's scholarship, his admiration for his devotion to improved education and non-nationalist Hungarian spirit was profound. Like Karácsony, Szabó was drawn to the Communists as the best hope for the new beginning Hungary desperately needed after the war. At Lakatos' urging, he joined the Party in 1945, but he was expelled after a few years. In the mid -Fifties, the Party invited him back but by then, he said later, he felt he had "woken up" to their dark side, and declined to return despite clear costs to his career.[41]

Lakatos and Szabó decided they would make full use of Szabó's exceptional powers of oratory, and Lakatos' stature as an ex-political prisoner. With the exception of a few good friends (some of whom he later turned out to be informing on) Lakatos was generally disliked and distrusted. In politically turbulent situations, however, his excited enthusiasm for his position, the cleverness and wit of his arguments and his taste for tactical agitation made him a dynamic figure. The Kerékgyártó debate marked his first public expression of a position that was not straight Party line.

One further dramatic tension in the background to the debate is worth noting. In 1947, after three years of stormy relationship, Lakatos had married his girlfriend Éva Révész. She had, with Lakatos' teaching, become an equally fervent and ambitious Marxist. Together they had evaded the Nazis in 1944, and been seen as the advanced "Marxist couple" by the other young Communists in hiding in Oradea. But within a year of their marriage she had left Lakatos for the same József Szigeti who was the "opponent" for Kerékgyártó's dissertation defense. Lakatos had been devastated by the desertion and was always agitated by both of them. Szigeti's feelings against Lakatos were hardly less strong. He felt he had rescued Éva from a "monster" and rarely lost an opportunity for an insult. Further, Lakatos always harboured a suspicion that Szigeti had been involved in his jail sentence.[42] Szigeti's official role in Kerékgyártó's degree hearing probably added fire to Lakatos' crusade.

September 10, 1956

Intellectual Budapest's highly developed gossip network would certainly have conveyed to Kerékgyártó that an opposition was gathering. His Party role probably also gained him information from police surveillance operations. But, as mentioned earlier, he would have reason to suppose that his position, subject matter, and "opponents" would guarantee him Party protection. However, by the morning of September 10 he was nervous enough to call Erzsébet Andics, a Central Leadership member, pleading "you must defend me!" She told him it was up to him to defend himself.[43]

None of the circulating rumors, however, had prepared the university officials for the 400 or so people trying to push in as the doors to the lecture room opened at 3 p.m. Quickly the doors were closed again, and officials conferred on their policy. Surprisingly, they neither cancelled the event nor admitted only as many as would fill the assigned room. They remained true to the invitation "all are welcome" and arranged to move the hearing to the only hall that would accommodate the crowd,

the Great Hall of the Karl Marx School of Economics, a classical building some 10 minutes away on the banks of the Danube. Everyone walked over, exhilarated by their numbers. Someone commented that this felt like yet another Petőfi Circle meeting.

The move caused the Kerékgyártó defense to open an hour late. This was a particular source of irritation to its opening speaker Ivan Ivanov. Ivanov was the ceremonial Soviet representative in the Budapest University Department of Philosophy. Some Hungarian academics, showing little respect for the dictatorship of the proletariat, referred to him as an "ironworker forged into a philosopher." He spoke no Hungarian and took his interpreter everywhere with him. However, perhaps because Ivanov expected this to be a brief *pro forma* affair, he did not have his interpreter on September 10th. He was irritated that it started late, went on very late, and was full of a crowd whose unruly excitement was as foreign to his Soviet experience as their Hungarian was to his ears. Several times in the evening he could be seen gamely trying to keep awake and only sometimes succeeding. His brief speech in Russian opened the proceedings. He acknowledged that since he could not read Hungarian he could not judge the work before the audience that day, but Kerékgyártó had prepared diligently and deserved his doctorate.[44]

Ortutay then assumed his role as Chair of the meeting, and called on Mészaros, who read a brief biography of Kerékgyártó, and called on Kerékgyártó himself for a summary of his work. Kerékgyártó, clearly ill at ease, noted that the committee and many members of the audience had received his "thesis", a 17-page version of the dissertation, so he read only brief extracts from it. Mátrai and Szigeti then gave their formal opponent speeches, the time-honored world-wide ritual of praise for the conception and a few suggestions for improvement. Mátrai said that the topic was important because "Karácsonyism" with its muddled mixing of Christianity, nationalism and ethics, obstructed clear revolutionary thinking, and because so many teachers had been influenced by it. What the dissertation lacked was an understanding that Karácsony's philosophy had been developed to combat the fascist-Horthy climate of the 1930's, and was irrelevant since the socialist victory. Szigeti made similar points, and demonstrated the language of the times in which a work or person could be simultaneously criticized for being "provincial" (i.e., too much emphasis on Hungary) and "cosmopolitan" (i.e., not enough class emphasis or criticism of the West). Karácsony was both and, moreover, identified "dialectic" as related to "Protestant existential philosophy" instead of to Hegel. Kerékgyártó's great merit was his "struggle against provincialism." His fault was "not being able to free himself from sectarian Marxist literalism" and imprecise writing. As expected, both opponents recommended that the Committee accept the dissertation.[45]

Ortutay indicated the floor was now open. Szabó made a move to stand, having worked out with Lakatos that he should be the third speaker. Kontra began to despair that his moment would pass, since clearly the crowd could erupt at any moment. But György Tamás nodded to him, Szabó sat back down, and Kontra took the floor. Despite the excited undercurrents, at this point the meeting still had the sense of a formal academic occasion, and Kontra continued this perfectly. Reading from a stack of small index cards, which he still has in his possession, he went through every instance in which Kerékgyártó's dissertation had misrepresented Karácsony's work, and gave the full Karácsony quotation that demonstrated this. True to his

plan and beliefs, he made no attacks on Kerékgyártó himself, or conveyed any political agenda. For many this was the high point of the evening, a reminder, after dark times, of academic integrity, of Karácsony's true humanistic Christian legacy, and, given the times and Kontra's youth, an act of courage. It was also, for many, the moment which convinced them that their attendance was not merely an expression of loyalty to their late teacher, or for the excitement of the occasion, but to oppose something that demonstrated the level to which academic standards and the search for truth had sunk. There was huge applause as he sat down.

After one or two short statements, Árpád Szabó gained the floor. He set a very different tone, building a case against the author, his motivations, the work, and finally the system in which this could occur. "When a dwarf wishes to fight a giant," he began "what is his best strategy? He picks up a handful of mud and throws it in the giant's face..." He went on to describe the giant, Karácsony, as "a great master of the Hungarian language." And noted many other of his contributions. As for the dwarf, Szabó went well beyond Kontra's list of Kerékgyártó's misrepresentations of Karácsony, and attacked him for poor scholarship. The audience was beginning to get worked up. Applause followed rhetorical flourishes. Szabó kept directing his speech to the Committee and his fellow academics but could be seen to be pulled toward responding to the audience. By the last part of the speech, when Kerékgyártó's paper became an example of the harm done to science by the politicization of scholarship, Szabó clearly had the larger audience in mind. He ended by proclaiming that both scholarship and the system were losers in this kind of bad work and the atmosphere of propaganda and suppression that could give rise to it. "It is scholarship that should be guiding the Party, not the Party the scholars." He sat down to another outburst of applause. József Vekerdi called the speech "a splendid, quite Ciceronian, oration."

From then on most speakers addressed the audience more than the committee, and the audience was unashamedly partisan, applauding all anti Kerékgyártó sentiments, and greeting the increasingly rare statements of support with stony silence. Only the committee members, usually speaking from previously prepared notes, tried to address each other and the task at hand of evaluating a dissertation. Mostly they made comments based on their own particular areas of expertise. Telegdi, the linguist, commented on poor interpretations of Karácsony's metaphors.

The evening was already fully political when Lakatos rose to speak. Though he had sought to influence the committee in advance with arguments of academic standards, his argument for the crowd was political. Though unlike Kontra in every other respect, like him he avoided a personal attack on Kerékgyártó, and, daringly, appeared to take on the national power structure. The dissertation in question was not only bad, it was irrelevant. Karácsony represented an earlier era and was no threat to the present. Lakatos rejected Kerékgyártó's charge that Karácsony had distanced himself from the Communists after the war, saying "I myself acted as the contact person between him and Rákosi."[46]

At this moment, with Lakatos in midspeech, Szigeti abruptly boomed out, "We don't want to hear anything from this man who is the denouncer of György Lukács." Lakatos raised his voice to continue his speech. Szigeti raised his. This man who uses Marxism as a dagger." There were snickers from the audience, many of whom knew Szigeti's relationship to Lakatos. There were murmured explana-

tions to others that this animosity was "because of the woman." Years later, Heller noted that the fight, and indeed the evening, was more deeply about the current struggle in Hungary between old line Stalinist habits of loyalty to the Party line and the attempts of the 1956 summer to criticize and reform Communism in action. Lakatos and Szigeti continued to try to outshout each other when suddenly Ortutay seemed to remember his role as chairman and ordered Szigeti to let the speaker continue. Lakatos finished with a daring flourish. "Tactically, the people we need to concentrate our attacks on are those *in power*. I leave it up to you to decide who they are!" The audience once more burst into applause. His wife noted later in her diary "Imre sounded like a soapbox orator. I hated it."

It was near midnight when Ortutay decided to bring this strange examination to a close. At this stage it was customary to ask the candidate and the opponents for final comments before the committee withdrew to make their decision. Mátrai had long ago left, pleading another engagement. Szigeti had to represent the opponents. He was clearly less enthusiastic than at the beginning. "This dissertation is disappointing both as scholarship and Marxism. Nothing prevented Kerékgyártó from writing a better dissertation." At that point Szigeti did not repeat, but did not rescind, his earlier recommendation for acceptance. Secretary of the Committee, István Mészáros, was getting impatient. "You give the impression that this dissertation meets the requirements. But the opposite is true. [It] is nothing but a tirade bloated by a mass of Party congress phrases... very sectarian, riddled with falsifications!" Ortutay turned to Szigeti, chiding him again for his earlier outburst against Lakatos, and asked him to clarify his position on the dissertation. Szigeti started again with generalizations. Ortutay broke in, "So? Do you recommend acceptance with revisions? Or an entire rewriting?" Long pause. "Rewrite. I withdraw my recommendation for acceptance."

Ortutay turned to Kerékgyártó, inviting him to answer his critics. The result was said to be "an endless pathetic discourse in which he avoided giving any answers."[48] The committee withdrew to discuss their decision. It was well after midnight when they returned. Only 200 or so of the original audience remained. Their chatter ended as Mészáros started to read the decision. Kerékgyártó's dissertation, he said, had chosen an important critique as its topic "a thorough Marxist analysis of the irrationalist eclectic karácsonyist ideology would contribute to the development of our cultural life. However, this dissertation fails to solve the task it set for itself. It approaches its topic in a sectarian unscientific way, and instead of convincing argumentation, it seeks to prove its case with dogmatic declarations. It is unsuited for diminishing the influence of karácsonyism, but to the contrary... despite itself it can attract new adherents to karácsonyism. At the same time it has Marxist pretentions, and its dogmatism may actually lead to increasing the numbers of the anti-Marxist camp. Its argumentation lacks logic in innumerable instances, is self contradictory and stylistically it is either confusing or oversimplifying. With its distortions, misleading assertions it constitutes a serious violation of scholarly ethics and fails to meet the standards of the kandidátus degree. The panel unanimously votes that the scholarly qualification committee not grant K the kandidátus.[49] A final cheer went up from the remaining crowd.

As the room emptied, an emotional Kerékgyártó walked over and wordlessly shook Kontra's hand.

Afterwards

György Kertész, a reporter for the party daily *Szabad Nép,* had not intended to cover the hearing. But when he arrived in the early evening to pick up his wife, he realized a newsworthy event was underway. He wrote it up, and by the time it was published on September 12 the Party "spin" had been established. It was "not a defeat for Marxism, but a defeat for dogmatism." "Comrade Kerékgyártó was unable to see the incorrectness of his approach... [He] defended his untenable position... [and] forgot he was taking an exam... [he] started to behave as if the committee, the opponents and the audience were being tested." The article noted that "Comrade Szigeti modified his opinion during the proceedings."[50]

No individual aftermath of this event, of course, is as momentous as the combined events that overtook Hungary in the following weeks. On October 6, Rajk and the three other senior officials executed with him were rehabilitated and reburied with honors. At least 200,000 attended. They heard Béla Szász , himself only recently released from prison, say that their presence there marked their "passionate desire... to bury an epoch; to bury for ever lawlessness, tyranny... the moral dead of the shameful years."[51] Between October 23 and November 4, the Hungarian Revolution became the most dramatic attempt for national freedom in the 44-year history of Soviet domination of East and Central Europe. It ended predictably with no practical support from the West and a brutal reassertion of Soviet power in the early days of November. The Kerékgyártó debate had no causal role in these larger happenings, but was itself, as we have tried to show, a product of the trends that soon had far greater effects. Years later Mátrai in his memoirs called it "a dress rehearsal for the counter-revolution."[52] How the main protagonists of this drama fared through and after the Revolution also gives some substance to the variety of human experience in those times and places.

Kerékgyártó was quickly removed from his University post, but his defeat was recognized by the Party as stemming from factors that made him more, not less, useful from their point of view. He was sent to the Institute of Cultural Relations. The foreign travel required was allowed only to the most trusted in the immediate post-1956 era. It was even said he was put there to "keep an eye on" the head of the council whose trustworthiness was under review.[53] In 1957, he received a call from Ivan Ivanov, long returned home, inviting him to defend his doctoral degree in Moscow. It is not known whether he rewrote any of it, but the topic was the same. As Szabó noted, "an unknown Hungarian attacked another unknown Hungarian in a language no one could understand, and an unknowing Soviet committee pronounced him Doctor."

He did not have long, however, to enjoy his academic status, his job or the silencing of his enemies in the post-1956 crackdown. In 1962, he was killed in Paris in the first Hungarian Airlines plane crash.

Szigeti changed his mind again about Lukács after the crackdown and made an important public denunciation at the party's behest. Lukács was named Minister of Culture in the short-lived revolutionary government of Imre Nagy, and had been captured with Nagy supporters during the restoration of Soviet power. Szigeti became deputy minister of Culture and Education for a few years after 1956. In this role he had influence over the careers of many. Árpád Szabó found himself expelled from the University and, since his role in the Revolution had been very small, assumed it was due to Szigeti's anger about the Kerékgyártó debate. Szigeti, however, made

a point of allowing Kontra his normal promotion in 1958, and believed that "came as a surprise to him."[54] Later Szigeti was the Director of the Philosophy Institute of the Hungarian Academy for many years.

Mátrai retained his Directorship of the Library until his retirement. In a paper he wrote introducing a seminar in the 1970's, he attacked Lakatos, calling him "a renegade of all ideas."[55] In his memoirs, he attacked Karácsony on a number of grounds, and described a bizarre scene he claimed to have witnessed in 1929 in which Karácsony insisted on beating and being beaten by young boy students.[56]

Ortutay became General Secretary of the People's Patriotic Front from 1957-64, and was active in purging the universities of many of the reformists and revolutionaries of 1956. He continued to receive cultural and academic honours.

The day after the Kerékgyártó debate, Lakatos reapplied for membership in the Communist Party, taken from him when he was imprisoned. He appears to have been turned down (or at least not given much hope). He was despondent and saw no possibility for a good career or housing unless he could get "rehabilitated".[57] Later in the month he gave his speech "On Rearing Scholars" at the Petőfi Circle meeting. The theme was the deadening effect on education and good minds of the policies of censorship, falsified history and propaganda, the policies he had been helping write eight years previously. He also argued for the teaching of logic in secondary school. "Let children learn the difference between a proven assertion and one that is unproven. Of course, some comrades will have a tougher time writing ideological critiques, and there will be fewer doctorates."

When Lakatos wrote up the speech for translation into English, he added the same phrase Szabó had used in the Kerékgyártó debate "Scholarship should guide the Party, not the Party the scholars." The speech was very well received among the reformists.[58] At the same Petőfi Circle meeting Kerékgyártó and his dissertation were attacked by sociologist István Kemény. One of the questions put to the moderator was "When will Kerékgyártó be dismissed?" In November Lakatos joined the large exodus of Hungarian refugees, walking with his wife and her family across the Austrian border. In January, he enrolled at Cambridge University for a Ph.D. in philosophy of mathematics. Two years later he had gained fame in philosophy circles for his dissertation on the philosophy of mathematics, and joined Karl Popper at London University. When Popper retired in 1966, Lakatos inherited his chair as Professor of Logic and Scientific Method. He died of a heart attack in 1974.

György Kontra had a respected career as a biologist. He always identified with the never extinct Karácsony circle and the Christianity he felt was central to its ethics. Members of the circle met quite regularly, and "tithed" themselves for a common fund to help members in need. After communism ended in 1989 they established an annual summer meeting for young people known as the Csökmei Circle, after one of Karácsony's books. Árpád Szabó, now in his mid-eighties, spoke at it in 1999. His topic was the changing views Hungarians had of their own history. Taking off from Karácsony's idea that Hungarian philosophy has been so overlaid with German philosophy that it cannot be looked for in "philosophy" as such, but rather in Hungarian literature, Szabó spoke of the changing views of Hungarian history as reflected in the literature of the 19th and early 20th century.

Perhaps this reviving of September 10th 1956 may also remind us of some particulars of change during the communist era, and some constants of the human spirit that kept coming forth. ❧

NOTES

1 ■ The "kandidátus" degree was a second post graduate doctoral degree introduced after 1945 in emulation of the Soviet degree of the same name. Kerékgyártó would have already earned the title of doctor of philosophy with the first doctoral degree granted by his university for successful defense of a thesis a few years after graduation. The *kandidátus* degree was granted by the Scientific Qualifications Board that operated out of the Academy of Sciences in collaboration with the relevant university department. It was roughly equivalent to the European "Privat Dozent" degree or today's US or British Ph.D. Those whose career proceeded to the higher reaches of academia would attempt a Doctor of Science for a major piece of research or writing in mid-career or later. We thank Gábor Palló for this clarification.

2 ■ Lajos Fehér, 1979, p. 562.

3 ■ Árpád Szabó, interview February, 1999.

4 ■ Lendvai, (1993).

5 ■ Vargha Domokos, interview March 1999.

6 ■ See Kadarkay 1991 and Heller 1998.

7 ■ Interview with György Kontra November 1998.

8 ■ Ágnes Heller interview, December 1998.

9 ■ Interview with György Litván, January 2000.

10 ■ Kadarkay, 1991 pp 412–3.

11 ■ See for example Litván, 1996.

12 ■ See for example Pálóczi Horváth (1995) and Aczél and Méray, 1966.

13 ■ Interview with László Vekerdi, November 1998.

14 ■ Calvinist Christianity is sometimes called "the Hungarian religion", although the majority of the country was Catholic

15 ■ For a summary of Karácsony's career and major publications see Lendvai 1993. We were greatly helped toward an understanding of Karácsony's ideas by interviews with György Kontra, Domokos and Maria Vargha, and László Vekerdi.

16 ■ Interview with László Vekerdi, November 1998.

17 ■ Jews were not allowed in the regular military services.

18 ■ Interview with László Vekerdi, November 1998.

19 ■ Interview with Domokos Vargha, January 1999.

20 ■ See Lendvai (1991).

21 ■ Letter from M. Khoor to A. Bandy, July 1999. Interview with József Újfalussy, February 1999.

22 ■ Interview with Gábor and Anna Vajda, January 2000.

23 ■ Karácsony Sándor (1945) pp 6-7. Andics' comment was in *Néplap*, April 12, 1945.

24 ■ Interview with Domokos Vargha, January 1999.

25 ■ Géza Losonczi in *Művelt Nép*, first issue, March 1950

26 ■ Interview with György Kontra, December 1998.

27 ■ Interview with György Kontra, March 1999

28 ■ This section is taken from the 17 page thesis provided by Kerékgyártó for the hearing. This was provided by György Kontra. The full dissertation and the thesis have disappeared from the Academy and the Eötvös Loránd Department of Philosophy where copies should have been preserved.

29 ■ Populist and the Hungarian *népies* are not exact equivalents, but very close. *Népies* contains more connotation of the Hungarian close relationship to the land of the rural worker than the western European populist movement. They are equivalent in being regarded by Communists as a dangerous attempt to suggest that elements of the working class (in this case the rural workers) might not have identical interests to the industrial proletariat. Interview with Gábor Palló, January 2000.

30 ■ Interviews with György Kontra November 1998 and March 1999.

31 ■ Communication from M. Khoor to A. Bandy, 1999.

32 ■ György Kontra (1995), p. 88.

33 ■ Lakatos also wrote his Cambridge University Ph.D., on the philosophy of mathematics, in the form of a Socratic dialogue similar to the open critical pathways of discovery in Karácsony's classes.

34 ■ The reason given for his expulsion was the leading role he had played in demanding the suicide of a 19-year-old girl in 1944. Éva Izsák was a fellow Jew and Marxist also in hiding from the Nazis in Nagyvárad. Lakatos felt she was in danger of being discovered and giving away other members of the group. This dark story is told in detail in Congdon and Long.

35 ■ The story of Lakatos' trajectory from the Ministry of Education to jail is quite complicated. It is another story that encapsulates many dimensions of Stalinist society. For an analysis of what is known and conjectured about this see: Congdon, 1997 and Long, 1998.

36 ■ As a colleague of Karl Popper in the UK, Lakatos claimed that his political philosophy started to change when he read Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies* in the Academy's collection of "forbidden" literature.

37 ■ Interviews with Árpád Szabó and György Kontra, March 1999.

38 ■ Interview with Ágnes Heller, December 1998.

39 ■ Information from Kontra who was present when Lakatos called Hollós.

40 ■ Interview with Árpád Szabó, April 1997, corroborated in interview with Tamás Lipták, May 1997.

41 ■ For Szigeti's attitude, interview with József Szigeti 1999. For Lakatos' suspicions, interviews with Joseph Agassi and Gillian Page, July 1995.

42 ■ Personal communication from Kerékgyártó to György Kontra reported in interview with Kontra, March 1999. The term "Central Leadership" was still in use in 1956. After 1957, "Central Committee." was the term used. In 1956, Andics was also head of the History Department at Eötvös Loránd University.

43 ■ Kontra's written unpublished account of the hearing, read by him in an interview, March 1999. Most of our references to what was said at the hearing come from this account.

44 ■ Mátrai and Szigeti's criticisms come from printed copies of their speeches made available by György Kontra. To our knowledge they are not filed anywhere publicly. See note above that all records of the hearing are missing from the Academy and the University.

45 ■ Interview with György Kontra, March 1999.

46 ■ Interview with Gábor and Anna Vajda, January 2000.

47 ■ Interview with György Kontra March 1999.

48 ■ Decision of the Committee 10 September 1956, signed by István Mészáros

49 ■ *Szabad Nép* 12.9.56, p.4.

50 ■ Szász, 1971, p. 238.

51 ■ Mátrai, 1982, p. 50.

52 ■ Interview with András Nagy January 1999.

53 ■ Interview with József Szigeti April 1999.

54 ■ [Source for Mátrai's Lakatos attack].

55 ■ Mátrai, 1982.

56 ■ Diary of Éva Pap , September 11 1956.

57 ■ See, for example, György Litván in the 1999 documentary film "Man or Devil: who was Imre Lakatos?", directed by Anna Mérei.

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Csaba Békés

The Hungarian Question on the UN Agenda

Secret Negotiations by the Western Great Powers October 26th–November 4th 1956. British Foreign Office Documents

Until recently students of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution considered the role of the UN as more or less long clarified, not expecting any new and surprising discoveries. Unlike foreign policy documents of the Western powers which only became available in the past decade, and those in the Soviet and Eastern European archives whose exploitation started only in the early nineteen-nineties, official UN documents had been available to historians right from the start, that is immediately after their drafting. These included the minutes of Security Council meetings and of General Assembly sessions, the text of resolutions and of draft resolutions moved by member states plus a great many submissions by governments, political and other organizations and private persons. Given that the UN and its various agencies operated in public, all news was promptly reported by the (Western) press. Historians were thus able to provide a fairly faithful picture on the basis of this secondary source of all that the representatives of member states said at the UN for public consumption.

Therefore, the judgement—accepted as sound for quite sometime—was formed soon after the event that the Western Powers did their best at meetings of the Security Council between October 28th and November 4th to ensure that the UN take effective measures to help the Revolution, such efforts, however, being aborted by the Soviet veto with the help of Péter Kós, the Hungarian representative at the UN.[1] True enough, the Suez crisis which on October 29th turned into an armed conflict, meant that British and French attention was no longer concentrated on Hungary, but the US continued (particularly after November 4th) to oppose Soviet intervention at the UN. This

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1 ■ One legend that came into being during the Revolution was only cleared up some time ago. It turned out that Péter Kós never held Soviet citizenship, and that in the Security Council sitting of October 28, 1956 he expressed the position then being taken by Imre Nagy's government. See Gábor Murányi: "A Konduktorov-ügy (The Konduktorov Affair). *Magyar Nemzet,* August 21,1991.

picture was somewhat refined later, which primarily resulted in a more critical view of the American attitude. The general opinion, however, that the principal conflict at the UN in relation to the Hungarian question derived from the irreconcilable opposition between the positions taken by the Western powers and the Soviet Union, has essentially persisted up to recently.

American, British and French archives, made available for research since the mid-eighties,[2] show however that this judgement holds at most for the period following the second Soviet intervention, but that the role of the UN at the time of the Hungarian Revolution, that is before November 4th, must be radically re-evaluated. The outlines of the revised story can be summed up as follows on the basis of documents that were inaccessible for decades: It was not the three Western Great Powers, but the United States that was responsible for the Hungarian question being placed on the Security Council agenda. The British and French governments, busy with preparations for the Suez action, only added their support as a result of American pressure. It is also clear now that it was not in the Security Council that the real negotiations concerning the Hungarian question took place, but in a far from official *ad hoc* committee consisting of the US, British and French UN representatives which met behind the scenes in secret discussion with a view to reconciling differences in the position taken by the three countries.

In the days before the Israeli attack on Egypt (October 29th) the representatives of the three countries agreed that the Soviet intervention must be unambiguously condemned in public but that, given the difficulties of finding out what was really going on in Hungary, wait and see tactics should be employed for the time being. As a result when, at the October 28th meeting of the Security Council, the Hungarian question was placed on the agenda at the request of the three Western Great Powers, no resolution was moved that might help to deal with the situation. Following the escalation of the Middle Eastern conflict on October 31st when British and French forces joined the fray, the character of tripartite negotiations concerning Hungary completely changed. From then on the real aim of the negotiating partners was no longer the condemnation of Soviet intervention, let alone putting obstacles in its way, they wanted rather to exploit the Hungarian crisis to advance their own, in this case drastically conflicting, great power interests.

From then on the British and French wanted to transfer the Hungarian question from the Security Council to a special session of the General Assembly convened to discuss the Suez crisis. They hoped that the joint discussion of the two international crises would significantly improve their position. This course would have favoured the Hungarian Revolution as well since there is no veto in the General Assembly and there was thus at least a theoretical chance that a simultaneous UN resolution would favourably influence events. The American administration, however, which right from the start sharply and publicly

2 ■ Some documents relating to the 1956 Revolution are now available in the official foreign affairs collections in the United States and France. See: *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–57. Eastern Europe.* Volume XXV. Washington D.C., 1990. (Henceforth: FRUS Vol. XXV, and *Documents diplomatiques français 1956.* Tome III. (24 octobre-31 decembre). Paris, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, 1990. For British documents produced during the Revolution, see: Éva Haraszty-Taylor (ed.): *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956. A Collection of of Documents from the British Foreign Office,* Astra Press, Nottingham, 1995. This selection primarily includes reports sent by the British Legation in Budapest to London, with the Foreign Office's comments, and thus with some exceptions do not touch on the deliberations at the U.N.

condemned the Suez adventure of their closest military and political allies, looking on a solution of the Middle Eastern crisis as their sole objective, did everything in their power to cross the Anglo-French plan. Indeed, they succeeded in preventing the Hungarian issue being referred to the special session of the General Assembly before the second Soviet intervention.[3]

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had suggested already on October 24th that the UN Security Council be convened to discuss the situation in Hungary. On matters Hungarian, Foster Dulles acted in close consultation with his brother Allen Dulles, who headed the CIA. What Foster Dulles was afraid of was that, should the US not move in time, Hungarian exiles in the US would see to it themselves that the question be placed on the agenda, making use of the good offices of the Cuban and Peruvian representatives on the Security Council. There was some basis to such a supposition since a number of organizations of exiles, such as the Alliance of European Captive Nations had, already on October 24th, requested a debate on the situation in Hungary and in Poland through a submission addressed to the Chairman of the Security Council. At their meeting on October 25th President Eisenhower suggested to Secretary of State Dulles that at the very least, the major NATO countries ought to be consulted, and that, in any event, a request to put the question on the agenda should not come solely from the United States.[4] In the State Department they finally thought it best to consult "friendly" signatories of the Hungarian peace treaty of 1947, and a round-robin cable to that effect was sent the same day to the governments of Great Britain, Canada, India, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. Albeit France had not been amongst the signatories, she was consulted as well. As regards "semi-friendly" Yugoslavia, it was left to the US Ambassador in Belgrade to decide whether and how he would raise the question with the government. The cable suggested that a letter be circulated amongst members of the Security Council which drew attention to the Soviet intervention and called on members of the Council to examine to what degree the situation threatened peace or security. Another way would be placing the question on the agenda. This would mean the appointment of a fact-finding commission which would report to the Council.[5] Then, after appropriate consultations, a resolution would be moved.

By the next day the Administration's ideas concerning possible sponsors had changed, and in the evening of October 26th John Foster Dulles instructed the US Ambassador in London to inform Selwyn Lloyd, the Foreign Secretary, that the situation in Hungary demanded a joint Anglo-American stand so that the question would be placed on the agenda of the Security Council without delay. Foster Dulles also let Selwyn Lloyd know he reckoned with the possibility of behind the scenes discussions with the Soviet representative which, he hoped, would lead to an improvement in the Hungarian situation.[6]

3 ■ See especially: Csaba Békés: "A brit kormány és az 1956 magyar forradalom" (The British Government and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution). In: *Az 1956-os Intézet Évkönyve,* Budapest, 1992, pp. 19-38. For the international context of the Revolution, see: Csaba Békés: *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and World Politics.* Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., September 1996, Working Paper No.16.

4 ■ FRUS Vol. XXV. p.273, pp.290–291

5 ■ *Op. cit.,* p.292.

6 ■ *Op. cit.,* p.307.

What follows are Foreign Office documents concerning the preparation, proceedings and evaluation of meetings of the Security Council held on October 28th, November 2nd, 3rd and 4th when the Hungarian question was discussed. They not only offer information on the position taken up by the British government and the Foreign Office, whose attention, at that time, was concentrated on the Suez crisis, but, thanks to the thorough reports by Sir Pierson Dixon, the British representative to the UN, we also get a detailed account of the above mentioned secret consultations between the U.S., Great Britain and France.[7] These documents are also evidence that, before November 4th 1956, it was not really the United Nations but the Western Great Powers, who—their actions being motivated by the Suez crisis—were responsible for the fact that the UN did not even try to take effective measures in the interests of the Hungarian Revolution.

One should not give too much importance to a possible favourable effect of a UN resolution which the special session of General Assembly might possibly have passed before November 4th. The Soviet Union, conscious of her position as a superpower and in possession of a guarantee excluding American interference, did not judge the role of the UN and the moral strength of its resolutions to be sufficiently great in the shaping of international affairs to allow such a resolution to stop her setting things right by force of arms in a country belonging to her own sphere of interests.

The November 4th 1956 second Soviet intervention put an end to the first stage of the Hungarian cause at the UN when help for the Revolution was possible, at least in theory. The second, *post mortem* period then lasted until 1963. In this the UN General Assembly passed numerous resolutions, establishing a special committee to deal with the question, keeping it on the agenda year after year, but none of this could seriously influence developments in Hungary.

DOCUMENTS

1

Foreign Office telegram to the United Kingdom delegation to the United Nations in New York

No. 1339
October 28, 1956. D. 6.35 p.m. October 28, 1956.

EMERGENCY
CONFIDENTAL

Your telegram No. 949 [1] [Security Council: Debate on Hungary].
Following comments may be useful to you for the debate.

2. Our legal rights under the Charter to question the intervention of Soviet forces at the request of the Hungarian Government is weak. In commenting on action of Soviet forces you should emphasize humanitarian and ethical rather than legal aspects.

7 ■ Public Record Office, Kew, London. Foreign Office General Correspondence. (Hereafter PRO FO 371).

3. As regards paragraph 4 (a) and (b) of your telegram No. 949, your argument would be that the situation created by Soviet armed intervention in the territory of a member of the United Nations is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security. This argument could be fortified by referring to the action of the Soviet Government in now moving large numbers of additional troops into Hungary from outside. Apart from challenging the action of the Soviet troops which had been stationed in Hungary, we ought also to challenge the action of the Soviet government in introducing additional troops into Hungary.

4. To avoid creation of awkward precedents in Cyprus and elsewhere, invocation of "human rights" should be based on Hungarian Peace Treaty rather than on United Nations Charter.

5. Whatever justification the Russians may plead under the Warsaw Treaty for their intervention, the Contracting Parties undertook in Article 8 to follow the principles of mutual respect for their independence and sovereignty and non-interference in their domestic affairs. Our aim should be to make the Russians justify their intervention under the Warsaw Pact. This might have a salutary effect in the other satellites and elsewhere.

6. On the assumption that any action proposed in the Security Council will be vetoed, you will doubtless have in mind that we might subsequently wish to have a discussion in the General Assembly. For this purpose we might need a procedural majority to remove Hungary from the agenda of the Security Council. There is a potential contradiction between this and a resolution enjoining the Security Council to keep the situation in Hungary under review.

7. The proposals put by the United States Minister at Budapest to his Government (Budapest telegram No. 464)[2] are open to obvious objections. In particular the proposal to establish a United Nations Commission, even though vetoed by the Russians, would constitute a dangerous invasion of Article 2 (7) of the Charter.[3]

PRO FO 371 122376 NH10110/107

2

Telegram from the United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations in New York to the Foreign Office

Sir P. Dixon

No. 245 Saving
October 29, 1956.

R. October 31, 1956

My telegram No. 961:[4] Hungary.
Following is a fuller summary of yesterday's proceedings.

2. Two letters from the Hungarian Representative to the United Nations were circulated, one protesting against discussion of the issue, as an infringement of Article 2 (7),[5] and one requesting to be present at the meeting. Mr. Sobolev[6] (U.S.S.R.) began by complaining against the action of the President, Monsieur Cornut-Gentille[7] (France), in failing to consult all the members of the Council before calling the meeting. This was, he said, contrary to the traditions of the Security Council. The President attempted to put the adop-

tion of the agenda to an immediate vote, but Mr. Sobolev protested against inscription of the item, speaking on the following lines:

(a) the three Powers have proposed the inscription of an item which concerns only the internal affairs of Hungary. This was not done with the approval of the Hungarian Government: indeed, the Hungarian Government has protested against their action to the President of the Council;

(b) the true motives of the three Powers are to incite an illegal, reactionary underground movement in Hungary against the Hungarian Government, which embodies the will of the toiling Hungarian peoples;

(c) this move is in keeping with the rest of United States foreign policy, a chief aim of which is to support subversive movements in countries which have managed to rid themselves of "fascist regimes", and to re-impose these regimes. The United States yearly appropriates millions of dollars for this purpose. He referred to the United States President's "Christmas messages"[8] to the satellite countries. (At this point, the President protested that Mr. Sobolev was not confining himself to the question of the Council's competence);

(d) the Hungarian Government had first employed its own troops against the rebels, and later turned to the Soviet Union with a request for help, under the terms of the Warsaw Treaty. It was a purely domestic issue. The Hungarian Government was also acting under Article 4 of their Peace Treaty which laid down that organizations of a fascist type should not be allowed in Hungary;

(e) to sum up, Articles l,[9] 2 (7) and 34 of the United Nations Charter, singly and together, made it clear that the Council had no competence in the present case.

3. I then made a brief intervention calling for immediate adoption of the agenda.

4. Mr. Brilej[10] (Yugoslavia) said that his Government were opposed to discussion of the question by the Council because they thought that Hungary should be allowed to find a solution to her difficulties without outside interference. However, as they were also in principle opposed to the intervention of foreign troops in domestic affairs, they would abstain.

5. Mr. Cabot Lodge[11] (United States) started to speak but was interrupted by Mr. Sobolev, who proposed an adjournment of two or three days to enable delegations, including his own, to assemble information. This motion was defeated by the same vote. Mr. Lodge then began by disclaiming hotly the Russian accusations against the United States of incitement, etc., and quoted at length Mr. Dulles'[12] statement of October 27 on the Hungarian rising. He stated briefly that he hoped that our action in bringing the question to the Council would move those responsible to cease depriving the Hungarian people of the rights which they were guaranteed by the United Nations Charter and by the Peace Treaty. He gave a narrative of the events of the last week in Hungary, stressing in particular the people's demands for the withdrawal of Soviet troops. He concluded by urging all members of the United Nations to give earnest and active consideration to the steps that could be taken.

7. I then spoke as reported in my telegram No. 958.[13]

8. Monsieur Cornut-Gentille (France) maintained that the Russian intervention was spontaneous, since the Government which claimed to have called them in did not in fact take office until the day after the Russians opened fire in Budapest. He stressed that the Warsaw Treaty provided no justification for the use of Soviet troops against Hungarian nationals, and declared that Hungary had a right to choose her Government freely and that her sovereignty should be restored as soon as possible. He quoted at length an anonymous manifesto from one of the rebel groups, urged that Soviet troops should be

withdrawn from Hungary as soon as possible and finally urged that medical supplies and food should be sent in order to lessen the sufferings of the Hungarian people.

9. Mr. Blanco[14] (Cuba), Dr. Belaunde[15] (Peru) and Dr. Kiang[16] (China) all made useful interventions in support of our position.

10. Mr. Sobolev then made a further speech, in which he covered very much the same ground as in his earlier one, going into greater detail in his accusations against the United States of incitement to revolt. The following additional points also emerged:

(a) he denied the accuracy of my account of events in Budapest;

(b) the concern which the United States, United Kingdom and French Governments had expressed over events in Hungary was no more than "crocodile tears"; their real intention in raising the question in the Council was to restore the capitalist system in Hungary and at the same time to divert world attention from the suppression of peoples' rights in Algeria, Cyprus and Singapore. The United States Government were also using the case as election propaganda.

11. Mr. Entezam[17] (Iran) expressed his country's traditional dislike of foreign interference, and antipathy to the use of the armed forces of a foreign state to repress a popular movement, even in cases where they had been called in by the Government in power. Mr. Langenhove[18] (Belgium) rebutted the Soviet argument on Article 2(7) of the United Nations Charter, and Dr. Walker[19] (Australia) quoted the section of Mr. Nagy's broadcast in which he said that a "great national movement has taken shape" to contradict the Soviet contention that the insurgents are "a mere handful".[20]

12. Later both Mr. Lodge and I answered Mr. Sobolev briefly, and Mr. Lodge again denied the charges of incitement. I said that Mr. Sobolev was employing the familiar tactics of dragging a red herring across the path to evade the question at issue. Actually while the Council was sitting we had received reports that the Soviet troops were withdrawing,[21] and the question now was whether the employment of Soviet forces against the Hungarian people would be discontinued in accordance with their wishes.

13. After a final brief statement from Mr. Sobolev, the Hungarian Representative (Mr. Kos) was invited to speak. He said that he had no instructions, beyond instructions to send the letter referred to in paragraph one above, but would wish to address the Council at a later date.

14. Before we adjourned, the President stated that he had received communications on Hungary from the representatives of Austria, Argentine, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Turkey and Thailand. The Council adjourned at 10 p.m. and will meet again at a time to be fixed by the President in consultation with members.

PRO FO 371 122380 NH 10110/241

3

Telegram from the United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations in New York to the Foreign Office

Sir P. Dixon

No. 968
October 29, 1956

D. 10.33 p.m. (L.Z.) October 29, 1956
R. 5.39 a.m. October 30, 1956

IMMEDIATE
CONFIDENTIAL

My Telegram No. 961:[22] Hungary.

I have held discussions through the day with my French and American colleagues about the next step in the Security Council. Last night the French gave us a copy of a suggested draft resolution (for text see immediately following telegram)[23] which had been prepared in Paris.

2. Early this morning Mr. Lodge telephoned to consult me on his latest ideas. His basic assumption was that we should table a resolution but assume that no resolution would in fact be adopted because of the veto. We would not, therefore, put it to the vote but leave it hanging over the Russians. This would also enable us to put more into the resolution than we knew could be passed. He thought that we could secure support from the nine non-Communist members. His idea was that the resolution should

(a) call for withdrawal of Soviet forces

(b) call for some kind of observation.

He said that he knew we and the French might object to

(b) as starting a precedent for similar proposals elsewhere. He was, however, open to arguments about the contents of the resolution.

3. The three of us met later this afternoon after the Security Council meeting on the Athos item. I said that I assumed that our ultimate aim was to secure total withdrawal of Soviet troops and not just to stop them interfering in Hungary; but the immediate objective in the Council was presumably to keep up the pressure to

(a) encourage the Hungarian people

(b) oblige the Russians to discontinue their oppressive military actions. We should, therefore, call a meeting as early as possible. This could hardly be before Wednesday in view of the worsening Palestine situation.[24]

4. As regards tactics, it was agreed that there were three broad alternatives:

(a) confine the meeting to developing an attack on the Russians and demolishing the Soviet thesis about a "clique of counter-revolutionaries", but without tabling a draft resolution. We might then hear what the Hungarian representative had to say before deciding on our resolution. Mr. Lodge thought there was a risk that the Hungarian might "steal the headlines" unless we had a resolution down.

(b) Table a substantive resolution but not press it to a vote. Mr. Lodge pointed that we could alternatively invite the veto and then proceed to the General Assembly under a uniting for peace resolution.[25] My French colleague, however, thought that there would be a risk here of pushing the Hungarian Government into the Russians arms. I said I was

attracted by Mr. Lodge's idea of not pressing a resolution to a vote but this would mean that we would not get any formal expression of the Council's views and we would not have anything left for keeping up the pressure.

(c) I then suggested that we might keep the substantive resolution up our sleeve until we saw the outcome of the debate (in particular the Hungarian attitude), but put forward a surprise procedural resolution during the next meeting—this might be on October 31—which would take note of Mr. Nagy's statement of October 28 that his Government were opening negotiations about the withdrawal of Soviet troops and suspend the Council's proceedings temporarily in order to see what the Russians did to give effect to the evident wishes of the Hungarian Government. This gambit would have the following advantages:

(i) The Council would be taking some quick action since we could avoid a veto on a procedural resolution.

(ii) The Council would be identifying itself with the wishes of the Hungarian people and the ostensible intentions of the Hungarian Government.

(iii) The resolution would oblige the Nagy Government either to complete the negotiations for withdrawal of troops or to reveal that they were not serious about them (see paragraph 3 of Budapest telegram No. 489)[26]. We could then, if necessary, proceed to a substantive resolution.

5. I handed my colleagues a suggested text (see my second immediately following telegram).[27] I said that in view of the Warsaw Treaty it might be dangerous to call for withdrawal of Soviet troops. There might be repercussions on N.A.T.O. and I even doubted whether, in terms of the Charter, we could go so far. I preferred the wording of the French resolution calling on the Russians to stop military interference in Hungary's internal affairs. It was true that this would not be going so far as the Hungarians themselves wished to go, and as Nagy himself seemed to contemplate. But we would only be tabling this resolution if Nagy's statement had been proved to be phoney. I circulated a draft resolution (my third immediately following telegram)[28] which I thought might be an improvement on the French text.

6. At this point a United States draft resolution (my fourth immediately following telegram)[29] arrived from Washington. Mr. Lodge intimated that this draft had not been approved at a high level in Washington and he did not wish to press its merits.

7. Mr. Lodge seemed much attracted by my idea and we all agreed to submit it to our three Governments, together with the suggested draft resolutions, with a request for instructions by ten a.m. (our time) tomorrow morning.

8. As regards our speeches at the meeting on Wednesday, I suggest the following line:-

(a) expose the falseness of the Soviet thesis, in quotations from Sobolev's speech and from "Pravda" that the Western imperialists were inciting a "clique of counter-revolutionaries".

(b) point out that Nagy's statement of October 28 evidently represents the wishes of the Hungarian people and

(c) propose that the Council should pause in order to see that negotiations will take place to give effect to these wishes.

PRO FO 371 122378 NH 10110/163

4

Telegram from the United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations in New York to the Foreign Office

Sir P. Dixon

No: 1027
November 2, 1956.

D: 7.45 a.m. November 3, 1956.
R: 9.33 a.m. November 3, 1956.

IMMEDIATE
SECRET

My telegram No. 1017:[30] Hungary.
Guard.

An hour or two before our tripartite meeting we circulated to the French and the Americans the draft substantive resolution in my immediately following telegram.[31]

2. When we got to our tripartite meeting two hours before the Council meeting we found that the Americans' ideas were very different from mine and the French. After I explained my plan for a resolution (paragraph 2 of my telegram under reference), Lodge said he had no authority to put in any resolution today. He claimed that the facts of what was going on in Hungary were too obscure. Moreover, the State Department were uncertain how to handle the Hungarian declaration of neutrality. He thought therefore that our immediate objective should be to question the Hungarian representative in the Security Council.

3. It was equally clear that the State Department were not prepared to move on at once to the General Assembly if the resolution were vetoed. Mr. Lodge claimed, without much conviction, that the Russians would be under greater pressure if the debate was continued in the Security Council. He further argued that we should stick to the previous arrangement of voting through some procedural resolution, but keeping a substantive resolution hanging in suspense. (My telegram No: 968).[32] Mr. Lodge then went so far as to say that our apparent eagerness to engage the General Assembly emergency session in the Hungarian question might be interpreted as a desire on our part to distract the Assembly's attention from the Middle East.

4. By this time the exchanges had become frigid. I said I simply could not understand the American position. Developments in Eastern Europe were no less important than those in the Middle East and required equally urgent attention from the United Nations, as Mr. Dulles himself had pointed out in last night's debate.[33] There now seemed a prospect of Hungary getting really independent if the Russians could be induced to withdraw their troops. Surely this was the psychological moment to bring all possible pressure on the Russians. Events in Hungary were quite clear enough, and it would be a profitless exercise to question the Hungarian representative. We had previously agreed on the two-stage operation (in my telegram No. 968)[34] since at that time the position of the Hungarian Government was obscure and we did not wish to push them into the Russian's arms. But this was all changed in view of the Hungarian Government's appeal to the United Nations.

5. I said that the apparent reluctance of the Americans to harass the Russians on Hungary contrasted oddly with the alacrity with which they were pursuing their two closest allies in the Assembly on the Middle East. In short, it seemed like deliberate procrastination to leave the decks free for Assembly action against us. This would, I felt sure, create a very bad impression in London and Paris.

6. My French colleague, who supported me in all this, said he had instructions to put in a resolution quickly and would do it by himself if necessary.

7. There followed some feverish telephoning to Washington which apparently produced no change.[35] I thereupon said in view of my instructions I would feel obliged to join with the French in submitting this afternoon the resolution we had already drafted and for which we would certainly get seven votes and which the Americans would, I thought, find it very difficult not to support. In view, however, of the importance we attached to preserving a tripartite front in this matter, I would not take this action if we could have a gentlemen's agreement that a further meeting of the Council would be called for tomorrow afternoon, at which the three of us would introduce a substantive resolution which we would have worked out in the morning. We could, this afternoon, content ourselves with a round of speeches and then adjourn until tomorrow. Mr. Lodge at once accepted this with evident relief.

8. At the meeting in the Security Council (which had been delayed), Lodge led off with a very feeble speech against the Russians in which he dwelt on the obscurity of the recent events and the need for time to clarify them. However, several members of the Council followed with robust speeches against the Russians and telling use of the second communication from Nagy (my telegram No. 1031)[36], about the fresh incursion of Soviet troops; to the evident discomfort of the Russian, who made the feeblest of statement. My French colleague and I had kept our part of the bargain by cutting out of our speeches any mention of a forthcoming draft resolution.

9. We then had reason to think that the United States delegation were putting it about that they were content if the Council did not meet tomorrow. The President (Entezam of Iran) answering a question, actually suggested the Council should meet again on November 5. As this seemed to me tantamount to breaking our gentlemen's agreement I challenged Lodge privately at the table and he gave instructions to his team to organize adjournment until tomorrow afternoon, while agreeing that we should have a tripartite meeting late in the morning to work out a draft resolution.

10. After the meeting, which from the point of view of the public had gone very well, I asked Mr. Lodge whether he could not get authority tonight to go ahead tomorrow with a substantive draft; we should not be telegraphing to you until late at night and it would be very much better if I had something satisfactory to report.

11. Mr. Lodge has now told me that he is confident of being able to join tomorrow in tabling a tripartite substantive resolution of the type of my immediately following telegram. The Americans may be very insistent on inclusion of a provision for a United Nations investigation body which two other members of the Council adumbrated in their speeches today, and I may have to accept it despite the disadvantage mentioned in your telegram No. 1399.[37] They will also be reluctant, as things are, to press a resolution to a vote with the likelihood of Uniting for Peace procedure as a sequel.

12. I have recorded this sorry chronicle (which I promised Lodge we would keep to ourselves) at some length because it does illustrate the abnormal relations which now exist between us and the Americans here as a result of our differences over the Middle East.

13. As we have been unable to reach the French delegation tonight, it would be as well if the Quai d'Orsay[38] could be reassured quickly as to Mr. Lodge's intentions tomorrow.

PRO FO 371 122381 NH 10110/292

5

Telegram from the United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations in New York to the Foreign Office

Sir P. Dixon

No. 1029
November 2, 1956.

D. 8.27 a.m. November 3, 1956.
R. 9.40 a.m. November 3, 1956.

PRIORITY

The Security Council met at 5.30 p.m.

2. After a very brief statement of protest from the representative of the U.S.S.R., the agenda was adopted by ten votes to one. The President, Mr. Entezam (Iran), then invited the representative of Hungary to take his seat at the table. After Mr. János Szabó[39], Second-Secretary in the Hungarian delegation, had taken the Hungarian seat, Mr. Tsiang[40] (China) asked whether Mr. Szabó's credentials were in order and Mr. Lodge (United States) raised the same question. The President said that the Secretariat had Mr. Szabó's credentials (by telegram from the Hungarian Prime Minister) for last night's emergency special session of the General Assembly, but not for the Security Council. After considerable discussion the Council finally adopted a proposal made by Dr. Belaunde (Peru) that, pending the verification of his credentials [?words omitted] and that it should be left to the discretion of the President whether or not he should be allowed to speak.

3. Mr. Lodge (United States) referred first to yesterday's emergency meeting of the General Assembly held to consider the serious situation in Egypt. Unfortunately there was also a critical state of affairs in Hungary, where events had moved rapidly in the last few days. The question now was what could the United Nations do? It was vital that Hungary should be free to decide her own future. After referring to United States ties of sympathy with Hungarian moves toward self-determination since the time of Kossuth, Mr. Lodge said that it was not yet clear whether the Soviet Government meant to respond to the Government's recent request to withdraw her troops. He examined the Soviet Government's statement of October 30 on the Warsaw treaty and Mr. Nagy's declaration of November l. We could not, he said, ignore the Hungarian appeal. He finally suggested that the Council's work would be made easier if we had a Hungarian representative who we could be sure really represented the present Government. He suggested that the Secretary General might request the Hungarian Government to send one.

4. Mr. Nunez-Portuondo[41] (Cuba) said that his delegation would vote in favour of any resolution expressing the Council's support for the freedom of the Hungarian people. Such a resolution should provide for the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops, a re-affirmation of the right of the Hungarians to free elections and the establishment of a commission of the Security Council to means [sic] etc [sic] to these ends taken by the national authorities.

5. I spoke as reported in my immediately following telegram.[42]

6. Dr. Belaunde (Peru) endorsed the proposals made by Mr. Nunez-Portuondo and added that if such a resolution were vetoed by the Soviet Union the matter would have to be brought to the emergency special session of the General Assembly.

7. M. de Gunewardene[43] referred to the telegram to the Secretary General from the Hungarian Government and called for action from the Council, if action was blocked by the veto, the matter should go to the emergency session. M. Tsiang repudiated the version of events in Hungary which had been given by Mr. Sobolev on Sunday and called for a resolution.

(a) expressing sympathy with the Hungarian people

(b) opposing continued Soviet military intervention

(c) establishing a United Nations observer commission, and

(d) appealing to the free people of the world to help Hungary.

8. Mr. Lodge then read a statement made today by President Eisenhower stating that he had authorized the allocation of twenty million dollars for food and other urgent relief measures for Hungary.

9. Mr. Sobolev (U.S.S.R.) said the situation in Hungary did not warrant the calling of the meeting; the real motive had been to divert attention from the Anglo-French aggression against Egypt. The Hungarian authorities had suppressed a "counter-revolutionary mutiny" with the help of the Soviet troops who had entered Hungary at the request of the Hungarian authorities and had withdrawn at their request; he denied that new Soviet forces had entered Hungary.

10. In a brief statement Mr. Tsiang drew attention to the letter from the Hungarian Government which had first been circulated (text in my second immediately following telegram)[44]. The meeting adjourned at 8.45 p.m. Though the President had earlier suggested that it would not be necessary to meet before Monday, it was agreed on the suggestion of the Cuban delegate to reconvene at 3 p.m. tomorrow (November 4)[45].

PRO FO 371 122381 NH 10110/274

6

Telegram from the United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations in New York to the Foreign Office

Sir P. Dixon

No. 1038
November 3, 1956

D. 12.15 a.m. November 4, 1956
R. 1.16 a.m. November 4, 1956.

IMMEDIATE
SECRET

Guard
Your telegram No. 1507[46]: Hungary.

When I saw Mr. Lodge this morning I learnt that he had been instructed to table a resolution immediately without further consultation with us and the French despite our agreement of yesterday and what he told me last night (paragraph 7 and 11 of my telegram No. 1027)[47]. He conveyed that in the present circumstances the Americans thought it better not to be identified too closely with Britain and France in this matter. They had therefore decided to act alone. He nevertheless would be pleased if we and the

French could give support to the United States draft in our speeches today. It was not his intention to press the resolution to a vote at this stage. Reports were coming in that the Russians had agreed to withdraw all troops from Hungary and it might be that they would not feel constrained to veto the resolution.

2. I was unable to discuss the United States draft with Lodge as it had not yet arrived from Washington and I judged that it was not worth while making a scene over this piece of American duplicity partly because I felt we would need all Mr. Lodge's genuine sympathy for Britain in our struggle at tonight's Assembly, and partly because the distrustfulness itself is only a symptom of a much wider difference. Since he had already told me that he did not wish either us or the French to co-sponsor his draft I simply said that we would study it and if we approved support it in our speeches.

3. You will see from its text (my immediately following telegram)[48] that it covers most of our points and does [? grp. omitted][49] include anything about United Nations observers (paragraph 3 of your telegram No. 1507).[50] I think the omission of any mention of Hungary's declaration of neutrality is a genuine reflection of American uncertainty and desire not to commit themselves now to any guarantee.[51] There is also no mention of the termination of the Warsaw treaty but we only thought of including this in our draft as justification of the direct invitation to the Russians to withdraw all their forces from Hungarian territory (my telegram No. 1028).[52] In contrast United States draft merely expresses the earnest hope that all Soviet forces will be withdrawn. This is its weakest point.

4. It should not be too difficult to explain publicly why having called the council together tripartitely it should now be the Americans alone who submit the resolution. I shall tell our friends here that we and the French are pre-occupied with Middle Eastern affairs and we simply cannot simultaneously take the lead in steering a resolution of this importance through the council; but we will give it our full support.

5. Since drafting the above I have spoken to the French who have received firm instructions to [grp undec ? amend] the United States draft so as to incur the Soviet veto. I have urged them not to do this on the grounds that;

(a) it is in our own joint interest to preserve what is left of the tripartite position in the Security Council;

(b) it is anyhow too late to try to use Hungary to strengthen our hand or procure delays in the Assembly over Egypt.

The acting French representative[53] agreed and I have since learnt that he has obtained new instructions enabling him to follow our line.

PRO FO 371 122381 NH 10110/293

7

Telegram from the United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations in New York to the Foreign Office

Sir P. Dixon

No. 1043
November 3, 1956.

D. 8.45 a.m. November 4, 1956.
R. 9.40 a.m. November 4, 1956.

IMMEDIATE
HUNGARY.

The Security Council met at 3 p.m.

The President (Mr. Entezam (Iran) stated that he had now received satisfactory credentials for Mr. Szabó as representative of Hungary before the Security Council. The agenda was adopted without a vote, Mr. Sobolev (U.S.S.R.) merely stating that his objections to the item still stood.

2. Mr. Lodge (United States) introduced the United States draft resolution (my telegram number 1039)[54] in a brief speech. He asked Mr. Sobolev and Mr. Szabó for information on the situation in Hungary and the negotiations which were reported to be proceeding on the withdrawal of Soviet troops.

3. Mr. Brilej (Yugoslavia) said that he had heard from his government that Hungarian/Soviet negotiations on the withdrawal of troops had started this morning. If Mr. Szabó could confirm this, he was sure that the Security Council would feel that these negotiations should be conducted in the most favourable atmosphere and he would, therefore, propose that the Security Council be adjourned sine die. The United Nations would then be at liberty to turn from an area where negotiations were proceeding to an area where peaceful negotiations had been rejected and where there was actual fighting. I then spoke on the lines reported in my immediately following telegram.[55]

4. Mr Van Langenhove (Belgium) said that intervention by the United Nations should no longer be delayed. Mr. Szabó said that he had "promising news" for the Council. The leaders of the Hungarian and Soviet armies had met at noon today and exchanged views on the technical aspects of withdrawal. They had agreed to study each other's proposals and would meet again at 10 p.m. tonight Budapest time. The Soviet Commander had said that no more Soviet troops would cross the border pending the outcome of the negotiations. On a point of order Mr. Brilej said he now moved "unconditionally and without reserve" that the meeting be adjourned. The reason for this proposal was that it is obviously our duty to refrain from doing anything that might impede these negotiations.[56]

5. Mr. Walker (Australia) said that the Soviet representative had repeatedly attempted to obstruct the Security Council and that despite the report of negotiations there was ominous news of new Russian troop movements. Furthermore he could not be sure that those negotiations were being held on the basis of equality. There were unfortunate precedents of negotiations with the Soviet Union in similar circumstances. He hoped that the Soviet representative would give the Council reason to believe that the negotiations would be successful.

6. Mr. de Guiringaud (France) called for immediate action by the Security Council. Negotiations were not possible if one of the parties was not free.

7. At this point the President suggested that the Yugoslav proposal for an adjournment should be put to the vote.

8. I said it would be quite wrong and misleading to the Hungarian people to assume, as the representative of Yugoslavia seemed to think, that the Security Council could now safely leave the matter to the negotiations between Hungary and the U.S.S.R. and to assume that the Hungarian problem would solve itself. History showed that often those who negotiated with the U.S.S.R. had suffered. I said I did not see how the Security Council could do less than adopt today the United States resolution. Mr. Belaunde (Peru) supported this proposal and proposed certain minor amendments to the United States draft. Mr. Nunez Portuondo (Cuba) said that in general he supported the United States draft resolution. He was doubtful about the question of adjournment but if a majority supported the proposal, he suggested 5 p.m. tomorrow (Sunday). Mr. Lodge said he agreed with this. The President suggested 10.30 a.m. on Monday, November 5.

9. There was then considerable discussion of the question of the date of the next meeting. Mr. Walker, Mr. Lodge and I all called on Mr. Sobolev to make a statement on the Soviet attitude to the negotiations. Mr. Walker and I both urged an early meeting and also pressed for consideration of the United States draft resolution today. Mr. Sobolev finally made a two-sentence statement confirming that negotiations were in progress and agreeing to the calling of the next meeting for 10.30 a.m. on Monday.

10. Finally, the Cuban Proposal for a meeting at 5 p.m. tomorrow was put to the vote. Six voted in favour (Australia, Belgium, China, Cuba, France, United Kingdom) 3 abstentions (Yugoslavia, U.S.S.R., Peru) and 2 against (United States, Iran). As the proposal had not obtained 7 votes the President put the proposal for a meeting on Monday at 10.30 to the vote. All except Australia, who abstained, voted in favour. In explanation of vote I said that it was better to have fixed a meeting too late than not to have fixed a time at all.

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8

Telegram from the United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations in New York to the Foreign Office

Sir P. Dixon

No. 1050
November 4, 1956

D: 12.45 p.m. November 4, 1956
R: 1.10 p.m. November 4, 1956

IMMEDIATE
CONFIDENTIAL

My telegram No. 1043:[57] Hungary.

You will see that we had a thoroughly unsatisfactory meeting of the Security Council this afternoon. If the United States had been in the least anxious to obtain a vote on their resolution we could easily have defeated the delaying tactics adopted by the Yugoslav with the connivance of the Hungarian and the Russian and of the President, Entezam (Iran). As it was, however, Lodge was only too willing to fall in with the Yugoslav suggestion that we should adjourn the meeting pending the result of the Hungarian/Soviet ne-

gotiations. As I mentioned, the United States delegation had this morning suggested using procedural motion on the lines of my telegram No. 970[58] despite the changed circumstances. Thus the substance was barely touched and the meeting finally deteriorated into an undignified wrangle about the date of the next meeting. Sobolev's refusal to speak[59] added to the frustration and unreality of the discussion, which in any case was so much under the shadow of the Assembly session which had been called for 8 p.m.[60]

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9

Telegram from the United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations in New York to the Foreign Office

Sir P. Dixon

No. 1051
November 4, 1956

D. 1.16 p.m. November 4, 1956.
R. 1.58 p.m. November 4, 1956

IMMEDIATE

My telegram No. 1050:[61] Hungary.

The Security Council met at 3 a.m. this morning immediately after the adjournment of the emergency session of the General Assembly.

2. Mr. Lodge (United states) in a brief but powerful speech, gave the latest information on the fighting in Budapest and introduced a slightly strengthened version of the United States resolution (see my telegram No. 1039)[62]. In the amended version the second operative paragraph reads "Calls upon the U.S.S.R. to cease the introduction of additional armed forces into Hungary and to withdraw all of its forces without delay from Hungarian territory".

3. I said that the news from Budapest admitted only one interpretation. A pitched battle was going on in Budapest and a tragedy unparalleled in the history of the gallant Hungarian people was taking place. A brutal slaughter of civilians had taken place. Was it yet too late to halt this brutal attack?

4. Mr. Walker (Australia) urged the adoption of the United States resolution. He was supported by M. Belaunde (Peru) and Mr. Entezam (Iran). M. de Guiringaud said that the question was no longer the survival of the regime but of the survival of a people.

5. Mr. Sobolev (U.S.S.R.) stated that a few counter-revolutionaries incited by the West had started an anti-popular rising in Hungary. The Soviet troops were legally in Hungary under the Warsaw Treaty. The Security Council was not in its rights in discussing the question. The Western motives in raising the question were to provide a smoke screen for Anglo-French aggression in Egypt. Mr. Lodge and I then replied briefly to Mr. Sobolev's charges.

6. Mr. Brilej (Yugoslavia) had no instructions. He would therefore not vote on the United States resolution but would record his vote subsequently. The Hungarian was also without instructions.

7. The United States resolution was then voted upon, nine in favour, one against (U.S.S.R.) and one no vote (Yugoslavia). Mr. Lodge then proposed a motion (text in my

immediately following telegram)[63] to call a special emergency session of the General Assembly. This was passed by ten votes to one (U.S.S.R.)

8. The Secretary General[64] said that he hoped the emergency special session of the General Assembly would be able to meet this evening at 8.p.m.,[65] by which time the report on the situation in Egypt (my telegram No. 1045)[66] would have been circulated. The meeting adjourned shortly after 5 a.m.

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NOTES

1 ■ Not here published.

2 ■ The British were the only Western legation in Budapest which was able to maintain continuous and untroubled contact with its own government during the Revolution. They were therefore from time to time requested by others to forward messages. That is how a telegram from the US Chargé d'Affaires Barnes, sent on October 27th, came to the attention of the Foreign Office. Barnes had suggested that the UN issue an appeal urging an agreement between the Hungarian government and the revolutionaries. This would have involved the surrender of the insurgents to the Hungarian Army and a new Hungarian government headed by Imre Nagy or Béla Kovács with the help of a UN consultative commission to be sent to Budapest.

3 ■ Article 2(7) of the UN Charter states that nothing in the Charter entitles the UN to interfere in the domestic affairs of any country.

4 ■ In cable No 961 of October 28th Dixon had already briefly reported on that day's Security Council meeting.

5 ■ Soviet documents that have become known recently show clearly that the Hungarian Government Declaration brought to the notice of the Security Council by Péter Kós, the Hungarian UN representative, and also forwarded to the UN General Secretary, had in fact been initiated in Moscow. On October 28th the Soviets, through Yuri Andropov, their Ambassador in Budapest, had called on the Hungarian government to issue without delay a statement that whatever was happening in Hungary was the country's own domestic business, and that the government therefore protested against the issue being placed on the agenda of the Security Council. The Hungarian government complied with the request, Imre Nagy himself signed the declaration which was forwarded to Péter Kós, reaching him before the Security Council met. Attention should be drawn to the fact that the Soviet draft sent to Andropov stipulated the statement should have also included items such as "the counter-revolutionary mutiny which started on October 23rd was the consequence of incitement by the imperialist states," furthermore the statement should have been published in the press and been on the air already before the meeting of the Security Council. On the day after the October 28th change in government policy Péter Kós was replaced. (See: *The Yeltsin File. Soviet Documents on 1956.* Edited by Éva Gál, András B. Hegedüs, György Litván, János M. Rainer. Századvég—1956 Institute, Budapest 1992 pp 57–60. For the statement see Csaba Békés: *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and World Politics.* 1956 Institute, Budapest, 1956, pp. 89–91.

6 ■ Arkady A. Soboliev, the head of the Soviet UN delegation.

7 ■ Bernard Cournot-Gentile, French UN representative, chairman of the Security Council in October 1956.

8 ■ The liberation of Eastern European Soviet satellite countries figured high in the propaganda of the Eisenhower administration right from the start. Foreign policy on the other hand tended to be the continuation of the more realistic containment policy of the Truman administration. All the same, right up to October 1956, vague hints regarding the liberation of the nations of Eastern Europe appeared regularly in speeches at the highest level, including the President's New Year message.

9 ■ The first article of the Charter defines UN competence as confined to the solution of international crises; peculiarly the Soviets looked on their activities in Hungary as Hungary's domestic business.

10 ■ Joza Brilej, Yugoslav UN representative

11 ■ Henry Cabot Lodge, US UN representative

12 ■ John Foster Dulles, US Secretary of State 1953–1959

13 ■ The telegram is not here published. In his address Dixon expressed his sympathy for the Hungarian people, arguing that freedoms stipulated in the 1947 peace treaty must be secured for the Hungarian nation. He called on the Soviet Union to put an end to armed intervention.

14■ Carlos Blanco, the Cuban UN representative.

15■ Victor A. Belaunde, the Peruvian UN representative.

16■ Chiping H. Kiang, the deputy UN representative of the Republic of China.

17■ Nasrollah Entezam, the Iranian UN representative.

18■ Ferdinand van Langenhove, the UN representative of Belgium.

19■ Roland E. Walker, the UN representative of the Commonwealth of Australia.

20■ Contrary to earlier expectations Imre Nagy's October 28th radio address did not particularly agitate members of the Security Council (See János Radványi: *Hungary and the Superpowers. The 1956 Revolution and Realpolitik.* Stanford, California, Hoover Institution Press, 1972. p. 10.) chiefly because they did not at first grasp the importance of this statement which radically revalued events, indeed, even days later Western politicians surmised that this was possibly an obfuscating manoeuvre.

21■ I am not aware of any report of an October 28th start of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Budapest but in his broadcast, which started at 17.20 hours, Nagy actually said that in terms of his agreement with the Soviet government, Soviet troops would immediately start their withdrawal from Budapest. Western diplomatists probably interpreted this notification as meaning that the withdrawal had actually started.

22■ See note 4.

23■ The telegram is not here published.

24■ As a consequence of secret Anglo-French-Israeli negotiations held at Sèvres a few days earlier, Israel invaded Egypt on October 29th 1956. In keeping with the scenario, the British and French governments then addressed an ultimatum to the combatants, and after Egypt rejected it, the British and French started to bomb Egyptian strategic and military targets on October 31st, followed by a joint attack by British and French paratroops on Port Said. As a result of political and economic pressure by the American government which had opposed the action from the start, the British and French governments were forced to accept, on November 6th and 7th respectively, a resolution by the UN General Assembly demanding an immediate cessation of hostilities.

25■ This preocedure made it possible that any cause threatening international peace and security be removed from the agenda of the Security Council, sidestepping the veto, and refered to the General Assembly.

26■ The document was not made available to researchers.

27■ The telegram is not here published.

28■ The telegram is not here published.

29■ The telegram is not here published.

30■ The telegram is not here published.

31■ The telegram is not here published.

32■ The telegram is not here published.

33■ A reference to an address to the UN General Assembly by the Secretary of State.

34■ See Document No. 3.

35■ To clarify tactics, Cabot Lodge called Foster Dulles who said that the British and French merely wanted to distract attention from their Suez action, and that American participation in this manoeuvre was out of the question. Dulles argued that "It is a mockery for them to come in with bombs falling over Egypt and denounce the S[oviet] U[nion] for perhaps doing something that is not quite as bad." Dulles and Cabot Lodge agreed that, since one could not tell what was going on in Hungary before the arrival of the new Hungarian UN representative, the US could not support any related Security Council resolution. A telegram sent by the Secretary of State a few hours later contained the express instruction that Cabot Lodge should abort the above mentioned Anglo-French manoeuvre; should he, however, fail, then he must do everything possible to delay a vote on the issue. FRUS Vol. XXV. p. 365.

36■ The document is not here published. On November 1st Imre Nagy took charge of foreign affairs as well. That same day he adddressed a telegram to the UN General Secretary informing him of the government's decision to give notice of termination of Warsaw Pact membership, and to declare the country's neutrality. He asked that Hungarian neutrality be placed on the agenda of the next session of the General Assembly. On November 2nd Nagy sent another message asking that the Security Council should instruct the Soviet and the Hungarian governments to start immediate negotiations on the withdrawal of Soviet troops.

37■ Not here published. The Foreign Office reminded Dixon that UN observers might create an awkward precedent in Cyprus and elsewhere.

38■ The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

39■ János Szabó, Second Secretary at the Hungarian UN delegation, was temporarily appointed to replace Péter Kós (see Note 5)

40■ Tingfu F. Tsiang headed the UN delegation of the Republic of China.

41■ Emilio Nunez-Portuondo, Cuban UN representative.

42 ■ The document is not here published. Dixon, after referring to the dramatic changes in Hungary, welcomed the Hungarian declaration of neutrality and expressed his hope that the Soviet Union, recognising that a whole nation had risen in arms against its rule, would cease its military intervention.

43 ■ Ratnakirti Senerat Serasinghe Gunewardene, Sri Lankan UN representative. Since, at the time, Sri Lanka was not a member of the Security Council, he attended the meeting as the Vice Chairman of the Political and Security Committee. On January 10th 1957 he became a member of the Special Committee appointed to deal with the Hungarian question.

44 ■ Not here published. Reference is to the message which Nagy addressed to the General Secretary on November 2nd. See Note 36.

45 ■ The telegram is mistaken regarding the date. The following meeting of the Security Council at which the Hungarian question was discussed took place on Saturday, November 3rd.

46 ■ Not here published.

47 ■ See Document No. 4.

48 ■ Not here published. The resolution moved by the Americans called on the Soviet Union to put an end to interfering in the domestic affairs of Hungary and to completely withdraw its forces from the country forthwith. The UN General Secretary was requested to urgently examine and report on the kind of help and assitance needed by the Hungarian people.

49 ■ The text should probably read: [does not include]

50 ■ Not here published.

51 ■ It was not just that the American politicians did not want to guarantee Hungarian neutrality since the British were also reluctant to do that, albeit they were ready to recognize it. At the highest level there was no agreement on whether Hungarian neutrality was at all acceptable to America. Many in the State Department favoured Hungarian neutrality but Foster Dulles had a horror of the movement of Non-Aligned States and therefore opposed neutrality as such, and thus also Hungarian neutrality. Foster Dulles was hospitalized on November 3rd and was essentially out of action till mid-December, the American position was determined by his views in early November, in days critical for the Hungarian Revolution.

52 ■ Not here published. The British moved that the Soviet Union be requested to cease intrefering militarily in Hungary and to withdraw its forces from the country.

53 ■ Louis de Guiringaud—deputy to the French UN representative.

54 ■ Not here published. See Note 52.

55 ■ Not here published. In his address Dixon, basing himself on the most recent news from Hungary, reported on the reorganization of the government on a coalition basis and on the fact that, owing to Soviet troop movements, the situation continued to be extremely serious. He repeated that H.M. Government welcomed Hungary's declared neutrality and expressed his hope that the Security Council would do all in its power to ensure the independence of the country.

56 ■ There can be little doubt that the procrastination of the Yugoslav representative was then already determined by agreements reached in secret negotiations on the island of Brioni at a Soviet–Yugoslav summit. There the Yugoslav leadership had not only approved the armed suppression of the Hungarian Revolution but had offered to be of assistance in eliminating the Imre Nagy government from political life.

57 ■ See Document No. 7.

58 ■ Not here published. For the essence of the procedural motion mentioned by Dixon see point 4 (c) of Document No 3.

59 ■ Soboliev was merely prepared to confirm that negotiations on the withdrawal of Soviet troops had started in Budapest. His reluctance to say more is understandable, since he probably already knew that on the morrow he would have to expound his governments views concerning entirely different events.

60 ■ The reference is to the November 3rd meeting of the Special Session of the UN General Assembly which continued to discuss the Middle Eastern crisis.

61 ■ See Document No 8.

62 ■ See Note 48.

63 ■ Not here published.

64 ■ Dag Hammarskjöld, Swedish diplomatist, General Secretary of the UN 1953–1961.

65 ■ The Special Session of the UN General Assembly met in the afternoon of November 4th to discuss the situation in Hungary. A resolution moved by the American representative on his own was passed by 50 votes for, 8 against, with 15 abstentions. The resolution condemned the Soviet intervention and called on the Soviet Union to withdraw its forces. It recognized the right of the Hungarian people to a government in accordance with its national interest. The resolution also made provision for UN observers and for the dispatch of aid to Hungary which accorded with the needs of the population but—in keeping with the American position—the country's neutrality was not even mentioned.

66 ■ The resolution is not here published.

Miklós Györffy

Legends and Parables

László Darvasi: *A könnymutatványosok legendája* (The Legend of the Tear-Artists). Budapest, Jelenkor, 1999, 567 pp. • András Forgách: *Aki nincs* (The Man Who Isn't). Budapest, Magvető, 1999, 407 pp.

So far László Darvasi has worked in the short forms, rehabilitating the story, the victim of "textual literature" of late, even if his stories mostly lacked any pointed moral, but folded into themselves, or else opened up infinite perspectives, and were localized in time or in place only in the way that historical legends are, nothing more than the gesture of narrating a history. His new work, *The Legend of the Tear-Artists,* a novel in consideration of its size (600 pages), seems to move in the same direction, although it does enter a new phase and creates new qualities on more than one account.

A könnymutatványosok legendája is Darvasi's first novel, regardless of the point that it hardly meets the rather pliable criteria of the genre, it being the kind of novel that Darvasi believes can be written nowadays. One critic described it as a simulacrum of a novel. It is a historical novel or, rather, a pseudo-historical pseudo-novel. This genre, which defies close definition, has appeared recently in Hungary in several versions: László Márton's *Jacob Wunschwitz igaz története* (The True Story of Jacob Wunschwitz), the young Transylvanian writer Zsolt Láng's *Bestiarium Transylvaniae,* and *Dzsigerdilen* by János Háy. These authors are attracted by the past's colourful cavalcade of stories: they can let their imagination run wild in the old and by now unverifiable stories, which carry a great deal more secrets, excitement and exotism than the dreary and gloomy "simulation" of our everyday experience, while allowing the writers to demonstrate the complex interconnections of human stories and narrative histories.

Darvasi's novel is set in the 16th and the 17th centuries, but most notably in the 1660s and the 1670s, in Hungary, with only occasional excursions beyond the Carpathian Basin: to Vienna, Prague, Venice, Galicia, Moldavia, etc. At that time most of Hungary was under Turkish occupation. Transylvania was able to retain a measure of independence, but this last Hungarian safe-haven was also under close Ottoman control. In the West and in the North the Habsburg Empire built up its line of fortifications, and so the Hungarians, diminishing in numbers, were under pressure from both the Turks and the Germans. However, the novel has no intention of enhancing or reducing the picture that the Hungarian reader might, or might not, have about the history of that period.

It is true, however, that the mere location of the events portrayed in the novel comes together with a multicoloured as-

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Miklós Györffy
reviews new fiction for this journal.

sembly of cultural codes, and readers unfamiliar with them will have difficulty understanding and comparing these events. What is more, Darvasi often exploits the assumption that his readers know what he has not told or explained them. If not from history, geography and ethnography, then they know it from literature, legend and myth. Darvasi's novel relies on a staggering amount of information, drawn from a diverse range of disciplines: the narrator is equally familiar with contemporary crafts and folk traditions, with curiosities of local history and cultural history, with the Jewish faith and Ottoman administration, as well as with old Hungarian literature. All this might go unnoticed, as Darvasi' work is not a historical novel, and is not even about history, at least not in the way that it is taught at school. As the title indicates, Darvasi's book is a legend. And here the Latin word's original meaning must come to the fore: to be read. We are dealing with a text "to be read", therefore which does not represent *something else,* something that it is about: the given, recognizable and identifiable history.

We have, therefore, something, from which the narrator draws his material for the text to be read: facts, events, beliefs, stories, but all these are no part of history, nor do they constitute a history. Or anything else, for that matter. Not even a novel, in the strict sense of the word. The only motif that holds together the elements that otherwise resist all cohesion, apart from the very broad spatial and temporal setting, is that of the tear-artists of the title. *"There are five of them. They travel up and down the highways of time. Their carriage is handed over to Spring by Winter, and taken over from Summer by Autumn, so that Winter can beg for it. Those who feel like talking about it say that their wailing is one long story, the alpha and the omega, without a moment of rest. They say there isn't a village between Rostock and Fiume, Munich and Kiev, where the soil is not soaked with their tears..."*

Five "tear-artists", a Hungarian, a Jew, a Serb, a Croat and a Bosnian, travel in Central and Eastern Europe by coach. They are the legendary circus artists of the endless story of wailing, of sadness. A poor German cloth dyer from Buda ornamented the canvas of their coach with an enormous teardrop of sky-blue on August 29, 1541, on the same day, hardly by coincidence, when Suleiman the Magnificent seized Buda Castle through a ruse. Thus 150 years of Turkish occupation begins, along with the endless passion play of those nations who delegate one representative each to the commune of tear-artists. The Hungarian tear-artist sheds tiny black stones, the Croat Goran Dalmatinac drops of ice, the Serb Zoran Vukovics' tears are sweeter than honey, but go up in flame when set alight, the Jew Aaron Blumm weeps cold and foamy blood, and in the Bosnian "Franjo Mendebaba's tears you can recognize your deadly enemy."

As legendary and immortal characters, bound by neither space nor time, the tear-artists pop up here and there, the vehicles and expressions of perennial Eastern-European sadness, both experiencing and performing miracles. Sadness has always been the keyword in Darvasi's stories. Readers familiar with Hungarian might have a sneaking suspicion that the one-letter difference between the words *könny* and *könyv* (meaning "tear" and "book"), the almost indistinguishable *könnyművész* and *könyvművész* could just be significant in the birth of Darvasi's wanderers, and that the tear-artists could be the legendary alter-egos of "book-artists", people who write and present books expressing the endless story of sadness and tears.

It is the appearance of these tear-artists that links the book's various episodes, which cannot be described as story lines

for the simple reason that they never combine into a story. There are about a dozen of these episodes, which come in alternating parts. They begin, then stop, so that they can continue later on, only to disappear again. According to one of his critics who claimed to have heard it from the author himself, this compositional technique was inspired by works such as Mario Vargas Llosa's *War at the End of the World,* David Lynch's television series *Twin Peaks,* and Robert Altman's movie *Short Cuts.* Once he had finished writing them, the author dismembered the stories, mixed them up thoroughly after cutting them into short pieces. Whether this is true is quite irrelevant, as in principle the reader has no way of knowing this; he regards the mosaic of the fragments as a given, or even necessary, fact. At worst he might lose track of the events, cannot remember the preliminaries, confuses the different stories, and cannot construct a coherent central story, to which all the part stories are subordinated. Actually, there is no such central story, and the narrator's intention is precisely to prevent the reader from looking for one, instead of concentrating on the "here and now". His only task is to read and to enjoy. To marvel and to grieve.

Individually or as a whole (because the possibility of reading them as a whole cannot be excluded), the stories are clearly not anecdotes with a punch-line, nor historical episodes with unexpected turns (although they do have such an aspect), but legends abounding in fabled/fantastic/fairy-tale elements. It would be hopeless to describe the cavalcade of miracles inspired by folk legends and old wives' tales, by contemporary romances and edifying religious legends, but above all else by the author's imagination, that enchant the reader, gluing him to each page in turn.

But an even more enchanting miracle is Darvasi's narrative. Alongside Péter Esterházy, Darvasi is at present undoubtedly the stylist *par excellence* of Hungarian writers of fiction, a true "book-artist". One of the characteristic components of *Könnymutatványosok...* is the stylization of older styles. He was especially influenced by the rhetoric traditions of 17th-century Transylvanian memoirs, but the narrative tone of some earlier works, of those 16th-century chronicles, exhortations and fables that established Hungarian prose, have also inspired him. At the same time, there is nothing archly archaic in his narrative, the tone of old legends and chronicles is perfectly adjusted to a balanced, economical modern narrative that reflects on tradition with loving irony.

Darvasi's novel obviously has some relevance to narration and to the philosophy of history that awaits the analysis of scholarly interpreters. The prosaic/poetic circus act of the book seems to explore whether there is such a thing as history, and whether it is still possible at all to write history or historical novels; his conclusion seems to be that history as seen today is very different from what people were, or in some cases still are, making of it. History has no direction, no essence, and no purpose; at best, it is the sum total of an infinite number of parallel events determined by the heritage of an infinite number of past occurrences. Therefore, not only the direction but the momentary reality of these events are illusions, since it is precisely their fundamental quality that links them mysteriously with the past, in this case with the disconsolate experiences of this historical region, the perennial endurance of destruction and devastation. But as well as carrying this "moral", Darvasi's novel also confounds it as the self-contradiction of a historical novel propagating rationality, referring readers to the "legend", to the text "to be read", urging them to take delight in the irretrievable miracle of the event just unfolding.

András Forgách (1952) has also recently published his first novel, *The Man Who Isn't;* although he is not exactly without prior writing experience, Forgách is a late starter by any standards, especially when it comes to prose, a genre to which he has contributed nothing apart from the present novel. His versatile talent has previously been associated with the theatre: he wrote and translated plays and also worked as a dramaturge and a critic. His book has another similarity with Darvasi's work—definitely the last one—in that this book, too, pretends to be a novel, for lack of a better description, without actually qualifying on any criteria of the said genre. Similarly to Darvasi's work, it consists of largely diverging miniatures at the very best, showing as much cohesion as a cycle of prose does.

The fiction here is that a Buddhist monk from China compiles a collection of his teachings. There are five books, with 99 parables each, except for the last one that has one hundred. Visually, the book's designer has emphasized the strongly stylized, and almost ritual, division by splitting the pages into two columns and adding headings and many lines, and so the numbered and quite often rather short passages—*Chan Chus,* using the author's term—form square-like blocs of text surrounded by lines, rather than horizontally drawn-out formations. This design not only lends an exquisite and archaistic appearance to the text, but effects the rhythm of both the text and the reading. Visually, this is a strikingly beautiful book and a masterpiece of design.

Initially, the concise and enigmatic Chinoiserie of the Chan Chu legends and parables seems authentic; some are aphorisms, such as the advice, *"If you forge plans for the future, never forget to take them off the anvil and throw them among the other plans",* while the others are longer, "sacred" texts describing various alleged incidents from Chan Chu's life. In any case, Chan Chu's figure, life and wisdom remain completely elusive in these mosaics of texts, the pieces of which sometimes come as ironic riddles and stylistic plays with the appearance of profoundness, and sometimes as clever bluffs. Then, in chapter 86 of Book One, when he is asked by his pupils about his own Master, Chan Chu answers with a parable that takes place near the Western Railway Station in Budapest, featuring a university student and a lecturer.

From this point onward, the text fragments of various length about this student, or sometimes a young dramaturge as Chan Chu, and a painter, a movie director or a young critic as his master, follow one another with increasing frequency, appearing in the company of his loves, mother and father, set in the scenes of a recent past. Chan Chu is none other than the narrator, or in fact András Forgách himself, since he introduces himself under this name in one of the scenes. He puts on the disguise of a Chinese sage in order to make it easier to talk about himself in such an unlikely role and costume—perhaps on the analogy of theatrical make-belief, a familiar experience for him; at the same time, he tries to give an alienating perspective to his own experiences by projecting them onto a distant cultural form. To the question "Why do you hide, Chan Chu, and why do you keep talking in parables?", he gives the following reply, both paradoxical and Dodonan: *"The reason I talk in parables is to avoid the need to hide. The parable talks plainly and unveils, but by unveiling, it also hides, because these unveiling avowals are themselves parables."* In Forgách's intent, the parables are about him; they unveil him, and these unveiling confessions are parables themselves. The formal fiction of parables is nevertheless sustained all along, alternating with the autobiographi-

cal details, although in Book Five, the longest one by a long way, taking up about one-third of the entire book, is unequivocally dominated by the religious form, so much so that the insert *Monaco* runs to the length of a novella and has very little to do with the fiction of Chan Chu.

The autobiographical inserts are all linked to the world of the 1970s and 1980s, but it would be an exaggeration to say that they are about this world. For one thing, none of them is much of a story: scenes, freeze-frame stills and case studies, without beginning or end, without preliminaries and continuation, left hanging in mid-air. Through them, Forgách tries to draw an autobiography of his own youth, with all the psychological and emotional crises that his family, upbringing and circumstances caused him, along with the immaturity of his own personality; they are also meant to illustrate the slow and painful process that he had to undergo in order to be able to leave his former self behind. Earlier on he used to think he did not really exist; now he seems to discover somebody who could be him. The frantic attempts to hide and to pretend, along with the increasingly fragmented compositional technique, seems to dismember and to suffocate this gradual coming-out, rather than bringing it out in full. The decision to tell the continuous, or rather the interconnected, parts (the scenes in Berlin and Warsaw, the story of the first rented room in a provincial town) in instalments (sequels?), interspersed with Chan Chus.

Even if we disregarded the compositional technique, original and promising even if its realization is contrived and taken to the extreme, the treatment of the various autobiographical inserts would still remain subject to criticism. The underlying cause of everything that is going on is lost in the details. Details, the relevance of which never actually come to light, are given in tedious and circumlocutory convoluted sentences, and so all the laboured analyses are self-absorbed, almost as if they served no other purpose than to allow the narrator to hide behind them, and to conceal something that would be more revealing. The same conclusion is suggested by the apparent schematism of characters and situations, i.e. the existence of some models for them, which only the initiated readers could know about. Those who are left in the dark about the position of a given character or event in our hero's life might feel that they are missing out on something, as the narrator's references and descriptions provide insufficient information for them to understand precisely what is happening, with whom it is happening, and why. The intricate circumscription the author needs to identify his characters is occasionally rather tedious, and sometimes downright comical, for the simple reason that he never calls people by their names: *"...she remembered the luxurious hotel where she had stayed with her mother so that they be able to console her father, the poet, who was sitting in a huge apartment alone, bursting out in tears like Job every time they visited this blue-eyed man, who was beautiful and intelligent, the sky and perfection itself for his daughter, who wanted to transplant her adoration for her father into her son, and after a while she was looking for her father in her son, and for her son in her father..."*

Forgách applies a great deal of ingenuity in concealing the fact that his work is basically an autobiographical novel, a *Bildungsroman* and a depiction of an era; since neither the hero nor the figures in the seperate episodes have a plastic character, the original, concealed motive cannot be identified. Hence what remains is the circus act, which impresses us rather less here than it does in Darvasi. ❧

László Borhi

Towards Trianon

Francia diplomáciai iratok a Kárpát-medence történetéről 1918–19 (French Diplomatic Documents on the History of the Carpathian Basin 1918–19). Compiled and edited by Magda Ádám and Mária Ormos, Akadémiai Kiadó1998, 395 pp. • *Trianon felé. A győztes nagyhatalmak Magyarországról (Paul Mantoux tolmácstiszt feljegyzései* (Towards Trianon. Negotiations of the Victorious Great Powers over Hungary. The Record Kept by the Interpreter Paul Mantoux.) Edited by György Litván, Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1998, 263 pp.

The Trianon Peace Agreement was a trauma for Hungarians comparable in magnitude only to the defeat inflicted by the Turks at the Battle of Mohács in the 16th century. The country has not been able to recover completely from the political and economic consequences of that shock to this day. It is hardly surprising then that the scrutiny of the causes that produced the peace of Trianon is one of the *leitmotifs* of Hungarian historical research. Nations normally spend much time and intellectual energy on discussing their national tragedies both on the scholarly and on the journalistic level to make it possible for such tragedies to be properly understood by the collective national consciousness. Suffice it to mention in this context the enormous debates in Germany over Nazism or the reams on the Vietnam War published in the United States. It is therefore highly welcome that, thanks to the efforts of historians who have already considerably contributed to the study of the fateful years of 1918–1919, two new collections of sources have been made available. They include documents some of which have appeared earlier in French, others are published for the first time. The book by Magda Adám and Mária Ormos contains a broad selection from the documents published in Volume 1 of the series *Documents Diplomatiques Français sur l'histoire du Bassin des Carpates 1918–1932,* edited by them and György Litván. In his own volume, Litván publishes the notes of the French Army's translating officer Paul Mantoux on the discussions of the Council of Four and the Supreme Council concerning Hungary. The majority of these are being published for the first time.

As soon as the war ended, it became an objective of the French to achieve political dominance in the Carpathian Basin. This did not seem unrealistic since the French enjoyed great prestige in the countries of the region, the other great powers having no particular desire to extend their influence in this part of Europe. The French policy related to Czechoslovakia was, however, inconsistent. In addition, Generals Paul Henrys, Paul D. Lobit and Franchet d'Esperay, along with Lieutenant Colonel

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Ferdinand Vix who was *en poste* in Budapest, the Allied military representatives charged with the implementation of the armistice, supported legitimate Hungarian interests. General Henri Mathias Berthelot was a prominent exception. He stressed the Romanian point of view at the expense of Hungary.

The problem of the border with Czechoslovakia

In November 1918 Czechoslovak troops arbitrarily crossed the border of Hungary from the North and demanded that their operations be accepted as justified. Lieutenant Colonel Ferdinand Vix, the head of the French military mission in Budapest, declared that the Belgrade convention did not cover Hungary's northern borders, the Czech border must not be crossed, and territorial claims could only be raised at the peace conference. A similar opinion was expressed by his superior, General Henrys. Clemenceau, however, declared the Belgrade convention to be null and void. He took the position that the Czech army, since it could be regarded as an ally, "had the right to occupy the (still undefined—BL) Slovak territories". He also declared the Hungarian government non-existent from an international point of view.

Circumstantial evidence led Hungarian historians to the conclusion years ago that in fact the convention had come into being with the approval of Paris, and there was no reason for d'Esperey not to make such an agreement with the Hungarian authorities. That hypothesis is corroborated by evidence provided by this volume.

Why, then, did Clemenceau insist that the Belgrade convention was a personal act by d'Esperey, when he himself had authorized its signing? Why did his vision of East Europe change? Clemenceau had originally envisioned a French presence in the entire region, therefore the strategic points were reserved by the convention for occupation by the French. However, in early December there was a crucial change: because of the failure of policy regarding Russia, Romania suddenly became important for the French. Another factor leading to the same result was that France's vision regarding the security of its Western borders collapsed since Great Britain was not willing to guarantee the inviolability of the France–Germany border. France also lacked the military strength to occupy the region, so Clemenceau was forced to yield to Eastern and Western allies, who were opposed to the idea of sole French occupation.

The definition of borders was frequently motivated not so much by President Woodrow Wilson's national self-determination principle than by economic and communications reasons serving strategic objectives. The Italian representative on the Serbian-Romanian border commission put this explicitly: "Every railway line absolutely necessary for the economy and strategic security of a country must stay within the territory of the given nation even if it traverses areas inhabited by an alien population." The priority of economic and communications principles, used frequently only as a pretext for underlying strategic interests, was the decisive factor, for instance, as regards the status of the Csallóköz region (Schütt Island in the Danube). The area was seen in the context of the town of Sátoraljaújhely and the Ipoly railway line. As a final compromise, the border was drawn somewhat more to the north, closer to the railway. This was meant to compensate for the fact that some ninety thousand ethnic Hungarians found themselves in Czechoslovakia. The committee, under pressure from Charles Seymour, proposed that the junction east

of Sátoraljaújhely be allotted to Czechoslovakia.

The issue of the status of Csallóköz was raised again in May 1919 when Masaryk showed a certain readiness to give up the region in return for a bridgehead on the right bank of the Danube opposite Pozsony (Bratislava). Since, however, the idea was supported neither by Edouard Benes nor Karel Kramar nor by the Allies, it was finally abandoned.

The Romanian border

Romania was the other Eastern pillar of Western security. Already in November 1918, Clemenceau mentioned it as the barrier to German expansion, even though Bucharest had concluded a separate peace in 1918. The events concerning the status of Romania point clearly to confusion within the Entente. After Romanian troops commanded by General Constantin Prezan had begun to occupy Transylvania without prior Allied approval, French Foreign Minister Stephen Jean-Marie Pichon told the Romanian envoy in Paris that Romania could not be regarded as an Allied nation as yet (since the Allies had given notice of termination of the Bucharest agreement of 1916). But, he added, this did not mean that the French did not emphatically support legitimate demands.

The picture that emerges from the documents in the volume about the circumstances of the Romanian occupation of Transylvania differs from what most historians had thought earlier. There is no documentary evidence that Franchet d'Esperey permitted the crossing of the demarcation line either on 17 November or 2 December, and General Henrys's approval was *post facto*. Neither did Franchet d'Esperey consent to Romania's occupation of the towns of Transylvania, contrary to views frequently expressed in the literature.

After Henri Mathias Berthelot gave permission to the Romanians to occupy Kolozsvár (Cluj) on his own resosibility, General Henrys asked Franchet D'Esperey to warn Berthelot to observe the November convention. Events, however, took a different turn in the end. Just as Franchet D'Esperey, referring to "universal interests," was instructing Henri Mathias Berthelot to bring a halt to Romanian expansion, István Apáthy, the representative of the Hungarian government, agreed with Berthelot on a line of demarcation running between Nagybánya (Baia Mare)–Kolozsvár (Cluj)–Déva (Deva), and on creating a 15 km deep neutral zone west of this line. Apáthy maintained that the agreement was made with the approval of the Hungarian government. Others, however, are of the opinion that he acted on his own, unbeknown to the Hungarian government. The agreement, which was called "unlawful" by Lieutenant Colonel Vix, ultimately legitimized Romanian expansion. The unfavourable consequences of the agreement have not been sufficiently emphasized by the literature so far. Historians are also divided over the issue of responsibility. According to Mária Ormos, "Apáthy was authorized to conclude this agreement." Ernő Raffay, on the other hand, thinks that it only came to the knowledge of the Hungarian government later. The French documents do not provide decisive evidence. Ferdinand Vix was keen to know what role the Hungarian government had played in the agreement. French sources informed him that it had been concluded with the knowledge of the Hungarian government. This was, however, firmly denied by Colonel Arisztid Jankovich, who said that the agreement "faced the Hungarian government with a *fait accompli*, even though Apáthy had been fully empowered

in this respect". This led Vix to the conclusion that the agreement had been concluded with the tacit approval of the Hungarian government. On the other hand—and this is left unmentioned by the literature—Henri Mathias Berthelot had no right to bypass the Mission and to come to an agreement with the Hungarians, if only because this meant a modification of the lines defined by the Belgrade convention.

French arguments against the ethnic principle

Numerous details of the events surrounding the definition of borders have been elucidated by Hungarian historians. Something they were so far unable to establish was the motivation behind the decision to define the Hungarian–Romanian and Hungarian–Czechoslovak borders along strategic and security lines rather than in accordance with the ethnic principle. This collection of documents is the first to clarify the problem by including the minutes of the border-defining commissions, which came to light recently. The points made at the sessions of these commissions give us an insight into the motives behind the decisions. Especially important are the French arguments, which ultimately held sway against the self-determination principles associated with the name of President Woodrow Wilson.

Jules A. Laroche argued that if Magyarized Romanians were not taken into account, nor Jews who thought of themselves as Hungarians, the demographic figures were very different. Moreover, he added, urban populations choose nationality according to their interests. Thus if Nagyvárad (Oradea) were to be allotted to Romania, then, after a while, there would be more Romanized Hungarians than there had been Magyarized Romanians earlier. Alexander Leeper questioned Hungarian statistics, and repeated the arguments of his French colleague. Charles Seymour, however, said that even if this were to be taken into account, there would still be a hundred and sixty thousand Hungarians as opposed to fifty thousand Romanians. Alexander Leeper, on the other hand, argued that he did not believe that, despite the Hungarian majority in the urban areas, the ethnic principle would be seriously damaged if these towns were allotted to Romania. He accepted that in the surrounding areas there would be an overwhelming Hungarian majority even if the Hungarian figures were amended. The British delegation insisted on allotting this region to Romania only because this was made necessary by economic considerations. Alexander Leeper wanted to join Szatmárnémeti (Satu Mare) to Slovakia by a railway line. He thought that the Hungarian population might be a danger in Romania, but economic reasons weighed more heavily. In the end the French were forced to come up with real arguments: the security of the Romanian border is not guaranteed if the Hungarians hold both the Debrecen-Békéscsaba and the Szatmárnémeti-Nagyvárad lines at the same time. The existence of Romania was a strategic issue which required guarantees even if Romania and Hungary are not at war witheach other. If Germany were to fight the Poles and the Czechoslovaks, and the Allies had to provide reinforcements for those countries, having to count on Hungary's goodwill, difficulties would expose those states to risks. That is why as many lines must be established between Romania and Poland and Czechoslovakia as possible.

Thus the eastern wall of French security was erected: the Allies would be able to mobilize their forces via railway lines held by friendly states from south to north and from east to west across Slovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia and Poland, whether

against Russia or against Germany. Compared to that strategic advantage, the ethnic fragmentation of the region seemed indeed secondary.

The source publications offer a deeper insight into the conflict between the Allied Powers and Romania, resulting from the invasion of Hungary by the Romanian army, than anything discovered before. The Romanian army pushed forward to the line of the river Tisza and kept the trans-Tisza area under occupation, despite the fact that Hungary had met the demands of the Allies, and pulled the Red Army back from Czechoslovakia. In return, Hungary had been promised that Bucharest would withdraw its troops from Hungarian territory. The documents throw light on the reasons why this failed to happen. The Allies had been seriously considering the occupation of Hungary, but wanted this occupation to be carried out by the armies of the successor states, treated as victors of the war. In reality, however, only Romania was ready to move. The others were not willing. At the June 11 session of the Supreme Council, for example, Karel Kramar argued that the Hungarians had kept the provisions of the truce having left the territory of Czechoslovakia. What pretext could they have to attack them? According to Paul Mantoux's notes, which accurately reflect the prevailing mood, the British Prime Minister Lloyd George was upset by the news of the Romanian action, and gave voice to his anger.

His opinion conflicted with that of the Foreign Secretary, Balfour, who supported the Romanian position. According to Balfour, the line of the Tisza offered protection to Romania against Béla Kun, who would obviously attack the Romanians if they were to pull back. Still, even Clemenceau was inclined to the view that the Allies must enforce their earlier decision, if only to maintain the authority of the Supreme Council, and Romania must be warned to pull back her troops.

Balfour, however, insisted. He referred to the fact that the Hungarian Communists had not disarmed. On the contrary, they were arming. "It is intolerable," he declared, "that Hungary should turn into a military fortress from which economic and political tremors could irradiate to the entire Central European region." The Foreign Secretary, who was anything but friendly towards Hungary, won the support of his French colleague. Since Romania refused to withdraw her army from Hungary, and indeed began to plunder the country on the pretext of securing reparations, she came into sharp conflict with the peace conference. On August 6, Clemenceau wired a rebuke to the Romanian government, warning that it had no right to force a truce on Hungary (Vol. II, p. 21). At the November 12 conference of the Allies, an open break was mooted. Clemenceau declared that Romania should be informed that the Allies would recall their representatives and that Bucharest must also recall her own representatives from the peace conference and from the Allied capitals. Patience with Romania had run out. Procrastination must come to an end. At this threat, Romania finally withdrew from Hungary. The conflict, however, did not alter the policy of France in the Carpathian Basin. Paris kept to its ambition to be the custodian of a new East European system "based on southern and eastern Slav states", in order to prevent the resurrection of Germany. (Vol. II, p. 140)

Sadly enough, it was clear already at the time when the borders were drawn that the Allies were making a mistake, which they could not, and did not want to, correct. President Wilson, whose principles had been ignored by the Allies, remarked on March 31, when the Hungarian Soviet Republic was declared, that perhaps the

borders had not been drawn quite the way they ought to have been. Lloyd George's proposal to adjust them had no effect. In the end the borders, which would later predictably drive Hungary into Germany's arms, stayed.

Although the Trianon settlement was motivated by tangible economic and military reasons, it would be wrong to suppose that the feelings and attitudes of some of the politicians taking part in designing it had played no role. French Foreign Minister Stephen Jean-Marie Pichon's remark made at the March 31, 1919 session of the Council of Four indicates that Hungary's reputation was probably at its lowest: "We must not forget that the Hungarians are among our most ferocious enemies. The Hungarian government had an enormously great responsibility for the outbreak of the war." Romania, which had broken the 1916 Bucharest agreement and fought against the Allies, could play the part of a bastion in the fight against Communism. "As far as Romania is concerned, we are forced to support this country at a moment when Romania is serving as a barrier against Bolshevism." As was pointed out by Balfour on 15 July 1919, the local conflicts between Hungary and Romania could not change the border since those countries' borders "had already been decided by the peace conference." ❧

Nicholas T. Parsons

Trade Secrets

István Bart: *Hungary and the Hungarians: the Keywords. A Concise Dictionary of Facts and Beliefs, Customs, Usage and Myths.* Budapest, Corvina Books, 1999, 218 pp. • Miklós Vámos and Mátyás Sárközi: *Xenophobe's Guide to Hungarians.* London, Oval Books, 1999, 64 pp.

Most of us can recall the irritatingly inquisitive small children we once were, the kind that frequently drove parents mad with the "why?" question. "I'm going out." *"Why?"* "Because I've shopping to do." *"Why?"* "Because we've nothing for dinner." *"Why?"* etc. Dr Spock has taught us that such zetetic tenacity, so far from being curtailed by the politically incorrect methods to which the overwrought parent is sorely tempted (e.g. a clip round the earhole), should be encouraged and nurtured as a healthy sign of the child's determination to make sense of the world. In the same way, when first making our way in a foreign country (e.g. Hungary) with an impenetrable language (e.g. Hungarian), we constantly find ourselves back in the position of that frustrated child. In the hope of enlightenment, we keep asking about this or that, but generally the answers (if they are honest) lead only to further questions. Doubtless it is the memory of such fruitless verbal exchanges that provokes István Bart to write (and with obvious feeling) in his Preface: " This book was born out of innumerable futile efforts to explain to visitors what is behind a gesture or a melody, a name, an attitude. It is both a guide to the 'secrets' of the Hungarians' code language and a concise cultural encyclopedia of Hungarianness."

This is a tall order. Let us take the very first full entry in the book and see how it stands up to the child's forensic examination by imagining where the *"whys"* might occur if someone was reading the text aloud: "**Ady Endre:** the greatest poet *(why?)* of the turn of the century, a condemned *(why?)* but seraphic *(why?)* figure, whose works elicit passionate responses from people to this day *(why?)*. His *New Poems,* published in 1906, are said to have brought Hungarian literature into the 20th century. *(Why? How?)*.

This test (which the Ady entry conspicuously fails) is not entirely fair, of course: for a start there has to be a limit to the wordage allowed for entries, and Bart ingeniously expands the actual compass of individual items by liberal cross-referencing (in the case of Ady to > **Kerepesi úti temető; temetés** and **táltos**). I should add that it is simply an unfortunate accident that one of the least helpful entries in 197 pages of text should occur at the very beginning of the book. That said, the little test is not solely intended as the malevolent device of the bilious critic, for it illus-

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trates quite well what the author was up against in the task he had set himself. By the time the present reader had reached the end of the book, Bart had earned his ungrudging admiration for the panache and wit with which he had carried out that task. In short, anyone who seriously wishes to find out what distinguishes Hungarians from other nations (what "makes them tick") could start with this book, go on with this book and (very nearly) end with this book.

One of the happiest aspects of the whole undertaking is the *form* that the author has chosen for imparting his immensely varied information, a form that allows him to combine sarcastic comment with factual precision. At times he reminds me of Dr Johnson, who adopted a pose of ironically pretended humility in describing the dictionary-maker's profession as that of "a harmless drudge". It is nevertheless well-known that Johnson's magisterial compilation, while exhibiting genuine and deep scholarship, is often also a vehicle for the author's sceptical and conservative views, not to say prejudices. These, of course, become all the more entertaining when clothed in the supposedly neutral language of scholarship, e.g.: "**Oats:** a form of cereal which in England is given to horses but in Scotland is a staple of the people". Funnily enough, this very word provokes Bart to a Johnsonism of his own, namely: "**Zab** *(oat[s]): Unlike elsewhere, in Hungary no one will eat oats in any shape or form, not even for breakfast porridge (> kása), because it has been traditionally used only as the fodder for horses, since it is considered especially nourishing for animals."*[1] The notion of food as an indicator of levels of civilization or backwardness is one that opens up interesting prospects, but it is not followed up by the author. For example, I would have expected an entry for *kukorica,* which would have afforded an opportunity to discuss *Kukorica Jancsi,* the idealized peasant of the operetta derived from Petőfi's epic poem *János Vitéz.* Hungarian pullulates with food-based similes and metaphors, often of great comic and satirical potential, but sadly the author seems rather uninterested in these.

The tradition of acerbic, humorous or discursive lexicography in English is quite an established one, but I am not aware that much of this kind of thing has been undertaken in Hungarian, with the possible exception of Kosztolányi's *Fun Book of Animals*. The most extreme example of the lexicon form used as a method of projecting the author's (in this case, cynical) opinions is Ambrose Bierce's famous *Devil's Dictionary,* and I often feel there would be no shortage of possible (and talented) authors were such a project to be offered around the scribbler's profession in Hungary. Alas, the tradition of provocative lexicography in America has rather degenerated of late into a vulgar populism (for example Dr Isaac Reuben's seventies bestseller *Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Sex But Were Afraid To Ask).* István Bart's attempt to explain the Magyars soars above the level of such snappy journalistic products: one might say he combines an unillusioned asperity of tone reminiscent of Bierce with a fine feeling for the verbal components of an individual *Weltanschauung,* like Cyril Connolly's *The Unquiet Grave* or even Brillat Savarin's *Physiologie du Goût.*

1 ■ Interestingly enough, the new edition of the great Országh dictionary, revised by Futász and Kövecses (1998), puts the words *"ír skót (Avena sativa)"* after their definition of *zab* ("oat, corn"); apparently the verb *zabál,* which appears two lines below, may be translated as "stuff one's face", "wolf down" etc., or generally to eat like a horse, not to say make a pig of oneself. This all makes Dr Johnson look exceedingly polite.

The balance of the book may be seen at a glance from the indexes, the first listing English equivalents of the Hungarian keywords, and the second listing subject areas. The longest entries in the subject index are **Society** (245 entries), followed by **Usage and Cliché** (135), **History** (158) and **Food and Drink** (131), although it is often a moot point as to whether a particular entry should be listed under "usage" or "society" or "history". Take, for example, the word **Balkán,** which is certainly "usage", not to mention "cliché", but whose entry deals almost exclusively with the desire of Hungarians and Hungary neither to be, nor be seen to be, a part of the region commonly so labelled. It appears under *"Geography",* but it is only symbolic geography we are talking about here, and anyway the entry begins by contradicting the index, remarking that the Balkans are "not a geographical designation but a painfully and embarrassingly familiar cultural terrain", the source of "historically based *angst*" which can best be alleviated by moving closer to the West. (> *Nyugat*). The associations of the word with "backwardness, chaos, filth, unbridled... treacherous aggression and rampant corruption" accordingly make the labelling of Hungary as part of the Balkans "an even greater insult than to think of it as part of Eastern Europe (> *Kelet Európa*)". This, though not perhaps entirely adequate as a history lesson on the Balkans, is a revealing résumé of Hungarian historically based cultural attitudes.

The same talent for vivid distillation is to be seen in the entry for the *Sztálin-szobor* (statue of Stalin), where we are reminded that the Rákosi regime blew up a church to make way for the mass murderer's mega-statue; that the Hungarian Communist leaders pathetically tried to ape the May Day parades of Moscow in the area dominated by it; that the statue was hacked down in the 1956 Revolution, leaving only the huge and intractable boots; that the nearby Lenin statue was put up much later than that of Stalin; and finally that all such remnants of showcase totalitarianism were swept away following the *rendszerváltás.* The latter word, which runs as a leitmotif through the book's cross-referencing, is here curiously translated as "change of regime", but my understanding is that it actually means "change of system". The latter phrase does indeed describe rather better what happened in and after 1989, not least because the old regime's nomenclature became today's "entrepreneurs" with such astonishing speed and adroitness. And if you want to know the average Hungarian's view of *those* ladies and gentlemen (the new rich – old nomenclature), you have only to look under the entry **vállalkozó** ("entrepreneur"). It is not flattering.

The treatment of political and historical issues, including (or especially) sensitive ones, is refreshingly free from cant. Indeed the book is remarkably outspoken, considering Bart was the manager of a state publishing house for a number of years under Kádárism, but on the evidence of this book, one with extreme contempt for the dictatorship of the bureaucracy. His two line blurb on the back cover doesn't mention his (ongoing) publishing career, merely alluding to a novel, short stories and translations; yet one feels that his dry perceptions of the evasions and absurdities of a regime slowly losing its grip must be the fruit of many years dealing with faceless, politically correct nonentities. On the other hand, he never makes the mistake of treating totalitarianism or Russian imperialism as *merely* a bad joke, a fact which makes his essays into black humour all the more telling. Of the *ideiglenesen itt állomásozó* ("temporarily here stationed") Soviet army of occupation, he remarks

that no joke was "funnier (and sadder)" than a 1980's news item announcing that the "temporarily stationed Soviet officers have just moved into their permanent residences".

Elsewhere he eschews humour in admirably dispassionate treatment of such sensitive topics as Jews and anti-Semitism in Hungary. His entry for **Zsidók** begins with a prophetic quotation (1903) from Theodor Herzl, who warned that the conspicuous patriotism of Hungarian Jews would not save them from a brutal fate, goes on to describe that fate and ends by suggesting that the forbidding references to Jews by the Communists "did not allow for the social resolution of this trauma". Thus after 1989 anti-Semitism re-emerged, as did (for some) a new emphasis on Jewish identity. On **Romanians, Roma** and **Tót** (= *"Slovak*—pejorative, though only to Slovak ears"), he is similarly blunt and thought-provoking without being offensive, and his obvious distaste for the limp euphemisms of political correctness makes the book highly readable.

Among the most interesting entries are those dealing with the endless permutations of forms of address in Hungarian, their very multiplicity telling us a great deal about Hungarian society (although exactly what is another matter). The prospective reader will certainly be much better informed (or possibly have attained a more sophisticated level of confusion) after he or she has digested the past and present nuances of *úr, uram, úrasszony, kisasszony, úrhölgy* and *úrnő*, not to mention *Tisztelt Uram! Tisztelt cím, tiszteletem, asszonyom* and *asszony*. All in all we must be grateful that we no longer have to contend also with the obligatory feudal hierarchy of address, which Géza Balázs tells us lasted until the end of World War II (*kegyelmes*—excellency, *méltóságos*—worshipful, *nagyságos*—gracious and *tekintetes*—honourable).[2] I liked the explication of *asszony*, which Bart says once meant "woman", now "wife" and is also used "when referring to older women of lowly social standing." This puts the habit of a satirical radio programme of referring to *"Thatcher asszony"* in an entirely new perspective.

Food and drink naturally deserve the huge space that Bart has accorded them here, for we are what we eat. Again travel supplement gush is refreshingly absent. *Zsíroskenyér,* says the author, "is surely the most horrendous of anything Hungarians eat, at least in the eyes of cultures that look down on pigs"—although he then goes on to tell us that it is delicious if accompanied by "sour-tasting" wine. I'm sure visitors will hardly be able to wait to try it. Those with delicate stomachs will find other useful information about the more extreme types of gastronomic experience in Hungary, e.g. **Kocsonya**, the "tail, ears, cheeks and feet" of the pig boiled to a consommé and eaten "only when it is cold and solidified enough so that it begins to quiver." It is, says Bart, a "typical mid-winter food" and must be just the thing as a pick-me-up after a debilitating bout of flu.

Of course not everything consumed by the Magyars is of local origin, which brings me to one of the few criticisms I have of the book, namely its lack of interest in etymons. **Kuglóf,** for instance, is here explained as "*kugelhopf* (lit.)", English "coffee cake" (although I doubt you can have a "coffee cake" on the analogy of "tea-cake",

2 ■ Géza Balázs: *The Story of Hungarian: A Guide to the Language*. Budapest, 1997. Page 169. He remarks at the beginning of this chapter that "the system of greetings and addresses has always created a complex linguistic muddle in the Hungarian language. They changed from time to time and their stylistic significance also underwent changes. An address that may have been improper or incorrect in the past is now correct and proper, and the reverse is also possible. These complex rules are frequently violated even by native Hungarians" (p. 167).

which the translator presumably had in mind). I suspect this is our old friend the *Wiener Gugelhupf,* suitably magyarized, a sort of pound-cake also encountered in Bavaria and in Switzerland (where it is called *Gugelhopf*). In Vienna, the cylindrical tower built as a lunatic asylum under Joseph II is known by this name and the Viennese have a way of dismissing any unpopular public figure by remarking that he or she "should be in the *Gugelhupf*". Talking of the Viennese, why no explanation of the Hungarian "Bécs" for "Vienna"? Is it true, as a new Austrian history of the city claims, that it meant a "place with a sheer drop" *(Ort mit Steilabfall),* or has the author made this up? Other etymons which would have been worth investigating include that for *kuruc.* Some sources say the word originally designated fugitives from justice; later, and probably erroneously, it was identified with participants in the planned crusade of 1514, which turned into the peasant rebellion under György Dózsa. Bart is simply silent on the etymon of the word, perhaps because of its famous obscurity, but he might have had a go at *labanc,* a term first recorded in 1672 and supposedly a reference to the untidy wigs worn by Habsburg loyalists. However, Paul Lendvai in his recent history of the Hungarians seems to derive the meaning from *láb,* thus a reference to "foot soldiers" or infantry, an etymon first proposed in 1787.

There seem to be a few omissions (but how could there not be in an undertaking of this nature?). **Lángos** is in, but I missed that wonderful simile "like the *Balatoni lángos sütő*", implying the window of opportunity for politicians and others to line their pockets as quickly as possible before being thrown out of office. (The two month summer season on the Balaton shore is a notoriously short time in which to make a killing out of selling *lángos*). It would also have been useful to have had more of the common terms of abuse, if only to warn visitors of the status of such words (*bunkó* is not in, but surely ought to be). Here and there it seems to me that an opportunity has been missed, e.g. the long passage on **Temetés** fails to quote that classic expression of Magyar self-laceration: *"temetni, azt tudunk"* ("burying, that is what we know how to do"). This would admirably have rounded off Bart's lengthy and lugubrious list of politically symbolic burials.

One or two statements in the book seemed odd or questionable, or at least at variance with what the present reviewer has been told over the years. Bart says Petőfi recited his *National Song* in front of the National Museum at the beginning of the 1848 Revolution, but Gyula Illyés says the following in his *Petőfi*: "[The] crowd gathered in the afternoon in front of the National Museum for a mass meeting. Contrary to the legend, the *National Song* was not heard here. The printed copies were distributed for transmission throughout the country."[3] Who is right? Bart says the Hungarians fought against the domination of the Habsburgs for 450 years, a curious figure that doesn't seem to fit with any of the obvious key dates such as the inheriting of the throne by Duke Albrecht in 1437, or by Emperor Ferdinand after the battle of Mohács in 1526. If you subtract 450 from 1918 it brings you to the middle of the reign of Matthias Corvinus, and if you subtract it from 1867 it brings you to the middle of the reign of Sigismund of Luxembourg. He also refers to the "Golden Seal Edict" (without giving its date of 1222), but as far as I know this is always referred to as the Golden Bull in English (which indeed is a reference to the gold seal

3 ■ Gyula Illyés: *Petőfi*. Translated by G.F.Cushing. Budapest, 1973, p. 385.

appended to Andrew II's Edict). He refers to King St Stephen as being traditionally represented "as a bishop", which is odd, though he is presumably thinking of depictions showing him holding an apostolic cross.

A minor quibble concerns the somewhat wobbly attempts at representation of equivalent English sounds in the pronunciation guide, such attempts also being arbitrarily distributed (many words have no pronunciation indicators). The Hungarian *"a"* is notoriously difficult to reproduce, since it doesn't exist in Standard English, its sound lying somewhere between the vowel sounds of *"hot"* and *"hut"*. Bart's representation of Ady as *"aah-dee"* is nowhere near it; nor can I contrive the correct pronunciation of *Győr* from *"dyowr"*, even if I assume that the diphthong here is that of *"throw"*, and not as in *"how"*. Nor, surely, is *"hawry"* remotely like *"Háry"*, the open Hungarian *"á"* being close to the English rendering of a bleating sheep.

On the other hand, the English of Judith Sollosy's translation of Bart's text is often excellent, although at times she fights a losing battle with those interminable, informally linked Hungarian subclauses which need to be ruthlessly broken up and redistributed. Just occasionally she loses her touch: the poet Swinburne is for some obscure reason never known as "Charles Swinburne", but either by his full name, or by his surname only. From the context it looks as if the meaningless *"social servants"* on page 85 is a mistake for *"civil servants"*. The phrasing of "to wrap a young woman around his fingers" is not quite right and more than one reference to "sour" wine (which would be undrinkable) would appear to mean "dry" wine. For the second edition, which I confidently expect in the not too distant future, more assiduous proof-reading would eliminate the very many literals in the text.

A welcome addition to the Xenophobe's Guide series is that of *The Hungarians* co-authored by Miklós Vámos and Mátyás Sárközi. In many ways the Hungarians are natural, even ideal, subjects for a book of this sort, which combines genuine information with a gently ironic portrait of the nation under examination. On the other hand, the authors are tied to the publisher's formula, which breaks the material up into gobbets, supposedly designed to reveal different aspects of identity and behaviour. Thus we begin with the abstract, or at any rate the subjective *(Nationalism and Identity, Character, Attitudes and Values* etc.), proceed to social phenomena *(Leisure and Pleasure, Eating and Drinking* etc.) and continue through institutions and systems, crime and punishment, government, politics and business, finishing up with *Language and Ideas* (sic), *Conversation and Gestures.*

At this point I should, as they say, declare an interest. Having written one of the other volumes in this series, I am all too well aware of the pitfalls inherent in this kind of exercise and of the great difficulty one has in avoiding them. The sympathy I feel for the authors of *Xenophobe's Guide to the Hungarians* when they fail to avoid such pitfalls is therefore just as great as my admiration for them when they succeed in doing so. The key to these books is their tone of voice: get that right, and the actual information from the huge wealth available more or less chooses itself. Get it wrong and the text is liable to exude an air of desperation, like an after-dinner speech delivered to Rotarians but more suitable for a stag party.

The authors of this volume have conscientiously entered something under each of the publisher's headings, but they are clearly more at home in some areas than in others. They are pretty good, as you would expect, on such fertile topics in

the Magyar context as pessimism, death, obsessions and sense of humour; also on something that had not previously occurred to me, namely the Magyar as know-all: "It is considered absolutely disastrous not to know about something which is considered important. A crafty old critic once got hold of a dummy book from a binder's workshop. A well-known foreign author's name and an imaginary title were on the spine but the pages were completely blank. He used the volume to test budding writers who came to his house.

"Have you read this novel, my friend?"

"Yes, certainly. I wouldn't rate it as highly as his previous book, but I enjoyed it nevertheless. "

"Did you? You little fibber! This is not a novel at all!" the disgusted critic would roar, showing his guest the empty inside. "

There are of course many areas of the *Xenophobe's Guide* that overlap with István Bart's book, but where Bart piles fact on fact, Vámos and Sárközi are impressionistic and often humorous, sometimes at the expense of possibly more fruitful lines of inquiry. Under the splendid heading *May They Rust In Peace,* they write: "There is a sanctuary for old donkeys in England and a rest home for old Communist statues in Budapest." The statue park, say the authors, "serves the purpose of saving some statues of notable artistic merit, without having to take their message seriously." This is a curious claim, when you come to think of it. Logically it would lead us to suppose that the "artistic merit" of some rather impressive piece of socialist realism resides in a secret intention of the artist totally at variance with the appearance of the work itself. The authors do not seem to have pondered Orwell's dictum that "all art is propaganda, but not all propaganda is art", which is surely worth pondering in this context, and hurry us on to a joke about a sealed tin can sold to tourists on the site and containing, according to its label, "the last breath of Communism".

In their resolute trudge through an agenda dictated by the publisher, Vámos and Sárközi evidently could find no space to address the many Hungarian conundra of the art/propaganda kind, which is a pity; Hungary is a land of contrasts and contradictions and it is precisely these which make it and its inhabitants so endlessly fascinating to the outsider. Failure to address the basic cultural fault lines does not really matter when they are discussing such things as food and drink, but they come seriously unstuck on topics like Culture. There is no mention in this section of the opposition between "country" and "metropolis", or of that between the national pride of glorious isolation and the busy cosmopolitanism of the Hungarian *Nachholkomplex.* A couple of pages are devoted to Hungarian poets, but apparently no prose writer (apart from Árpád Göncz, who is mentioned because he became President) is worthy of comment in the *Xenophobe's Guide.* Music and the Fine Arts get two paragraphs each, the first one of the former reading as follows: "Liszt must be the most famous of Hungarian composers, but he was too pompous to go to the villages and therefore composed Hungarian rhapsodies from the wrong kind of material. This cannot be said of either Bartók or Kodály, who collected many genuine Hungarian folk tunes and based some of their music on them." Whether the untutored punter will have the faintest idea what all this is really about, I beg leave to doubt, but it is hardly the authors' fault. How can one sum up an entire culture in a couple of pages? The answer is one can't, so one opts for a humorous travesty instead.

Something rather similar to the *Xenophobe's Guide* was published bilingually a few years back by Zsuzsanna Ardó under the title of *How to be a European: Go Hungarian! Európai akarsz lenni? Csináld Magyarul!* (1994). It covers much of the same ground, proclaims itself on the cover as a "tongue in cheek guide to what makes Hungarians quintessential Europeans" and has plenty of good jokes (as well as some rather limp ones). More idiosyncratic than Vámos and Co., Ardó´s breathless trip round the Hungarian psyche benefits from being written by one author only, which allows her quirky personal humour to come through. The *Xenophobe's Guide,* being the labour of a collaboration (sometimes it looks more like a committee) often gives the impression of a literary template onto which the assembled jokes have been diligently welded. Items that do not really lend themselves to this process get short shrift—for instance, it is amazing that the three paragraphs on **Religion** have only this to say about a major fault line of Hungarian culture and identity: "The ruling religion remains Catholicism, but even *(sic)* in most villages there are at least two different churches, one Catholic, the other usually Protestant". As far as I can see, the word Calvinism, which was after all once dubbed "the Magyar creed", does not occur in the entire book. It is as if readers are not expected to venture further east and south than Budapest.

And this is in fact the problem, both with the *Xenophobe's Guide* and with *Go Hungarian!,* notwithstanding their many felicities and witty insights: namely that both give the impression of being written from the perspective of the metropolitan intellectual with not much interest in the world of the peasantry and the provincial towns. Consequently readers would learn little from these texts about a Hungary that is still in some important ways rural and peasant in mentality, as well as being quite religious, albeit with a refreshing absence of the bigotry observable in other areas of mixed confessions. Again, in the case of the *Xenophobe's Guide,* the authors are not entirely to blame, if only because of the publisher's fierce veto on anything that can be regarded as "history". The trouble is that Central European nations like Hungary tend to live and relive their history ("the past in the present") in a way that Western Europeans believe (wrongly) that they have outgrown.

The authors of the *Xenophobe's Guide* are on stronger ground when dealing with the foibles of public services in Hungary such as the **Telephone** (although I do not agree that Hungarians "do not like the telephone"—if that were true they must be even greater masochists than we thought, since most of them seem to spend much of the day on it). Under **Post** the authors mention that Hungarians are poor letter-writers and commercial enterprises or public bodies never "write, never acknowledge, and never answer letters." I think I can explain this. Hungarians in fact communicate between each other by telepathy, which is the real "code-language" of which István Bart speaks, and the secrets of which they have sensibly not divulged to other nations. This skill certainly makes letter-writing redundant and theoretically it should do the same for the telephone. In fact however, they cannot resist ringing you up to demonstrate that they know exactly what you are up to now, what you were up to yesterday and what you in all probability will be up to tomorrow. The *Xenophobe's Guide* doesn't mention any of this, but that is most likely because the authors are Hungarian and are hardly going to divulge the nation's most valuable trade secret. ❧

Gabriel Ronay

"We cannot do much more..."

Csaba Békés: *Az 1956-os magyar forradalom a világpolitikában*
(The 1956 Hungarian Revolution in World Politics) Budapest, Institute for the Research of the History of the Hungarian Revolution, 1996, 184 pp.

Like Martin Luther King, I too had a dream. Mine was that, against all the odds, we had won, the 1956 Hungarian Revolution had succeeded. The awakening was, like Martin Luthert King's, inevitable and painful. It came with the sharp reports of guns. Thousands of them. And in the twilight state between dream and wakefulness the calamitous reality hit me like a bullet. We, the students and workers of Budapest, had lost. This sense of loss stayed with me in all those decades when I was barred from Hungary.

In those decades I used to watch with dismay, from my vantage point on the westernmost fringe of Europe, as the victors rewrote the history of the Hungarian Revolution. My occasional "corrective interventions", on the news pages of *The Times* and in my column in the *The New Statesman,* used to be met with withering fire from the agitprop hacks of Budapest and Moscow.

Gabriel Ronay,
author, broadcaster and journalist, left Hungary in 1956 and was until recently on the staff of The Times *of London. Among his books is* The Lost King of England—the East European Adventures of Edward the Exile, *published by Bowdell & Brewer in Britain and the US in 1990.*

Occasionally, Western fellow-travellers too felt impelled to join the fray, unless, perhaps, they had been instructed to do so by Moscow. The invective used to flow freely. Their message was loud and clear: 1956 was a "counter-revolution" instigated by reactionary circles in the West and the armed Soviet intervention was "fraternal aid to an imperilled Socialist state." Nothing, they used to aver, could stop the forward march of "progressive mankind".

In the post-1956 years, the younger generation in Hungary, and elsewhere in the "Socialist camp", were fed on a diet of lies, half-truths and "dialectical" distortions of the revolution. As a result, it is mostly the young who have been disinherited from their own history.

With the collapse of Communism, October 1956 has once again become a symbol of man's irrepressible yearning for freedom. It was undoubtedly our finest hour this century. But with so many groups and factions laying exclusive claim to the Hungarian Revolution, and with so many conflicting accounts of the attitudes of the Great Powers at the time, good history books are much needed if we are to put the record straight and make the younger generation aware that, not so long ago, Hungary and the human yearning for freedom were synonymous.

A series of excellent books, published by the Research Institute for the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, has made the task of both laymen and historians easier. A new book by Csaba Békés fills a void by putting, as it does, the 1956 Revolution in the right international context. It is a valuable contribution.

Drawing on Western and hitherto unavailable East European archive material, Békés provides a broader and more authoritative picture of the Great Powers' decision-making processes which, ultimately, determined the outcome of the Hungarian Revolution.

A dispassionate examination of East-West relations in the mid-1950s, free of the cant of the propaganda of the time, helps us to understand the mood of the period. With negotiations having replaced confrontation, Europe was looking forward to a new era of superpower rapprochement. America and its allies were no longer planning to "liberate" the satellite states or to "roll back" Communism from the heart of Europe. In the qualitatively new post-Stalin era, the West, seeking to avoid a nuclear war by miscalculation, tacitly recognized the status quo in Europe and negoatiations replaced confrontation.

East-Central European expectations that the new rulers of the Kremlin might agree to a kind of "Finnlandization" of the region had no basis in reality. In the crucial years of 1953–1956, the Kremlin had no intention of letting go of its satellites, regarded by Nikita Khrushchev with earthy realism as the victor's spoils.

In this delicate situation, the spontaneous popular uprising in Hungary on October 23, 1956 caught everyone by surprise. The Eisenhower administration saw the Budapest events, spiralling uncontrollably into armed conflict with the Red Army, as a possible trigger to a wider war and a threat to the fragile process of superpower rapprochement.

Békés's section of United States documents, including the papers covering the telephone conversations of President Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles, his Secretary of State, on October 25, 26, 27 make sobering reading. Dulles admitted to the President (October 26, 15.50) that "it is very difficult to decide how to handle the [Hungarian] question. I met recently Harold E. Stassen [the President's disarmament adviser] in my office, and our talks are continuing. We agonised a lot about the issue.

"In my opinion, we should not bring it up with the Russians unless, perhaps, in the UN Security Council. While the Council is in session, we could have behind-the-scenes talks, which could be more or less acceptable. However, the British seem to prefer to take the issue to the UN General Assembly, which is scheduled to open in two or three weeks' time." And at this critical juncture of the Hungarian Revolution, when the Soviet forces were making their own armed reply, Eisenhower urged Dulles to "ask the British ambassador [to Washington] for further elucidation." Dulles readily agreed and said he would be sending a message to Selwyn Lloyd, his British opposite number.

A couple of hours later (October 26, 19.06 hours) Dulles rang the President to ask whether he agreed that he should breach the issue "that all we want is that the people [of the region] should regain their real independence. If they get this, the security of the region would be posed in a different form." Eisenhower agreed. Dulles then said, as an apparent reassurance to Moscow, that he would also include in his message to Britain that "there is no need for a significant (eastward) enlargement of NATO—or some such remark".

Eisenhower concurred. "If these states are assured any existence, they could elect their own governments, or whatever they would want, and we would be satisfied. This would offer a solution of the gravest dangers confronting world peace."

Dulles's briefing of a presidential conference on the Hungarian situation the next day (October 27) fleshed out the American approach. It revealed that the US wanted no direct role; it preferred to act, not as the sole Western superpower, but as a member of the Western Alliance relying on the UN talking shop. "As far as the United Nations action is concerned, it is beginning to take shape," Dulles told the President and his advisers. "Together with the British, the French, the Canadians and the Australians, we are backing the move that the issue be put on the Security Council's agenda today."

But Dulles also reported that, regardless of these Western moves, "the Hungarian uprising is becoming ever more general across the whole territory of the country. Significant units of the Hungarian armed forces have gone over to the insurgents and in the provinces significant territories have risen against the regime... Our Government has got in touch with the American Red Cross which, in turn, contacted the International ICRC, and is working on aid and medical supplies.

"Refugees are crossing over in great numbers to Austria. They are looked after there and the Red Cross are also sending medical supplies to Austria and to Hungary. In my opinion, we cannot do much more and, for the time being, we should not either."

Clearly, Washington was not prepared to jeopardize its twin-track policy objective *vis-à-vis* Moscow, but equally, it was not prepared to admit to the world that it was standing idly by as the anti-Communist uprising of a small East-Central European nation was being drowned in blood by the Soviet Army. The rhetoric directed against Soviet intervention was fulsome but not followed by action.

The behind-the-scenes negotiations involving America, Britain and France at the United Nations appeared the best solution to avoid having the buck stop in Washington—to paraphrase Truman's famous phrase. Eisenhower also realized that, in this moment of acute East-West crisis, India and the other non-aligned nations must be won over to the Western position. In an early morning telephone conversation (October 29, 08.00 hours) with his Secretary of State, the President suggested: "It would be useful to get Nehru involved in this. I suppose, it must have occurred to Nehru that he ought to establish closer links with the West provided we can find a face-saving formula that would allow him to do so." Dulles concurred replying that he had been thinking along similar lines.

But the Suez crisis put a new spin on the Hungarian events and Britain and France smartly shifted ground. London and Paris wanted the UN General Assembly, hastily summoned to discuss the Middle East crisis, to discuss the Hungarian question too, whereas Washington wanted the latter to go before the more manageable Security Council. With the Great Powers at odds, the United Nations was unable to agree on any steps, let alone stop the second Soviet military onslaught on Hungary on November 4, 1956. The Kremlin must have been pleased.

What this *Realpolitik* meant in practice can be gauged from the British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd's position paper for Anthony Eden, his Prime Minister, in connection with a mooted letter to Nikolai Bulganin, the Soviet Premier. "...Personally, I do not think that this would be an opportune moment for the sending of a

personal letter. We have already summoned the Russians to the UN Security Council, there we administered hard blows to them and there is no doubt that we shall have to go on administering similar blows as they have no intention of withdrawing from Hungary in a hurry.

"I expect you will agree with me that, no matter how much we would enjoy giving Bulganin an appropriate retort to his sanctimonious lecture to us on Suez, it would be senseless to waste the opportunities inherent in the good personal relationship with Bulganin in this futile debate," Lloyd argued.

Armed Western aid was, of course, never on the cards but, as the carnage began, we students at the receiving end in Hungary were still hoping that the combined effects of the UN's moral authority and Western political pressure would be sufficient to force the Soviet army to withdraw. It was, as the documents from both East and West adduced by Békés underline, a forlorn illusion.

Looking back now from a distance of over forty-three years, I realize that, despite our almost total isolation in Budapest, surrounded as we were by a ring of steel of 20 Soviet combat divisions in November 1956, many of us instinctively understood—and picked our way through—the complex attitude of the Great Powers.

In the face of the mounting Soviet atrocities, I desperately wanted to inform the outside world, especially the UN Security Council, of Hungary's plight. I was an ordinary student without funds, organization or contacts. In my search for contacts with the outside world, I ignored the United States becasue it was petrified of a nuclear war. I also discounted Great Britain and France as suitable conduits to the UN because of their total preoccupation with Suez, and turned instead to A.M. Rahman, the Indian envoy in Budapest, with my plan for action.

India's stock and moral credibility as a non-aligned nation was at the time high in Moscow and Washington, as well as at the UN. Furthermore, India chaired the Security Council debate on Hungary. With the Indian envoy's help I managed to provide reliable documentary proof of Soviet atrocities perpetrated on defenceless civilians which, I had hoped, would influence the Security Council debate. This was *Realpolitik* but, of course, I could not have known about the effects of Soviet pressure on New Delhi and the dirty footwork of diplomatic fellow-travellers. Like most of us, I was being very naive.

In spite of America's Cold War propaganda, this was the moment of truth: the West did not even dare seize a unique opportunity, offered on a platter, as it were, by Hungary, to "roll back" Communism from Central Europe by backing the freedom-fighters.

The incipient rapprochement between the superpowers could not be jeopardized. The Yalta division of Europe into Eastern and Western spheres of influence could not be challenged. This was the brutal reality driven home by the Hungarian Revolution. This spontaneous anti-Communist uprizing was not in Western political interests, as it unwittingly endangered the process of rapprochement that both East and West so badly wanted. Eventually, the Helsinki Accord of 1975 codified this superpower interest and *de iure* recognized the *de facto* division of Europe.

For those who have not been fully acquainted with the interrelation of Suez, American inertia and the Hungarian crisis, Békés's book should dispel any lingering illusions. The sources and original documents presented in this 183-page volume offer a balanced insight into the meaning

of *Realpolitik* and the behind-the-scenes negotiations of the main protagonists.

The Hungarian Revolution, in spite of its heroic failure, was instrumental in the unmasking of Soviet imperialism and colonialism and, ultimately, the destruction of Soviet-style Communism.

In 1990, phoenix-like, democracy was reborn following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Kádár dictatorship in Hungary. The new political class, with certain notable exceptions, has accepted the aims of the 1956 Revolution as its moral inheritance. The rest is history.

The appendix listing the publications of the Budapest Institute for Research on the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution provides invaluable documents and source material. It is to be hoped that the book will be translated into English and thus become available to a wider circle of scholars interested in this crucial phase of the Cold War. ❧

Tamás Koltai

Game and Talk Shows, Back to School

Vak meglátta, hogy kiugrott (The Blind Man Saw It Jump Out) • Péter Kárpáti: *Világvevő* (Super Receiver) • Kálmán Mikszáth: *Beszterce ostroma* (The Siege of Beszterce) • Imre Madách: *Az ember tragédiája* (The Tragedy of Man)

Games are a passion that is duly exploited by commercial culture, primarily through the media. They account for a substantial part of programming both on radio and television, luring participants in the studio and at home with the prizes they offer. Some, and those are the better quality ones, offer huge prizes in the guise of cultural quizzes; naturally their chief objective is to improve ratings and obtain higher advertising rates.

This is the consumer culture the Budapest alternative theatre company Atlantis parodies with *The Blind Man Saw It Jump Out.* The blind man is none other than Oedipus (the title itself paraphrases a nursery rhyme), and the production is a performance of Sophocles' tragedy in the form of a quiz show. The stage is arranged as a television studio, with the real audience playing the part of the studio audience, and the game show host leads the chorus of classical tragedy (billed as DJ Choir). The preliminaries of the Oedipus story are performed: the central character answers three riddles put to him by the Sphinx and thus becomes King of Thebe. And what better place to have the riddles put than a television quiz show? With the manic costume and nonchalance of your typical host, the DJ makes his entry and the player called Oedipus (complete with name tag, naturally) solves the riddles in quick succession. After each correct answer the DJ demands ecstatic audience response, the band provides a flourish, Oedipus produces the usual cumbersome bow that non-professionals manage on camera.

The tragedy now unfolds in the form of a series, since the show has its regular slot. When blind Tiresias starts to unmask the crime committed in the past, the show immediately takes on a crime-watch format, with the DJ assuring the audience that each new development in the investigation will be followed up. They have live coverage of Oedipus being confronted with Creon, and with the shepherd who had once saved his life. Everything is tuned to meet the audience's expectations. The climax, the unmasking, is also covered live. Naturally, at the most interesting points the show breaks off for commercials: the products of antiquity are given the full TV ad treatment. The final episode is hyped beforehand with a vengeance: the entire country is watching the outcome of the investigation. Oedipus blinds himself live on

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editor of Színház, *a theatre monthly, is* The Hungarian Quarterly*'s regular theatre reviewer.*

camera, thus producing an extraordinary media event with a sure rapid rise in the ratings.

All this hits the bull's eye and it is anything other than a farfetched caricature of the real thing. Far from it: apart from the commercials, it is Sophocles' text that is used all along, and very effective it is in the setting of a television show, too. The director (who also composed the play's music) Ádám Horgas has resisted the temptation to caricature the tragedy; the play is performed almost in full and the parody is directed against the milieu that tries to reduce canonized cultural values to its own level under the pretext of entertaining the public.

In Péter Kárpáti's *Super Receiver* a commercial radio station broadcasts a "concert", in the course of which there is an interview with the star, a Hungarian pop singer now living in Switzerland. Here, too, the audience acts as the live audience, constantly breaking out in "spontaneous" applause during the concert (and the saccharine interview); we see and hear the interviewee sob as she tells us how much she longs to go back to her own little homeland and find true love, feeling that the man for her is somewhere out there.

The next scene takes us to a remote Gypsy village where a man is sitting beside a radio set, listening to the same broadcast; as he listens, he is connecting electrical wires to iron rods stuck in the ground so as to produce worms for fish bait. As he does so a young woman is trying to persuade him to give up custody of their child, now that she is living with someone willing to look after it. Another scene gives us yet another woman whose spouse is lying dead next to her, electrocuted as he tried to catch worms using the same method. We next see a man trying to lull his baby to sleep; the mother has sneaked out to see her lover in the reedy marsh. The silent man seen in the first of these scenes walks by the marsh with a portable radio set: he wants to listen to the "live concert" while fishing. This suddenly arouses our suspicions that this man, Jani Pici, is to be the pop star's future lover. In fact, he does manage to hook a singing pop mermaid that resembles the glittering golden fish of the familiar tales wearing an evening dress covered in metallic scales. They promptly rush back to the village to hold their wedding, which is attended by all the wrangling and haggling Gypsies: the men, women and children of the previous scenes, all singing and dancing, and accompanied by musicians who get the party going; the stage becomes one happy family, with Jani Pici and the Swiss/Hungarian mermaid covered in fish scales at the centre, united until death will them part. Just as in a fairy tale.

In short, the play is an ironic and poetic paraphrase of the tale of the poor man who catches the golden fish, which fulfills three of his wishes. Elements of social drama are mixed with parody, and the whole thing ends up in Gypsy folklore. Rough, redundant and yet concise dialogue takes it beyond naturalism and the frame story of the radio broadcast mercilessly exposes the empty lies of commercial culture. As the two are blended together in the final act, the happy ending of the fairy tale is both teasingly lofty and melodramatically improbable. Eszter Novák, who directed this Bárka Theatre Company production, should take much of the credit for the final result: instead of intellectual empathy and an austere sociological approach, she had the courage to produce a colourful, playful and ambivalently tragicomic play. The actor playing the radio interviewer is not just parodying the brainless chatter of the typical media host on the commercial channels, he is also making fun of himself—in his capacity as a well-known host of simi-

lar shows. And the marriage of the ragglе-taggle Gypsy and the international superstar fish is just as absurdly utopian as the tale itself.

For story is an essential part of every play. Sophocles was a master story-teller; any Hollywood scriptwriter of political thrillers would envy the Oedipus plot, the story of a murderer disclosing his own crime. The use of flashback to create tension would deserve an Oscar for best screenplay, which is one of the reasons why the play can be turned into a game show.

Hungary also has its own great story-teller, the late nineteenth-century novelist Kálmán Mikszáth. One of his novels, *Beszterce ostroma* (The Siege of Beszterce), involves a game of make-belief with reader (audience) participation, although television, let alone game shows, was still very much in the future. The characters are ordinary people who dress up in historical costumes and pretend to live in the Middle Ages in order to satisfy an eccentric whim of their master, a certain Count Pongrácz. (Indeed, we cannot be absolutely sure whether he really has a screw loose.) In any case, he pretends to live in medieval times, in an old castle on his own estate; in a manner befitting his household he raises a private army, so that if something displeases him, say a decree of the Mayor's Office, he can give his men the order to attack. On one occasion the town's chief of police has had enough of the game and, to pacify the belligerent Count, he hands a "noble lady" (actually an orphan employed in the inn) over to him as a hostage. Apolka thus becomes a chatelaine, and since everyone thinks that the old Count wishes to take her to wife, her fiancée really lays siege to the castle. After adopting Apolka and naming her his heir, Pongrácz dies in the siege, thus clearing the way for the two lovers' happiness.

The Madách Theatre decided to turn this still popular novel into a musical, probably set to coincide with the millennium celebrations, as Mikszáth's novel is set around 1900, a period with many similarities with the present. (In the sense that we are now witnessing the same corruption, the same fetishism of money, the same constant haggling between politicians.) There is no sense, however, in bringing back the figure of the Count as part of the millennium reprise, if we are left in the dark as to whether he is an anachronistic figure trying to escape modernism and progress, or a romantic rebel rejecting the shallow, dismal business world of the present. Obviously, the latter option would have an enduring message—Mikszáth himself would have agreed—but according to the laws governing musicals the disagreeable fiancée, obsessed with getting hold of the dowry, should have mended his ways for the happy ending. Phoney sentimentality is obligatory in the genre, which is why the Count's passing away degenerates into a sentimental grand finale. When in fact it could have equally been turned into a "conspirative" parlour game. László Tolcsvay has enough imagination to imitate various musical styles, or perhaps we might say he uses stylistic paraphrases in the pastiche manner. Viktor Nagy's direction is more likely to satisfy the taste of those who like to go all mushy over the analogy between the end of the century and the end of the millennium, laughing at life through a mist of tears—without noting the analogies that give little cause for joy.

We are invited to take part in a similar historical parlour game, but this time with the chance to make an unsparing discovery of actual analogies and overlaps, in a production of the József Katona Theatre of Kecskemét, with *Az ember tragédiája* (The Tragedy of Man) as directed by Géza

Bodolay. Regular readers have lately been treated to a wealth of information about Imre Madách's classic, whose current spate of revivals can be connected to the millennium celebrations of Hungarian statehood. (The first Hungarian king, St Stephen, was crowned in the year 1000.) My excuse here for returning to the play is that the Kecskemét production stands out among all the recent versions.

In this rendering of the play, which starts out from the creation myth and sketches out the history of mankind with the help of chronologically arranged dreams taken from the various historical periods, the characters are played by a school class. The actual setting is a class room. There are benches, a teacher's desk, and a blackboard with the date chalked on it. The Lord (i.e. God) is played by the form master, thereafter known as the Teacher. Lucifer's (i.e. the Devil's) role goes to one of the rebellious schoolboys who sits at a separate desk. However, at the beginning of the play the same Lucifer comes on stage in the guise of Imre Madách himself, polemically identifying Lucifer's views with those of the author. Yet, despite his name's original meaning, "light carrier", Lucifer traditionally represents evil, whose aim is to drive the first man, Adam, to despair and suicide by presenting the history of mankind to him as a futile struggle. Although this particular interpretation has been less prominent lately, and Lucifer is presented more as a rational enlightener: a malicious educator whose stance against doctrinaire authority, the most important motif in the present interpretation, was last given (political) significance during the 1980s, when we still lived under a one-party dictatorship.

By identifying Lucifer with Madách, the director underlines the drama's Hungarian mentality. By the same token, however, he moves away from the popular interpretation of the play as a "world drama" and, in consequence, from the Goethe analogy. (*The Tragedy* has often been described as an imitation of *Faust*.) The play, which was completed in 1861, has a gloominess that has traditionally been associated with the suppression of the Hungarian revolution and war of independence in 1848/49. Madách began to write the play during the years of Habsburg' repression, and the only scene that offers some hope is that of the French Revolution. The explanation is probably rooted in the writer's proud memories of the Hungarian Revolution's heroism. Bodolay, the director, takes the circumstances of the play's origin so seriously that initially the year 1848 is written on the blackboard in place of the actual date; and thirteen effigies are hung from the ceiling in commemoration of the thirteen generals of the revolutionary army executed in 1849. It is quite clear, therefore, that the "divine" Teacher represents supreme authority in a repressive regime, and the choir (of seraphim in the original work, and of students in this production) hailing him are the subjects. But this is not enough. Just as Madách extended the play right up to his own time, those who re-interpret the work today should do the same. And since Hungary in the twentieth century has also experienced reprisals, the negative experience of a crushed revolution, 1848 gradually fades into 1956. The date is written on the blackboard, while Beethoven's Egmont Overture is played, just as it was played constantly over national radio during those October days, to later become one of the emblems of that autumn. Sadly, the effigies hung from the ceiling remain in place.

The intention is probably clear: to couple the creation myth, in other words the power "created" to be everlasting and unchanging, with the subjects' perennial longing for freedom. But since history is in-

terpreted in a quasi-Hegelian manner in the form of a dialectic struggle of ideas, a school-room setting is the best place to illustrate this. A "history lecture for boys", as Endre Ady, the great poet of the early 20th century, wrote in one of his poems. The school setting and the stage props demonstrate the ingenuity of this particular "school dramsoc". The skeleton of the Byzantine zeitgeist is obviously borrowed from the equipment store of the biology class. In medieval Prague, in this "indifferent age", a small iron stove provides some warmth; in December 1956 students were shivering by similar stoves in freezing-cold class rooms. The teacher's desk acts as throne for the Pharaoh, as a podium for demagogues in ancient Greece, as the arena for Roman gladiators, as Danton's pulpit, and as a laboratory desk in the Fourierists' Phalansters. The pyramid and the stake for burning the Byzantine heretics are both built of Thonet chairs. The school's sliding blackboard is used as a guillotine. (For the French Revolution scene, some 1956 newsreels are projected over the backdrop, with pictures of demonstrations and street fighting in Budapest.)

Finally, to restore order the Teacher enters, brandishing his report book. Having explored history's possibilities in preparation for his finals, Adam is now obliged to sit with the rest of the class, on the last bench. Once more he turns for advice to Lucifer who, once again in the guise of the author (and instead of the Lord in the original) delivers the play's famous last sentence: "O Man, strive on, strive on, have faith; and trust!"

This is a game, too, but one that is far more intelligent than a quiz or a game show. Here we can discover that there is more to the game we call Life than winning or losing money. ❧

That Changing Light in an Actor's Eyes...

István Szabó talks about his recent film *Sunshine*

Sunshine was awarded three Europe Prizes in Berlin and was nominated for the Canadian Film Academy's Génie Prize in fourteen categories. The film, a Canadian-German-Austrian co-production, made with a grant from Eurimages, was shot on location in Hungary with a Hungarian crew. The cameras were handled by Lajos Koltai, who has been Szabó's constant creative companion for over twenty years. The leading roles are taken by British and Canadian actors.

John Neville, the British actor, who is one of the leads in the film, said that "One would give up a lot of things gladly just to work with István Szabó." Ralph Fiennes said that during shooting he received unusually thorough directorial instructions.

As far as I am concerned everything must be subordinated to the actor. I do not let anything or anyone interfere with that. In our films the actor does not have to stand where it best suits the cameras. We conform to what is best for him or her. We arrived at this by asking ourselves what is it we consider most significant in a film. In every art form there is something which that specific genre is able to express best. What is it that films show us best? I asked myself. Not a landscape, which you can paint and not even a portrait, because you can hardly say something about man more beautifully or enticingly than Rembrandt or Titian, recording facial expressions in a certain state or mood. But continuous movement, the way emotions are born on the faces of human beings, only to become other emotions, the way expressed thoughts spring out of ideas, once again to change into others, the way doubt turns into action or love into jealousy, right in front of the audience's eyes, well, all these things can only be shown by a film. The light suddenly changes in an actor's eyes, to express something you already know from your own life or from the eyes of a person close to you. This is where a feature film is different, where it can give more than a text or a painting can.

The actor's face primarily carries thoughts and emotions?

Since that is so, then the most important question is what a certain face represents, what social class, what age, what notions. The actor's face, with all its changing thoughts, radiates a kind of energy, which meets another force radiating from another face towards him and towards the public. This exchange of energy carries the message of the film. Of course, the faces have to be placed in an environment, in a certain setting, in a social context. Just as a painter

chooses colours for a picture to be painted, or a writer jots down certain words to be used when describing something, when I invite an actor to work with me I am in effect making a decision about what the film is going to be like. This also means that I respect and like good actors, and I make absolutely sure that the ideal circumstances are present so that they can feel free. In this way they will not give us preprogrammed reactions to emotions, they will be able to evoke real feelings and energies so that we get that strange, warm, tingling feeling when we are sitting in a cinema. Our goal is for the public to get goosepimples from the emotions, the joy, the eroticism, the rage, or the desperation radiating from the screen. Otherwise, his only reaction will be to mention at some intellectual gathering how thought-provoking and politically significant the film was.

You took a long time deciding who would play the leading roles, you went to see actors working in the theatre and in other films. And still, you took a certain risk, because Sunshine *is about identities, about losing the safety of one's home, and although this could happen anywhere, it is given a Central European setting.*

Naturally, this risk is always present. But Ralph Fiennes, William Hurt and all the others are great characters, and I think they are capable of expressing even more than we asked them to.

One of the scenes takes place in prison. Valéria Sors, the heroine of the story and the individual who conveys moral righteousness, is played in her old age by Rosemary Harris. During a prison visit time, she winks reassuringly at her grandson. Was this the actor or the director?

It is in the script, but that's not the point. The point is who does it and how. This is the secret of interpretation. In order for that wink to mean something to the public, we needed Rosemary Harris, one of the best of English actresses, and no-one else.

There were a few disparaging remarks after the première about the leading roles being played by British and Canadian actors.

A film is made for an audience, so it is in effect public. Picking a quarrel with it and how depends on that person's taste, and on the interests motivating him. My aim is just to tell a story, and I consider it important that the public should accept the people depicted in the film. If I am lucky, they may even come to like them, they may understand their story, the explanations for their actions. If someone does not want to do that, that's their business. It is undeniable that in *Sunshine* my Hungarian actor-friends only play minor roles. That is because the production was financed by Canadians and Germans. This film was very expensive by Hungarian standards and we could not have done it otherwise. The relatively high costs demanded that we make the film in English, and that's what we received the money for. You can only make a film in English with actors whose native language is English. Those Hungarian actors who speak English well enough were given minor roles.

You could not call them minor parts. Mari Törőcsik, for instance, plays a very important figure: Kató, a servant. She is part of the family because she sticks with the Sonnenscheins through thick and thin. They go through life together. She is present at the birth of the children, at the death of the grandparents, she is there in happiness and in sorrow, in glory and in humiliation.

When Mari Törőcsik read the script, she said: it's a small part, but I can see why

you need me. I'll do it. Her character really is important. In the part of the film set in the 1930's, Kató and General Jákófalvy, the secretary of the officers' sports club, mean solidarity and understanding, generosity and loyalty, precisely those human qualities which show Hungary's most humane and unblemished side. The real Hungary, which was not duped by Parliament and which refused to take notice of the anti-Jewish laws. A Hungary which can be proud of its attitude to this day, and one which has nothing to be ashamed of. Another Hungary, however, unfortunately, has much it ought to ponder. This has been true throughout the ages.

How did the British and Hungarian actors get on together?

Excellent relationships took shape. István Bubik, László Gálfi, Zoltán Seress, János Kulka and the others often appeared on the set even when they had nothing to do, just to see their new friends. I learnt from Brandauer early on that with actors it is not linguistic comprehension that matters, they read each others' eyes. When Mari Törőcsik appeared on the set for the first time, she introduced herself to everyone before standing in front of the cameras. All she had to do then was to stand in silence next to a stove in a corner of the room and watch the family. After we shot the scene Rosemary Harris and Ralph Fiennes came up to me and asked: that lady by the stove is a really great actress, isn't she?

Sunshine *covers a period of over a hundred years. During this time fashion and hairstyles changed, so did the objects and the colours around people. You and Lajos Koltai have always taken great pains to provide an accurate picture of the world around your characters. Here it must have been exceptionally difficult because of the time span.*

We had first-class help, and we were able to make good use of the tremendous amount of information they amassed. Over the last fifteen years we have done everything we could to bring our films to Hungary and to work with our team. This is what happened with *Mephisto* and with *Colonel Redl.* The producer of *Meeting with Venus*, who is English, wanted to shoot the film in the opera house of Buenos Aires. I had a three-month battle with him to bring the production to Budapest. The shooting gave the Hungarian film industry a good name and we must hold on to this reputation.

Last year you backed out of a Boris Godunov *for the Budapest Opera because you were putting the finishing touches to* Sunshine. *But you have taken on a new work to be premiered during this year's Budapest Spring Festival,* Three Sisters, *by Péter Eötvös, who is an old friend of yours and who composed the music for your film,* The Age of Day-Dreaming.

Eötvös created an extraordinary opera, basing his libretto on Chekhov's *Three Sisters.* He does not follow the scenario or the chronology of the original play, which is the story of three sisters, their brother, Andrei and his wife. Here each act—or sequence, as he calls them—is centred on the fate of the characters he considers important. The first act is all about Irina, her desires, her struggles for love, the second is about Andrei, and the third about Masa. The music is fascinating, beautiful. I am not qualified to judge its value, but I know that it had a great effect on me. That is unusual because—I must confess—I find 20th-century music after Bartók and Stravinsky difficult to follow. This opera was an exciting emotional journey for me. Visually I try to emphasize everything that Eötvös wanted to accentuate, so what

I have to do is to show what the music expresses using colours, light and movement. Although every act has its central character, the work requires constant and complete concentration from all the actors. I am an absolute amateur in directing opera, so I believe in the help of the singers and the conductor, who is none other than the composer himself.

Is it true that you will start work on a new film this autumn?

No, I need to collect my thoughts first. Seven years passed between *Sweet Emma, Dear Böbe* and *Sunshine*. Of course, we did a lot of work in that time. We completed a highly subjective documentary on Budapest called *The Boat's Stability* for the BBC, and we turned two one-act operas by Offenbach into an ironic, musical costume drama for the German-French channel Arte. These were enjoyable and we learned from them too. But large-scale films are slow in the making. I think the right time for me to embark on a film is when an idea inspires me to the extent that I become convinced: it is important for the public too. ❧

Mária Albert

Erzsébet Bori

A Bitter Fate

István Szabó: *Sunshine*

News of István Szabó's much awaited film long preceded it. By the time it had its Budapest première, it had already won three Prix Europas, for best actor (Ralph Fiennes), best cinematography (Lajos Koltay) and best script (István Szabó —Israel Horovitz). No Hungarian film has been thus honoured before. The last one to achieve worldwide success, including an Oscar for best film, was *Mephisto* in 1981, also directed by Szabó. But is *Sunshine* a Hungarian film?

Of course it is. The producers are Hungarian or at least of Hungarian birth, the director, cinematographer, set and costume designers and a good proportion of the actors are Hungarian and, most significantly, the film is set in Hungary and is a specifically Hungarian story.

Of course it is not. It was made with money from elsewhere, in a foreign language, the producers are from a distant country overseas, Canada; the leading roles are mostly played by foreign actors, some of whom are unknown to Hungarian audiences, the film music was written by a foreigner and the co-scriptwriter is a familiar figure in the Anglo-American film and theatre world.

István Szabó's epic narrative tells the lives of four generations of a Hungarian Jewish family, from the years of peace of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, through two world wars and the hell of the Holocaust, to the new disaster of the Communist period. The great-grandfather is a village innkeeper—a typical Jewish occupation even in the Hungary of the 1940s—who, by trial and error, invents a recipe for a digestif flavoured with herbs. (There is no tradition of bitters in English speaking countries but they are much favoured in German speaking countries and in Italy. In Hungary, Zwack Unicum is the best known of these. The Hungarian public is reminded all the more of the Zwack distillery, since the film is recognizably partly shot on its premises.) The still explodes, taking with it the great-grandfather, the 12-year-old boy sets out to seek his fortune with the recipe under his arm. The new drink is named Taste of Sunshine (Sonnenschein) after the family.

An advantageous marriage, the secret recipe and the liberal climate of the Monarchy allow the family enterprise to flourish. Manó is able to send his sons to university and to study abroad. The elder, Ignác, is a paragon of conformity. He moves rapidly through the ranks of (imperial and royal) judges; he is even offered a

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Erzsébet Bori
is the regular film critic of The Hungarian Quarterly.

seat in parliament. But with every step, he has to give up something: love, independence and finally even his name. Like so many other Jewish families, the family had already assimilated once when it changed its ancestors' Hebrew name to Sonnenschein. Even this is no longer enough and, under pressure but freely, they choose for themselves the telling name Sors, which means the same in Hungarian as it does in Latin, namely "fate". Conformity is a typical Jewish way of life, at least as typical as is the unruly, radical Jew who joins believers in doctrines of socialism, revolution and redeeming the world. This is the formula we recognize in Gusztáv, Ignác's younger brother, forever condemned to play second fiddle to his eminent elder brother. Then the First World War, the defeat of Austro-Hungary, the fragmentation of the Monarchy and the tragedy of Trianon, which reduces Hungary's population and territory to a third, puts an end to this good, peacetime world. Ignác serves as a judge advocate throughout the war and mourns the passing of Francis Joseph, who once honoured him with a personal audience. Nor is the family spared by the chaos following the war. Gusztáv is forced to emigrate, Ignác is crippled by the loss of his world. His sons, Ádám and István, in their turn choose their paths and start their families in a stabilized society. Ádám stakes everything on fencing, becoming Hungarian champion and then gold medallist at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. He is blinded by his sporting success and refuses to see the way the world is going and the dangers that threaten. Despite all the urgings from relations and well-wishers, he does not want to flee the country. Ultimately he is sent to the Russian front in a Jewish forced labour batallion, where he pays with his life for an illusion. His teenage son, Iván, his father humiliated and murdered and himself the only member of the family to survive the war, is led by a passionate anti-fascism into the camp of the communist system as it is establishing itself. He feels his place is in the police force, where he can fight to ensure that nothing like this will ever happen again.

Iván is only slowly, gradually able to confront the communist reign of terror; he takes part in the 1956 revolution, is sent to prison. Finally we see him again in a familiar location: in the same office where his grandparents took the name Sors, he changes his back to Sonnenschein.

For a start, we have to accept that *Sunshine* is not a European art film or even a director's film and was not made only, or even primarily, for a Hungarian audience. We cannot call it to account for the exact reconstruction of events in Hungarian history or expect it to answer questions which are at the root of controversy both within and outside the industry. But in its own genre, as a quality period film addressing a wide audience, we cannot find much fault with it. In terms of spectacle, cinematography, sets and costume, it is flawless, being both beautiful and credible. The script is a masterpiece of its kind which, though at times offensively trite, succeeds in organizing close on a hundred years of historical events and numerous characters' life stories into an intelligible whole. (The film is three hours long, and is not long because it shows much but because it is long-winded and didactic at certain points). The music is a workmanlike job but at every sensitive point it has the catastrophic effect of leading the film towards cliché, emphasizing and reinforcing its faults.

The message of *Sunshine* could not be clearer: Accept who you are! Everything which goes beyond this truism—the depiction of history, assessing assimilation as a choice, the portrayal of Hungary and Hungarians in the film, moral questions—

has become the subject of heated arguments within the industry and on the Internet. And these arguments are taking place here in Hungary. It could easily be that István Szabó has met his match. For an audience abroad, this film, made for international distribution, is one film amongst many. But here at home, the public are queuing up at the box office and the arguments are also being conducted here at home. Basically, they are ideological arguments. That is my problem. I respect Szabó, and his earlier films are close to my heart—the critics recently included *Father* amongst the best Hungarian films of all time and amongst the best twelve on Budapest. However many times I see them, I find them absorbing and moving. But in his more recent films, however worthy and well crafted, there is too much theory and too little human interest. Instead of lively characters, full of contradictions and their random fate, we now have stereotypical figures in age-specific situations; their decisions, good or bad, represent the dilemmas of the age. Their personalities and paths through life are made to fit ideological and theoretical categories. In his first trilogy, Szabó shared his own experiences with his audience; in the *Mephisto* trilogy and here in *Sunshine* he is sharing his thoughts. ❧

Sir,—Professor Romsics is mistaken when he uses the term ,"Jewish question". (That Was the Century that Was, HQ 156, Winter 1999). There has never been a "Jewish question" in Hungary; there has only been a Hungarian question. To state otherwise is to use the language of anti-Semitism, no matter what the author's intentions. The term, "Jewish question" was invented by anti-Semites to mask their true intentions, anti-Semitism. Moreover, in an article on Hungary in the 20th century, it is unconscionable to omit the staggering loss of over 450,000 murdered Hungarian Jews or 5% plus of the Hungarian population. In fact, it is accurate to say that while the Hungarian government would not have murdered their Hungarian Jewish citizens without the Germans; these same citizens could not have been murdered without the collaboration of that same government and/or acquiescense of many other Hungarians. Facing up to these issues of history is not a Jewish concern; it is a Hungarian concern.

Michael Kaplan
Portland,Oregon

Sir,—I am very grateful to Mr Michael Kaplan for reminding me of the importance of terminology. The term *Jewish question* as indicator of a social and political problem of 20th century Hungary is not my invention. Among predecessors who used this term I would mention the great Catholic-conservative historian, Gyula Szekfü and the eminent liberal democratic political thinker Oszkár Jászi. As editor of the famous sociological review entitled *Huszadik Század,* Jászi devoted a special issue to this problem in 1917. Leading personalities of the political and intellectual life of pre-war Hungary were expected to respond to the question whether there was a Jewish question in Hungary, and, if yes, how it could be defined. Out of the 50 contributors 37 considered the Jewish question not only a legitimate term, but a real problem as well, in fact, a very explosive one. The *Jewish question* remained a legitimate term in Hungarian parlance even after the Holocaust. The outstanding liberal democratic political thinker of post-war Hungary, István Bibó used it, just as the Marxist historians Erik Molnár or György Ránki. I do not think they all "were mistaken" and "used the language of anti-Semitism". Rather, they tried to face, understand and interpret a delicate aspect of modern Hungarian history. Just as I did.

As for the Holocaust, I did not deal with it in my short essay (as I did not touch many other important events of a century-long history, either). Anti-Semitic legislation was mentioned only in relation to social mobility and educational policy. It does not mean, however, that I would deny the existence and singularity of this tragedy. In my latest book I too underlined the responsibility of the Hungarian authorities. (*Hungary in the Twentieth Century.* Budapest: Osiris/Corvina, 1999, pp. 212–213.) I also agree with my reader in emphasizing that facing these issues is a Hungarian concern. I would not say, however, that they do not concern people who have a Jewish ethnic and/or political identity.

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You can be proud of anything, if you really want to be. Ostriches, I suppose, are proud of not being able to fly—this would be an embarrassment to most birds, but oh how fast an ostrich can run! Hungarians are proud of their language, just because it is so different from all European languages, unable to express things like masculine and feminine, having no word for "to have", but being able to express (with a separate verb conjugation!) whether the object is indefinite or definite. Thus látok *means "I see" (generally, or something indefinite), while* látom *means "I see it". Hungarian does not belong to the Indo-European family of languages: the only other languages in Europe which do not are Finnish (with which Hungarian is distantly related), Basque and Turkish..*

From Ádám Nádasdy: Hungarian—A Strange Cake on the Menu, pp. 46–50.

ISSN 1217-2545

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